

# **Year One Peer-Evaluation Report**

**Lake Washington Institute of Technology  
Kirkland, Washington  
Fall 2012**

A confidential report of findings prepared for the  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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# Evaluation Committee

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## **Introduction**

The Lake Washington Institute of Technology (LWIT) began as Lake Washington Vocational Technical Institute, part of the Lake Washington School District, and has served the community since 1949. The main LWIT campus opened in Kirkland, Washington, in 1983; LWIT has been a member of the Washington State Community and Technological College system since 1991. The LWIT began the operation of an additional campus, the Redmond Campus, in 2005. The LWIT opened an applied baccalaureate degree program in applied design in 2009.

LWIT is a public technical college and is centrally located in Washington State's high-technology corridor in King County, near Seattle. LWIT has evolved from a vocational training school to a technical college offering a comprehensive curriculum that includes professional-technical programs, as well as basic skills, academic and continuing education programs. LWIT offers more than one hundred degree and certification options. LWIT had an enrollment headcount of 4,831 students and an enrollment FTE of 3,309 students during the Fall 2011 Quarter.

From September 15 to November 19, 2012, a three-person peer-evaluation team from the Northwest Commission on College and Universities (NWCCU, Commission) conducted a Year One Peer Evaluation of LWIT in an off-site telephonic and virtual environment. The virtual evaluation was conducted through audio-conferencing and consisted of a teleconferenced organizational meeting and teleconferenced evaluation meetings. The peer evaluation was conducted based upon the Commission's 2010 Accreditation Standards and Eligibility Requirements.

LWIT underwent a Comprehensive Evaluation in the Fall of 2011. In a letter dated February 3, 2012 and signed by Dr. Sandra E. Elman, NWCCU President, LWIT's accreditation was reaffirmed and the NWCCU affirmed accreditation at the baccalaureate level. NWCCU requested that LWIT address the Fall 2011 Recommendation 1 and Fall 2011 Recommendation 2 in its Fall 2012 Year One Self-Evaluation Report. NWCCU requested LWIT address Fall 2011 Recommendation 3 and Fall 2011 Recommendation 4 in its Fall 2014 Year Three Self-Evaluation Report.

## **Report on Fall 2011 Recommendation 1**

Recommendation 1 reads as follows:

*While the program for international students has the potential to enrich the diversity and culture of the college, the evaluation committee recommends further deliberation on the placement of the program within the core themes in terms of effectively supporting*

*student success through assessment and improvement of student achievement and student services (2.D.1, 2.D.3, 3.A.1, 3.B.1, 4.A.4, 4.A.5, 5.B.1).*

To address Recommendation 1, LWIT formed a task force in the Winter quarter 2012. The task force administered a campus survey, analyzed the feedback, and developed an aggressive action plan. The task force engaged all of the institution's constituent groups, solicited specific consultation from individuals with subject matter expertise, and maintained communication with the institution's community on the development of the action plan.

LWIT reports that the Recommendation 1 action plan was implemented at the end of Spring 2012 and that several items are still ongoing or yet to begin. The task force will conduct an assessment of the action plan no sooner than one year post implementation (Spring 2013). The results from the action plan assessment will be shared with the institution's community and will be used for program improvement.

**Concern:** The Evaluation Committee did not find that LWIT had yet fully addressed the specific issues identified in the Fall 2011 Peer Evaluation Report.

## **Report on Fall 2011 Recommendation 2**

Recommendation 2 reads as follows:

*While the committee generally appreciated the well-organized, easy to read materials submitted, especially considering the condensed accreditation cycle, the team noted that many core theme indicators and corresponding thresholds were not well-aligned or challenging enough with respect to each core theme. The team recommends the college now take the time to reflect upon the appropriateness of each indicator and establish meaningful, sustainable goals or thresholds to achieve as the college moves forward with the next accreditation cycle (1.B.2).*

To address Recommendation 2, LWIT formed a task force that engaged the institution's constituent groups, received specific participation from individuals with subject matter expertise, maintained communication with the institution's community as to progress on an action plan. The task force examined the institution's core themes and strategic planning process. LWIT employed two consultants to assist in examining the strategic planning process and aligning the plan with the core themes, outcomes, indicators, and performance goals. After significant work, the institution elected to retain the four core themes with minor modification. The institution focused on refining the outcomes and indicators used to evaluate institutional performance for each core theme.

In September 2012, LWIT's Board of Trustees reaffirmed the institution's mission and the revised core themes, outcomes, and indicators. The institution will implement the strategic planning process during the course of the 2012-2013 academic year.

## **Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report**

The Evaluation Committee received LWIT's Year One-Self Evaluation Report, including Appendices in electronic form. The Evaluation Committee did not receive a copy of LWIT's catalog in electronic form or hard copy; the institution's Year One Self-Evaluation Report did contain a web site link to the catalog and the Evaluation Committee was able to access the catalog online. The Year One Self-Evaluation Report and supporting documentation were well organized, thorough, and concise. LWIT provided a detailed, thoughtful and useful self-evaluation of its institution to address the requirements set forth in Eligibility Requirements Two and Three, and Standard One.

## **Report on Eligibility Requirements**

### **Eligibility Requirement Two – Authority**

LWIT operates under the authority of and in compliance with the legislation and policies of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board, and LWIT's Board of Trustees in order to lawfully operate and award appropriate degrees and certificates. The Lake Washington Technical Academy is a high school operated within LWIT that offers a high school diploma and is authorized by the Washington State Superintendent of Instruction and accredited by the Northwest Accreditation Commission.

