

Integrated Framework for the Self Study

Telling the Ohlone Stories

Introduction

The heritage of the college namesake, the Ohlone peoples, provides a metaphorical roadmap for our everyday work. Our dedication to developing community, especially in support of student and employee learning is an important example of this, as is our commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability. Our accreditation Self Study provides an opportunity to model another cultural practice of the Ohlones, the art of storytelling. While engaging in the conventional process of self study assessment, we have produced compelling Ohlone Stories of institutional accomplishments that give life to our college values and strategic goals, as well as the ACCJS/WASC accreditation standards and themes. The Self Study demonstrates that our values and goals, and the accreditation standards and themes are integrated parts of our institutional system, rather than isolated concepts.

The following excerpt from the California Indian Storytellers Association (CISA) provides a rich context for this effort (<http://www.cistory.org/>):

Stories as rich as the landscape.....as varied as the People and their tribal traditions

"A long, long time ago, the Creator,
and who knows how many Great Beings
- gave the People language.
At this time stories were born..
...Stories mirror our world,
at the same time they are like rays of sunlight
illuminating the dark places
so that we can see more clearly..
...Without our stories..
...we would be lost."

Georgiana Valoyce Sanchez
(Chumash/Tohono-O'Odham)

Emergence of the Learning College Model

Ohlone has experienced a renewal of spirit since budget and organizational crisis of 2002-03. In the renewal process we embraced and implemented the recommendations from the 2001 ACCJC-WASC visiting team evaluation, which urged Ohlone to redirect approach our strategic planning efforts. The team recommended an inclusive process of shared governance to develop a limited number of achievable goals with measurable outcomes linked directly to student learning and resource allocation.

In 2003-04 a new shared governance system emerged from a college-wide effort to identify institutional values and goals as suggested in the 2001 recommendations, as well as in alignment with the ACCJC-WASC accreditation standards and themes in general. The college created a representative Strategic Planning Committee to engage in a college-wide process to update our vision, values and strategic goals, resulting in a focused and outcomes-based strategic plan.

During the planning process, a decision was made to pursue an Office of Education, Title III, Strengthening Institutions Grant. The Strategic Planning Committee temporarily became a Title III Planning Team. The Title III proposal, which was eventually funded, emphasized the Learning College Model as the context for strengthening the college. When the Strategic Planning Committee refocused on its original charter, the Learning College Model became a central and unifying theme of the college's strategic plan. The Title III project has become a driving force for improvement at the college. Ohlone President Doug Treadway has outlined the major characteristics of a Learning College, as follows:

- Focus is on the individual; it is a college for and about the individual learner.
- More options for students are better; experimentation and innovation are encouraged and supported.
- Engagement in collaborative learning; learners are active, not passive vessels being filled.
- Everyone is a facilitator of student success.
- Documentation: feedback, assessment and adjustment are ongoing quality processes.

Ohlone is a Learning College and Learning Organization

Ohlone College has a strong institutional commitment to being “A World of Cultures United in Learning.” The Learning College focus on student and employee learning outcomes has deep roots at Ohlone, reaching back to the original statement of educational philosophy over 40 years ago and continues to this day. A key component of being a Learning College is to “walk the talk” by being a Learning Organization. A Learning Organization views all members of the organization as learners and recognizes that the learning process is central to effective decision making, problem solving, and continuous organizational improvement and renewal. Our Self Study has been a valuable learning experience for the college community and a chance to celebrate student and employee learning outcomes.

Ohlone Stories: Demonstrating Integration in the Self Study

Our Ohlone Stories spring from the review and assessment of our accomplishments and challenges related to our values and strategic goals and the accreditation standards and themes. These stories come from a variety of perspectives at the college including institutional, program, department and individual. The Ohlone Stories demonstrate the organic relationships between the accreditation standards and themes and the strategic plans and actions of the College. The stories chronicle Ohlone’s journey over the past six years by presenting our accomplishments that reflect an integration of the ACCJC/WASC criteria with the College’s own unique framework for planning and assessment. The Ohlone Stories share a common fabric of elements:

- Manifestation of our College Values
- Contribution to achieving our College Goals
- Demonstration of meeting the Accreditation Standards
- Expression of the Accreditation Themes.

Institutional Self-Evaluation Using Commission Standards

The College Council created a Learning and Assessment Team for each section of the Accreditation Standards. Two additional teams were also created. One has concentrated on a Substantive Change Proposal related to our new Newark Center for Health Science and Technology; the other focused on our Distance Learning activities. Co-Chairs representing administration, faculty and staff were selected for each Team to coordinate the learning and assessment work. The Teams identified ways to create engagement of the college community in reviewing the standards, including team meetings, special meetings of existing groups, special focus groups, open forums, surveys, etc...). The narrative reports developed were based on engagement activities and a review of the Questions and Suggested Sources of Evidence in the ACCJC/WASC “Guide to Evaluating Institutions.” Web-based Word templates were used for analysis and reporting on standards. The Teams prepared interim reports and presentations to the College Council/Self Study Steering Committee and encouraged the development of “Ohlone Stories” to demonstrate the integrated nature of our institutional work.

Background Comments about the Planning Agenda Statements

The ACCJC/WASC “Self Study Manual” (2006) indicates that Planning Agenda statements should include three elements:

1. Statements of the plans, activities, and processes (as opposed to tasks) the institution expects to implement as a statement of what the institution thinks it will do.
2. Discussion of the ways the areas identified in need of improvement will be or have been incorporated into the ongoing, systematic evaluation and planning processes of the institution.
3. Discussion of how the outcomes of these plans, activities and processes are expected to improve student learning and foster institutional improvement in general.

The Planning Agendas in the Self Study include each of the three recommended elements. However, the “opposed to tasks” statement is the first element was somewhat confusing, as often “plans, activities, and processes” can be viewed as tasks. Adding to the confusion was the phrase, “statement of what the institutions thinks it will do,” as what an institutions does can be thought of as tasks. Dialogue within the Learning and Assessment Team Co-Chairs group led to an approach that helped to add clarity. The statement, “Plans, activities, and processes the institution plans to implement as a statement of what the institution thinks it will do.” is understood to mean the outcome the college is seeking as an institutional improvement. The concept of tasks is understood to mean the steps undertaken to achieve the outcome.

Since it is difficult to talk about outcomes without including tasks, it was decided to include both in the Planning Agenda statements. This allows tasks to be discussed, while maintaining the focus on the identified outcome.

The Planning Agendas in the Self Study will have the following four elements:

1. Outcome
2. Tasks
3. Ensuring ongoing compliance
4. Impact on student learning

For many of the standards the college is deemed to be meeting the standard and no Planning Agenda is required. Where the college is not fully meeting a standard, a Planning Agenda is presented. Also, there are some instances where the college found to be meeting a standard, but a Planning Agenda is presented to move beyond meeting the standard.