Blueprint
for a Virtual College

Report to the President's Senior Executive Team

Shoreline
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

VIRTUAL
COLLEGE
LEADERSHIP TEAM

March 1, 2011

Executive Summary

¶ES1 This Blueprint is provided to the President's Senior Executive Team (PSET) by the Virtual College Leadership Team (VCLT) in response to PSET's request for information on how Shoreline Community College (the "College") might proceed in forming a virtual college (VC), a "college within a college." The Blueprint addresses outcomes that can be reached on a short timeline (i.e., what could be implemented by summer or fall 2011), a mid-term timeline, and as a longer timeline (i.e., what could be implemented by 2020). Reaching the short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals of this initiative are the expected outcomes.

¶ES2 Short-term goals acknowledge that the College already has an important, successful presence in online education and, thus, many aspects of a VC already exist. To choose a path toward a longer-term goal of significant enrollment increases, represented by President Lee Lambert's articulated goal of doubling enrollment by 2020, and its complementary short-term goal of reversing the College's flat or downward enrollment trend, the VCLT and its workgroups looked at existing online education examples from around the world. After comparing those examples with the College's realities, the VCLT decided to recommend an underlying approach that will build upon the College's existing strengths: offering high-quality online instruction at an affordable price.

¶ES3 This evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, approach offers scalability. It allows the VC initiative to move ahead immediately, regardless of external factors such as funding opportunities. It also provides a strong basis for pursuing the funding, programmatic needs, and partnerships that would be necessary to achieve longer-term growth targets. It is important to note that longer-term outcomes will be driven, at least to some extent, by funding opportunities. External funders will not provide the College with resources unless specific outcomes are envisioned and delivered and, depending on the nature of the funding opportunities, those outcomes may be different from the ideas presented in this Blueprint. Assessing the alignment of the College's goals for a VC with the desired external funding outcomes will be critical in determining whether, when, and how to seek external funding.

¶ES4 Using this incremental development approach, the immediate recommended goal is to improve existing online instructional offerings and to package them comprehensively, and — equally if not more importantly — to address internal process barriers in the area of student services. Concurrently, some investment in student services–related software will assist not only the immediate goal, but will offer capabilities needed for mid-term goals of expanded program offerings and marketing reach. Furthermore, improvements in online student services will enhance the experience of the College's face-to-face students as well.

¶ES5 Another mid-term goal is a stabilized revenue stream for the College that will contribute to college stewardship and sustainability, which is reflected in the College's core theme number five in the ongoing accreditation process. Because the College has experienced cuts in state support for the last several budget cycles and faces future budget cuts in concert with flat or declining face-to-face enrollments, this mid-term goal should be addressed with a sense of urgency and should influence current strategic directions of the College.

¶ES6 Achieving longer-term goals is also possible and this Blueprint outlines those opportunities and challenges. While the goal of doubling enrollments by 2020 involves a long timeline, meeting that goal will require immediate and aggressive action now. At the same time,

President Lambert has emphasized that the quantifiable increase in enrollments (e.g., by a factor of two) is less important than the broader goals of increasing access to quality education for those whom we serve and, at the same time, increasing the College's enrollment and fiscal stability.

¶ES7 The process of creating this Blueprint has been both challenging and productive. The VC initiative has given rise to a synergy between the VCLT and its workgroups because the VCLT was tasked with producing a concrete deliverable — this Blueprint — on a very short timeline. The VCLT understands the urgency of this matter due to the forces discussed above; however, the disadvantage of such a short timeline is that the VCLT and workgroups were not able to complete comprehensive research or get comprehensive feedback from the campus. With that challenge in mind, however, the VCLT did solicit and consider a significant amount of feedback from various campus groups as feasible within the short timeline. Ultimately, this Blueprint should be viewed as the beginning of an ongoing conversation.

¶ES8 If PSET decides to pursue the opportunities described in this Blueprint, the VCLT recommends that the next step in the process be the creation of an implementation team, with members appointed on the basis of their functional roles on campus and their expertise in the implementation areas. To ensure continuity and preserve momentum, the VCLT suggests that leadership of the implementation team come from its current members, and that a student services representative be appointed to a leadership role because changes in that area are fundamental to any future developments of a VC. Piloting and fully marketing instructional programs, for example, will not be fully successful until the College has a smooth student support interface in the online world.

¶ES9 The VCLT recommends that the implementation team be given authority directly from PSET to implement whatever pieces of the Blueprint PSET deems worthy, because implementation will straddle multiple offices, academic divisions, and departments across the College, potentially including most College employees. The implementation team also should be encouraged to continue to look for opportunities that might not have been contemplated when this Blueprint was written. The VCLT also notes that many of the recommendations in this Blueprint, while arising from discussions about how to approach a VC, are applicable to the entire campus and would help to ameliorate existing shortcomings in the College as a whole. One of the duties of the implementation team, then, would be to communicate to campus about its efforts and request broad input.

¶ES10 In view of the ambitious timeline, the VCLT recommends that an implementation team be appointed and convened no later than the end of March.

¶ES11 In summary, there is nothing particularly radical in this Blueprint's analysis and recommendations. The potential paths that are outlined represent not so much a new direction as the identification and enhancement of what the College does already, and does well. As noted above, improvements in access to student services will enhance the experience of students whether instructional delivery occurs in a virtual world or face-to-face. The goal of every community college in Washington State should be, in the words of our enabling statute, to "offer an open door to every citizen, regardless of his or her academic background or experience, at a cost normally within his or her economic means"* and to be "an independent, unique, and vital section of our state's higher education system."† This Blueprint suggests a means by which the College can continue to fulfill that charge, as it has done for almost fifty years.

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*Revised Code of Washington, sec. 28B.50.020(1).

†Ibid., sec. 28B.50.020(7).

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The VCLT and workgroups also benefitted from numerous conversations in both structured and informal settings with various councils, committees, divisions, and other groups, as well as with individuals. These conversations greatly assisted the preparation of this Blueprint.

Any errors or omissions in this Blueprint are the responsibility of the VCLT and not the workgroups or their members. The opinions expressed and recommendations made in this Blueprint are those of the VCLT as a whole. They do not necessarily represent the opinions of the workgroup members, nor do they necessarily reflect the opinions of the various groups and individuals consulted as part of this process.

Acronyms

AAAS	Associate of Applied Arts and Sciences
ABE	adult basic education
ADA	American with Disabilities Act
BOT	Board of Trustees
BYU	Brigham Young University
CASAS	Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems
CEO	Career Education Options
CPE	continuing professional education
CPM	critical path method
CSF	College Success Foundation
D2L	Desire2Learn
DETC	Distance Education and Training Council
DLD	Digital Learning Department (of OSPI)
DOL	Department of Labor (United States Government)
DTA	direct transfer agreement
ESL	English as a second language
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FERPA	Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
FLC	Faculty Learning Community
FTE	full-time equivalent
GED	general educational development
HIIM	health informatics and information management
I-BEST	Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
LMS	learning management system

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LTC	Library Technology Center (Shoreline Community College)
LWTC	Lake Washington Technical College
MCO	master course outline
NCTA	National College Testing Association
NSF	National Science Foundation
NWCCU	Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
OHSU	Open High School of Utah
OSPI	Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
OSS	Office of Special Services
PDF	portable document format
PERT	program evaluation and review technique
PRO	Prospect Research Online (iWave)
PSET	President's Senior Executive Team
QM	Quality Matters
SBCTC	State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (Washington State)
SID	student identification number
SIS	student information system
SPBC	Strategic Planning and Budget Committee
TCC	Tacoma Community College
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TSS	Technology Support Services
VC	virtual college
VCLT	Virtual College Leadership Team
VPAA	Vice President for Academic Affairs
VPAS	Vice President for Administrative Services
WAOL	WashingtonOnline
WGU	Western Governors University
WSU	Washington State University

I. The VCLT's Charge and the Workgroups

¶1 This virtual college (VC) initiative derives from President Lee Lambert's vision that Shoreline Community College (the "College") be a world-class educational leader not only through its physical campus but also through a virtual delivery model. The VC is conceived as a "college within a college," to augment and not to replace the College's physical presence in the city of Shoreline and the traditional face-to-face delivery methods that it has successfully employed for more than forty years.

¶2 In November 2010, the President's Senior Executive Team (PSET) named individuals to the Virtual College Leadership Team (VCLT) on the basis of their individual knowledge and experience, functional area of responsibility within the college, time availability, and leadership abilities. The VCLT was designed to be connected to the College's Strategic Planning and Budget Committee (SPBC) in that it includes both the chair and the co-chair of that committee. In December 2010, President Lambert charged the VCLT to develop a set of recommendations, in the form of a "blueprint" document, for creating a VC for the College and to deliver those recommendations to PSET by March 1, 2011. Because the VCLT was not charged with considering *whether* the College should embark on a VC initiative, issues of why a VC should or should not be pursued are not addressed in this Blueprint. Some feedback received during the process of writing the Blueprint did, however question why a VC should be pursued at all.

¶3 President Lambert charged the VCLT with communicating with the campus and soliciting feedback. The VCLT was invited to speak about the VC initiative to several groups on campus, including councils, committees, instructional divisions, and staff meetings. The VCLT also hosted a brown bag session on campus, with an opportunity to attend face-to-face as well as via Elluminate. A "frequently asked questions" document was distributed to the campus in conjunction with this session (http://sccvc.wikispaces.com/Frequently+Asked+Questions). Working with the College's Vice President for Administrative Services (VPAS), the VCLT also ensured that regular reports were given to the Board of Trustees (BOT) and the College Council. (A detailed list of presentations made is available at http://sccvc.wikispaces.com/Presentations.) The VCLT and its workgroups used a public wiki (http://sccvc.wikispaces.com/) as its virtual collaborative space, which provided the campus with a live, fully transparent view of the VC initiative in process.

¶4 The VCLT formed workgroups in the following areas and appointed members to them with the consent of the VPAS and PSET:

- Funding (with subgroups for external and internal sources)
- Instruction
- Marketing
- Quality, Assessment, and Continuous Improvement
- Student Support Services

Workgroup members were chosen, primarily from the College's faculty and staff, on the basis of their expertise in a workgroup area (see http://sccvc.wikispaces.com/Work+Groups). The workgroups assisted the VCLT in drafting this Blueprint. Workgroup members were asked to

approach the Blueprint from a student's perspective; to address a short timeline (i.e., what could be implemented by the summer or fall of 2011), as well as a longer timeline (i.e., what could be implemented by 2020); and to use data and research to support their analysis and recommendations.

¶5 The President charged the VCLT to think "outside the box" and consider all options, including outsourcing, when analyzing what would be the best approaches for a VC at the College. While the College currently employs one model of "outsourced" services to a certain degree (i.e., in eLearning to provide evening and weekend technical support for Blackboard when college staff are not scheduled to work), this model is not generally part of the College's culture, and, not surprisingly, this aspect of the VCLT's charge proved to be the most challenging. The VCLT chose to think about "outsourcing" as a matter of degree and kind, as opposed to either-or.

¶6 If large-scale outsourcing or radical out-of-the-box thinking, especially in the area of instruction, is truly a path that the President and PSET would like to explore, then the VCLT recommends that an external consultant be engaged to analyze the possibility further. The VCLT did catch glimpses of out-of-the-box thinking through its research into entities like Western Governors University (WGU), the University of Phoenix, and Rio Salado College. For the College to emulate some of that thinking in a VC, it may well have to structure the VC as an entity that is free to have a simpler mission, a different governance structure (both in order to reduce complexity), a different business model (to reduce cost), and, potentially, a radically different role for faculty.

II. Overview of the Virtual College Concept

A. Vision

¶7 President Lambert articulated a vision for the College to create a VC, a college within a college, the goal of which is not to supersede the bricks-and-mortar college but to function within it and help sustain it. Accordingly, the VC reflects the same core themes that guide the entire College. This initiative, for example, seeks to embed program excellence (core theme number one) throughout the programs and services offered by the VC. Additionally, the VC is directly tied to access and diversity (core theme number four) in that it has the potential to increase access for potential students who are unable to attend the physical campus. Specifically, the VC will help the College double enrollment by 2020, a goal articulated by President Lambert. College stewardship (core theme number five) is also reflected in the VC effort in that the VC will be a self-supporting entity that provides a return on investment for the college.

¶8 The proposed vision statement of the VC initiative is

> Guide students to learn successfully online at any time,
> from any place.

B. Mission

¶9 The proposed mission statement of the VC initiative is

> Develop a virtual college that offers high-quality 21st-century
> learning experiences for students, supported by the services they
> need to be successful online.

C. Principles

¶10 The principles of the VC initiative are

- Accessibility. The VC will increase meaningful, easy access to online education for more students wherever they may be geographically; the VC will break down current hurdles (e.g., lack of robust systems for online advising and counseling, tutoring, financial aid, etc.) in order to increase student access and success rates.

- Affordability. The VC will provide a competitive price-to-value ratio and will offer education at a price less than the competition and/or will provide funding to students to help them meet the cost. The VC also will be affordable to the College in terms of resources required in relation to the return on investment.

- Accountability. The VC will be accountable to students, accreditors, prospective employers of our student, taxpayers, and funders.

- Outcomes. The VC will demonstrate that student learning outcomes are being satisfied. Students in the VC will be held to the same

academic standards as students attending the College face-to-face. Faculty will be held to the same pedagogical and professional standards as those teaching face-to-face. Assessment standards, as set forth through the relevant accreditation bodies, will be the same as those in the face-to-face environment. The VC will seek to adopt best practices in teaching and learning, to measure outcomes, and to use the results to inform continuous improvement.

D. Expected Outcomes

¶11 This blueprint addresses outcomes that can be reached on a short timeline (i.e., what could be implemented by summer or fall 2011), a mid-term timeline, and a longer timeline (i.e., what could be implemented by 2020). Reaching the short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals of this initiative are the expected outcomes. In the short-term, many aspects of the VC already exist at the College. For example, the College has a large number of instructional classes and programs already developed online. The college offers five online degrees and approximately fifteen online certificates with 116 online credit classes offered winter quarter 2011.

¶12 To choose a path toward the longer-term goal of significant enrollment increases, represented by President Lambert's articulated goal of doubling enrollment by 2020, and its complementary short-term goal of reversing the College's flat or downward enrollment trend, the VCLT and workgroups looked at existing online education examples from around the world. After comparing those examples with the College's realities, VCLT decided on the underlying approach of building upon existing strengths.

¶13 This evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, approach provides scalability. It allows the VC initiative to move ahead immediately, regardless of any external factors such as funding opportunities. It also provides a strong basis for pursuing the funding, programmatic needs, and partnerships that would be necessary to achieve the envisioned long-term growth targets. Meeting the long-term enrollment goal will require immediate and aggressive action. The College's Enrollment Management Planning Committee determined that the enrollment growth required over the next ten years to achieve the goal would entail a 15 percent cumulative increase each year. Whether the goal of doubling enrollments is realistic is not the primary issue here. It is clear that the College needs to pursue strategic initiatives such the VC aggressively in order to stabilize its otherwise flat or declining enrollment trend. The trend for online class enrollments at the College has been and continues to be upward, even in the face of an overall college enrollment environment that is flat or declining (see Appendix A).

¶14 A mid-term goal is a stabilized revenue stream for the College that will contribute to College stewardship and sustainability (core theme number five). Because the College has experienced budget cuts for the last several budget cycles and faces future budget cuts in concert with flat or diminishing face-to-face enrollments, this mid-term goal should be addressed with a sense of urgency and should influence strategic directions of the College.

¶15 Using this incremental development approach, the immediate goal is to improve existing online instructional offerings and their packaging and to address internal process barriers around student services. Concurrently, some investment in student services–related software will assist not only the immediate goal, but will put in place capabilities needed for mid-term goals of expanded program offerings and marketing reach. Achieving the long-term goals is possible, and this Blueprint outlines those opportunities and challenges.

III. The Life Cycle of Virtual College Delivery

¶16 The VCLT organized its work around the "life cycle" of delivery of instructional services in a VC. This cycle is broken into the following parts:

- Research
- Targeting
- Marketing and recruiting
- Student enrollment and commerce
- Student preparation and orientation
- Ongoing student support services
- Instructional delivery
- Assessment, credentials, and accreditation

Each of these components is discussed in turn below.

A. Research

¶17 While VC concepts are viewed by many as a nascent area of education, a significant amount of research and a large number of case studies are available for review, including full business life cycles for some efforts, as well as information regarding how others have changed and adapted. The VCLT researched existing virtual colleges, universities, and consortia in Washington State and worldwide to view lessons learned, determine best practices, and learn about competitors to the College's VC. The VCLT reviewed the following entities:

- Alverno College (http://www.alverno.edu), in Milwaukee, places emphasis on students' developing abilities to put knowledge to use. Rather than standardized tests and traditional exams, Alverno faculty evaluate student demonstration of abilities using a "multidimensional process of judging the individual in action." According to Alverno, "faculty and other trained assessors observe and judge a student's performance based on explicit criteria. Their feedback, as well as the reflective practice of self assessment by each student, helps to create a continuous process that improves learning and integrates it with assessment." Instead of earning credits, students obtain competency-based units. Alverno asks students to provide evidence that they have met a program learning outcome through an online e-portfolio that is reviewed by outside teams to assess student learning.

- Bellevue College (http://www.bellevuecollege.edu) is the largest provider of online learning in the Washington community and technical college system.

- Bridgepoint Education (http://bridgepointeducation.com) is an independent, for-profit education company. Bridepoint Education owns Ashford University in Iowa (http://ashford.edu), which offers online and face-to-face classes, including associates degrees; as well as the University of the Rockies (http://rockies.edu), which offers online and face-to-face graduate degrees. Bridgepoint's Web site states that "Bridgepoint Education was founded on the principle that those who are academically prepared deserve access to an affordable higher education without sacrificing quality, transferability of credits, accessibility and academic standards. A leading provider of postsecondary education services, Bridgepoint Education is dedicated to those seeking flexible, high-quality choices in higher education."

- Brigham Young University (BYU) offers an online high school completion program (http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/aboutus/what.cfm). The cost at BYU is $126 for a 0.5 high school–credit course.

- Capella University (http://www.capella.edu) is an accredited, for-profit online university with partial residency requirements (in the form of "colloquia") for advanced degrees, based in Minneapolis. Capella offers bachelor's, master's (MS and MBA), and doctoral (PhD and PsyD) degrees in select areas, including business, information technology, education (including an instructional design for online learning specialization), psychology, public health, public safety, and human services. Within those areas, Capella offers 136 graduate and undergraduate specializations and 17 certificate programs with over 1,050 online courses. More than 38,000 students come from all 50 states and 52 other countries. Capella's business model is weighted toward advanced degrees: 48 percent master's, 30 percent doctoral, and 22 percent bachelor's degree programs. It has a faculty of over 1,200, with four-fifths holding doctoral degrees. Capella's faculty live in 47 states and five countries (http://www.capellaeducation.com/news/assets/Media_Fact_Sheet.pdf) and Capella also hires what they term "educator/practitioners." Capella's model appears to be a mix of standardization and faculty involvement in curriculum development. Job descriptions indicate high levels of accountability for administrators in curriculum development.

- City University (http://www.cityu.edu/) has a centralized structure in which a team of faculty "course managers" develops assessments that are directly tied to course learning outcomes. The assessment instruments are common to the course; faculty exercise academic freedom insofar as to how best to teach to those outcomes. City University makes an online orientation course a requirement for faculty employment, unless competency can be demonstrated.

- Connections Academy (http://www.connectionsacademy.com) is a free K–12 school content provider that operates through nonprofit and publicly authorized virtual schools across the country. While not

a traditional home-schooling program, strong parent involvement is expected.

- The Digital Learning Department (DLD) under Washington State's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) was formed in 2009 by Substitute Senate Bill 5410 as the office responsible for managing a statewide approval process for multidistrict online learning providers in Washington. This process is intended to qualify, monitor, and maintain high-quality online learning providers for K–12 students. The DLD provides all school districts in the state with equal access to 600-plus online courses available through an easy registration system that saves time and money. This ease of access is further enhanced by ongoing teacher training and course support, both online and via phone consultations (see http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/).

