

Lord Fairfax Community College

Guide to Planning for Institutional Effectiveness

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Overview: Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE).....	4
Planning Assumptions	5
Planning Organization	5
Planning Process	6
Academic Program and Course Assessment.....	7
The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)	8
Administrative and Student Support Services Program Review	8
Outcomes: The Key Concept	9
WEAVEonline®	9
PIE Resources	10
Appendix A History of Lord Fairfax Community College.....	11
Appendix B Planning Assumptions	12
Appendix C Planning Calendar	14
Appendix D Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Activity Calendar	15
Appendix E Planning Documents.....	16

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for the planning and institutional effectiveness processes at Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC). The concept of institutional effectiveness enables an organization to engage in an on-going process of goal setting and periodic self-assessment and evaluation of those goals using qualitative and quantitative information in order to ensure continuous improvement and ultimately to meet the vision, mission and goals in the most efficient and effective manner. .

Planning is the structured process that supports institutional effectiveness and that result in specific guidance for the effective short and long-term operations of the organization. Planning begins with the broadest perspective possible, and maintains this broad perspective throughout the development of specific goals and activities, to the point where it should be directly helpful to each employee of the organization.ⁱ At LFCC, the goal of planning is to establish an on-going environment of assessment and evaluation that results in tangible improvements to our programs and services. Successful growth and change is contingent on a shared and cohesive planning process that spans academics, services, resources, and facilities.

All members of the College community should participate in the planning process; this participation will engender an informed and knowledgeable population who will be able to assist the College in establishing and reaching its goals. The sense of purpose that results from planning will enable members of the organization to have knowledge of where the College is going and how their contributions fit in the overall plan. The planning strategy for LFCC must be flexible in order to be ready to accommodate change; it is highly likely that the LFCC graduates of today will work in fields that do not currently exist.

Good planning supports an active focus on institutional effectiveness. We must always ask the questions:

- Are our students learning what we intended for them to learn?
- Can they apply what they learned in the real world?
- Are we serving our students well?
- How can we improve, innovate and create?
- What is the real value of an education obtained from this institution?ⁱⁱ

Additionally, institutional effectiveness is the basis of the Principles of Accreditation as outlined by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). In a single example, Core Requirement 2.5 is defined as “the institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.”

Overview: Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE)

Planning supports the process that takes the organization from its mission to its outcomes. Good planning ensures that there is “sustained analysis and assessment of progress towards goals and objectives.”ⁱⁱⁱ Integrated planning ensures a coordinated and comprehensive approach that spans all the functional areas.

Higher education planning can be divided into three broad functional categories: academic, resource, and facilities. *Academic planning* is the key to all other planning. It addresses the heart of our mission. What is our educational identity? Who do we serve? How do we determine if we are successful? *Resource planning* focuses on creating and allocating the financial, human and technological needs to support the organization. *Facilities planning* focuses on geography, space, maintenance and short and long term capital projects. [Holland, 10]

Planning can also be viewed as being in support of one of two main categories: instructional/academic or services. Within services are the two categories: academic services (registration, counseling, student services) or administrative services (maintenance, security, technology). The unique characteristics of these two areas are addressed in more detail in the section on *planning organization and process*.

As a member of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), LFCC is primarily guided by its parent organization, and beyond that, by The State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV). The VCCS mission and vision is embodied in *Dateline 2009*, which is the Chancellor’s strategic plan. LFCC’s mission, vision and strategic plan must first respond to the challenges established in *Dateline 2009*. The areas of specific focus in *Dateline 2009* are: enrollment growth; workforce development; graduation, retention and job placement; transfer to four-year colleges and universities, affordable tuition, dual enrollment with high schools, private funding, and management improvement.

