WATC

TECHNICAL COLLEGE

CHAPTER 6

CRITERION FOUR: TEACHING AND LEARNING
– EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

SELF-STUDY
2014

Chapter 6…

Criterion Four: Teaching and Learning — Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Wichita Area Technical College (WATC) strives to create a culture of continuous improvement across all of its academic programs, support services, and the overall educational experiences of its students. This is accomplished by drawing upon faculty, staff, and administration to develop and implement data-driven plans that focus on improving student learning, measuring effectiveness, and using the results to make further improvements. This chapter provides examples of the processes in place to evaluate and improve all areas of the college, including the process of *academic program review*; the assessment of student learning in technical and general education; and the continuous improvement of retention, persistence, and completion rates in individual programs and across the college.

Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

Core Component 4.A.1

The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.

WATC offers academic programs with the goal to provide effective learning that supports the ongoing economic strength and workforce training needs of Kansas and a global economy. To achieve this goal, WATC utilizes ongoing program-review processes. The college has a formal program-review process along with supplemental program-review processes supported by or through external entities. The primary purpose of WATC's formal program review is to improve academic programs through the analysis of collected evidence relative to quality and student success, shared reflection regarding a program's current status and future direction, and constructive feedback through peer and administrative reviews. These processes provide faculty the critical information needed to make curricular changes that keep programs relevant and rigorous in addition to giving academic leadership insight into the progress of programs.

WATC Program-Review Process

The program-review process is overseen by the vice president, Academic Affairs, and the appropriate dean or program director and is carried out by faculty with support from Institutional Research and Instructional Design and Technology. An outline of the process is provided to faculty that consists of three sections that are completed during

Program Review Documents

the fall, spring, and summer semesters. Along with programs, general education disciplines also complete the program-review process omitting information specific to degree programs, such as graduation and placement data or industry advocate team (IAT) members. Another difference is that some general education disciplines are comprised completely of adjunct faculty. For example, the Social Sciences discipline does not have a director or lead faculty member. In this case, the dean, General Education, carries out the review process with assistance from adjunct faculty.

Section A

Section A compiles general data about the program, including degrees offered, faculty members, prerequisites , status of program accreditation or certification, and the IAT. Faculty review the program's strengths and challenges and indicate actions planned to address the identified concerns. For example, the academic year 2011–2012 program review for the *Practical Nurse program* indicated that

> *Students find exams with application and analysis level test items especially challenging. Many [students] also struggle with the volume of work required, although it is well within parameters of estimated time students should plan to spend outside of class based on credit-hour content of class.*

Practical Nurse faculty responded by adding a section at the beginning of an entry-level course that focuses on test-taking skills and time management.

Section A of program review provides faculty an open forum to provide feedback on program related issues.

A review of program resources is conducted to assess the program facilities, technology, budget, and marketing. Emphasis is placed on human resources, including the degree to which existing faculty can adequately support the program and evidence that faculty are current in both technical and teaching skills. Finally, a program summary is completed, which lists specific recommendations for improving the program and correcting identified weaknesses, the person or group responsible, and the anticipated completion date.

Section B

Each spring, the Institutional Research department provides faculty with a summary report of program outcomes over a two-year period. The year-to-year comparison provides valuable program information that is used to determine whether program outcomes are being met and to identify any areas that are trending negatively. Section B covers the following items:

Section B of program review gives faculty insight into many aspects of their program.

- Student enrollment

- Retention and completion (programs only)

- Demographics

- Course size and delivery data

In addition to the *Section B*, information faculty receive a program summary sheet to respond to and plan for any issues identified on the summary report.

Section C

While faculty participate in Section C, their reactions to surveys and annual assessment matrices may not be enough to document assessment and evaluation activities in some programs.

The *final section* reviews student satisfaction and program *assessment*. The college uses the *Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory* (SSI) to collect information about student satisfaction within various areas of the college as well as the importance students place on these items. The program-review process requires faculty to provide a plan of action for addressing areas where there is a difference between students' satisfaction and perceived importance. The Noel-Levitz SSI is administered annually, which provides faculty opportunities to gauge the results of their action plans and to focus on improvement from year to year.

A review of *program assessment* is included in Section C. IR developed an Assessment Handbook to provide a framework for developing and implementing assessment plans. To help faculty develop their assessment plans, an assessment matrix tool is utilized on an annual basis. The matrix headings include Student Learning Objectives, Measurement, Expectation, Actual Results, Analysis, Recommendations, and Outcomes – Did it work? The program-review process ensures that faculty are practicing assessment. Faculty identify the current end-of-program measurements and the corresponding results, review current program outcomes, and provide the completed assessment matrix. Although assessment is included in program review, the only factor evaluated is whether program faculty completed the necessary steps for the year or not.