- Edmonds Community College (http://www.edcc.edu) is the second largest provider of online learning in the Washington community and technical college system and is the College's geographic neighbor to the north. Edmonds's breadth and depth of online offerings is much larger than the College's, and it offers high-demand online and hybrid programs that the College currently offers only face-to-face, such as nursing.

- Florida Tech University Online (http://lp.floridatechonline.com) has a physical campus in Melbourne, Florida. Its slogan is "Tradition. Academic Excellence. Online Convenience." On the first page of its Web site, it markets its accreditation and longevity as an institution: "For a half-century, regionally accredited." Ranked a Tier 1 Best National University by *U.S. News & World Report*, it has some similar online programs to the College, such as in accounting, with which the College could articulate.

- Grand Rapids Community College (http://www.grcc.edu/) in Michigan is using learning analytics to identify "at-risk" students so that the college is better able to intervene with services and support that will increase academic success and retention.

- Idaho Digital Learning Academy (http://www.idahodigitallearning.org/) is an online high school that serves 14,300 high school students statewide. It uses Blackboard as the learning management system (LMS).

- Ivy Bridge College of Tiffin University (http://ivybridge.tiffin.edu) represents a model of a "joint venture" between a financially slumping private institution, which is responsible for curriculum and faculty, and a for-profit partner that provides enrollment management and student services.

- Ivy Tech Community College (http://www/ivytech.edu), in Indiana, is a statewide community college with 24 campuses but single accreditation. It experienced explosive enrollment growth (45 percent) over the last two years and did not significantly increase tuition or staff by implementing Banner as its administrative system and CampusConnect as its portal, leveraging self-service applications.

- Midlands Technical College (http://www.midlandstech.edu/), in South Carolina, greatly expanded access to its LMS, Desire2Learn (D2L), by integrating it with its student information system (SIS), Datatel, and by providing a D2L virtual classroom for every class item number. Within two years, access to its LMS went from about 2,000 to 12,000. In addition to reviewing its Web site, VCLT members spoke with Diane Yeoman, director of instructional design, in February. Note that the College has already enacted what Midlands Technical College has done by integrating its LMS (Blackboard) with its SIS (the HP 3000) several years ago and by creating a Blackboard classroom for every class item number starting in fall quarter 2009. The College has reaped the same benefits that Midlands experienced from its effort.

- Open High School of Utah (OHSU) (http://ocw.openhighschool.org/) is a public charter school with a total enrollment of 250, split between ninth and tenth grades for the 2010–11 school year. In 2011–12, OHSU will add eleventh and twelfth grades. Its first graduating class will be the class of 2012. OHSU is accredited through the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools. It accepts credits from all other Northwest Accreditation Commission–accredited schools and vice versa. Faculty are both full- and part-time and all are certified and licensed or working toward licensure. Each student is given a laptop by the school. OHSU uses open courseware. Coursework is available for review on its Web site.

- The Open University (United Kingdom) (http://www.open.ac.uk) was an early innovator in high-quality learning for nontraditional students and remains an important provider of education in Britain, the wider European Union, and beyond.

- Rio Salado College (http://www.riosalado.edu) is marketed as "the college within everyone's reach." It is the largest of the ten Maricopa Community Colleges and, because of its online presence, has never built a traditional campus. Established in 1978, its mission was to serve under- and unserved geographic areas of Maricopa County. Revenue and market considerations evolved the mission, which now includes corporate and government partnerships, dual enrollment (similar to the Running Start program in Washington State), adult basic education, incarcerated re-entry, military and veteran opportunities, and university transfer. Rio Salado offers weekly start dates for some programs, as well as complete online enrollment and

advising services. The college promises instant access to registration, grades, faculty, the help desk, and tutoring. For Maricopa County residents the cost is $71 per credit. The Web site is highly user-friendly. Rio Salado lists transfer agreements with 51 universities, including a 2+2 agreement with Capella University. It is extremely easy to view all online classes, with over 75 disciplines listed, including American Sign Language. Rio Salado offers 25 online programs, degrees, and certificates.

- Sinclair Community College (http://www.sinclair.edu/) in Ohio is using learning analytics to identify "at-risk" students so that the college is better able to intervene with services and support that will increase academic success and retention.

- University of London International Programmes (formerly University of London External System) (http://www .londoninternational.ac.uk) has offered high-quality distance education to students across the world at the undergraduate and graduate levels for over 150 years. It has evolved over that time from a correspondence-based model to an online model that uses Moodle as an LMS. Students in the international program are held to the same standards as face-to-face students at the University of London's colleges. Because the British system of education is almost entirely examination-based as opposed to coursework-based, this model may be regarded as a type of competency-based system.

- The University of Phoenix (http://www.phoenix.edu/) was founded in 1976 and fully accredited in 1978 as one of the earliest alternative providers of education for students who were older than students traditionally served by universities. Today it offers over a hundred degree programs in nine colleges, employing over 20,000 faculty. Delivery is both online and face-to-face. It is the number one transfer institution for Washington community and technical college students and a top transfer institution for the College's students (see http://sbctc.edu/college/d_acad.aspx, specifically http://sbctc.edu/college/studentsvcs/4prog_0910.2.pdf).

- The University of South Africa (http://www.unisa.ac.za) is a distance and low-residency research university with students in Africa and worldwide. Its fees are less than one-half those charged by residential universities in South Africa.

- The University of Washington (http://www.washington.edu) offers hundreds of online courses, including 15 master's degrees and 26 certificates administered by UW Educational Outreach. It recently launched an initiative very similar to the College's VC initiative, in which it "will double online course enrollments to 24,000 within three years without using state funding" (http://www.washington .edu/news/articles/uw-launches-initiative-to-double-online-enrollements).

- WashingtonOnline (WAOL) (http://www.waol.org) is a Washington State online consortium of the 34 community and technical colleges. It does not offer classes or degrees, but rather helps colleges to do so. The publication *New Direction for Higher Education,* No. 146, Summer 2009, includes a case study of WAOL.

- Washington State University (http://www.wsu.edu) offers several degrees, certificates, and graduate programs online (http://online.wsu.edu/future_students/degrees_and_certificates.aspx) using the ANGEL LMS.

- Western Governors University (WGU) (http://www.wgu.edu/) has as its slogan "Online. Accelerated. Affordable. Accredited." On the first page of its Web site, WGU markets its accreditation. WGU is regionally accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) and nationally accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), an accreditation standard that the College may wish to look into for itself. WGU is a nonprofit organization, founded by the governors of 19 states, including Washington. It is not a competitor to the College in that it offers only bachelor's and master's degrees, articulates an interest to stay only in that market, and has articulated a desire to partner with the College. It has some similar online programs to the College's, such as bachelor's degrees in accounting and in health informatics, with which the College could articulate. Because there is legislative interest in forming a partnership with this institution (see http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/localnews/2014151167_onlineschool07m.html), members of the VCLT met with a founding member of WGU, Dr. Samuel H. Smith, the former president of WSU now working in WSU's Seattle office. In addition, President Lee Lambert will be meeting with the WGU president and touring its headquarters this spring. WGU has recently expanded its presence in Indiana as the result of a partnership initiated by the governor and other leaders in that state.

¶18 The VCLT recommends that more site visits be made to virtual colleges, universities, and high schools and that interviews be secured with institutional representatives to learn more behind-the-scenes details that cannot be discerned from research conducted solely on the World Wide Web.

¶19 In addition to researching other institutions, the VCLT also reviewed what the College currently offers in terms of online instruction and services and what hurdles exist. This initiative builds on the research done during summer 2010 by the SPBC on opportunities to stabilize and increase enrollment at the College, of which eLearning was one of the focus areas (http://intranet.shore.ctc.edu/intgovstratcom/enroll-op2010.htm#eLearning). Campus-wide feedback was gathered on its research solicited by the SPBC during Opening Week 2010, and the VCLT also considered this feedback (see http://intranet.shore.ctc.edu/intgovstratcom/Enrollment focus group 2010/ACLfeedback/11-17-10 Summary of Comments on eLearning.pdf).

¶20   The research and literature review clarifies the types of online education delivery methods in existence and the limitations of each. It also helps categorize the College's current efforts and defines the opportunities and challenges.

¶21   The VCLT's research played a key part in the VCLT recognizing that the College already has an important presence in online education and in determining the recommended approach to build on existing strengths. The College's existing integrated, institutionally supported online education delivery program (eLearning) is in place. While there may be significant differences between the College and other institutions, the VCLT's research review revealed no significant advantage to an alternate approach, at least in achieving the VC initiative's short-term goals.

B. Targeting

¶22   The approach of building on existing strengths also pays dividends in identifying target markets. The College's current practices offer significant target market information. For example, positive and quick fill rates for our existing 116 online courses and attendant degrees and certificates indicate areas of market interest. Also, the College's required program advisory councils help show program relevance through industry review and tracking student outcomes. These external reviews provide data and the process model to identify target market choices for workforce-related offerings. The existing online AA-DTA degree provides the foundation for transfer-related offerings, which also can benefit from the professional-technical market information. Articulation agreements with four-year schools for specific degree tracks, such as the recent agreement with City University, also offer transfer degree expansion opportunities. In the short term, the VCLT therefore recommends building the market for the College's existing online degree and certificate programs and doing further market research into those programs.

¶23   The "existing strengths" approach includes demographic and geographic factors as well. For example, the College's expanding recruiting presence in Pacific Rim countries for international students also provides an opportunity to extend appropriate online content to place-bound students in their home countries. Possibilities include the current efforts of the College's English as a second language (ESL) faculty to build new online curricula and the exhibited interest in automotive technology training. Also, the College has existing and substantial expertise in adult basic education (ABE), ESL, and other student support programs such as the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program and the career navigator concept. Along with new initiatives from the College's LMS vendor, Blackboard, the VC project could find a strong market in pre-college education opportunities and have a significant impact in traditionally underserved populations. Ongoing participation by President Lee Lambert and John Backes, Vice President for Academic Affairs, on Blackboard's Developmental Education Advisory Council will allow the College to stay close to advancements and opportunities in integrating developmental education into the VC initiative. The College's growing relationship with Blackboard may bring an opportunity to incorporate other initiatives to meet developmental education needs, such as the Blackboard–K12 Inc. effort (see http://investor.blackboard.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=177018&p=irol-newsArticle&ID =1482105&highlight=).

¶24   Another existing strength is the College's veterans program administered through the office of special services. The College enjoys status as a veteran-friendly campus and recently received a $370,000 grant from The United States Department of Education to support military veterans returning to school. The three-year grant will help create a center of excellence for veteran student success and fund a veterans' counselor, new computers for the veterans resource center, textbook loans, and short-term childcare and housing loans.

¶25 According to The National Center for Higher Education Risk Management, higher education is set for an experience similar to those that came after World War II in the 1940s and the Vietnam War in the 1970s; that is, an influx of 19- to 30-year-old students returning from military service (see http://www.ncherm.org). Recent changes to the GI Bill (http://www.gibill.va.gov/post-911/post-911-gi-bill-summary/Post911_changes.html) enhance its benefits, including a housing allowance for distance-learning veterans. While the College already has seen a significant increase in veteran students on campus, the bill now allows veterans to qualify for a housing allowance while taking online classes, not just face-to-face instruction. The College's existing messaging to the veterans market uses print and social media with geographic and demographic targeting, due to the previous housing benefit restriction. The Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010, enacted January 4, 2011, opens a significant additional targeting opportunity that could benefit the VC. The College could, like WGU and Rio Salado College, market itself to online learners as a veteran-friendly school (see http://www.wgu.edu/tuition_financial_aid/veterans and http://www.riodsalado/veteran/Pages/default.aspx).

¶26 In the long range, the College should investigate markets independent of our existing online programs, looking at instructional programs that successful virtual colleges and high schools offer that we do not. Specific choices for online program expansion would weigh a number of factors, including faculty availability, partner availability, and funding. One promising choice to investigate is high school students who need completion courses. Many high school students are behind in the credits needed to complete high school. If they are significantly behind, they often enter face-to-face programs like the College's Career Education Options (CEO) program. For others, they may only need two or three classes and would prefer to make up those classes and graduate from their own high school. High schools are significantly financially challenged and generally offer limited options for making up credits. High school counselors regularly refer students to online resources such as BYU's options (see http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/aboutus/what.cfm). The cost at BYU is $126 for a 0.5–high school credit course. When students take a course at the College for high school credit, a five-credit course translates as one high school credit; i.e., two high school classes. The College does not currently offer any online classes specifically targeted at students still in high school. BYU offers 600 courses and has enough students from our state even to offer a Washington State history course. It appears that BYU is quietly running a huge online high school completion operation. Similar operations to research include the University of Missouri's high school completion program (http://cdis.missouri.edu/high-school.aspx) and the Idaho Digital Learning Network (IDLA) (http://www.idahodigitallearning.org/). The College should research further and understand how the OSPI's DLD plays into this marketplace (see http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/).

¶27 Geographic scope is not by itself a strategy, but rather a component when considering viability of existing and new target markets and programs. As well, regardless of the potential appeal of any particular program across a broad geographic range, it must be acknowledged that the geographic location of the physical college does play a part in the decision-making process of the student. Indeed, a 2004 study by the Lumina Foundation (http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/Hossler.pdf) looks at fifty years of changes in that process and concludes that physical location continues to be an important deciding factor. The College's current online student body bears this out, as most students come from Shoreline or just north or south of the College (http://intranet.shore.ctc.edu/intgovstratcom/Enrollment focus group 2010/eLearning/eLearning ReportForBoardRetreat.docx).

¶28 The College has a number of examples of how geographic considerations influence market viability. Our existing online accounting degree is popular, but is primarily appropriate for a United States market because accounting standards differ from country to country, and the College teaches

generally accepted accounting principles used in the United States. This is a potentially limiting factor in terms of geographic scope. Obviously, the College's international programs efforts have a strong geographic component, but they become attractive only when paired with degree tracks that appeal to those students, such as business and engineering. Although Blackboard has a feature to convert content to different languages, the VCLT recommends that courses should be offered in English, so that the instructional faculty have control and understanding of the content. The health informatics and information management (HIIM) program is wholly online. Because it is one of a limited number of such programs in the United States, HIIM draws students from across the country. In addition, the current focus on employable skills and degree tracks means that geography as a targeting component must also be weighed against differing job availability across markets. The VCLT recommends, therefore, focusing in the short term on the geographic scope that is appropriate to existing online degrees and certificates.

¶29 ESL is a potential opportunity and a good example of how expanding geographic considerations may or may not play a role. The College's ESL faculty is currently responding to an opportunity in China. That experience may build the expertise and open additional markets abroad. In adding a demographic component, however, there may also be a significant local market opportunity for ESL. For example, the Latino population is the fastest-growing cultural segment in the United States, in Washington and in the Puget Sound region. Between 2000 and 2006, Washington's Latino population grew from 442,000 to 581,000, or 32 percent. Of that group, 72 percent say that they speak Spanish only or Spanish mainly. Of Puget Sound Latinos, 39 percent have not finished high school and 16 percent have some college. Still, more than 80 percent say that they somewhat to highly value higher education and a similar number indicate they would like to improve English language skills (http://www.conexion-marketing.com/).

¶30 There is potential for additional markets for place-bound international students. China, India, and the Philippines all have large English-speaking populations, and the demand for higher education in those countries is greater than their current domestic institutions can meet. There exists the potential to pair that need with the College's ability to deliver in fields such as information technology, engineering, nursing, and business programs for expansion of online instruction. In some fields, such as nursing, determination of whether the program is designed for students to meet United States licensing or international requirements would have to be considered.

¶31 Potential international markets (where the students would remain in their native countries) include those students who do not pass the achievement tests to be accepted at their domestic universities. Online instruction could be developed to provide coursework to transfer to domestic universities or those in the United States. Articulation agreements would need to be established with U.S. and domestic universities to provide educational pathways for students. The Rio Salado Web site highlights educational pathways for students (see http://www.riosalado.edu/advisement/transfer/Pages/default.aspx?utm_source=RioFuturePage?&utm_medium=BodyLink &utm_campaign=AdvisementTransfer). The College should publicize existing articulation agreements and engage in an effort to develop appropriate articulation agreements to coordinate with targeted program expansion. If the international market is heavily business-oriented, then articulation agreements with institutions with strong business programs should be pursued, including both domestic institutions and native partners.

¶32 Drawing on the strength of the existing face-to-face ESL courses and the support of moving to online instruction by some members of the College's ESL department, online courses could be

developed to meet the demands of international middle-aged persons who desire instruction in English.

¶33 A growing and potentially significant source of students also comes from existing online high schools. Clearly, graduating high school students are a significant factor for a face-to-face college. The College heavily recruits and markets to this group and is beginning to extend its message to younger students. A parallel effort should be made to target online high school students. The OSPI lists 21 online high schools in Washington State. They range from home-grown efforts such as the Everett Online High School, sponsored by the Everett School District, to Insight School of Washington, sponsored by the tiny Quillayute Valley School District in Forks, but run by Insight Schools, which operates in nine states. Insight works with EdGate, which provides a "standards-based curriculum matrix" to find lessons for use in the classroom. EdGate, in turn, is owned by EDmin, a San Diego-based firm with the mission "to serve the K–12 educational community with value-driven solutions that support decision-making, accelerate learning, and improve performance."

¶34 In 2009, the Washington State Legislature established OSPI's DLD (http://digitallearning .k12.wa.us) to facilitate K–12 online learning. The DLD offers a catalog of more than 600 online courses available to school districts and approved online providers. The number of total students enrolled in state online high schools was unavailable at the time of this report; however, further investigation of this young but likely significant effort should be made.

¶35 While the recommended strategy is to build on existing strengths, in the long range, that should not preclude looking at markets and instructional programs that successful virtual colleges offer that the College does not. Specific choices for online program expansion would weigh a number of factors, including faculty availability, partner availability, and funding along with those mentioned above.

C. Marketing and Recruiting

¶36 The current marketing approach for the College's eLearning program is a print and online awareness campaign in the our traditional geographic draw area (i.e. typical retail sphere). Limiting factors are primarily driven by the limitations of the program. Still, the relative success of eLearning in spite of the limitations is a significant point of optimism for the VC project. Moving forward, marketing needs and approaches can be broken down to three general categories: product, student services, and messaging.

1. Product

a. Degree and certificate packaging

¶37 While the College currently does offer a large number of online courses, degrees and certificates, they are not generally packaged into predictable and defined pathways that lend themselves to marketing (see Section III.C.1.b, "Course appearance," below, for details). To increase domestic enrollment immediately, the College should engage in increased marketing, state- and nationwide, of existing degrees and certificates. The single most common theme in the comments received from campus during Opening Week 2010 on the SPBC's eLearning focus area was the need for improved marketing of eLearning classes and programs (http://intranet.shore.ctc.edu/intgovstratcom/Enrollment focus group 2010/ ACLfeedback/11-17-10 Summary of Comments on eLearning.pdf). College employees'

internal awareness of current online offerings needs to be increased, especially with respect to those employees who provide academic advising.

b. Course appearance

¶38 Blackboard is the College's LMS tool and, while it offers significant course design flexibility to instructors, standardization to ensure consistent look and feel (graphics, colors, etc.), tool usage, and other features in online courses would give online students the analogous feeling of walking onto the physical campus, which has a consistent appearance and consistent signage, etc. The desired outcome is that an online student immediately recognizes the College brand and associates quality with it.

c. Quality and third-party verification

¶39 While the College rightfully pays close attention to institutional accreditation, it is an assumed value for students at a public community college. The College's eLearning program and the classes offered fall under its regional accreditation. In the competitive virtual environment, however, accreditation as a signal of quality and reliability is a key marketing statement. All virtual colleges and universities prominently market at least their regional accreditation and some, like WGU, also tout national accreditation: as "nationally accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC)" (http://www.wgu.edu/ about_WGU/accreditation). As the College expands in this environment, national distance education validation may be an appropriate adjunct to regional accreditation. Applying standards that result in additional external verification of quality, such as the nationally recognized standard for online and hybrid course design, Quality Matters, provides a significant advantage in the marketplace. In addition, the College should apply for awards in the area of eLearning, because virtual colleges and universities use their awards and rankings in their marketing efforts. For example, Florida Tech University Online notes that it is "ranked a Tier 1 Best National University by *U.S. News & World Report.*" (http://lp.floridatechonline.com/all/career/all_strengthencareer_t01_1012.aspx?source=1 97449zf1&WT.mc_id=12340&origref=http%3A//www.amazon.com/aan/2009-09-09/ static/amazon.pda/pda.html). Capella University publishes its learning outcomes and assessment metrics. Articulation partnerships also are a way to market the College's value to students.