LFCC’s strategic plan expands on *Dateline 2009* and establishes the critical College-wide goals for the next three years. This in turn establishes the direction for, and constraints upon, the other entire academic and operation activities within the College. A variety of other plans are created which guide the activities and operations of the College. Each of these plans must be inspired by the College mission, vision and strategic plan, and be developed in conjunction with other plans as appropriate. Complete descriptions of these plans are described the Appendix.

Planning must take place in context. Knowledge about LFCC’s past and its origins in the community creates a historical perspective. A history of LFCC is included in the appendix and is updated each year to reflect the significant internal and external events that affected the College. Examination of LFCC’s current circumstances identifies immediate challenges and opportunities and establishes the baseline for change and improvement. LFCC’s present is both quantitatively and qualitatively evaluated through assessment and evaluative activities. Forecasting our future environment is essential to creating successful long-term

strategies. As part of the annual planning process these three areas: past, present and future, are evaluated.

Planning must support LFCC in meeting both internal and external expectations, especially those of our peer reviewers. LFCC is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and participates in the reaffirmation process every ten years. In October 2007 LFCC is continuing the current reaffirmation process with the visit of the SACS team

Planning Assumptions

The LFCC planning process incorporates basic planning assumptions. These assumptions provide the initial guidance and broad framework for creating the strategic plan and resulting outcomes/objectives. Planning assumptions cover the key environmental factors that affect the College. These include social, technological, economic, political, legal/regulatory, and competitive. Planning assumptions also include a frank internal assessment of College strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats or challenges (SWOT analysis). During each planning cycle, these assumptions must be evaluated for validity and relevance. What things are changing around LFCC? What things are not changing? What are the critical issues facing higher education nationally and regionally? LFCC's current planning assumptions are detailed in the appendix.

Planning within the Organization

Lord Fairfax Community College is committed to a participative short and long-term planning process. The primary goals of the planning process are to support continuous quality improvement and to provide a clear sense of direction for the College. The sense of purpose or direction resulting from such planning will enable members of the organization to have knowledge of where the College is going and how their efforts contribute to the overall success of the organization.

The College organizational structure^{iv} defines the key planning groups and sub-groups and is supplemented by input from the various committees within the College governance structure^v. The President's Cabinet is comprised of the senior executive leaders for the major organizational units and are responsible for working collaboratively on the development and implementation of all College plans. The Cabinet is comprised of:

- President
- Vice President for College Advancement
- Vice President for Learning
- Vice President for Financial and Administrative Services
- Vice President for Student Success and Fauquier Administrator
- Associate Vice President for Workforce Services and Continuing Education
- Director, Human Resources

The governance constituency committees contribute membership to committees as needed for the college strategic vision plan, and on an ad hoc basis for functional or unit implementation plans.

LFCC intends for everyone to be involved in the planning and institutional effectiveness process. Recommendations for outcomes/objectives that will lead to improvements and innovations are best identified by those who are closest to the functional area. Unit outcomes/objectives are developed through a team and cross-functional approach. Units develop their outcomes/objectives based on data provided by the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE). Units hold inclusive and open discussions about their role in supporting the mission and strategies of the College. The prioritization of recommended outcomes/objectives is done at the unit level. In the spirit of transparent and integrated planning, all unit outcomes/objectives are visible to all employees through the WEAVEonline® software tool and via the LFCC intranet.

Planning, IE and Budget Process

The strategic vision plan has a six-year perspective, and establishes the broad themes for the College. These themes are influenced by current issues, opportunities and challenges in the college environment. The current six-year plan was established during the 2003-04 fiscal year and is scheduled to be updated in 2009-2010. The strategic implementation plan is updated on a two-year cycle. This includes the detailed action plan for attaining, measuring and evaluating the desired outcomes. The overall philosophy for planning is one of continuous activity, with on-going evaluation and improvement throughout the cycle. Complementary to the college strategic implementation plan are various functional, operational and unit plans. The planning cycle is coordinated with the fiscal calendar and is closely linked with the College budget request and allocation cycle. The planning cycle is coordinated with the fiscal calendar and is closely linked to the College budget request and allocation cycle.