External Accreditation

In addition to WATC's formal process, certain governmental agencies require program reviews. For example, the *Carl D. Perkins* Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 (Perkins) requires the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) to monitor the performance of institutions receiving federal funding through Perkins. Core indicators of performance are used to assess the extent to which WATC has improved the quality of career and technical education programs. Yearly compliance reviews are completed to ensure compliance with state and federal requirements for Perkins grant funding. WATC works with KBOR to conduct reviews of grant activities, outcomes, and expenses. Such reviews facilitate discussions on improving program quality, aligning programs with state and national standards, increasing support for initiatives, and expanding opportunities for students to achieve industry-recognized credentials.

Carl Perkins Annual Report - 2013

The final type of formal program review is external accreditation. Many of WATC's programs maintain relationships with external accrediting agencies, many of which culminate in program-review activities. For example, all of WATC's _healthcare programs_ have external accreditation and are required to provide reports and program self-study/site visits to earn reaccreditation. Each year, at least two WATC programs undergo accreditation review.

External Accreditation - Dental Assistant

External Accreditation - Agreement Form

External Accreditation - Medical Assistant

External Accreditation - Surgical Technology

In addition to external accreditation, _IATs_ review aspects of program facilities, equipment, and curricula. When and where appropriate, IATs recommend changes to programs so they better align with current industry standards. Many times these changes are included in the upcoming budget plan.

Using Program Review

The combination of a formal process along with external review from accreditors and KBOR provide WATC programs a solid foundation for program review.

WATC's program-review process is an ongoing process of collecting evidence, reviewing a program's current status, and developing strategies for improvement. The integrity of this process is ensured through the involvement of program faculty, IR, and academic leadership. By including multiple data sources, evaluation processes, and assessment mechanisms, faculty have the information necessary to make changes to curricula and processes that improve student learning and keep programs current and rigorous. Faculty identify program strengths and challenges after the data has been collected and evaluated. A new plan can then be developed for the areas that need improvement, and the program-review process begins again. These plans are monitored by faculty and deans/directors to gauge the success of the improvements.

Core Component 4.A.2

The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning.

Core Component 4.A.3

The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

Review of Transfer-Credit Process

WATC maintains an established process for _reviewing transfer credits_. Official transcripts that demonstrate college credit earned by students are required for review of transfer credit. The registrar reviews, evaluates, and considers coursework from regionally accredited institutions that fulfill the course requirements for technical certificates or associate of applied science (AAS) degrees. KBOR community colleges and universities all abide by core competency standards for specific core courses, and these credits are transferred as the appropriate WATC course equivalencies. The registrar evaluates

courses from other regionally accredited colleges and universities on an individual basis by comparing course syllabi to competencies currently being taught in similar courses at WATC. Technical course syllabi are sent to the appropriate dean who then works with the technical faculty to determine the appropriate equivalencies. Courses from nonaccredited colleges and universities are not accepted. All coursework that is accepted must have a letter grade of C or better.

Credit for Prior Learning

Policy 5-27, *Credit for Prior Learning*, addresses the process of evaluation and assessment of a student's learning outside a traditional classroom environment, including military credit, credit by examination, standardized tests, and prior-learning assessments. Students may earn a maximum of 15 credit hours through these options.

Prior learning credit is only awarded for courses that WATC is approved to offer. Students must pay a fee and submit a portfolio that is evaluated by WATC faculty who have expertise in the subject area. The portfolio should include a narrative that outlines training, certifications, work experience, and formal education.

WATC also considers training and nontraditional credit earned through active military duty that satisfy program course requirements and are equivalent to courses offered. The appropriate military documentation is required. The registrar examines the documentation provided and evaluates the credit using the American Council on Education Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services. WATC abides by the best practices outlined by the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges consortium.

Credit by examination is available to students whose COMPASS® admission assessment scores place them in a math or English course higher than the one required for their program. Students have several options in this scenario. The first option is for students to complete the appropriate courses indicated by the assessment with a C or higher, and the courses will meet the program requirement. The second option is for students to complete the appropriate courses required for the program with a C or higher. The final option is for students to receive credit for the course required for the program, and a grade of S is posted to the transcript. In the first two options, tuition and fees are assessed at the normal rate, and in the final option, the credit is awarded free of charge.

The college recognizes standardized tests, such as the College-Level Examination Program® and the Advance Placement® exams. Students who wish to receive credit for standardized tests must submit an official score report to the registrar to be considered for evaluation. Credit is awarded only in subject areas where comparable courses are offered at WATC.