¶40 Another approach is to market the VC as a high-quality provider of accessible online learning for underrepresented and underprepared students. This market space is not currently targeted by the better-known online universities such as the University of Phoenix, WGU, and Capella. These institutions typically target non-traditional, working adult populations, many of whom have at least some college experience. One possible niche for the College might be in preparing students for a successful transfer to a higher-level degree on the basis of our ability to provide high-quality online learning to underprepared students.

d. Training support

¶41 Online learning requires different learning skills from the face-to-face environment. Offering branded and free online courses such as "How To Be a College Student" or "How To Learn Online" can lower the entrance bar for students interested in taking online classes at the College. There is a substantial existing publishing market for this information (see, e.g., http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-

keywords=online+student&x=19&y=19) and numerous online colleges and promotional services (see, e.g., http://www.elearners.com/advisor/step1.asp?p=stl&cm_mmc=B03-_-elad-_-adv-_-stl) offer question-and-answer assistance and online orientation courses for students. The VC should incorporate this component as a free student-support offering. These courses could be marketed to future target markets, such as to high school students in the College's service district, as well as to junior high and high school teachers in the service district to assist them in preparing their students for college. It also could be adjusted for an ESL population. The courses might be developed as self-paced tutorials so that little or no staffing would be needed to teach them; for development, a faculty member could be given release time to develop the courses, or an eLearning instructional designer might be able to develop or assist in development.

e. Multiple device delivery

¶42 The College's eLearning program was the first in Washington's community and technical college system to use Blackboard's new Mobile Learn product and has conducted testing from summer through winter quarters in the 2010–11 academic year. While functional improvements can be made in this product, it is clear that mobile devices will continue to grow in capabilities and market prevalence. According to the 2011 Horizon Report, "Internet capable mobile devices will outnumber computers within the next year. . . . This shift in the means of connecting to the Internet is being enabled by the convergence of three trends: the growing number of Internet-capable mobile devices, increasingly flexible web content, and continued development of the networks that support connectivity" (http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/HR2011.pdf, at p. 12). The report predicts that the likely time frame for mobile devices to enter mainstream use for teaching, learning, and creative inquiry is one year or less. On the basis of these data, the VC should continue to expand the College's current access to online courses via mobile devices in cooperation with vendor partner Blackboard.

f. Affordability

¶43 The College discounts out-of-state tuition for online-only students with its non-resident eLearning tuition rate. The rate has not been well marketed internally or externally, but it should become a key message to students as the VC moves forward. Raising awareness on the part of College staff will also be important. The VCLT sees no restrictions in marketing this, since it is a rate duly approved by the BOT. Overall, as a state-supported public institution, the College has a price-point advantage over its private competitors that should be leveraged aggressively. The College should market its cost to students in relation to online competitors, just as WGU does (see http://www.wgu.edu/tuition_financial_aid/overview and http://www.wgu.edu/tuition _financial_aid/tuition_comparison_pop).

2. Student Services

¶44 Quality customer service can be a strong messaging point, while the converse can be a significant liability. A rich and complete experience, including e-commerce; personal, academic, and financial support; and quality instruction, is a powerful advantage in the marketplace. These needs are discussed elsewhere in this Blueprint.

3. Messaging

¶45 Continued fracturing of communication channels provides both challenges and opportunities. The general rules for the VC are much the same as they are for the physical college: match the message and the medium to the audience. While this is becoming more complicated, the College has the opportunity to deliver a more targeted and relevant message. In practice, this means that, depending on the target, a full range of messaging strategies would be available, including traditional print and Web, social media, e-mail, direct mail, partnerships, and events. While the specific messages would adapt to the target, in general, addressing the consistent underlying principles of the VC are key: accessibility, affordability, accountability, and outcomes.

¶46 In conclusion, the College should market its online programs much more aggressively. The SPBC's research on eLearning revealed that the University of Phoenix spends 25 percent of its budget on marketing (http://intranet.shore.ctc.edu/intgovstratcom/Enrollment focus group 2010/eLearning/eLearningReportForBoardRetreat.docx). The College also should put more emphasis on recruiting students to online programs. While it may not be desirable to employ the same recruiting tactics as the University of Phoenix (see http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/12/15/apollo), other virtual universities, such as WGU, employ persistent recruiting practices and have increasing enrollments to show for it. The College should learn from these organizations the value of marketing and recruiting students.

D. Student Enrollment and Commerce

¶47 The VCLT's student services workgroup approached its task from the point of view of a prospective online student who is interested in enrolling at the College. Such a student does not live in the immediate vicinity of the College and has neither the means nor the intention of visiting the physical campus. The workgroup asked which steps such a student would need to go through to apply for admission, apply for financial aid, enroll in, and attend the College. The workgroup looked for barriers that currently confront this fully online student and brainstormed options that might reduce or eliminate such barriers. The goal was to think of ways to make it easier for students to "get in the door" and succeed.

1. First Point of Contact

¶48 The path leading to enrollment at the College is currently riddled with roadblocks and delays. This is true for both online and on-campus students. There are a number of steps where the College essentially tells prospective students to leave and come back later, trusting that they will return. There are various reasons for this, and it may turn out that either in the best interest of the student or, for reasons beyond our control, it is unavoidable. There are, however, opportunities for improvement at every step along the way, the most critical being the first point of contact: when the perspective student comes to the College Web site and decides to inquire or apply.

¶49 It is at this first point of contact that the College needs to establish a solid communication channel. Ideally, a College e-mail account would be issued at the time of application or admission. This would establish a consistent and reliable communication mechanism that would last through alumni status, which also could be significant to future fundraising efforts. Automatically issuing students a College e-mail address would allow the College to contact students securely via e-mail in compliance with Family Education Rights and

Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations, and it also would allow students who enroll in classes to gain immediate access to the College's password-protected instructional resources (see Section III.F.3, "Library Services," below).

¶50 Blackboard Inc. offers a communication tool called Connect (http://www.blackboard .com/Platforms/Connect/Overview.aspx) that would provide the ability to reach out to prospective and admitted students via telephone, e-mail, text, and social media. It could be used for announcements, reminders, and emergency notification. Blackboard claims that this service has paid for itself at other institutions by reminding students of important enrollment and payment due dates. The product costs approximately $20,000 per year.

¶51 Blackboard Inc. recently acquired Presidium, which is now called Blackboard Student Services Blackboard markets the product as an extension of existing resources. The service can answer all incoming calls and resolve simple issues relating to admissions, enrollment, and financial aid. It will escalate more complex matters to College staff. It can also develop a Web-based self-help middleware system for students, and a streamlined administrative interface to assist College staff. The advantages of Blackboard Student Services are availability twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week, immediate person-to-person access even during peak periods, and the flexibility for College staff to have time to focus on students' more complex issues. The cost is approximately $100,000–150,000 per year; the middleware has a startup fee of approximately $25,000 and an annual licensing fee of the same amount

¶52 Implementing a content management system would greatly improve the effectiveness of the College's Web site by establishing a consistent framework in which all content is delivered. The College's Web workgroup is moving ahead on this now, leaning toward OUCampus from OmniUpdate (http://omniupdate.com). The actual content and flow of the Web site within this framework is best designed collaboratively by the people who work within the associated areas of the College. A leadership process similar to the one used for the VC initiative would be ideal for this task. The first-year cost of OUCampus is approximately $29,000, and the annual license and support fee is $16,500.

¶53 The ultimate solution for an online student interface would be to integrate all of the College's online student services into a Web portal. A portal is a system in which a user logs in once and is then able to navigate to all available online services. The interface is customizable by the user and settings are retained between sessions. A number of colleges in the Washington community and technical college system have deployed a Web portal. Bellevue College, Big Bend Community College, and Cascadia Community College all use a collaboratively developed system based on Microsoft SharePoint. This system is significantly complex to implement and maintain. Bellevue College has a team of developers dedicated to it. Edmonds Community College uses Blackboard's portal, and there are many other portal products on the market. The deployment of a portal is a longer-term project that will cost well in excess of $100,000. Further analysis would be required to determine the best solution for the College.

¶54 Continuing to improve the College's Web site by organizing information logically and making it easier for new users to find would be helpful for online students. The College's Web site offers a Current Students page that collects student services resource links in one place (http://www.shoreline.edu/CurrentStudents.aspx). A Future Students page seems less well developed at this point (http://www.shoreline.edu/steps/). The College's Welcome to eLearning page mostly explains the logistics of online learning. Information-page models from other colleges offer broader varieties and depths of resources. Investigating the online

information provided by other colleges may well provide new ideas for how to package and make resources easily available to online students (see, for example, Utah State University, "Online Learning Center," http://www.usu.edu/arc/online_learning_center/).

2. Admission

¶55 The College's current application process relies on a module hosted at the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). The prospective student is presented with a list of all Washington community and technical colleges and is given the opportunity to apply to five. The list is sorted alphabetically, and the College's name falls below those of all of its neighboring colleges in the alphabet. After a student who makes it down to the "S" schools submits a Shoreline Community College application through the SBCTC module, additional coding data must be added manually by the College's Enrollment Services staff before the student's information can be entered into the administrative system on the HP 3000. At this point a determination of residency is made. No method currently exists for the application module to interface directly with the HP 3000 in real time, although there is a batch upload process. Currently, the application must be manually processed before a student identification (SID) number is issued, which is required before the student can enroll or access other College services.

¶56 The admissions software provided by SBCTC puts most but not all of the enrollment data into the HP 3000 server through a batch upload process. The College's Technology Support Services (TSS) department has the capability to replace the SBCTC admissions module to suit the College's needs better, but a replacement system would require more work hours for Enrollment Services staff, who would need to enter all enrollment information data into the HP 3000. An advantage to the College of a modified admissions module would, however, be exclusive College branding and issuance of a College e-mail address to all applicants. A commercial solution to admissions would be more complete, but in-house modification of existing software is an inexpensive alternative that could be completed in a relatively short time, maybe in a few months depending on other TSS development priorities.

¶57 Bellevue College implemented a third-party product from iModules to replace the SBCTC application system (http://www.imodules.com/s/1333/index.aspx?sid=1333&gid=1 &pgid=325). The iModules system integrates the application process with a sophisticated inquiry management system. Bellevue College is using this system for all of its admissions processes (including selective admissions programs), and its boasts an 82 percent online application rate. The iModules vendor claims that the system pays for itself with its ability to collect fees without SIDs. The product includes some of the communication functionality of Blackboard Connect. The annual maintenance cost for iModules is approximately $10,000; startup costs would be additional.

¶58 The College's continuing education enrollment system vendor, CampusCE, is anxious to enter the for-credit market and believes it can bridge the College's existing admission-to-enrollment gap in a fashion similar to that of iModules. CampusCE has experience circumventing the limitations of the legacy HP 3000 system; however, significant development would be required to create a functional product. Blackboard offers an eCommerce module, but it has no experience working with the HP 3000 system. An extensive development effort would also most likely be required to integrate the Blackboard product.

¶59 All of the above solutions should be investigated to determine the best fit for the College. A combination of solutions from Blackboard, iModules, CampusCE, and possibly others may be necessary to achieve optimal results.

3. Financial Assistance

¶60 The complexity of the financial aid application process varies from student to student. Under ideal circumstances it may be possible for a student's federal financial aid eligibility to be approved within a few days, provided that the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application and supplemental materials are complete, accurate, and include all necessary supporting documentation. (In addition to the online FAFSA, the process requires signed original supporting documents.) This also assumes that sufficient staff are available to process the volume of applications. The typical backlog of financial aid applications at the College is several weeks. For much of the 2010–11 academic year, the processing time has been twelve weeks. The College's existing financial aid application process can be streamlined by implementing the following strategies:

- Leverage the as-yet-unused features of the Financial Aid Management (FAM) system to automate the process wherever possible. This will reduce errors and improve communication with students.

- Develop online application forms using verifiable electronic signatures to reducing student input errors.

- Assign every student a College e-mail address at the time of admissions.

- Implement a document imaging system.

- Increase staffing through direct hire or contract with a third-party student services provider to augment the services provided by existing College staff.

¶61 The College's Workforce Education Division has its own financial assistance application process independent of what is traditionally classified as financial aid. The most immediate challenge is determining which programs a student qualifies for and which of those is the best fit for each student's circumstances. An online form would help reduce the time and effort required for staff to complete this analysis.

¶62 A detailed review of the impacts of the financial aid process and changes needed for a VC is provided in Appendix B to this Blueprint.

4. Placement Testing

¶63 Three widely accepted placement testing products are currently on the market: Asset, Compass, and Accuplacer. All require proctoring with students showing picture identification at the test-taking site. The College accepts both Compass and Asset tests for mathematics and English placement, as well as Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) for ESL and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) for international ESL testing.

Although there are testing centers across the United States that conduct Asset and Compass tests, some prospective students may have better access to an Accuplacer testing center. The College should consider adopting Accuplacer in addition to Compass and Asset to provide maximum flexibility to potential students.

¶64 The National College Testing Association (NCTA) hosts a Web site to help colleges and students find local testing centers, but it does not provide a mechanism for scheduling tests or collecting fees, only contact information via e-mail or telephone (http://www.ncta-testing.org/). There is an opportunity here for the College to expand this system to include scheduling and fee collection capabilities with the added bonus of having the College's logo on an internationally used resource. This is beyond the scope of what the College can do with existing staff, but expanding this system could possibly be funded via a grant.

¶65 The possibility of using non-proctored placement testing was explored by the workgroup because of the inherent time-lag barrier in enrolling students who are required to take proctored tests, and the counterintuitiveness of students having to go to a physical testing site in order to attend an online college. An alternative to proctored testing is online self-testing, which acknowledges that college students are adults and that they should take responsibility for themselves by not cheating and by accepting the placement recommendations of self-tests. The workgroup identified one institution, Goucher College, that offers immediate online testing and placement for college-level mathematics courses, and further investigation of this institution should be conducted.

¶66 Additional research is necessary to determine whether online self-testing for placement in mathematics and English is a viable option for the College. It appears that most of peer institutions do require proctored exams, so this does not put the College at a significant disadvantage. Workgroup members who spoke with the College's mathematics and English faculty about the need for proctored placement tests heard that online self-testing would not be sufficiently complex to place students accurately in the several levels of developmental mathematics and English offered by the College. Workgroup members also expressed concern that many incoming students do in fact attempt to enroll in classes that are beyond their preparation level, which results in poor student performance or academic failure. Placement testing presents a conflict between the desire to enroll students completely through online processes on the one hand, and appropriately serving students' academic needs on the other.

5. Enrollment

¶67 Enrolling students in classes presents a number of hurdles. Students cannot enroll until they have SID numbers, which means they need to be admitted to the College first. Once students determine, through appropriate orientation and advising, which courses they wish to enroll in, the next larger hurdle may be payment. The College currently requires students to pay tuition or make arrangements to pay tuition within five business days of enrolling. Thus, students may need to wait for information about federal financial aid eligibility, or a determination of eligibility to receive funding through other federal or state programs before they are able to enroll in courses. Students whose financial aid applications are being processed can get payment deadlines extended, provided they pay full tuition costs in the event that they turn out to be ineligible for financial aid. If getting new online students promptly enrolled in classes is a priority for the College, developing a way to add flexibility to tuition payment deadlines without exposing the College to revenue losses through unpaid tuition is worth investigating.

¶68 Current options for payment of tuition and fees include paying in person with cash or a credit card, paying online with a credit card, or setting up a payment plan through the College's third-party payment plan vendor, Nelnet (http://www.shoreline.edu/es/PayTuition.aspx). Online payment is currently accepted by the College, although the College is not able to accept foreign credit cards online at this time. Further investigation is needed to determine the costs associated with accepting payment via foreign credit cards and how those costs might be passed on to or shared with students who choose to pay using this option. Charging students for using foreign credit cards might be similar to other payment fees that students are assessed. For instance, students who establish payment plans through Nelnet pay a $30 enrollment fee per quarter for the ability to pay their tuition in installments (http://www.shoreline.edu/Cost/payment-plan.aspx). Commercial vendors that offer pieces of online enrollment and payment software include Blackboard, CampusCE, and iModules. Currently students cannot pay all non-tuition fees and charges online using a credit card. It may be possible to use a third-party vendor such as iModules to allow such online credit card payments (Bellevue uses iModules this way).

¶69 Enrolling students outside the traditional quarterly course schedule is a subject for future investigation. Permitting multiple course start dates, altering the quarterly course schedule, developing course modules rather than ten-week courses, allowing students to register for portions of current five-credit courses rather than repeating all of a failed course—these possible options for online instruction would all involve changing enrollment protocols and payment dates and affect student services programs in as-yet unknown ways.

¶70 Assisting students who drop or withdraw from courses are two additional functions of the College's Enrollment Services and Financial Aid Department. Currently, students who pay tuition and withdraw from courses during the first three weeks of a quarter may be entitled to tuition refunds. Students may withdraw from a course in person and may receive an immediate tuition refund if they paid by credit card in person, or they may withdraw through an online request and receive a refund via check, credit card, financial aid, or other payment method. Students who have paid tuition via a payment plan must request an adjustment through the payment plan service (see http://www.shoreline.edu/es/PayTuition.aspx). Refunding of tuition is handled individually, which seems workable at current staffing levels for online students as long as the number of students requesting tuition refunds is not large.

¶71 Processing requests for withdrawals from courses is cumbersome for online students, as well as for Enrollment Services staff. Withdrawing from courses is most complicated for online students during the period of the quarter in which the grade of "W" is noted on the transcript (i.e., during weeks three through seven), and it is more problematical for online students than for face-to-face students. Faculty permission is required for a student to withdraw from a course during the "W" period, and a $15.00 withdrawal fee is assessed on the student. Faculty permission to withdraw from courses is required in order to prevent students from violating the College's grading policy that provides that a student may not withdraw to avoid consequences of cheating, plagiarism, or other intellectual dishonesty. Face-to-face students obtain faculty signatures on course schedule change forms and present those forms for processing in person to Enrollment Services staff. Online students obtain e-mail permissions to withdraw from their instructors and forward those permissions via email to the Enrollment Services online student e-mail account (see "Adding or Dropping a Course," http://www.shoreline.edu/es/withdrawalfromclass.aspx.)

¶72 Because the rules governing the "W" grade are part of the College's official grading policy, modifying the faculty signature requirement for course withdrawals during the "W" period would require approval from the faculty senate (see College Policy 6260). One suggestion for modifying the current system would be to allow students to withdraw from courses through the first day of the seventh week of the quarter (or the equivalent date for summer quarter) without faculty signatures, but to require them to agree at the time of withdrawal that if it is later determined that the student withdrew from a course to avoid consequences of cheating, plagiarism, or other intellectual dishonesty, the "W" grade would be converted to a grade of 0.0. In conjunction with this grading policy change, the College would need to set up a system through the Office of Student Success for faculty to report instances of academic dishonesty, along with a procedure to permit faculty to change a "W" grade to a 0.0 if a student is shown to have withdrawn to avoid the consequences of academic dishonesty (see College Policy 5033). The Faculty Senate Council is already discussing how to institute a system of reporting cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, as this is an ongoing and seemingly growing problem.

E. Student Preparation and Orientation

1. Orientation

¶73 The College's current orientation for new online students asks them to go through a hybrid process that consists of reading several web pages of information about the College followed by an on-campus or telephone appointment with an academic advisor (http://www.shoreline.edu/NewStudentOrientationQuiz.aspx). Students are asked to print and have available for their advising appointment a "Putting it Together Checklist" (http://www.shoreline.edu/orientation2/PuttingItAllTogetherChecklist.pdf) and an "Orientation Summary Checklist" (http://www.shoreline.edu/orientation2/orientationmod22.htm). Prospective students who follow the hybrid orientation process must arrange to take a proctored mathematics and English placement test (Asset or Compass) and work their way through twenty or more pages of text-based information before scheduling their in-person or telephone advising appointment. While this process may be easier for online students than coming to an in-person orientation session, it is nonetheless long and cumbersome, is very reliant on text-based information, and is likely to be off-putting to many students. It is also questionable that students actually need to be familiar with all of this information prior to enrollment.