Requests for budget resources must be linked to the requirements of the strategic plan. The LFCC fiscal year is July 1 to June 30, and is driven by the State and VCCS budget cycles. LFCC financial resources are controlled in accordance with the VCCS *Policy Manual* “Administration and Finance (General Fiscal Affairs)” and Commonwealth of Virginia procedures and policies.

Beginning in October, the college’s two-year strategic implementation plan is reviewed and updated. This review process includes evaluation of plan outcomes from the previous year as documented in the WEAVEonline® system. Goals are updated and expanded in order to support continuous institutional improvement. The review and update process involves unit and functional input, as well as input from members of the governance process, as appropriate. The strategic plan is finalized by January, prior to the beginning of the budget request process.

In early spring, the budget process for the upcoming year is updated. Cabinet members begin to compile their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. Each unit follows individual budget review and request processes, as appropriate for the focus of that particular unit. Budget requests are based on approved initiatives. These processes provide for input on resource requests. Cabinet members present their unit requests at a late winter budget presentation. Budget priorities are established and prioritized. The budget is also evaluated for opportunities to reallocate internal funding in order to provide resources to identified strategic priorities. Final funding consideration is contingent on the VCCS funding model.

Throughout the year, progress towards fulfilling the incremental, annual outcomes that are driven by the strategic two-year plan are tracked using WEAVEonline®. This information is focused on the operational, short-term goals and objectives. These are then used to support the internal evaluation process of each unit, and the progress towards the strategic plan goals. WEAVEonline® provides a structure approach for evaluating the goals and objectives, and more importantly, for documenting how the evaluation results are to be used for institutional improvement. The PIE office supports functional units in creating, documenting and evaluating their progress by providing quantitative research and analysis of the measures established for the individual goals.

Several other planning processes, such as the college enrollment and recruitment plans, are also related to the strategic planning and budget process. Cabinet is responsible for ensuring that the individual plans both reflect and contribute to the strategic planning cycle as appropriate.

An overview of the planning cycle and related planning documents are listed in the appendix.

Academic Program and Course Assessment

Course and academic program assessment provides information that leads to change and improvement in our academic programs. Significant guidance for academic assessment is provided by SACS accreditation guidelines and by the VCCS. The VCCS requires a review of academic program viability every four years. While the College assessment program is focused on evaluating and improving the quality of courses and programs, the VCCS review is primarily focused on justifying the productivity of programs that do not meet VCCS thresholds.

The academic program assessment process is directed by the Vice President for Learning and is fully detailed in the *Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC) Assessment Manual: An introduction and overview of our current assessment projects*, available on the LFCC intranet. Course assessments are conducted every three years and program reviews are conducted every four years. Faculty ownership is integral to the success of the assessment processes. A faculty assessment committee provides oversight for the format and structure of the academic review process.

Changes in curriculum that result from the review process would be made through the governance model, via the curriculum and instruction or the learning committees, and would require approval of the college leadership committee before being presented to the executive administration of the College. All programmatic and curricular changes must be approved by both the College and the State Boards.

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

The LFCC QEP is entitled *Seeking the Ox: Developing Critical Thinkers at LFCC*. This five year plan begins in academic year 2007-08 and promotes a cultural change that will “permeate all aspects of the College Community” through the achievement of three goals:

- Fostering awareness and understanding of critical thinking among employees
- Enhancing critical thinking skills in all courses and programs
- Encouraging critical thinking outside the classroom

The QEP is an essential and integral part of the LFCC institutional effectiveness program and is fully detailed in the *2007 SACS-COC Quality Enhancement Plan*.^{vi}

Administrative and Student Support Services Program Review

Institutional effectiveness is only successful if it encompasses the entire organization. Periodic evaluation of the administrative service groups within the College is also necessary. At LFCC this will be a new process, implemented for the first time during the 2007-08 fiscal year. All administrative and educational support functions will participate in developing the template and process for administrative review and in establishing a prioritized, realistic review schedule. A draft version of an administrative review template is the appendix.