### **Eligibility Requirement Three – Mission and Core Themes**

The Board of Trustees of LWIT approved the mission statement in June of 2001 and reaffirmed its commitment to the mission in 2007. In September 2012, LWIT's Board of Trustees reaffirmed the institution's commitment to its mission, vision and the revised core themes. The institution's resources are devoted to support its educational mission, vision and goals.

## **Section One**

### **Introduction**

LWIT's mission statement is "To prepare students for today's careers and tomorrow's opportunities."

The essential elements of the mission of LWIT are defined by the four core themes:

Core Theme 1 – Pathways

Core Theme 2 – Student Achievement

Core Theme 3 – External Engagement

Core Theme 4 – College Community

### **Standard 1.A: Mission**

The LWIT Board of Trustees approved the existing mission statement in 2001, and reaffirmed the mission in 2007 and 2012. The mission statement is concise and appropriate for a technical college that is focused on workforce training and education. The mission statement is published in the LWIT catalog, in institutional publications, Internet and Intranet websites, program brochures, and in statements to the community.

The mission statement is supported by four core themes and the institution expects the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan to support, connect, and align with the mission and the core themes. The four core themes define the essential work performed by the institution and guide the allocation of resources to support achievement of the core theme outcomes. The fulfillment of the institution's mission is defined by progress toward meeting the performance goals defined for objectives in each of the four core themes.

The Year One Self-Evaluation Report and Appendices reflect the results of LWIT's collaborative process for defining mission fulfillment through the development, assessment, revision, and refinement of the institution's mission and core themes. LWIT has developed a well-organized institutional assessment framework containing meaningful indicators and measures to guide collection of the requisite data and assess institutional progress towards mission fulfillment. LWIT is complimented on its collaborative process of defining mission fulfillment.

### **Standard 1.B: Core Themes**

Each of LWIT's four core themes identifies outcomes; Core Theme 1 sets forth three outcomes; Core Theme 2 sets forth three outcomes; Core Theme 3 sets forth two outcomes, and Core Theme 4 sets forth two outcomes. Each outcome identifies and provides a rationale for indicators that will be used to measure performance toward achievement of the outcome.

Since the Fall 2011 comprehensive evaluation, LWIT has actively engaged in a process of reflection, refinement, and alignment of the indicators and measures for the outcomes in each of the four core themes. LWIT has strengthened the rationale for the indicators and measures to provide better foundation for how they apply directly to measuring institutional performance

toward the outcomes defined for each of the core themes. The institution has developed a core theme assessment framework that will result in data for each indicator that is descriptive, comparative, contextual, quantitative, qualitative, and longitudinal in order to ascertain the progress made towards meeting the goals defined for each of the core themes.

LWIT's Year One Self-Evaluation Report communicates that developing, reflecting on, and refining of the core themes, outcomes, and indicators is a work in progress. The institution self-identifies and explains the factors placing the institution in the early stages of development of its institutional assessment process.

**Compliment:** LWIT is complimented for its institutional effort and commitment to developing a continuous improvement process for assessing and refining its four core themes, outcomes, and indicators.

**Concern:** The Evaluation Committee has concerns regarding the rationale for a number of the indicators which remain to be refined into direct and meaningful measures for assessing institutional performance within the core theme framework. The Committee's concerns focused on the outcomes that are to be assessed by indicators with rationale which contain statements of future action and/or performance specification such as "thresholds to be set in conjunction with strategic planning," "survey to be identified," "measure in process," and "indicator and thresholds still in discussion."

## Summary

LWIT's Year One Self-Evaluation Report allowed the Evaluation Committee to acquire a detailed understanding of the institution's mission, core themes, and institutional processes used to define and assess the accomplishment of its mission. The Evaluation Committee was able to review LWIT's progress in addressing the standards cited in Recommendations 1 and 2 set forth in the Fall 2011 Evaluation Report.

LWIT has an appropriate mission statement for a technical college; the mission statement provides the foundation for the institution's four core themes. The fulfillment of the mission of the institution is defined by success in achieving the outcomes of the four core themes. Each core theme establishes outcomes with rationale describing the indicators to be used to measure institutional performance. Since Fall 2011, LWIT has revised and aligned the core themes, outcomes, and indicators; the revisions were approved by the Board of Trustees in Spring 2012. The Evaluation Committee finds that LWIT is collaboratively engaged in the formulation and alignment of its Strategic Plan with the mission and core themes as part of a continuous improvement process that includes reflective refinement of the outcomes, indicators and measures used to assess institutional performance.

# Commendations and Recommendations

## Commendations:

1. The Evaluation Committee commends the Lake Washington Institute of Technology for its progress and achievement in addressing the matters identified in Fall 2011 Recommendations 1 and 2.
2. The Evaluation Committee commends the Lake Washington Institute of Technology for its commitment to a collaborative process for defining mission fulfillment.
3. The Evaluation Committee commends the Lake Washington Institute of Technology for its collaborative approach in planning, formulating, aligning, and refining the outcomes, indicators, measures and rationale statements for each of the four core themes.

## Recommendations:

1. While the program for international students has the potential to enrich the diversity and culture of the College, the Evaluation Committee recommends further deliberations on the placement of the program within the core themes in terms of effectively supporting student success through assessment and improvement of student achievement and student services (Standards 2.D.1, 2.D.3, 3.A.1, 3.B.1, 4.A.4, 4.A.5, and 5.B.1).
2. The Evaluation Committee recommends that the Lake Washington Institute of Technology continue to engage in the ongoing process of reflection and refinement of the intended outcomes, indicators, and measures to ensure that all outcomes have meaningful, assessable, verifiable indicators of achievement to form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes (Standard 1.B.2).