¶74 In addition, the current hybrid orientation process does not directly address the particular needs of eLearning students. Students may access information about eLearning from the hybrid orientation pages, but there is no specific track or pathway through the process for online students to take. Instead, highly detailed explanations of how to read the online class schedule and obtain a transcript evaluation are likely to cause the eyes of our prospective online students to glaze over.

¶75 A great deal of thought has gone into putting together the step-by-step information included on the existing hybrid orientation pages. In their current format, however, there is too much unappealing text-based information included that students might be better able to absorb much of this information after they already are enrolled at the College. Strong consideration should be given to replacing these text-based pages with a shorter online orientation process that would include video and audio presentations and focus only on the information and resources that students need to have right away to be able to enroll in classes. For an example

of online student orientation tutorials, see Rio Salado, "MyMaricopa.Edu," http://my.maricopa .edu/student-center/help/?tutorials.

¶76 In addition to an orientation to the College as a whole, prospective online students need an orientation to online instruction that will make students aware of the academic demands and other expectations the online learning modality will place on them. Requiring students to take an online readiness test that assessed their ability to do college-level work online is one model for making students aware of the demands they will face as online students. WGU, for example, requires students to take an online readiness test that assesses their abilities to do college-level writing (http://www.wgu.edu/admissions/requirements).

¶77 Another model is to ask students to complete a short online tutorial or preparatory course that will help them become familiar with the College's online instructional platform and with online instruction in general. The College offers a Blackboard-produced online tutorial, "Getting Started with Blackboard," that provides technical instructions for how to use the Blackboard LMS. A more extensive online tutorial or preparatory course may be beneficial for students who have unrealistic expectations about the ease of online learning and their own levels of preparation for college. An online tutorial or preparation course could allow students to test their readiness for online learning before actually enrolling in an online program. It might also serve as a bridge into college-level work for students who have not previously taken college-level courses. (For an example of an introductory tutorial for online students, see Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, "How to Be a Good Online Learner," http://www.valrc.org/tutorials/onlinelearner/introduction.htm.)

¶78 An online orientation course might be non-credit and offered at no cost to the student. It might be offered to students while they wait for financial aid or transcript evaluation and course placement. Ideally, such a course would be offered frequently, including times before a quarter begins. One option would be for the course to be a self-paced modular tutorial. Startup costs would include designing the introductory tutorial. Adding faculty to teach an introductory course would likely need to be delayed until there were sufficient profits realized from increased online enrollments to cover the cost of faculty. For an example of a required non-credit mini-course for online students, see The Johns Hopkins University, "Introduction to Online Learning," http://distance.jhsph.edu/core/index.cfm/go/course.home/cid/90/.

¶79 Another idea for preparing students to succeed online is for the College to produce free, open-source online course modules that could be marketed with College branding for use with our own students and at other colleges. To support the College's online students, these course modules or online tutorials would cover topics such as "How to Be a Successful College Student," and "How to Learn Online." These courses might be taught by recent online students of the College or be part of a service learning assignment so that current online students could act as mentors in the courses. For examples of the sorts of material to be included in these modules see Southern Methodist University, "How is College Different From High School," http://smu.edu/alec/transition.asp, and Skip Downing, "On Course," http://www .oncourseworkshop.com/.

¶80 Academic success courses have been shown to be an effective means of improving student retention. As part of its "Achieving the Dream" program, Tacoma Community College (TCC) tracked the retention rates of incoming first-year students who completed Human Development 101, "a course designed to introduce new students to higher education and prepare them for academic success." Students who enter TCC with test scores below the

twelfth-grade level are required to take Human Development 101. Despite their low test scores, students who completed Human Development 101 in the fall quarter of their freshman year showed higher quarter-to-quarter retention rates than students in the control group who did not take the course (see Tacoma Community College, "Research Brief: HD 101 Courses," http://www.tacomacc.edu/upload/files/abouttcc/achievingthedream/RB11--HD%20101 %20Courses%20(FINAL).pdf). The College offers a similar Human Development 101 "College Orientation and Success" credit course online that could be required, following TCC's best practice.

¶81 In addition to adjusting to college, online students must adjust to doing college-level work in an online environment. A study of distance learning students attending California's Coastline Community College reports that online students underestimate the difficulty of online courses and overestimate their own abilities to complete the significant reading assignments that most online courses require. The study recommends use of "pre-course orientations" that will "prepare students by describing the demands of these [online] courses," along with "skills assessment followed by onsite/online tutoring [to] help student in particular disciplines, such as English and math, and ultimately increase completion rates" (see Robert D. Nash, "Course Completion Rates Among Distance Learners: Identifying Possible Methods to Improve Retention," Online Journal of Distance Learning Education 8, no. 4 (2005), http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/).

2. Advising

¶82 Academic advising consists of a number of distinct elements. At initial enrollment, advisors may review a new student's placement test results, conduct an unofficial transcript review to determine whether the student has met course prerequisites, and discuss the degree or certificate path the student might be interested in following. In an initial academic advising session, incoming students typically receive guidance in building appropriate course schedules that effectively set them on the road to achieving their academic and career goals. New incoming students benefit from receiving personalized academic advising because this prevents at least some students from inappropriately enrolling in courses they are unprepared for or that do not fit into their desired certificate or degree programs.

¶83 The challenge of delivering effective academic advising online can be met by combining self-help advising tutorials for students with live chat, e-mail, and telephone advising appointments. The College has piloted an online advising program for the past two years (see http://www.shoreline.edu/eadvising/). To provide secure communication and verification of student identity to meet FERPA requirements, eAdvising at Shoreline uses e-mail messages to communicate with students. To verify student identity and remain compliant with federal student privacy requirements, a chat system might need to require SID validation or other portal validation. In the short term, the College's existing eAdvising system can be expanded by including additional faculty in the program and developing a rotation schedule that will spread the work of responding to student inquiries beyond the current faculty participants.

¶84 A more robust online advising system would likely be necessary should online enrollments increase significantly. Research on this topic in Washington was not fruitful. On its Web site, SBCTC identifies four colleges in the state that offer online advising programs: Bellevue College, Columbia Basin College, Skagit Valley College, and Walla Walla Community College (see SBCTC, "Online Academic Advising," http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/_s-onlineacadadvising.aspx). Bellevue College's academic advising Web site does not in fact appear

to offer online advising for students (http://bellevuecollege.edu/advising/). Columbia Basin College offers a well-designed and friendly Web site with online advising information, but it does not include interactive online advising (http://www.columbiabasin.edu/home/index.asp?page=168). The "live adviser" and "register for classes" features of Walla Walla Community College's online advising site were not functional when reviewed for this Blueprint (http://www.wwcc.edu/student_services/online_adv/). Skagit Valley College's online adviser was offline when the site was reviewed for this Blueprint: (https://secure.skagit.edu/onlineadvisor/MeetPoint/ChatWindow/).

¶85 Links on SBCTC's Online Academic Advising page provide examples of other colleges around the country that use online student advising request forms to interact with online students. Students fill out their SID and contact information and ask a specific advising question. There may be a live chat possibility through these college sites if an advisor is available when the student is online, but more likely the student will receive an asynchronous e-mail response to an advising inquiry.

¶86 In addition to intake advising, enrolled students require ongoing academic advising. Two approaches to providing ongoing advising to online students are (1) implementing an automated early academic alert system for students who need assistance in their coursework and (2) developing a mentoring or academic coach system that closely monitors students' educational progress.

¶87 Early academic alert systems rely on faculty members to input data about students who are doing poorly in their courses early in an academic term. The system then alerts struggling students about resources available to assist them in improving their academic success. The system also may notify college faculty or staff to allow them to make personal outreach efforts to help students get academic or other assistance as needed. TSS is currently investigating the appropriateness for the College of early academic alert systems that are in use at Lake Washington Technical College (LWTC) and Tacoma Community College (TCC).

¶88 LWTC's system, which is called FAST, was developed with funding from a Title III grant (https://webapps.lwtc.edu/FAST/). The early alert system at TCC was developed in conjunction with an Achieving the Dream grant. TCC implemented an advising dashboard, as well as a cohort introductory college seminar, Human Development 101. For information about TCC's advising dashboard, see "Driven By Success: Student Achievement By the Numbers," TCC Magazine (Winter 2010), 2-3, http://www.tacomacc.edu/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/abouttcc/tccmagazine/Win2010_TCCMagazine_4web.pdf. These early alert systems show promise, but whether the software for these programs can be effectively used at the College remains unclear.

¶89 Faculty or peer mentor and career navigator approaches to ongoing student advising are gaining adherents, particularly in online instruction. Students who take courses online do not interact with faculty face-to-face in a traditional classroom setting. Research has consistently shown that developing personal relationships with faculty members is one of the key predictors of college persistence (see Shoupling Hu and Yanli Ma, "Mentoring and Student Persistence in College: A Study of the Washington State Achievers Program," Innovative Higher Education 35, no. 5 (2010): 329–41.) Recent research into the persistence of online community college students found that poor or nonexistent advising was the number-two risk factor for student nonpersistence (see Christopher Hill, "Ten Factors That Determine Online Student Success at Community Colleges," Faculty Focus (July 27, 2010), http://www.facultyfocus.com/

articles/distance-learning/ten-factors-that-determine-online-student-success-at-community-colleges/).

¶90 Mentoring programs provide more than academic advising. In a mentoring program, faculty, staff, or peer mentors interact with new college students more frequently than would traditional academic advisors, who typically meet with each student once a quarter to discuss the next quarter's class scheduling. Mentors communicate with students more often and in a somewhat different capacity: for instance, a faculty mentor may be the instructor and mentor for a freshman or first-year student cohort that takes the faculty member's introductory-level college course for a quarter or longer; a staff mentor may contact a student weekly to check on student progress and concerns; or a peer mentor may lead a student study group associated with a particular class or student cohort. One study argues that effective faculty mentoring helps students "to think about their education, purpose and responsibility in life," and that ideally the student should be "an active partner in the process" rather than a passive recipient of faculty advice (see Craig Cobane, "Mentoring: The Forgotten Component of an Undergraduate Education," Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the APSA Teaching and Learning Conference, Washington, D.C. (2005), 19, http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p11502 _index.html).

¶91 Student retention efforts that include first-year mentoring through learning communities or freshman cohort instruction have been shown to be more cost-effective for colleges and universities than similar investments in new-student recruitment. A 1999 study of the efficacy of freshman-year experience course at a regional public four-year university found that students who participated in the program "continued their enrollment to the fall term of their second year at a higher rate than students who did not participate in the course." The study further found that participating students completed more of their first-year courses and earned higher cumulative grade point averages than students who did not participate. Based on significantly improved retention rates for students in the freshman-year experience program, the study estimated that "the difference between retaining 63% of the students who would otherwise be retained at a rate of only 56%" meant that the cost of the program "could be recovered in one year, assuming a resident undergraduate student tuition of $2381 per year" (Meg Wright Sidle and Janet McReynolds, "The Freshman Year Experience: Student Retention and Student Success," NASPA Journal 36, no. 4 (1999): 288-300, http://journals.naspa.org/).

¶92 Online student retention rates are typically lower than face-to-face student retention levels. Further research is needed into the latest data on online student persistence rates, along with best practices for online student retention. Additional online advising, mentoring, learning-community, and cohort instructional models should be explored as possible means to improve online student persistence. For instance, Ivy Bridge assigns one "personal success coach" for every 80 students. According to an article in *Inside Higher Ed,* "These coaches check in with their students' progress in the classroom once a week, typically by telephone" (see David Moltz, "A New Model Community College," Inside Higher Ed, January 4, 2011, http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/01/04/tiffin_university_and_for_profit_company _run_online_community_college). The article continues, "Three-fourths of [Ivy Bridge] students engage with their coaches on a weekly basis either by telephone, e-mail or Facebook."

¶93 Developmental students may require enhanced assistance in order to succeed in online programs. Mentors and coaches may have the ability to leverage online learning analytics to identify when developmental students need greater assistance and support than students who have better academic preparation for college-level work. Recent studies of the efficacy of

learner analytics show that they have the potential to improve student retention rates, particularly for at-risk students. For an excellent review of recent work on the success of online instruction for underprepared students, see Shanna Smith Jaggers, "Online Learning: Does it Help Low-Income and Underprepared Learners?" CCRC Working Paper No. 26, Assessment of Evidence Series (January 2011), http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Collection.asp?cid=20.

F. Ongoing Student Support Services

1. Counseling

¶94 Career counseling is an important college service for both academic and professional-technical students. The College provides career counseling information online through a career counseling Web site (http://www.shoreline.edu/acc/advising02.html). Links on this page go to information about careers for different academic majors, to academic discipline planning sheets, to the United States Department of Labor's national *Occupational Outlook Handbook,* and to the Washington Occupational Information System, "a computer data bank that includes approximately 300 occupations with information on salary, outlook, available schools and training in Washington State, working conditions, etc."

¶95 The College offers in-person individual career counseling appointments, as well as fee-based face-to-face personality and interest assessments; for example, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and a two-credit online "Career Exploration" course (Human Development 105). While it is likely beyond the College's current capacity to offer personal career counseling through free online appointments, further investigation is needed to determine whether fee-based personality and interest assessments could be made available online. The Myers & Briggs Foundation provides information on its Web site about existing online testing systems, as well as a referral network for certified MBTI practitioners (see Myers & Briggs Foundation, "Take the MBTI Instrument," http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/take-the-mbti-instrument/.)

¶96 Through a grant from the King County Workforce Development Council and the Aspen Institute, the College has implemented a successful career navigator program in its award-winning General Services Technician automotive program (see "the College Is Finalist for Bellwether Award," On Campus, January 13, 2011, http://www.shoreline.edu/OnCampus/blog/default.aspx?id=209&t=the College-is-finalist-for-Bellwether-Award). Further research is needed to determine whether career navigator services could be developed and implemented for online programs offered through a VC. Alternatively, the College could refer online students to career counseling services available in their own communities.

¶97 Personal counseling is available at the College to face-to-face students. Client privacy considerations and other logistical concerns likely make it both undesirable and impractical for the College to offer personal counseling services to online students. The College could instead develop or access an online referral system that would give students information about local personal counseling and mental health resources.

2. Books

¶98 Having timely access to required textbooks and other class materials assists students in meeting their academic goals. Shoreline students currently have online access to the College bookstore at http://www.shorelineccbookstore.com/. Before each quarter begins, students

may look up required and recommended textbooks by quarterly course schedule, and find information such as author, title, publisher, edition, and International Standard Book Number (ISBN) that allows them to purchase their textbooks through any book vendor, online or in person, in the United States. (Similar textbook information is not typically made available at colleges that have contracted with outside vendors to operate their campus bookstores.)

¶99 Students may purchase textbooks in person or online through the College bookstore. The bookstore Web site is set up to sell textbooks online via credit card or bookstore gift certificate; the bookstore will ship orders directly to students. The bookstore's current online ordering system is similar to those of other online book vendors and works well for online students who are well-organized and understand the importance of their having access to required and recommended texts on the first day of the quarter.

¶100 Despite the ability to order textbooks online through the College bookstore, barriers to online students obtaining textbooks in a timely manner (i.e., by the first day of instruction) include students registering for courses too late in the registration period to receive books in the mail by the first day of the quarter, students delaying ordering books until the quarter has already begun, students purchasing the wrong books, or students ordering books from an unreliable or slow Internet source that does not deliver the correct books as advertised. Short of requiring students to purchase textbooks through the College bookstore at the time of registration, there is little that the College can do to prevent a certain number of students from beginning the quarter without access to required textbooks.

¶101 Ensuring that students have timely access to required textbooks will enhance student retention and academic success. Making electronic versions of textbooks automatically available to online students may help to ensure that all online students have access to required materials. Further investigation is needed into whether electronic books might be packaged directly into Blackboard (or another LMS) classroom so that registered students have immediate access to their textbooks as part of their online enrollment. One idea is to include a book fee as part of the eLearning or VC fee structure so that electronic texts would be available to enrolled students through their online classrooms.

¶102 This idea raises a number of logistical questions. Electronic textbook vendors make books available either by download or by a time-limited online subscription. In some instances, electronic textbook vendors require purchasers to download software that may be incompatible with student computer systems or with the College's computer lab equipment and operating systems. Vendors of electronic textbooks and course materials include the following:

- Aplia (http://aplia.com/)

- Cengage Learning (http://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/index.html)

- CourseSmart (http://www.coursesmart.com/)

¶103 Further research is needed to determine how the textbooks that faculty currently assign might be made available electronically to all online students, whether the e-text software permits texts to be made available to classes of students or only to individual students, whether students will accept an electronic textbook or whether they prefer to read their texts in print form, and whether an e-text program would be cost-effective for students who repeat courses or take course series that use a single text (i.e., if a student were required to pay three quarterly

electronic textbook fees to access the same book for three quarters, would this represent a cost savings to the student compared with purchasing a single printed copy of the book?). It also is possible that electronic textbooks might cost students more than their current net cost for textbooks, since students are able to sell textbooks back to the bookstore and receive up to one-half of the new price back. (There is no resale value for electronic textbooks or rented textbooks.) For an analysis of this, see Dennis Carter, "Survey Suggests College Students Still Tepid on eBooks," eSchool News, November 11, 2010, http://www.ecampusnews.com/top-news/survey-suggests-college-students-still-tepid-on-ebooks/.

¶104 Another reality is that while major publishers make their best-selling textbooks available in electronic formats, texts for less popular subjects and courses are not typically available in electronic format. Thus, addressing student textbook needs for an online college will require flexibility. Some students may benefit from electronic textbooks being made available as part of their online classrooms, while other students will prefer to have easy access to traditional printed textbooks, and some courses will not have electronic options for the materials faculty wish to assign.

¶105 It is the goal of the College bookstore to make its textbook rental program available to online purchasers. (The bookstore's Web site announcement currently reads, "Textbook rentals are now available in the main campus bookstore.") Students who rent textbooks through the College bookstore sign a contract obligating them to return the books at the end of the quarter or pay the cost of replacing the book. The issues that need to be resolved to implement the textbook rental program for online students are the signature of the student on the rental contract, the timing of return of the book via mail, and the barrier of the student paying the return postage or shipping costs for the book. The bookstore might investigate electronic signature options, and consider packaging books for online rental with prepaid return mailing labels.

¶106 The bookstore is currently investigating alternative methods of providing texts to students. For spring quarter 2011, the bookstore will market a "hybrid" version of an open text written by a mathematics faculty member by making the text available as a printed "packet" and on a compact disc. This model avoids the time limitation of most commercial online textbooks. The bookstore is also considering the possibility of renting electronic book readers to students, possibly with texts preloaded with the specific textbooks that each student requires. This concept would allow the cost of the electronic reader and the electronic textbooks to be incorporated at the time of registration and could address the problem of students not having access to required textbooks at the time classes begin. Logistics for how to get preloaded electronic book readers into the hands of online students in a timely manner would need to be worked out.

3. Library Services

¶107 The College's Ray W. Howard Library Technology Center (LTC) already provides many online resources that can be easily accessed through its Web site (http://www.shoreline.edu/library/). Most significantly for fully online students, much of the College's library collection is digitized. To supplement its on-campus collection of printed books, the LTC catalog provides registered College students with access to thousands of volumes through its subscription to *ebrary* electronic books. This electronic collection of 43,000 titles is integrated into the LTC online catalog and is accessible online to registered students (provided that they have College

e-mail addresses). Additional resources would be needed in order to expand the breadth of online curricula into new areas.

¶108 In addition to electronic books, the LTC subscribes to over 40 online research databases that provide students with electronic access to full-text articles, abstracts, and citations from academic and popular journals, newspapers, magazines, and other publications. These databases include maps, artwork, classical and jazz music, theater productions, science and medical publications, statistical data, newspaper collections, and trade periodicals.