For administrative operations and academic support services, important areas of evaluation include

:

- Service justification
 - How does the service relate to the VCCS and LFCC mission?
 - How does the service relate to other LFCC programs, disciplines, services and student needs?
 - What is the documented need for the service? What would be the consequences if the service was unavailable?
 - Are additional services in this area needed that are not provided?
- Service quality
 - How is the quality of the service assessed?
 - How satisfied are students with the service? How satisfied are employees with the service?
 - What changes have taken place since the last self-study and what was the effect?
 - Is the service delivered in the most cost effective manner?

- How does the service interface with other services and departments?
- Service resources
 - Do employees in the service have credentials that meet state, federal, or accrediting requirements (if applicable)?
 - Are regulatory and security issues being followed?
 - How is the professional development integrated into the unit?
 - How has the professional development of employees made a difference in the service?
 - How is technology integrated in the service? How has it improved the service?
 - How adequate are the facilities and equipment to support the service?
 - What is the annual budget required to support the unit?
 - What external resources or partnerships contribute to supporting the service?
- SWOT analysis
 - What are the overall strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the service?
 - What are the three most important issues facing this service in terms of quality over which employees have some control?
- Recommendations
 - What are recommendations, including a timetable and resources needed, for service improvement or enhancement?

Outcomes: The Key Concept

All of the institutional effectiveness processes require attention to one key element, which is the development of meaningful desired outcomes. Good outcomes should answer the “so what?” question. What is the true end result of the activity? The following are examples of meaningful outcomes:

- Benefits for people
- New knowledge
- Increased skills
- Changes in values
- Modified behavior
- Improved condition
- Altered status
- New opportunities

Creating good outcomes requires the use of critical thinking:

- Using creativity to discover multiple and diverse approaches to issues
- Finding relevant information to address tasks and problems
- Justifying conclusions and solutions
- Seeing connections within and across disciplines^{vii}

WEAVEonline®

WEAVEonline® software was purchased in 2006 to provide a centralized, standardized planning tool to support and enhance the development and documentation of the College planning and institutional effectiveness process. This software supplements other College planning documents. During the 2006-07 academic year, primary focus was on utilizing WEAVEonline® to document certain academic programs and the student success unit. In 2007 the product is being rolled out to all administrative units.

WEAVEonline® captures key information about unit level goals in the following categories:

- Mission
- Outcomes/Objectives
- Measures
- Findings
- Action Plan
- Analysis
- Annual Reporting

In early 2008, significant improvements are being made to the WEAVEonline® software. These include: a document repository in order to exhibit a culture of evidence, improved data, analysis and reporting options, and more curriculum mapping tools.

Key individuals in the College, led by the PIE Coordinator, are WEAVE specialists, and are available to assist other units in creating outcomes and entering information. All units are expected to share the assignment of WEAVE duties and to develop and evaluate progress as a group activity.

Training is provided at the unit level on both the overall philosophy of institutional effectiveness and the specifics of the software tool. These presentations are available on the PIE website as well.

PIE Resources

The office of the president and the LFCC cabinet provide administrative leadership and guidance to the planning and institutional effectiveness (PIE) processes at LFCC. Administrators stay abreast of current trends in PIE by holding membership in various organizations such as the American Association of Community Colleges, The Society for College and University Planning, and the Society for Institutional Research. PIE is primarily supported by the office for planning and institutional effectiveness. The role of the PIE office is outlined in *Policies and Procedures Manual for the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness*. Additional support is provided by the VCCS institutional research office.

Appendix A

History of Lord Fairfax Community College

Appendix B **Planning Assumptions**

External Planning Assumptions

- 1) State and local tax revenues will be affected by reduced revenues through the 2010-2012 budget cycles, thus affecting available funding for higher education initiatives, and possibly driving budget reductions.
- 2) The Department of Education, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) will continue to drive an increase focus on the need for institutional effectiveness programs with demonstrable outcomes.
 - a) In the Department of Education report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of Higher Education*,^{viii} significant emphasis was placed on determining ways to improved accessibility, affordability, and accountability in higher education. The latter may drive changes in the higher education accreditation model.
- 3) As a result of increased focus on Homeland Security, emergency, business continuity and pandemic flu planning are a high priority at the federal and state levels, increasing LFCC's compliance requirements in these areas.
- 4) Unemployment in the service area will continue to be very low.
- 5) As a result of the tragedy at Virginia Tech and other school environments, safety and security are high-priority issues for all constituencies.
- 6) LFCC's student population will begin to reflect the growing diversity of its service region.
- 7) Population trends indicate that the vast majority of increases in LFCC's enrollment will be in traditional-age students (24 and younger) as per the February 2004 LFCC Environmental Scan and Analysis by Mangum Economic Consulting, LLC, and as borne out by recent enrollment changes.

Internal Planning Assumptions

- 1) LFCC will continue to operate as a single unit within the VCCS and the parameters set by Virginia Statutes and the State Board for Community Colleges regulations.
- 2) The strategic goals of the VCCS will continue to be a major defining factor for the development of internal LFCC strategic goals.
- 3) Seven counties, the City of Winchester, and XXX will continue to be the service region of the institution; however the College will also serve those non-resident students who seek its programs and services.
- 4) Marketing of the VCCS articulation agreements will increase the number of transfer students.
- 5) Due to increasing competition with local and metropolitan employers and salary constraints imposed by the VCCS salary structure, the recruitment of qualified faculty and staff will continue to be challenging.

- 6) The College Educational Foundation has a key role in supporting the operations of the College by securing funding for scholarships to support qualified students who have financial need.
- 7) Technology equipment and services and related infrastructure needs will continue to increase, especially due to increasing technology requirements as established by the VCCS technology plan and increasing technology security regulatory requirements.
- 8) No immediate capital construction projects are in the active planning process after completion of the Science and Health Professions Building and the Corron Community Development Center, thus the efficient use of all LFCC facilities will continue to be important.

Appendix C Planning Calendar

Lord Fairfax Community College Planning Calendar			
Month	Activity	Participants	Coordinating Office
July	Fiscal year begins		
August	Opening Week Activities including Professional Development Sessions and Updates on College Outcomes	College Community	Office of Learning
September	Review and Update of <i>LFCC Guide to Planning for Institutional Effectiveness</i>	Cabinet and Unit Managers	PIE Office
October	Strategic Plan Review Meetings	President, PIE Office, and Unit Planning Teams	President
November	Review Unit Goals and Objectives	Unit Managers	PIE Office
January 10	Strategic Plan Finalized	President, Cabinet, Planning committees	President
February-March	Unit Planning Retreats	College-wide	Units
March 1	Distribute budget request instructions to units	College-wide	Finance
April 1	Budget requests due	College units	Finance
April 10	Budget requests published		Finance
April (mid)	Budget presentations and review by Cabinet		Finance
May 25	Budget Allocations Finalized (contingent on VCCS funding model)		Finance

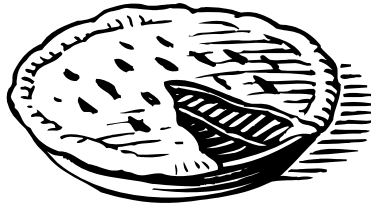
Appendix D
Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Activity Calendar