¶109 The LTC's online resources are available through all on-campus computers. To access these resources from off campus, students (and staff) must use a College e-mail address and password. At present, instructional and LTC faculty are frequently faced with trying to assist students who are working from home on assignments that are due within hours but who have not requested College e-mail addresses and therefore do not have access to LTC resources. Issuing all incoming students College e-mail addresses when they apply for admission or register for classes would facilitate student access to online LTC resources (see Section III.D.1, "First Point of Contact," above). Access to electronic journals, Blackboard, and e-tutoring each require separate logins. Allowing students to use one set of credentials for all resources would be a great improvement.

¶110 To provide information to students about the LTC's services, College librarians have branched out from the LTC Web site to social media. The LTC has a Facebook page and a Twitter feed. The Facebook page is located here at http://www.facebook.com/pages/Shoreline-Community-College-Library/285965960391; the Twitter feed is located at http://twitter.com/scclibrary.

¶111 College students have access to real-time assistance with resource searches and research questions by calling the LTC reference desk or by using an online chat reference service, Ask WA, which is available twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. This service is provided free to students through a library consortium in which College librarians participate. The current contract with Ask WA allows for a set number of hours of student tutoring per quarter. Should student demand for online research assistance increase, the LTC would need to increase its contribution (staffing hours) to Ask WA in order to provide more hours of access to students.

¶112 Both face-to-face and online students also may be referred to their local public libraries for additional resources. Many online students will have access to excellent public library systems, while other online students will not. A best practice for new-student intake may be to advise all students to get borrower cards at their local public libraries if they do not already have them. Because the availability of public-library resources will vary significantly for online students, however, the College will need to provide as many online resources as it can afford to purchase to serve its online students.

¶113 Additional library resources may be available eventually through the regional Five-Star Consortium should the five participating colleges develop resource sharing agreements. Shared digital library resources also may be available as a result of ongoing efforts at the state level to make the state's higher education system more efficient. SBCTC has for years put forward legislative proposals to consolidate community and technical college library database systems so that each of the 34 community and technical colleges in the state does not need to negotiate and fund contracts separately for services from proprietary library databases. Thus

far, the Washington State Legislature has not supported establishment of a statewide library system for higher education, despite its calls on all sides for efficiency in government services.

¶114 Each campus does all that it can within operating budget constraints to provide students with comprehensive library services. The College's librarians regularly work with instructional faculty to create course-specific online resources called LibGuides that provide a Web site through which students enrolled in a particular class can gain online access to specific library resources needed for their coursework (see LibGuides at: http://shoreline.libguides.com/browse.php). These online LibGuides are particularly useful for students in fully online classes who may not have the opportunity or ability to visit the LTC and work with a librarian in person.

¶115 In addition to course-specific LibGuides, the College's librarians have developed online guides on general topics related to accessing and using library resources. (The guide entitled "Research" is a good example of this type of LibGuide; see http://shoreline.libguides.com/research.) These online modules are particularly useful for students in fully online courses whose instructors cannot take them physically to the library for a research workshop led by a librarian. Online outreach efforts such as these will help students who cannot come to campus to work with a librarian in person meet the College's information literacy general education outcome.

¶116 To add to the LTC's support of online (as well as on-campus) students, the College's librarians are currently discussing the possibility of using Camtasia to create mini-tutorials on such topics as how to search the LTC catalog, how to search for articles in the LTC's online databases, how to assess the credibility of online sources, and how to cite sources correctly, to name a few. These tutorials would offer students brief video guides for how to navigate through the LTC Web site and use its many online resources. Since online students cannot visit the library to be shown how to access LTC resources, the librarians are hoping to have time to create online mini-lessons that would take information about the LTC to the online student. This success of this initiative depends on maintaining (or increasing) current staffing levels in the LTC.

4. Tutoring

¶117 The College is currently a member of the Northwest eTutoring Consortium. This group of 35 colleges and universities provides online tutoring twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week to students enrolled at member institutions on a cooperative basis. This service is available to the College's students from the eleventh through the final day of each quarter; the service is not available during finals week or during quarter breaks. The Northwest eTutoring Consortium offers an online writing lab, e-mail question center, and live chat. The tutoring subjects covered by this service are currently limited to: accounting, anatomy and physiology, biology, chemistry, information literacy (research methods), mathematics (including calculus and statistics), outpatient medical coding, Microsoft Office 2007, Spanish, Web development, and writing. The College offers online certificates and degrees in accounting and medical coding, two of the subjects covered by the Northwest eTutoring Consortium (see http://www.etutoring.org/). If the college expands its fully online certificate and degree programs, it may wish to investigate how the Northwest eTutoring Consortium can expand the number of disciplines covered by its online tutoring service.

¶118 A possible alternative to the consortium model for online tutoring is the commercial vendor model. Further investigation into online tutoring vendors is needed to determine the business practices, available tutoring services, cost per student served, and quality of commercial online tutoring services. One well-known online vendor, SmarThinking, claims to be "the leading provider of online tutoring," serving over 300 institutions (see http://smarthinking.com/static/colleges/.) SmarThinking sells its online chat service directly to students at a rate of $35 per hour. Institutional rates are not posted on the SmarThinking Web site. SmarThinking is a business partner of StraighterLine, an online education provider. A series of stories about StraighterLine that appeared in *Inside Higher Education* in December 2010 cast doubt on the academic rigor of StraighterLine's college-level course offerings, and reported that SmarThinking's online tutoring services are not in fact available to students as many hours as advertised and that the subject knowledge and teaching skills of SmarThinking tutors varied considerably (see Serena Golden, "A Curricular Innovation, Examined," *Inside Higher Ed,* Dec. 16, 2010, http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/12/16/review_of _straighterline_online_courses). This option would therefore need to be investigated carefully prior to proceeding.

5. Study Groups

¶119 Options exist now for creating study groups within individual Blackboard classrooms or Elluminate rooms. Other platforms and vendors are providing expanded opportunities for synchronous interaction by online students across classrooms. California State University, Fullerton, offers a study group registry to hook up students who are interested in joining study groups (http://www.fullerton.edu/irvinecampus/pages/sa_studygroups.asp). Purdue University has developed an application that allows students to create study groups via Facebook (Dian Schaffhauser, "Purdue Students Hook into Facebook for Study Groups," *Campus Technology,* http://campustechnology.com/articles/2010/10/05/purdue-students-hook-into-facebook-for-study-groups.aspx). A site called OpenStudy allows students from around the world to form online study groups (Laura Diamond, "Study Groups Move Online, Attract Students Worldwide," *Atlanta Journal Constitution,* Nov. 23, 2010, http://www.ajc.com/news/ atlanta/study-groups-move-online-752264.html).

¶120 Tools that allow for online study groups also can be used to facilitate online student clubs or other synchronous activities that contribute to establishing a comprehensive learning environment for students that might be called the "college experience." Pennsylvania State University's Worldwide Campus provides opportunities for online student clubs, while the University of Maryland University College offers a number of online extracurricular activities (Steve Kolowich, "Student Clubs, Virtually," *Inside Higher Ed,* Mar. 10, 2010, http://www .insidehighered.com/news/2010/03/10/clubs). The VC at the College could include online study groups, student clubs, service learning, and even online student government.

6. Technical Support

¶121 Students often experience problems with technology. Many of the problems are due to issues with their own hardware and software. It is extremely tedious and time consuming for TSS and eLearning staff to troubleshoot the wide variety of problems that the College's students present with laptops on campus, let alone doing this remotely. It is not realistic to expect that the College can provide the level of technological support that students demand. There are potential ways to make it easier for both the College and its students, however.

¶122 The College could provide or require a standard computer configuration to be used for online students. Google is currently testing its Chrome notebook platform. This is a Web-based operating system. All of the applications and data are stored online rather than locally. This platform leverages Google Apps for the office productivity suite, which includes a word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation software. Rather than providing or requiring a specific computer to provide platform consistency for online students, it may be possible to require online students to boot their own computer from a Chrome CD, thus establishing a consistent, virus-free learning environment. TSS currently is investigating the viability of this option. A drawback is that students and faculty would need training in Google Docs and other online technologies. To handle the increasing volume of online student support issues, the College also could expand the current eLearning contract with Blackboard Student Services to provide a wider array of technical support services around the clock.

¶123 Technology support can be assisted by good instructional design. Adopting consistent course-to-course design features for the College's LMS (currently Blackboard 9) should improve student ability to access course resources. Best practices include posting all documents and files in Adobe's portable document format (PDF), using consistent naming practices for documents and files, and using consistent naming conventions for LMS menu items (see, e.g., Southern Oregon University Distance Education Center, "Best Practices in Online Course Design and Delivery," Sept. 10, 2009, http://www.sou.edu/distancelearning/ SOU%20DEC%20Best%20Practices.pdf.)

7. Disability Services

¶124 Currently, students with documented physical and other disabilities who request special services (note takers, screen enlargers or screen readers, extra tutoring hours, extra time for test-taking) meet in person with staff from the Office of Special Services (OSS) to discuss their eligibility. Students must provide documentation of their disability status, and after eligibility is determined the Director of OSS informs instructors of the accommodations to which students are entitled. OSS staff will need TSS computer programming help to develop online application documents and electronic signature protocols for disability services applications. For summer quarter 2011, OSS and TSS plan to pilot interaction via Skype or Elluminate for both disabled students and veterans (see "Services for Students with Disabilities," http://www.shoreline.edu/studentswithdisabilities.aspx.)

¶125 In addition to individual special services for eligible disabled students, the College is required to comply with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For online students, universal design must be used in the development of all course materials, tests, and PDFs to support screen readers. All information, forms, and coursework must be accessible to students who are sight and/or hearing impaired. Different modalities of tests (e.g., essay, multiple choice) are helpful. Instructors must provide captions or sign language for hearing impaired students. A best practice for ADA compliance is to provide class notes online, and ADA compliant materials should support both PC and Macintosh environments. Training for faculty and staff in best practices for online accessibility needs to be provided, because many faculty and staff are not yet aware of how to create and use ADA-compliant online materials. The Quality Matters program is one option for ADA-accessibility training, which entails a $150-per-person registration fee (http://www.qmprogram.org/professional-development/courses/ standard8). An instructional designer also could assist in this effort.

¶126 In addition to training faculty and staff about best practices for online ADA compliance, OSS staff recommends that students with disabilities who are contemplating enrolling in online courses should be encouraged to take a specially designed tutorial or course on how to be successful with eLearning. Such a course would emphasize how students with disabilities can utilize the support available to them through OSS in an online environment. This course would need to be developed.

8. Veterans Services

¶127 Currently, veterans interact with OSS through face-to-face meetings, fax, scanning of documents, and phone calls. At present, veterans qualify for GI Bill benefits only if they take at least one face-to-face class, but that regulation will soon change so that veterans will be able to take all online classes. Veterans who are eligible for veteran services must provide the College with the federal DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) documents, but these may be submitted in scanned or fax format. Several veteran services forms require signatures, which presently is not a problem since veterans must take at least one face-to-face course. Verifiable electronic signature options will need to be provided for veterans taking all online courses (see Shoreline Community College, "Veterans' Programs," http://www.shoreline.edu/veterans/).

¶128 Active duty service personnel enrolled in online courses could be located anywhere in the world. Veterans who are in the planning stages for post-service educational options often conduct research and make decisions prior to the end of active duty. To enhance its services to veterans, the College should be able to offer current and prospective veteran students round-the-clock interaction with veteran services staff, particularly given the worldwide deployments of these potential students. Supplemental veteran services might be provided through an extended services contract with an outside vendor who would be available during off hours to take calls and respond to e-mail and chat inquiries. To attract veterans, the College should provide a robust web site that contains comprehensive information about College programs and veteran services.

G. Instructional Delivery

1. Instructional Aspects and Quality of Instruction

a. Quality instructional design

¶129 Quality instructional design can occur in any modality: online, hybrid, or face-to-face. Standards of online course design should be established to ensure quality. To facilitate students' ability to move from course to course and allow for a consistent student experience, there are strong benefits to standardizing online course design in Blackboard in terms of format and look and feel (i.e. where information is located, standardizing an entry point to the classroom, etc.). This standardization is often requested by online students in the quarterly online student satisfaction survey (see http://www.shoreline.edu/elfaculty/surveys.html). Such standardization is not intended to impinge on academic freedom, since it relates to course design and not content or curriculum. In addition to developing a common look and feel, VC course assignments and assessments should align with course learning outcomes in an intentional manner. The VC could develop a set of instructional design standards for online courses that promote assessment of student learning. Sample standards could help to ensure the following:

- Course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable

- Types of assessments measure stated learning outcomes

- Rubrics are provided for evaluation of student work and participation

- Learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning outcome

¶130 The above standards reflect some of the best practices for online and face-to-face course design as identified by Quality Matters (QM), a nationally recognized organization whose standards reflect current research in instructional design. Indeed, a faculty proposal has recently been presented to various bodies on campus (including Faculty Senate Council, the Dean Team, and several of the academic divisions) that the College develop a peer review process to ensure that all online courses meet the QM design standards (see Appendix C). To meet QM standards officially, individual courses must be reviewed by course review teams, comprising a team of a master reviewer and two peer reviewers, every three years. There are 61 certified QM master reviewers and peer reviewers in the Washington State community and technical college system who could form the teams, and more of the College's faculty could be trained for this. The cost for managed reviews is estimated at $550 per course. Taking winter quarter 2011 as a measure, the College offered 116 online courses so the total cost to review these courses would amount to just under $64,000. To maintain the QM certification mark, a review cycle would need to be created and a budget established. The VCLT estimates that perhaps a third of this winter's quarter classes would need to be reviewed annually, at a cost of roughly $20,000.

¶131 Alternatively, to reduce the scope and cost, the VC could pilot one online degree, such as HIIM, and assess the costs and advantages of QM review.

¶132 Another alternative to a comprehensive QM-certified review could be to establish an in-house review process. Considerable expertise exists on campus, including Professor Doug Reid, who is a certified QM master reviewer, Professor Ruthann Duffy, who intends to complete the training soon, and Ann Garnsey-Harter, who is certified in QM train-the-trainer. In addition, the College has a group of faculty including, among others, Professors Judy Penn, Amy Kinsel, and Betsey Barnett who have been involved leading in Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) focused on best practices in online teaching and learning. Currently, the eLearning department is in the process of seeking to hire an instructional designer (from student fees, not state funds) who also could provide valuable coordination and assistance in devising a review standard, a process for online design and assessment, and training. A scaled approach could start with reviewing courses in a targeted online degree or certificate program so that the entire program could achieve a "quality instructional design" seal of approval that could be marketed to students. One potential advantage is that this would help to establish a higher standard for both online instructional design and face-to-face courses.

b. Maintaining academic integrity

¶133 One of the perceived challenges to quality online instruction revolves around academic integrity. Some faculty have voiced concerns about maintaining academic integrity in an online instructional environment where, for example, it is difficult to verify the identity of remote students and ensure that students are taking closed-book exams without consulting their books or class notes. Some faculty have addressed these issues by requiring proctored tests in which identification is required. The College also has tools, including Respondus LockDown Browser and Tegrity, to provide a method for non-proctored but secure online examinations, and training on this method has been offered to the faculty.

c. Quality of instructional delivery: best practices for student success

¶134 High-quality educational practices that are rooted in current research (see, e.g., George D. Kuh, *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*, American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2008) tend to refer to face-to-face learning environments. A space exists for the VC to become a leader in the delivery of high-quality education by adapting and applying these practices to the virtual environment. These high impact practices include the following:

- First-year seminars and experiences
- Common intellectual experiences
- Learning communities
- Writing-intensive courses
- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Undergraduate research
- Diversity and global learning
- Service learning and community-based learning
- Internships
- Capstone courses and projects

¶135 In addition to the research on the high-impact practices above, research on mobile learning shows that students are more engaged with learning when using mobile devices (see http://net.educause.edu/live115). To that end, the VCLT recommends that the College implement best practices in mobile teaching and learning as a subset of best practices in general online instruction. In addition, guidelines for implementing best practices in Web and mobile teaching and learning are being developed by the college's FLCs. A mobile learning initiative would be necessary to review and redesign online courses for a mobile learning environment (see http://www.blackboard.com/About-Bb/Media-Center/Press-Releases.aspx January 19, 2011). To increase the scale of this initiative, ubiquity of devices is needed among faculty and students. The College should explore opportunities for getting every faculty member and student in a VC a smart mobile device, staring with a larger pilot group beyond the FLC group this academic year. One strategy would be to target the faculty and students involved in one of the online degree programs, such as the HIIM program.

d. Quality of instructional delivery: faculty and staff training

¶136 Faculty members need training to teach online. To maintain and improve the quality of online instruction, online instructors need to be competent in online teaching pedagogies and technologies. Simply having taught an online course before, either for the College or for another institution, does not demonstrate competency and knowledge of the College's standards. The VCLT recommends requiring that all faculty who teach online have some level of training in online instruction; a means of ensuring training for current full-time and associate faculty, then, needs to be developed.

¶137 Rio Salado and City University make an online orientation course a requirement for faculty employment, unless competency can be demonstrated (see http://www .riosalado.edu/faculty_services/Pages/FAQ.aspx). The University of Phoenix requires a four-week course for new associate faculty, where the future instructor experiences being an online student and reviews effective policies, procedures, and online teaching models. Of the Five-Star Consortium institutions, both Cascadia Community College and Everett Community College require faculty to take WAOL's three-week, online "How To Teach Online" training (or similar training) before they can teach online (see http://waol.org/ info/training/instTrainingRegistration.aspx). Because WAOL requires this training course for any instructor teaching as part of the consortium, some the College's faculty already meet this requirement, and many have voluntarily taken the training. The College easily could implement this same requirement for all online instructors, since WAOL staffs this training session and it is offered once a month. While the WAOL training takes place in its own LMS (ANGEL), the training itself is LMS-agnostic and thus applicable to the College's online instructors using Blackboard.

¶138 Training specific to the Blackboard LMS software, however, also would need to be provided by the College. Rio Salado College requires online instructors to complete not only the orientation to online teaching, but also training on Rio Salado's specific LMS. The College currently provides some Blackboard-specific group training (see http://www .shoreline.edu/elfaculty/training.html), as well as one-on-one training and mentoring offered by the eLearning Faculty-in-Residence, but much more could be done by an instructional designer. The American Federation of Teachers supports this idea because their guidelines for good practices in distance education list faculty support "includ[ing] special assistance in instructional design" as "required" (http://www.aft.org/pdfs/ highered/distanceedguidelines0500.pdf, p. 8).

¶139 According to the Sloan Consortium report, "there is no single approach being taken by institutions in providing training for their teaching faculty. Most institutions use a combination of mentoring and training options. . . . The most common training approaches for online faculty are internally run training courses (65 percent) and informal mentoring (59 percent)" (see http://sloanconsortium.org/sites/default/files/pages/learningon demand-7.pdf, p. 3). This reflects what the VCLT envisions for the College's training, which includes WAOL as an "internal" resource providing group training, as well as one-on-one training provided by the eLearning Faculty-in-Residence and group training provided by the instructional designer.

¶140 A challenge is that faculty will also need to become accustomed to taking online training in various LMSes and using various synchronous and asynchronous tools, as this is and will continue to be the trend for training in eLearning. For example, Sloan-C online

training sessions, offered for free to the College via an SBCTC membership, use Moodle as the LMS, and many synchronous webinars (through Educause, LMS vendors, etc.) are offered in Elluminate, Wimba, WebEx, etc. The bottom line is that faculty would be appropriately trained through a variety of methods, including a required online training on "How to Teach Online," Faculty Learning Communities, technology, and pedagogical training offered by the eLearning instructional designer and Quality Matters organization.

¶141 Faculty and staff resistance to the VC would likely be reduced if time and training were made available. One idea is for such training to be a regular part of Opening week each year, since faculty members are on contracted days at that time but are not yet in the classroom. The greater degree to which faculty are aware of eLearning and take or teach an online course, the less their resistance to the modality. To increase the numbers of faculty teaching online, the SPBC's summer 2010 research suggested focusing some effort on faculty who currently are not teaching online classes. Specifically, the SBPC suggested to determine what specifically these faculty need in order to want to teach online classes (see http://intranet.shore.ctc.edu/intgovstratcom/Enrollment focus group 2010/eLearning/ eLearningReportForBoardRetreat.docx).

¶142 Ongoing training can be done using a Blackboard classroom that demonstrates best practices in instructional delivery. Such training would also include best practices in assessment.

¶143 Training is necessary for support staff, as well as faculty, and there is no current training designed or offered at the College specially for how support staff or student services staff support online students. Training on customer service could be offered by an outside vendor, and an orientation to the online environments from a student's perspective could be offered by the eLearning department. All tasks of the college need to be viewed through the lens of serving online, as well as face-to-face, students. Such eLearning training should be a dedicated effort supported by the senior administration.

2. Course Offerings

¶144 The VCLT recommends building on the College's current instructional strengths, since we currently offer 116 online courses, 5 online degrees, and approximately 15 certificates. Efforts are ongoing; for example, the Equity and Social Justice Department is working on packaging its courses into a new multicultural understanding certificate, which will be offered online as well as face-to-face. Efforts like this should be encouraged among the faculty.

¶145 If a VC is to succeed, the College urgently needs to develop an annual schedule of online classes to ensure that students can complete online degrees and certificates, as well as prerequisite classes, in a timely manner and to meet demand. The schedule also will assist in the advising of online students. The College currently does have an annual schedule, but the modality of the course is not included. Advantages of this approach include having online classes offered on a regular basis so that students can plan their schedules in advance. One challenge is that some departments do not want to offer online courses until the face-to-face sections are fully enrolled. If a schedule were published, there would be a need to follow it. That notwithstanding, there can be general resistance and special situations when the published schedule is not followed, which causes problems for and complaints from students. Administrative direction and support is necessary to require that online courses be offered on a regular and consistent basis.

¶146 Many of the College's current online certificates are stepping stones to certificates and degrees, stackable credentials where the certificate of completion course requirements are included in the course requirements of the certificate of proficiency, which are then included in the course requirement for the associate's degree. The following represent the stackable certificates and degrees and should be marketed as such:

- Associate of Applied Arts and Sciences (AAAS) in Accounting

  Growth in accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping and payroll services is predicted to grow 21 percent between 2008 and 2018 (see http://www .acinet.org/acinet/indview1.asp?id=8,1,,1&nodeid=45).

  o Certificate of proficiency in accounting

  o Certificates of completion

    ▪ Accounting clerk

    ▪ Accounts receivable/payable

    ▪ Payroll clerk

    ▪ Tax preparer

- AAAS in Business Technology

  Growth in office administration is predicted to grow 20 percent between 2008 and 2018 (http://www.acinet.org/acinet/indview1.asp?id=8,1,,1&nodeid=45).

  o Certificate of proficiency in business technology

  o Certificates of completion

    ▪ Business software applications

    ▪ Customer service specialist/receptionist

    ▪ Microsoft software applications

    ▪ Office assistant/receptionist

    ▪ Office clerk

    ▪ Word processing

- AAAS in Purchasing and Supply Chain Management

  o Certificate of proficiency in purchasing and supply chain management

  o Certificate of completion in purchasing and supply chain management

- AAAS in Health Informatics and Information Management

  o Certificate of proficiency, medical coding and reimbursement specialist

¶147 The VCLT recommends that the College begin to enhance its current online degrees and certificates. For most of the existing programs, this would mean offering more sections of current course offerings, which would increase instructional cost. For programs with restricted enrollment and requirements for practical clinics, instructional costs would not increase, but costs of support staff would increase to handle the additional load of students. If the HIIM program were changed to allow two entry points, fall and winter quarters, for example, the College would need to commit to additional sections of Biology 170, Business Technology 150, Business Technology 170, Business 104, and Accounting 101 to accommodate 50 additional students. As an example, this might require an additional full-time faculty member (approximately $80,000 including benefits), support staff (approximately $45,000), and nine additional associate faculty, since courses that are currently only offered once per year would be offered twice per year. One to two associate faculty would need to be hired who work only on the clinical practice courses every quarter (approximately $12,000 per quarter per section).

¶148 In order to ensure student success in a VC, prerequisite courses for online degrees and certificates must be offered online and frequently enough to meet demand. Administrative direction and support are necessary to require that online courses be offered on a regular and consistent basis. Adopting system-owned and sister college–owned courses offered through WAOL is an existing option for meeting the need for online course offerings, and one that the College is not currently taking full advantage of and that could be put into practice immediately. This would increase the College's ability to offer prerequisite and required online courses for online degrees on a regular basis, as well as to increase enrollment for the College. This option is particularly attractive when College-owned online courses have not yet been or will not be developed at the College. With this in mind, WAOL courses must be formally approved by the College before being included in the College's quarterly class schedule. The process requires approval of a master course outline (MCO) by the department and the division planning council. The MCO is then reviewed by the College's Curriculum Committee with a minimum of two readings. The Curriculum Committee then recommends approval of a course to the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA). This process can be expedited in the short term by the VPAA approving a special topics course on a temporary basis.

¶149 Increasing online class capacity is one alternative to meeting initial increased demand. The current capacity for online courses is 25 students. In recent years many faculty members have enrolled more than 25 students in online courses to meet student demand and to assist the College in meeting its enrollment targets. The VCLT recommends that a process be developed to determine the appropriate cap for each online course, because not all online courses are the same in terms of their instructional and content details. In developing this process, an area of potential sensitivity might be the use of faculty members' recent practice of overloading courses as a determinant for new course caps, which could be viewed as a penalty for trying to help address student and College needs. Thus course caps should be determined on the basis of an objective review of each course's needs and research into class caps at other colleges for similar courses, not only on the past practices of individual faculty members.

¶150 The VCLT also recommends that the College take full advantage of the new and innovative work being done in the field of open courses, in Washington State as well as around the world. The College currently has five faculty funded and working as part of the Washington Open Course Library project (see http://opencourselibrary.wikispaces.com/), led by Cable Green, the SBCTC's Director of eLearning and Open Resources. Discussions with the Gates Foundation in early February 2011 made clear that proposals for any funds that the College seeks will need to be coordinated with Cable Green and include an open-course component. The

Open High School of Utah also uses open courseware; the College should conduct further research into OHSU's model and investigate the possibility of targeting its students, as well as other online high school students.

¶151 In the long term, the College should focus on new online degrees and certificates and new targeted populations as discussed in Section III.B, "Targeting," above. For example, the College's HIIM program developed a three-year plan to take its degree from a face-to-face program to a program that is fully online, including a clinical site requirement and the requirement to meet national professional accreditation standards. This model could be adapted to expand other existing online degree and certificate programs, and it would aid in the selection of new online certificates and degrees to be developed or converted from face-to-face offerings. Many programs may not need to address as many challenges as the HIIM program, but this program provides a good model for growth and transition of programs to the online environment. Courses necessary to meet the degree requirements for an online business direct transfer agreement (DTA) degree are already offered and should be marketed. The VCLT recommends that a review of all existing College degree and certificate programs be conducted to determine which are closest to being made available completely online so efforts can be made in that direction.

¶152 The College also could learn from its nearest neighbor, Edmonds Community College, which has the second largest online learning program in Washington State. The SPBC's research on eLearning suggests that the College may be losing students to Edmonds, because of the breadth of its online offerings, as well as the depth of those offerings (i.e., more sections of the same classes are offered). With regard to breadth of offerings, the SPBC's research shows that Edmonds offers the following:

- More humanities and social sciences, including anthropology, art, English, history, political science, and philosophy

- More computing classes

- Nursing program that includes online classes, on-campus skills labs, and clinical experience in a variety of facilities

- More professional-technical programs online, including hospitality, paralegal, medical devices, and occupational health and safety

- Bachelor's degree partnerships with the University of Washington and Washington State University (but not the regional universities; Central Washington University has a physical presence on the Edmonds campus)

(See http://intranet.shore.ctc.edu/intgovstratcom/Enrollment focus group 2010/eLearning/ eLearningReportForBoardRetreat.docx.) The research also noted that while the College and Edmonds Community College both have abundant business and business technology course offerings online, science offerings are not as prevalent. This may indicate an area of potential growth for the College.

¶153 In the longer term, multiple start dates could be developed for online programs by developing cohorts for various degrees. Multiple start dates would depend on the requirements of course pedagogy and on student demand. Research also would be necessary to determine a pedagogically desirable size for a cohort. It also would be necessary to investigate a principle other than the College's current "75 percent of class cap" for determining whether a course would be offered or cancelled.

¶154 A related option would be to develop a fast-track business cohort. Two of the College's accounting transfer courses have already been offered as fast-track four-week courses using a hybrid modality during the summer quarter, so the College has some experience with accelerated offerings. Other virtual colleges also offer accelerated course options. Rio Salado College, for instance, offers an eight-week class option so students can take more classes in a shorter period of time, if desired. Rio Salado students can choose the eight-week class option within the first week of the course. Rio Salado's system automatically creates an eight-week calendar for the student and adjust assignments, quizzes and examinations accordingly. Adopting accelerated offerings such as these would depend on to whom the College is marketing. Students with previous bachelor's degrees and a desire to change careers might find this a desirable option.

¶155 The VCLT's research also noted that Rio Salado College offers weekly start dates for some programs. In view of the innovative undertakings observed at Rio Salado, the VCLT recommends learning more about its system, particularly the technology behind Rio Salado's online delivery system, called RioLearn.

¶156 Nontraditional students, or those uncomfortable with technology, might well find online, particularly accelerated, options too challenging. For those students, the College could provide bridge classes to prepare them for online instruction. This could be an expansion of a general online preparatory course adjusted to particular niche audiences. For example, the College's hybrid course ESL Lab 054 currently introduces students to distance learning. The course could be modified to a fully online version with some synchronous instruction included.

¶157 In the area of students transitioning from the College to bachelor's degrees, the VCLT recommends that a transfer articulation agreement with Western Governors University (WGU) be pursued to provide the College's online students with a seamless path from its online degrees and certificate programs to WGU's online baccalaureate programs. This builds on current efforts in the Washington State Legislature "regarding the efficient transfer of credits and courses between" WGU and Washington State higher education institutions by establishing WGU as the first nonprofit online university in Washington State (see Senate Bill 5136 in the 2011–12 legislature, http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=5136#documents and the counterpart House Bill 1822, http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1822 &year=2011). The legislature is also looking for a physical space for WGU in Washington State, and the College could pursue co-location with WGU on its campus.

¶158 In the longer term, the College also might wish to move, in the words of the Washington State Senate, to "recognize and endorse online, competency-based education as an important component of Washington's higher education system" (see Senate Bill 5136 in the 2011–12 legislature, http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=5136#documents). This would represent a radical departure from the way that the College currently assesses students and assigns credit towards degrees. A competency-based model does not use traditional courses alone as a means of determining whether a degree should be awarded;

rather, students are guided toward opportunities to master material that is necessary to demonstrate specific competencies. A full analysis of this approach is beyond the scope of this Blueprint; nevertheless, the VCLT recommends that it be explored.

¶159 Partnerships with other virtual colleges and universities, such as the one proposed above with WGU, would benefit the College's students. Currently, the University of Phoenix is one of the top schools to which the College's students transfer, but is the number one school to which Washington State community and technical college students transfer overall. The University of Washington is the number one school to which the College's own students currently transfer, and it has recently announced the UW Online Initiative, an effort to double its online enrollments (http://www.washington.edu/news/articles/uw-launches-initiative-to-double-online-enrollements). While this initiative sounds very similar to the College's efforts and could be seen as a competitor, the College could explore articulation with the University of Washington's initiative. Washington State University (WSU) also offers online degrees, such as accounting, to which our online students could easily transfer (see http://online.wsu.edu/future_students/degrees_and_certificates.aspx). In fact, Bellevue Community College and Edmonds Community College and others partner with WSU's online program so that their students are co-admitted (see http://online.wsu.edu/future_students/community_college .aspx). WSU had approached the College to pursue a similar partnership several years ago, but the College did not move forward due to lack of internal support.

¶160 In order to meet the needs of industry, the College could provide online training for high-job-growth areas. Current programs offering education for in-demand occupations in Washington are as follows:

- Accounting assistants and technicians, 116 programs

- Aircraft mechanics and technicians, 13 programs

- Industrial machinery mechanics, 14 programs

- Telecommunications equipment installers and repairers, 22 programs

- Cabinetmakers and bench carpenters, 4 programs

- Chemical laboratory technician or science technician, 7 programs

- Paralegals and legal assistants, 26 programs

- Registered nurses, 52 programs

- Surgical technologists, 16 programs

This information could be used to help determine which of the College's existing offerings could be marketed, which programs could be modified to meet current needs, and what new areas should be identified for development.

¶161 The Los Angeles Trade Technical College's green workforce development program (see http://college.lattc.edu/green/presentations/) provides an example of how a community college is meeting the needs of business by training underserved students. Further research should be done on how to market to the underserved student population and to provide basic technological skills to support these students in online instruction.

¶162 ESL and basic skills represent additional opportunities for growth. The College should consider providing online supplemental courses for credit that can be accessed off-site or through an ESL and GED technology center. Community resources, such as public schools during after-school hours, could be used to provide online orientation courses for potential students, as well as ESL courses for working parents and other adults.

¶163 Similarly, the College could continue to develop I-BEST–like courses tied to industry for overseas markets. I-BEST courses provide ESL instruction as contextual to the technical program. They are team-taught with a content specialist and an ESL or basic skills instructor and have proven to be very successful, although costly.

¶164 An additional example of courses that could be migrated to a fully online environment is given in "Teaching a Hybrid Developmental Math Course," a presentation that addressed a developmental mathematics class in the hybrid modality. Although the model is a hybrid course, the presenters at Scottsdale Community College combine Pearson's MyMathLab, face-to-face instruction, and online instruction (see https://sites.google.com/site/hybriddevedmathscc/). In winter quarter 2011, the College is offering a basic mathematics course as a hybrid using Pearson's MyMathLab. Students register for up to five credits, and the course is designed as five modules. The students work at their own pace. If a student does not complete the number of modules originally selected, the student may continue to progress in a subsequent quarter. This is one example of a class that might be migrated to a fully online format.

¶165 In another area of instruction, the College's renowned automotive technology programs already have significant online components that accompany the cooperative education portion, and further online development is not possible. Students spend four of eight quarters in online training prerequisites. Students spend one quarter on campus with hands-on training, and one cooperative education quarter at an automobile dealer or service establishment, during which they complete some work on Blackboard. All four manufacturer programs represented at the College have schools in other parts of the country, with some exceptions, such as Idaho and North and South Dakota, so these would be the only possible markets for the College. The manufacturers license labs with other states. In fact, Honda plans to begin a short version of its automotive training program in 60 locations. One small area of growth, suggested by Professor Bob Biesiedzinski, is a continuing education online course having to do with automotive history.

¶166 In the area of continuing professional education (CPE) and noncredit courses, the College's HIIM faculty are currently developing a course to meet new educational requirements for incumbent workers in the health informatics profession. This model could be extended to other professions and certifications that require CPE, such as accounting, finance, human resources, law, and counseling. The college already has one set of fully online courses in its catalog specifically aimed at career-changers; specifically, students who already hold a bachelor's degree in any field and who want to sit for the Uniform Certified Public Accountant Examination. This program could be expanded with sufficient faculty resources.

¶167 Another area of potential expansion is in offering college preparatory courses for high school students and for those that fail their first quarter in college. While the University of Washington, for example, has a high percentage of freshmen who complete their first year (between 91 and 97 percent, according to various sources), the number of students who do not finish is significant. The College might offer an online college-preparatory course that students

would complete in order to retain their status as University of Washington students. Other state institutions do not achieve as high a rate of retention. The College could market such a course to freshmen at other state institutions.

¶168 The College could also develop an intensive summer college preparatory program for high school students who already have been accepted to college. This program could be offered online, as a hybrid, and/or face-to-face and would be marketed to high school seniors in north King County and south Snohomish County. The idea would be to circumvent problems that occur in the freshman year of college. The challenge to this idea is that research on such "success courses" has not shown any substantial effect on student outcomes in terms of completion rates and student persistence (see http://www.mdrc.org/publications/578/overview.html), primarily because colleges who have implemented this as a strategy were not able to reach more than 10 percent of the intended target population (i.e., it is an idea that is hard to scale up to have a real effect on student outcomes). If the College were to put energy into this specific effort, it would need to implement it in a way to reach a much higher percentage of the target population (see http://www.mdrc.org/publications/578/execsum.pdf, p. 20).

3. Modality and the Role of Faculty

¶169 Accreditation standards that govern the College, as set forth by the NWCCU, provide that "faculty have a primary role in the evaluation of educational programs and services" (Standard 4.A.2) and "faculty with teaching responsibilities are responsible for evaluating student achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes" (Standard 4.A.3).

¶170 Beyond these standards, the VCLT offers the following considerations in determining the role of faculty in online learning:

- Learning analytics can be used to assess student and instructor quality.

- Mentors could be provided for each student in a VC. This is a critical component of the WGU and other models.

- Free, open-source courses could be identified to assist students in learning online. Faculty members could attach these courses to their own courses and require students to complete them if the students are not able to demonstrate needed skills through a pre-assessment. The College could develop a pre-assessment test or locate an existing test to ensure that students have the requisite skills. This is addressed further below.

4. Student Preparation as Essential to Instructional Delivery

¶171 According to a Sloan Consortium survey, the assessment of equal or better learning outcomes for online education compared to face-to-face has increased from 57 percent to 68 percent since 2003 (see http://sloanconsortium.org/sites/default/files/pages/learningondemand-7.pdf). While the survey was prepared in the context of training of instructors and staff, its wisdom can be applied to students too; it is critical for students to be adequately prepared for online instruction. All new online students should be required to take a

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short course preparing them for online instruction and familiarity of the platform. With a standardized format for courses (proposed in Sections III.C.1.b and III.G.1.a), this class would prepare students for all of the College's online offerings. This course should be offered frequently, including before a quarter begins. The course would be non-credit and at no cost to the student. The support for this idea comes primarily from the combined experience of the College's faculty members who have taught extensively online and the staff who directly support eLearning students. While there would be some cost to develop this course, all full-time online faculty could support it on a rotating basis. Such additional teaching load could be addressed through the current span of annual course load assignments.

5. Technological Aspects of Instructional Delivery

¶172 The College signed a three-year contract from with Blackboard, from 2011 through 2013, to continue as the provider and remote host of its LMS. This contract can support increased offerings of up 8,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students; however, the College may need to address increased costs associated with increased space usage on Blackboard's servers, in the range of $3,600 to $102,600 or higher, depending on whether Blackboard would charge for space overages (which it has not done historically). The College's current integration between the student management system (SMS) on the HP 3000 and the Blackboard environment, which updates course enrollments from SMS to Blackboard automatically three times per day, can accommodate increased enrollments. The college also offers round-the-clock technical help for Blackboard users, with evening and weekend hours outsourced through Blackboard Student Services (formerly Presidium).

¶173 SBCTC has purchased software licenses that provide both synchronous and asynchronous web tools for online course delivery, such as Elluminate and Tegrity, and disk storage is not limited for these products. Outsourced technical support, twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week, is offered with all of these products through the SBCTC's license.

¶174 The College's main challenge is that the technology is underutilized, not overutilized. More advanced features in Blackboard, such as adaptive release and learner analytics, are not used by faculty at the College currently, but these features could be used to increase student success, increase efficiencies and automation in teaching online, and for assessment purposes. An instructional designer would provide training for faculty on these more advanced features. Currently, faculty training on Blackboard offered by the eLearning department focuses on the basics and target the most urgent need: those faculty who are new to the software.

H. Assessment, Credentials, and Accreditation

¶175 Two types of general assessment activities are required for accreditation by the NWCCU: (1) assessment of the institution's core themes and objectives, and (2) assessment of student learning outcomes. The former type of assessment should be roughly consistent across an institution and so encompasses any of the activities that might be undertaken by the VC. Assessing student learning in a virtual environment provides both some challenges and opportunities. This section refers to the assessment of student learning at the course, program, and institutional level.

¶176 It should be noted that there are no limits on the number of online courses or programs that an accredited institution can offer; rather, there are only limitations on correspondence courses, which the VCLT does not recommend offering in a VC. (These correspondence-course limitations are restrictions placed with respect to federal financial aid; see http://ifap

.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/0910FSAHbkVol2Ch8DistanceEd.pdf, left side bar on second page).