Lord Fairfax Community College Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Activity Calendar			
Month	Activity	Participants	Coordinating Office
July	Alumni Survey	Alumni	PIE Office
July	Student Evaluations of Faculty	Faculty and Students	Office of Learning
August	Completion of Annual Plan with Outcomes; submit to VCCS		PIE Office
September	Compilation of Assessment Data from SIS		PIE Office
October	Publication of Fact Book		PIE Office
December	Student Evaluations of Faculty	Faculty and Students	Office of Learning
February	Non-Returning Student Survey	OIRE/Non-Returning Students	PIE Office
March-April	Employer Survey	OIRE	PIE Office
April	Annual Administrative Services Review Internal Survey	College-wide	PIE Office
April	Completion of Unit Assessments		PIE Office
May	Graduate Survey	OIRE and Students	PIE Office
May	Student Evaluations of Faculty	Faculty and Students	Office of Learning
June	Review implementation of strategic goals, as well as unit goals, and use evaluation results to begin forming new goals or modifying existing ones.	President, Cabinet, Planning committees, College units	PIE Office

Appendix E
Planning Documents

Lord Fairfax Community College		
Planning Documents		
Document Title	Responsible Unit	Update Schedule
Dateline 2009	Chancellor	Annual
LFCC Mission & Vision	President	2009
LFCC Strategic Vision Plan	LFCC Planning Committee(s)	Six-year
LFCC Strategic Two-Year Plan	Cabinet	Two-year with off-year review and adjustment
LFCC Annual Report	President	Annual
LFCC Response to the Chancellor's Goals	President	Annual
Unit Plans	Units	Annual
Guide to Planning for Institutional Effectiveness	VPFAS	Annual
Master Campus Plan	VPFAS	Ten years, next due 2017
Enrollment Management Plan	Student Success	Annual
Quality Enhancement Plan (Critical Thinking)	Learning	Five year with annual goals
Recruitment Plan	Human Resources	Annual
Capital Improvements Plan	VPFAS	Six-year with bi-annual updates
Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan	VPFAS	Annual. Submitted to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management
Technology Plan	VPFAS	Annual. Submitted to the VCCS.
SACS/COC Reaffirmation and Accreditation Reporting	SACS Liaison and PIE	See separate reaffirmation schedule

Why the PIE? It's about **P**lanning and **I**nstitutional **E**ffectiveness!



All of our faculty and staff, individually and collectively,
contribute to making our LFCC pie. We each add our unique ingredients.

We work together to create a blue-ribbon pie -

by sharing our recipes for success,

by understanding what ingredients we each contribute,

by having a shared and understandable vision of what makes a...

A Super Tasty, Fulfilling, Satisfying Outcome!

Okay, corny metaphor,

but if the pie pan fits...

PIE Resources

The Society for College and University Planning, Web resources, <http://www.scup.org/>

VCCS Institutional Research, <http://system.vccs.edu/vccsasr/Research/index.html>

“Spartanburg Community College: A Manual for Planning, Program/Service Review and Evaluation,” Spartanburg Community College, September 2006

Abell, Patricia P., “The Integration of Planning, Program/Service Review, Assessment and Budgeting,” Society for College and University Planning Workshop, July 7, 2007, Chicago, IL.

ⁱ “Lord Fairfax Community College 2000, Institutional Plan 1995-2000,” 8.

ⁱⁱ “Why This Conference,” Annual Conference on Best Practices in Institutional Effectiveness, The Center for Applied Research, Piedmont Community College, North Carolina, July 16-18, 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ Holland, Middaugh, Sibolski, “Integrating Higher Education Planning and Assessment: A Practical Guide,” Society for College and University Planning, 2006, p. 10.

^{iv} <http://www.lf.cc.va.us/SACS/documents/SACS%20MAIN%20CHART.pdf>

^v <http://www.lfcc.edu:800/Governance/governance.html>

^{vi} 2007 SACS-COC LFCC Quality Enhancement Plan, p. 5.

^{vii} 2007 SACS-COC LFCC Quality Enhancement Plan.

^{viii} Action Plan for Higher Education: Improving Accessibility, Affordability, and Accountability, September 2006, www.ed.gov.