1. Learning Assessment Using Course Learning Outcomes

¶177 Student learning outcomes in courses should be assessed by the teaching faculty, according to NWCCU accreditation standards (e.g., Standard 4.A.2 and 4.A.3: "Faculty have a primary role in the evaluation of educational programs and services," and "Faculty with teaching responsibilities are responsible for evaluating student achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes."). In short, the faculty is responsible for assessing the extent to which students have mastered the course learning outcomes. That said, different models and structures exist for faculty assessment of course learning outcomes. City University, for example, has a centralized structure in which a team of faculty "course managers" develops assessments that are directly tied to course learning outcomes. The assessment instruments are common to the course; faculty exercise academic freedom insofar as to how best to teach to those outcomes. At the College, and at most public colleges, a more decentralized structure is in place in which faculty members have freedom to develop the learning assessments that they judge will best promote learning outcomes. Here assessments are not common to the course but reflect faculty interests, specialization, and judgment.

¶178 Some institutions have adopted "ability"- or "competency"-based outcomes. For example, Alverno College, in Milwaukee, places emphasis on students' developing abilities to put knowledge to use. Rather than standardized tests and traditional exams, Alverno faculty evaluate student demonstration of abilities using a "multidimensional process of judging the individual in action." According to Alverno, "faculty and other trained assessors observe and judge a student's performance based on explicit criteria. Their feedback, as well as the reflective practice of self assessment by each student, helps to create a continuous process that improves learning and integrates it with assessment" (see http://www.alverno.edu). Instead of earning credits, students obtain competency-based units.

¶179 Similarly, WGU has adopted a competency-based model in which students demonstrate their mastery of the required course competencies by completing assessments. An assessment may be a traditional test, a project, an essay, or another practical demonstration of a required skill. WGU uses test experts—what it calls an Assessment Program Council—to develop assessments. (It is not clear who evaluates the assessments.) With the assistance of a learning "mentor," students at WGU are free to set their own pace and complete assessments when they are comfortable that they have learned the material presented in a course.

¶180 A number of third party providers are available to help faculty to manage assessments and measure learning (e.g., Chalk & Wire, LiveText, etc.). LiveText, for example, helps to measure student learning performance and to collect, access, and analyze assessment data. Indeed, one of the advantages of a virtual environment is the ability to collect and monitor student data. The VCLT suggests that a VC leverage the ability to measure student participation better, to help improve the delivery and success of student learning opportunities. Next-generation learning grants funded through the Lumina Foundation for Education have emphasized the use of learning analytics, and the VC would be well advised to investigate further the use of student learning data to help inform and improve learning. Some colleges, such as Grand Rapids Community College and Sinclair Community College in Ohio are using learning analytics to identify "at-risk" students so that they are better able to intervene with services and support that will increase academic success and retention.

¶181 Currently, the College's courses are reviewed by the Curriculum Committee, and each MCO identifies both the learning outcomes and the assessments identified by faculty to measure student learning. There is, however, no control or attempt to ensure that learning outcomes are in fact achieved beyond the assignment of grades. At the course level, this may be acceptable, but there are currently no systematic assessments to indicate that program and general education outcomes are being achieved. This likely could be an issue with regard to ongoing accreditation. For that reason, it may be worthwhile for the College to create a new position to coordinate assessment, both in the face-to-face world and the VC. In addition, it may be worthwhile to create a pool of resources to support professional development for faculty and staff to explore innovative models of assessment of student learning.

2. Leaning Assessment Using Program and General Education Outcomes

¶182 The evidence collected to assess whether student learning outcomes in online courses are being satisfied should become an important basis for assessment of program and general education outcomes. The evidence itself can take many forms, including common rubrics, student e-portfolios, capstone courses, and third-party assessment instruments such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment or the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. Third party assessment is not especially expensive (e.g., the Community College Learning Assessment costs $6,500 for one year) and has the benefit of generating normed data. In-house assessment, however, could allow a more customized solution that is unique to the learning outcomes and goals as defined by the College. Some of the larger universities, such as City University, for example, use an LMS (e.g., Blackboard) to collect student learning "artifacts"— i.e., assignments, projects, and assessments—and then randomly aggregate those to evaluate program and institutional learning goals with the use of rubrics. Capella University requires students to enroll in a capstone course in which instructors make assessments on the basis of specific criteria. Using electronic assessment tools, Capella captures detailed records about each student's level of achievement and then uses the data to create reports of student performance. Alverno College asks students to provide evidence that they have met a program learning outcome through an online e-portfolio that is reviewed by outside teams to assess student learning.

¶183 An opportunity may exist for the College to take the lead in assessing student learning at the associate's degree level. Some of the online institutions that have focused on assessing learning outcomes—e.g., City University, Capella University, and WGU—are generally focused on working adult learners, many of whom have college experience, if not a bachelor's degree. Participation in leading-edge efforts to define and measure learning, like the Lumina Foundation's recently announced "Degree Qualifications Profile," could help position the VC in the marketplace to attract students.

3. Ongoing Monitoring of Instructional Delivery

¶184 Currently, student evaluation of courses is conducted using an evaluation form developed specifically for online classes by a faculty committee (see http://www.shoreline .edu/elfaculty/evaluations.html). Student response rates appear to be lower than in face-to-face classes, and some faculty members have resorted to offering extra credit in order to increase student participation. The VCLT recommends a review of the evaluation instrument to ensure that it is rooted in best practices. In addition, the College should investigate means to increase student response rates to be commensurate with face-to-face classes so that administration and faculty can use feedback to make improvements.

IV. Business Models to Support Various Approaches

¶185 Articulating a business model for the VC is important. Researcher James Cox notes that "VCUs [virtual colleges or universities] that operate with a business model, not an educational one, had greater success in meeting their goals. This does not argue for traditional institutions to cast aside their educational goals; it does imply that some attention to business goals may be warranted" (*Lessons Learned from Virtual Universities: New Directions for Higher Education,* p. 8).

¶186 The regulatory environment for online education is dynamic and must be monitored. Recent scrutiny of for-profit providers has had significant impact on their business models and stock prices (http://sccvc.wikispaces.com/stock+price+tracking). Undoubtedly, that scrutiny and future additional regulation will have some consequences, intended or not, for all providers, including the College. Recent regulatory news includes new regulations on offering online classes to students outside of Washington State. The VCLT is researching these regulations and will continue to monitor them as the national discussion matures on this topic (see http://www.insidehighered .com/news/focus/technology/recent/report_breaks_down_details_of_state_regulatory_laws_for_on line_colleges and http://www.itcnetwork.org/about-itc/itc-newsletter/90-state-authorization-for-institutions-offering-distance-education-to-out-of-state-students.pdf). These regulations may have a large impact on the College's targeting efforts outside Washington State.

¶187 WGU's business model of charging by a six-month term for unlimited competency-based assessments is radically different from the College's but is one that the College should explore for the long term.

A. Contractual Relationships

¶188 While the VCLT elected not to engage a paid consultant to assist in the preparation of this Blueprint, the VCLT does recommend that the College continue to evaluate the possibility of engaging consulting services (for example, from Blackboard Inc.) to assist with the implementation of the VC. The cost of such an approach could be significant. The University of Southern Mississippi incurred approximately $1.5 million in Blackboard Inc. consulting fees to establish its virtual college. Furthermore, consultants need to be managed carefully and strategically, both to contain cost and to ensure results. Any consultant hired by the College must be given a well-developed scope of work and budget, and both must be monitored for progress. Turning development of any initiative, including the VC, over to a consultant without active participation on the College's part could result in a poor outcome. That said, it is unlikely that the College currently possesses all of the expertise necessary to establish a VC without outside assistance.

B. Staffing

1. Short Term

¶189 The College is currently recruiting for an instructional designer position in the eLearning department to conduct faculty training and coordinate quality assurance in instruction. While the process of requesting this position predates the VC initiative and was identified in the College's 2009–10 Technology Planning Committee document, and while the position will be funded through online and hybrid student fees (not state funds), the position is essential to ensuring quality of VC

instructional efforts. In fact, faculty support "includ[ing] special assistance in instructional design" is cited as "required" by the American Federation of Teachers in its distance education guidelines (http://www.aft.org/pdfs/highered/distanceedguidelines0500.pdf, p. 8). It is advantageous that this position will be funded from eLearning student fees, since these funds are exempt from current hiring freeze rules. In addition, these funds are required to be used for direct support of the online and hybrid students who pay the fees; the funds cannot be used to pay for other positions at the college, such as instructional faculty.

¶190 Once an instructional designer is hired, the Director of eLearning will be able to focus some time and effort on grant-writing and helping to procure external funding, in collaboration with the College's Chief Advancement Officer. It would be ideal, however, for a full-time grant-writer position to be created that would focus a large percentage of time on pursuing grants to help build the VC. This position could be created in the Shoreline Community College Foundation as part of the fundraising staff.

¶191 A faculty member may need to be given release time to develop the online courses such as "How to Be a College Student" and "How to Learn Online," or the instructional designer may be able to develop these.

2. Longer Term

¶192 Full-time and part-time faculty and support staff will be needed on a program-by-program basis as the VC grows and increases its instructional offerings.

¶193 An online assessment coordinator will likely be required for the VC and for the college as a whole. Assessment requires time and resources, and a pool of resources should be created to allow appropriate assessment of student learning. Accreditation requirements should be considered in determining the faculty or staff status of an assessment coordinator.

¶194 Further information on longer-term staffing needs should be developed by the implementation team that the VCLT recommends be created immediately following PSET's acceptance of this Blueprint.

C. Finance and Funding

¶195 A range of funding needs, from small to very large and immediate to long-term, arises from the overall approach to a VC of incremental growth that builds on existing strengths. To meet those funding needs, the VCLT researched both external and internal funding sources and models.

¶196 The VCLT's External Funding Workgroup conducted research into external funding sources using the iWave Prospect Research Online (PRO) product. Staff in the College's Office of Advancement use keywords in PRO to search for donors and grants made to community colleges for areas of need for the VC. This is a time-consuming project and will continue as needs are identified and the search can become more targeted.

¶197 Working from the general concept of a VC, a funding prospect list has been created, including corporations, foundations, state and federal sources, and individuals who could fund potential VC personnel, training, equipment, programmatic development, and student scholarships. Once the immediate and long-term needs of the VC, as identified in this Blueprint, are approved by PSET, the list will be developed further. Each funding priority will be linked to a funding prospect and a strategy created to cultivate or solicit the grant. Solicitation teams representing the College's

Office of Advancement, faculty, and volunteers will be trained to make a set number of contact each month, including personal visits, letters of inquiry, and other contacts as necessary. Proposals and other materials will be created by advancement staff in conjunction with faculty and staff experts.

¶198 The following external funding sources currently appear on the prospect list and are being researched or actively pursued:

- Foundations

    o College Success Foundation (CSF) (http://www .collegesuccessfoundation.org/Page.aspx?pid=291), funded by the Gates Foundation and Costco. The CSF has connections to WGU.

    o The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (http://www .gatesfoundation.org) funds initiatives very much like the VC initiative. College staff met with the Gates Foundation in February 2011 to discuss possible private funding for the VC. The College also could apply for a Next Generation Learning Challenges grant, "a collaborative, multi-year initiative created to address the barriers to educational innovation and tap the potential of technology to dramatically improve college readiness and completion in the United States" (http://nextgenlearning.org/). The grant is partially funded by the Gates Foundation. The Gates Foundation also funded a partnership between Indiana University and the WGU in which Indiana received a $700,000 grant from the Gates Foundation (see http://blog.senatedemocrats.wa.gov/ kastama/kastama-bill-would-improve-college-access-for-working-adults/). The Gates Foundation also funded the Open Course Library initiative in Washington State (http://opencourselibrary.wikispaces.com/). The Gates Foundation, and Bill Gates personally, are interested in student completion rates and open source education (see, for example, Bill Gates's Web site Gates Notes on improving college completion rates in the United States: http://www.thegatesnotes.com/Thinking/article.aspx ?ID=173). One challenge to consider is that some resistance to these concepts has been articulated by the College's faculty, although the College has five faculty members currently funded and working on the Open Course Library grant. Finally, the Gates Foundation is interested in funding partnerships with WGU, if institutions model WGU's competency-based learning model and business model.

    o Lumina Foundation for Education (http://www .luminafoundation.org), whose focus is exclusively to fund community college efforts. The College's Office of Advancement has conducted extensive research into the Lumina Foundation; a letter of introduction and intent has

been drafted and is being coordinated between the office of advancement and the College's partner Blackboard Inc., which has connections to the Lumina Foundation. The request is likely to be in the multi-million-dollar range. The Lumina Foundation is also interested in funding partnerships with WGU, if institutions model WGU's competency-based learning model and business model.

o The College's Office of Advancement is exploring the possibility of creation of an institute for community college advancement that could be one method of funding part of the VC initiative. This would be an organization affiliated with the Shoreline Community College Foundation with a mission of supporting research and technology advances to sustain innovation and systemic change in community colleges. Such an institute would provide another way to attract donors locally and outside of Washington, since the institute would publish, promote, and convene gatherings focused on advancement of community colleges beyond the College. It would provide an unencumbered business model with a spotlight on best practices, policy, and support for the VC with a powerful advisory board to drive investments to the college. An example of such an advisory board is UW Online Initiative's Strategic Online Learning Advisory Board: "UW recently formed a high-profile advisory board of some of the leading innovators in online learning. Board members represent Microsoft, the Gates Foundation, Google, Boeing, and the Sloan Foundation, among other organizations. The board will advise the UW on effective strategies to meet its online learning goals as well as the latest uses of technologies." (see http://www.washington.edu/news/articles/uw-launches-initiative-to-double-online-enrollements).

- Vendor partnership with Blackboard (http://www.blackboard.com). A partner relationship with Blackboard is being established, building on the College's long history of using its LMS and help desk service. Blackboard already has donated initial consulting time, brokered a meeting with the Gates Foundation, invited the College's President and VPAA to be part of its Developmental Education Advisory Council, and sponsored a Shoreline Community College Foundation event. The College has requested that Blackboard donate more consulting time to this VC project.

- Research is ongoing into individuals, such as venture capitalists, in the College's vicinity with interests in emerging technology or online learning.

- Governments

    - United States Department of Labor (DOL), in coordination with the United States Department of Education Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grants Program (http://www.doleta.gov/grants/find_grants.cfm), "provides community colleges and other eligible institutions of higher education with funds to expand and improve their ability to deliver education and career training programs that can be completed in two years or less, are suited for workers who are eligible for training under the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers program, and prepare program participants for employment in high-wage, high-skill occupations."

    - National Science Foundation (NSF) and SRI International (http://www.nsf.gov; http://www.sri.com) fund cyberlearning initiatives. Jeremy Roschelle, Director of the Center for Technology in Learning at SRI International, is applying for a REESE Pathways Project grant through NSF. President Lambert wrote to Dr. Roschelle on November 15, 2010 at the suggestion of Blackboard Inc.'s Gordon Freedman to include the College as a potential data source for the project. It is the College's desire to gain insights into how the quality of instruction provided by the College helps students stay in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pathway. The work with SRI could lead to other partnerships and better linkages to NSF funding for the College and the VC.

    - United States Department of Education, Title III: Strengthening Institutions Grant (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/iduestitle3a/index.html) provides funds of up to $2 million over five years to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability of eligible institutions; it is designed to enhance self-sufficiency and expand capacity to serve low-income students. Title III grants are highly competitive and generally require hiring a consultant and grant-writer. In all likelihood, a Title III grant would take several years for the College to obtain; however, it is possible, since several of the College's sister colleges, including the neighboring Edmonds Community College, have won Title III grants.

¶199 There are challenges associated with external funding. One challenge involves the requirements that come with the money. These requirements would strongly influence the direction of the VC initiative. For example, the DOL grant requires all programming created with the funds be open source and available to the public. These requirements may run counter to the College's culture or the initial thoughts put forth in this Blueprint. The time needed to address reporting requirements for federal grants is large and can be a challenge. Students in classes with

faculty who are contracted and in grant-funded positions will not count toward the College's state-funded enrollment targets, which may be a disadvantage in the short term as the College struggles to meet these targets; in the long term, this could be an advantage if enrollments increase and state targets are exceeded.

¶200 One internal, as opposed to external, source of funding may come as the result of a prior, and ongoing, effort by the College's technology directors to restructure technology fees charged to students and to change how they are administered to allow for strategic, coordinated planning and purchasing of technology and a fairer and more consistent contribution to technology costs by students. PSET and the BOT would need to approve changes to student technology fees to fund anything new that is recommended in this Blueprint and to support ongoing growth in the absence of external funds. Such funds cannot be used to pay faculty salaries but can be used for support staff, such as the instructional designer position (http://intranet.shore.ctc.edu/ intgovstratcom/Enrollment focus group 2010/eLearning/eLearningReportForBoardRetreat.docx).

¶201 Another internal source of funding is tuition; while it is set by the legislature, the College does discount out-of-state tuition for students taking online classes only. This non-resident eLearning tuition rate is just slightly over the rate for Washington residents. The College cannot yet offer this reduced tuition rate to international online-only students, but the College could request the SBCTC to make a modification to the rule. This would allow the College to offer in-country programs to international distance learning students. Questions about how such offerings fit with the College's statutory mission would need to be addressed. Another option would be to offer in-country training as contract- rather than state-supported.

¶202 An indirect external funding source is state and federal student financial aid, which would not be limited or negatively affected by the College's creation of a VC. While an institution cannot provide its students with federal financial aid if more than 50 percent of that institution's courses are correspondence courses, this does not include online courses (which is the modality of courses envisioned for the VC). The College should investigate managing its financial aid offerings more strategically. For many for-profit colleges, financial aid is a large portion of indirect revenues. While the College does not wish to imitate for-profit colleges in every respect, strategic management of financial aid will benefit both students and the College.

¶203 A longer-term funding source identified by the SPBC, which would be worth exploring once the College is in a position of safely meeting its state enrollment targets, would be self-supporting and contract online classes, in which students pay the full cost of instruction. Rather than paying tuition, students pay a self-supporting fee commensurate with tuition (e.g., currently around $80 per credit). Part-time faculty members could be hired contingent upon sufficient course enrollments to cover salary cost. While students in these classes would not count towards the College's state enrollment targets, they would generate revenue for the College. (see http://intranet.shore.ctc.edu/intgovstratcom/Enrollment focus group 2010/eLearning/eLearning ReportForBoardRetreat.docx). This also could represent a longer-term funding strategy once the College has met its enrollment targets.

D. Brand Management

¶204 Most online colleges and universities market first and foremost their accreditation. While the College should do this as well, it is not as important because accreditation is assumed for a Washington State public community college.

¶205 The College's brand also is presumed to be cost competitive to public universities and private institutions, but we should clearly publicize the cost-to-value ratio of the VC as compared to other community and technical colleges, as well as virtual competitors such as the University of Phoenix. The College could also brand itself as a high-quality provider of online learning for students who need extra support and a high-touch educational experience as this is not necessarily the model of other major online providers who tend to cater to nontraditional, working adult populations.

E. Governance

¶206 In the short term, the VCLT recommends that the VC be governed through normal governance processes and channels already in place at the College, because the model recommended by this Blueprint is closely integrated with the College's current mission, core themes, and instructional offerings. This model affects most employees at the College and will benefit the entire College. Regular reports on the progress of the VC should be made by the implementation team to PSET and the BOT.

¶207 If the College were to emulate more comprehensively some of the out-of-the-box thinking that glimpses of WGU, the University of Phoenix, and Rio Salado provide, it may well have to structure the VC as an entity that could "disrupt" the status quo, complex governance structure. This entity most likely would require a simpler mission, a different business model, and/or a radically different role for faculty. This would require a longer-term effort.

V. Tasks, Questions, and Conclusion

¶208 Suggested action items are provided in the executive summary and at the beginning of this Blueprint. Most critically, the VCLT recommends that, if PSET decides to proceed with the VC initiative, an implementation team be appointed and convened by the end of March 2011. The implementation team should go through this Blueprint and determine detailed action items and assemble them into a project management paradigm such as Gantt, program evaluation and review technique (PERT), or critical path method (CPM).

¶209 While not an exhaustive list, some of the items that the VCLT recommends that the implementation team consider are as follows:

- Develop specific milestones to reach goals

- Prepare financial *pro formas*

- Develop a staffing model

- Engage outside consulting services

- Engage external partners

¶210 In addition to various operational considerations, issues of institutional culture and interrelationships also should be a consideration. While cultural issues cannot be dispositive, they can easily disrupt any initiative if not regarded seriously. The VCLT suggests that PSET and the implementation team make clear the following points to address concerns articulated by College faculty and staff:

- The quality of online instruction in the VC will be the same as face-to-face. The College also needs to address criticism that the identity of students taking online exams is not known unless a proctored test is required. The SPBC recommends: "Discuss with the campus community the quality of online classes through advertisement of completion rates, etc. Advertise outside of our district in whatever ways we can. Substantially increase marketing once we know we have increased instructional capacity" (http://intranet.shore.ctc .edu/intgovstratcom/Enrollment focus group 2010/eLearning/eLea rningReportForBoardRetreat.docx).

- The purpose of the VC is not to replace the brick-and-mortar institution but to function within it and help sustain it. In this way, the VC reflects core theme number four, access and diversity, in that it will help achieve President Lambert's goal of increasing access to education by doubling enrollment by 2020, and core theme number five, college stewardship, in that it will be a self-supporting entity that provides a high return on investment for the College.

- The VC initiative is not about replacing face-to-face instruction for students who prefer that modality.

- The VC initiative will help with the overall sustainability of the College in that current enrollment trends for College, except for eLearning enrollments, are down or flat. The College's geographic service territory does not offer growth opportunities in face-to-face enrollment.

¶211 In conducting its work, the VCLT also identified several questions from members of the College community. These are outlined below for PSET's and the implementation team's consideration.

- Why was a virtual college investigated in the first place?

  o The SPBC's summer research on eLearning showed online enrollments as a viable area of enrollment growth for the College, since the online enrollment trend, locally at the College as well as statewide, has been for the last several years and continues to be upward. In addition, there is a large market for online enrollments in the College's general geographic area, as attested to by Edmonds Community College's online enrollments. Edmonds has the second largest eLearning program in the state, second only to Bellevue Community College (see http://intranet.shore.ctc.edu/ intgovstratcom/enroll-op2010.htm#eLearning).

  o Explosive enrollment in virtual colleges and universities is observed across the country; for example, WGU Indiana tripled its online enrollment in its first six months (see http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/wgu-indiana-triples-enrollment-in-first-six-months-112816774.html)

  o This year's Horizon Report, a yearly study that tracks emerging technologies and practices that are likely to enter mainstream use over the next one to five years, highly ranks the trend of people "expect[ing] to be able to work, learn, and study whenever and wherever they want" (http://net .educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/HR2011.pdf, p. 3).

- How will faculty be compensated for developing online courses?

- Would students gain identical skills as in a face-to-face environment (e.g., laboratory experiences)?

- Would courses be accepted by transfer institutions and professional organizations?

- Would there be adequate opportunity for students to practice collaboration and oral communication skills?

- How will students be properly placed into classes and prerequisites checked?

- How might purchasing, packaging, and delivery of laboratory equipment to distance learning students be managed and supported?

- The American Chemical Society has stated, "virtual labs are a useful supplement, but not a substitute, for a hands-on laboratory experience." How will the VC address this issue?

- Both mathematics and chemistry have a high use of symbols, equations, and molecular models. How can these be delivered online?

- How will quality be maintained online, especially since the College is recognized as having one of the strongest science curriculums in the state at the community college level, and this has helped attract students from a wide area?

¶212 The VC initiative should be included as one of the top strategies in the College's new strategic plan, but efforts toward the VC should not wait for the strategic planning document, since that document has not yet been started. In addition, many of the efforts outlined in this Blueprint are ongoing, existing efforts at the College that predated the VC initiative. Some of those efforts were slowed due to the feeling that they should be coordinated and "sanctioned" by being added to the Blueprint. The VCLT does not want the momentum and synergy that has built up around the VC initiative to dissipate as a new strategic plan is created by the SPBC. The VCLT also implores PSET to make decisions on how to proceed on the VC as soon as possible, for the same reasons. The VCLT feels a sense of urgency in moving forward with implementation due to the college's flat enrollments and financial uncertainty.

¶213 In conclusion, the VCLT and its workgroups would like to thank President Lambert, PSET, and the entire College for this stimulating and engaging opportunity. We all have learned a tremendous amount over the past four months and look forward with eager anticipation, as well as optimism, to the next steps.

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Appendix A

Comparison of eLearning FTEs to All Other FTEs

Comparison of SCC eLearning FTEs to all Other FTEs
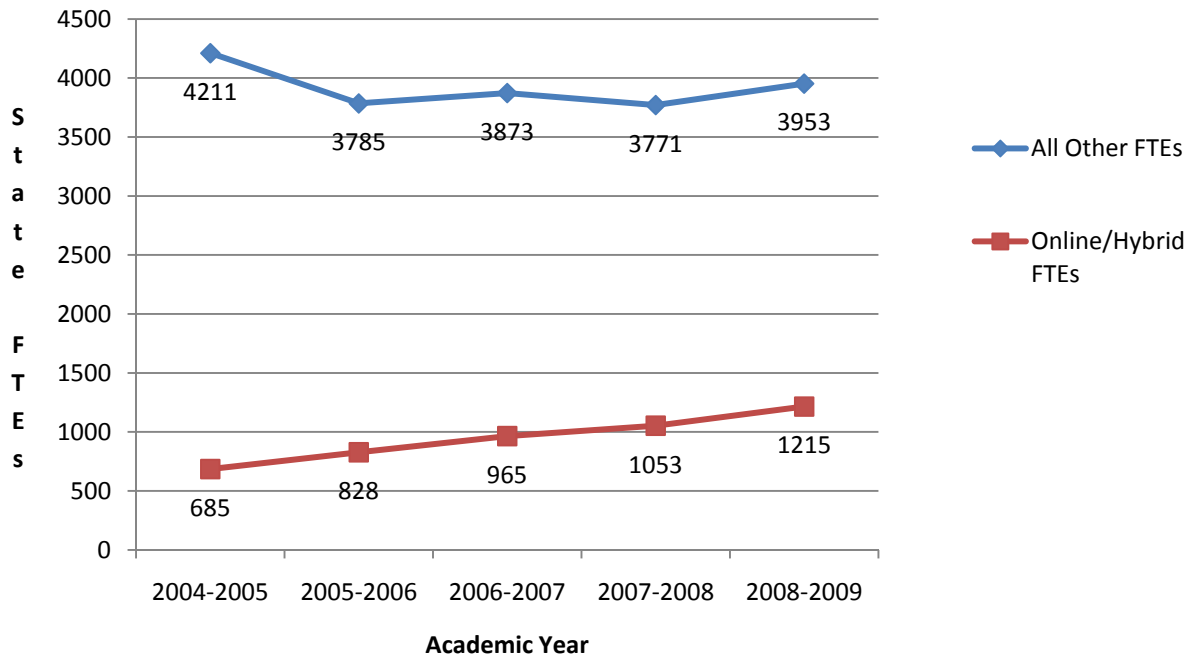
Data extrapolated from eLearning Student Reports, Full Time Equivalents 2008–09 at http://www.sbctc.edu/college/d_elearningdata.aspx. The chart takes the total FTEs, from the SBCTC Web site, subtracts online/hybrid FTEs and then graphs online/hybrid FTEs as compared to the remaining FTEs (i.e. non-online/hybrid FTEs).

Review of Financial Aid Process Impacts and Changes Needed for VC

Review of Financial Aid Process Impacts and Changes Needed for Virtual College

Gavin Smith and Linda Weir • 2/23/2011

Summary: Impacts and Proposed Solutions

Due to an increased number of applications and a decrease in staff in the Financial Aid office, it currently takes **12 weeks** to process financial aid for a student. Since one of our goals for the Virtual College initiative is to allow students to quickly register and begin taking classes on an e-commerce model, this processing time is likely unacceptably high.

Some of this delay is due to the inherent complexity of the financial aid process, which involves interacting with multiple federal and state websites and data systems. But the delay could likely be reduced by:

- Adding custom programming for online student financial aid application documents to replace the paper forms
- Implementing available but unused parts of the current Financial Aid Management (FAM) system such as the Student Portal and loan origination
- Implementing auto-assigned, required Shoreline student e-mail address
- Implementing a document imaging system
- Increasing staffing in Enrollment Services.

Overview of Current Financial Aid Approval Process

1. Students apply for Financial Aid using two initial documents: a signed paper form (Data Sheet) from Shoreline and the online federal FAFSA form. To complete an application other documents may be needed such as Verification Worksheets, tax forms, etc.
2. Financial Aid staff "draw-down" completed FAFSA results approximately once a week.
3. When the FAFSA is complete, the Data Sheet and other required documents are received, and the student has applied for admissions according to the HP, a physical (paper) file is created for the student.
4. A staff member then performs a File Review on each new file, comparing information in several data systems to ensure all information the student has submitted is accurate. Currently, five staff split up the alphabet and each of them processes their subset of these files. The data systems they use include:
    a. FAM: The State Board application for processing Financial Aid. Used for tracking the student through the FA process.

b. The HP: The college data system. Used for verifying student enrollment, number of credits, appropriate Intent and Program codes, etc. and for correcting student information.

c. NSLDS: The National Student Loan Data System. Used for checking student's use of financial aid at other institutions to prevent over-use or over-payment of student financial aid.

d. EDE: Federal Electronic Data Exchange for FAFSA information. Used to track FAFSA results, correct information on the FAFSA, and to originate student loans.

5. If the student is selected by FAFSA for Verification, an additional process begins that requires more documentation from the student and more detailed review by FA staff. This is tracked on a paper document.

6. At successful completion of the File Review financial aid is awarded and the student is sent a Financial Aid Award letter.

7. For students who request loans, additional processing is needed to review facts and originate the loan.

Issues and Proposed Solutions

1. **Processing Applications Requires Knowledgeable Staff to Check Multiple Data Systems**

    Problem: Financial Aid staff must use a wide variety of data systems to process, verify, and award aid, to resolve problems, and to originate loans.
    Potential solution: The State Board FAM system has capabilities not currently being utilized. For example, it could be used to automate the process of File Review, automatically assign packaging codes, and monitor the student transfer process.   Implementation of the FAM Student Portal and use of the FAM system to originate loans are currently underway and should be in place shortly.
    Resources needed: Using FAM for more of the processing will require additional time resources from TSS and Financial Aid staff to learn about, test, and implement additional FAM features.

2. **Students Make A Lot Of Mistakes Requiring Review and Correction**

    Problem: Students make a lot of mistakes filling out the paper forms, enrolling, and registering. A lot of time is spent contacting students for additional or corrected information.
    Potential solution: The Financial Aid department has requested online application forms students would use instead of the paper forms. They would require students to select valid values for all required fields and would warn of mistakes, greatly reducing the number of errors requiring FA staff follow-up.
    Resources needed: TSS programmer time will be required to develop, test, and implement the forms and related data systems. FA staff time will be required to test and implement the system. We also need to resolve the issue of whether a digital signature is acceptable and how it can be implemented.

3. **Financial Aid Staff Often Have Difficulty Contacting Students**

    Problem: When financial aid staff need to contact students to provide updates or notify them of needed corrections they sometimes discover students haven't provided a working e-mail address or other current contact information. Mailing addresses often change from the time the student applies for admission and/or financial aid creating substantial returned mail.
    Potential solutions: 1. Instituting a required Shoreline e-mail address that is assigned as soon as the student registers would provide a guaranteed working e-mail address for every student. 2. Implementing the FAM Portal could provide an improved interface for communicating with students. 3. Prompting students to update their contact information when they register would increase the likelihood we have their current information.
    Resources needed: TSS programmer time is required to create an automated e-mail address system and modify the current registration pages to require students to update their contact information. Both TSS and Financial Aid staff time is required to analyze and implement the FAM Portal.

4. **It Can Be Difficult to Keep Track of All the Documents Required**

    Problem: When student information needs to be reviewed it can be challenging to collect, maintain, and, in some cases, find all of the appropriate documents.
    Potential solution: A document imaging system that could be used to scan all important documents and file them digitally would likely help a lot, and would be useful throughout Enrollment Services.
    Resources needed: Enrollment Services has already requested such a system, and TSS has determined that we have insufficient staff to implement such a system. Money would be needed for the hardware, licenses, and personnel necessary to implement the system.

5. **Insufficient Staff to Process Complex Paperwork Quickly**

    Problem: Staffing has been reduced in Enrollment Services as throughout the college.
    Potential solution: For such complex processing more staff may be required regardless of technological solutions we could implement.
    Resources needed: Funding for additional staff.

Appendix C

Background on Quality Matters

To: Ann Garnsey-Harter   12/30/2010

From: Doug Reid

RE: Proposed Peer Review Process for Online Courses at Shoreline Community College

Purpose: To ensure all online courses offered by Shoreline Community College meet quality standards established by current industry best practices guidelines.

> Recent research into the field of online instructional design has resulted in a set of standards that can be used to design and evaluate online courses in an institutional environment. Based in Maryland, the Quality Matters Program is regarded as a preeminent leader in the field of design and evaluation of the design of online courses. The Quality Matters Rubric is centered on relevant research and was developed initially based on a review of the literature, the expertise of experienced practitioners, and existing standard sets. Each of the specific rubric standards are supported by literature from the field.

Cost associated with Official Course Reviews: Official Course Reviews are defined as any course reviews, QM-managed or subscriber-managed, that are conducted in compliance with QM Course Review Standards with the intention of receiving QM recognition.

QM-Managed Course Reviews - $900.00 per course

Course reviews that are managed by Quality Matters staff and/or designees in compliance with QM Course Review Standards.   Institution must be a QM Subscriber to be eligible for the $900.00 per course fee.

Courses that successfully meet the QM rubric standards in this review are eligible for QM recognition and may carry the QM certification mark.

> **106 courses @ $900.00 per course = $95,400**

Shoreline CC (Subscriber)-Managed Course Reviews - $550.00 per course

Official course reviews, managed by a trained Subscriber representative, that adhere to the QM Course Review Standards and use the QM online tools.

Courses that successfully meet the QM rubric standards in this review are eligible for QM recognition and may carry the QM certification mark.

> **106 courses @ $550.00 = $58,300**

> $250.00 MR (1 required)

> $300.00 PR (2 required)

Course Review Teams:

Each course review team is comprised of three members; the team chair and 2 peer reviewers. All members of the review team must have completed QM training and be certified as either a Master Reviewer (MR and team chair) or Peer Reviewer (PR). At least one member of the team must be external to the institution. Currently there are 61 QM certified reviewers and 35 QM subscribing higher education institutions in Washington State.

Attachment 1   Underlying Principles of Quality Matters
Attachment 2   Quality Matters Subscriber Institutions - Washington State
Attachment 3   Official QM Course Review Application

Attachment 1 of 3 - Underlying Principles of Quality Matters

The Quality Matters Rubric and processes are:

Continuous

- The Quality Matters process is designed to ensure that all reviewed courses will eventually meet expectations.
- The process is integral to a continuous quality improvement process.

Centered

- On research - the development of the rubric is based in national standards of best practice, the research literature, and instructional design principles.
- On student learning - the rubric and process are designed to promote student learning.
- On quality - the review sets a quality goal at the 85% level or better (courses do not have to be perfect but better than good enough).

Collegial

- A Quality Matters review is part of a faculty-driven, peer review process.
- The review process is intended to be diagnostic and collegial, not evaluative and judgmental.

Collaborative

- The review is based on collaboratively identified evidence found in the course rather than the personal preference of an individual reviewer.
- The review is flexible and not prescriptive (many ways to meet each standard).
- The review team consists of three experienced online instructors as reviewers along with the course faculty developer.

Quality Matters Subscriber Institutions—Washington State

Bates Technical College

Bellevue College

Bellingham Technical College

Big Bend Community College

Cascadia Community College

Centralia College

Clark College

Clover Park Technical College

Columbia Basin College

Edmonds Community College

Everett Community College

Green River Community College

Highline Community College

Lake Washington Technical College

Lower Columbia College

Olympic College

Peninsula College

Pierce College - Fort Steilacoom
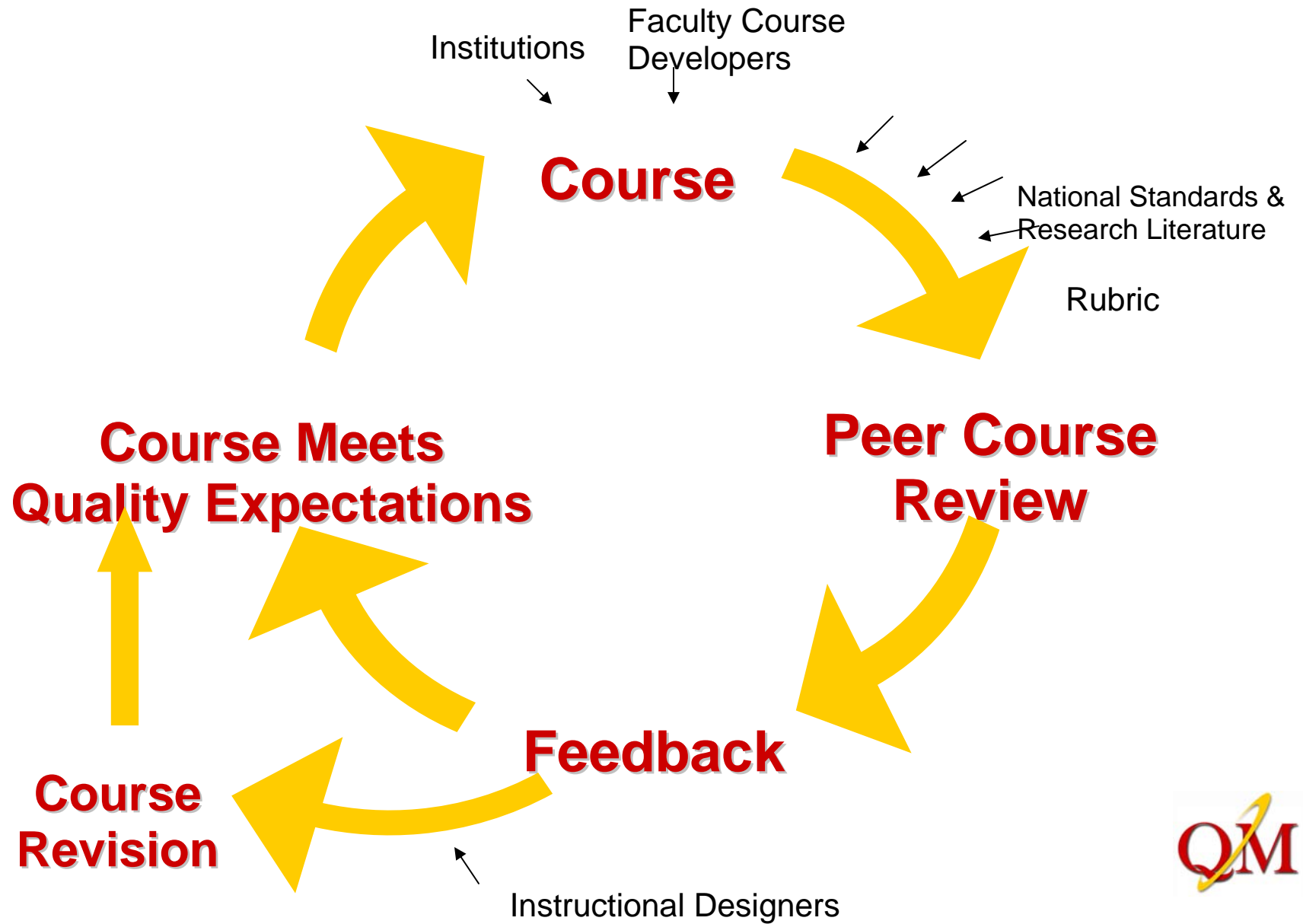
Pierce College at Puyallup

Pierce College Military Program

Renton Technical College

Seattle Community College-Central Campus

Seattle Community College-North
Campus

Faculty Reviewers

Institutions

Faculty Course Developers

Course

National Standards & Research Literature

Rubric

Peer Course Review

Course Meets Quality Expectations

Feedback

Course Revision

Instructional Designers

QM

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