Core Component 4.A.4

The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual-credit programs. It assures that its dual-credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.

WATC's academic departments maintain and exercise authority over prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, and expectations for student learning by continuously evaluating the curricula and making changes as needed. Annual program reviews, course evaluations, student and IAT feedback, KBOR program alignment, and external accreditation criteria, in addition to other factors, may prompt changes to curricula. Curricula changes are led by faculty and are vetted through an academic approval process that begins with the department and solicits feedback/approval from IATs, the Faculty Council, and in some cases KBOR. Revisions to specific courses follow an approval process that evaluates the impact of the change on students, the current program, *programs in development*, the need to meet industry needs, and finances. This process ensures that input from across the college is considered prior to approval from the vice president, Academic Affairs.

Students have many options for transferring credit and earning credit through exams and prior learning.

New programs follow a *development process* that includes five phases — program proposal, research, curriculum development, program approval, and program implementation. Any WATC employee, as well as community members and business and industry partners in conjunction with a WATC employee, can submit program proposals. The research phase includes student needs assessments and employer needs assessments. During the research phase, a benchmarking analysis is completed to determine what is currently available in the education marketplace. Once the benchmarking is complete, a curriculum committee, consisting of WATC faculty and staff and industry representatives, is formed to design and develop the curriculum. After this committee finalizes the curriculum, approval is sought from the vice president, Academic Affairs, the Faculty Council, and the WATC Board. External approval is then requested through KBOR.

WATC has invested in new positions in educational partnerships and instructional design over the past two years.

Access to Learning Resources

WATC strives to maintain access to learning resources for its students. The *library*, a key resource for students, provides a physical and digital presence. Physical resources, such as books, reference materials, journals, magazines, and newspapers, are available for student use at the Southside Center (Southside). The library offers numerous electronic resources through WATC's Web site and online student portal, myWATC, which students can access 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Online resources include e-books,

academic databases, such as EBSCO, reference resources, and an online library catalog. Library personnel work closely with faculty to provide assistance to students with research, citation, or general library questions.

The *Academic Success Center* (ASC) provides students with walk-in tutoring services at the NCAT and Southside campuses. The ASC tutors are available to provide students with assistance in a variety of general education areas, such as math, writing, reading, science, and computer skills. The ASC also offers test preparation services for various assessments needed for admission into select programs or for placement into specific courses.

Dual-Credit Courses

WATC constantly works to foster partnerships with area high schools to offer college-level courses to students while they are still in high school. These efforts were bolstered when the Kansas legislature passed *Senate Bill 155* in May 2012, which waives tuition for Kansas high school students who enroll in certain career and technical education courses. The courses, whether taught at the postsecondary site, at WATC, or online, use the same instructional content and follow the same outcomes and competencies as those offered to postsecondary students. Courses offered at the high schools must use WATC's approved syllabi, course standards, approved textbooks, and the college's online learning management system to post attendance and submit grades. Faculty are evaluated by their dean, director, or lead faculty. Dual-credit students are subject to the same placement guidelines as postsecondary students. Faculty are hired with the appropriate credentials, industry experience, or education. In cases in which this may not be the case, they are placed on plans of study to meet the necessary goals.

Agreements with Secondary Schools

Core Component 4.A.5

The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.

WATC strives to maintain external accreditations or affiliations for its programs when possible. Achieving external accreditation ensures that WATC's programs meet standards that align with WATC's mission of providing quality higher education and leadership in workforce training, as well as meeting the needs of business and industry. The external accreditations provide a method for ongoing evaluation of the learning environment in addition to the program-review process, *see Appendix F.* One example of this is WATC's Aviation Maintenance Technology program, which receives certification from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) based on the Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 147. These two portions of the regulations pertain to the operation, grading, curriculum, and other aspects of the program. The certification process requires that the program generate an operations manual based on the aforementioned regulations. The manual must state how the program will meet and sustain those requirements. The strength of this oversight process provides opportunities for continuous improvement

FAA Approval Letter

AMT - FAR Part 65

AMT - FAR Part 147

by having an external reviewer oversee the process.

External accreditations are also used to evaluate student learning. Many programs with external accreditation also provide opportunities for students to attempt end-of-program assessments and/or to earn industry-recognized credentials. The end-of-program assessments, which are linked to industry standards, allow faculty to test students' abilities to solve problems in their fields. Examples of this are in WATC's *automotive programs*, which are accredited by the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation *(NATEF)*. The end-of-program testing through NATEF allows WATC to verify that the curriculum aligns with national standards. In the *KBOR Foresight 2020* plan, a ten-year strategic agenda for public institutions of higher education in Kansas, Strategic Goal 5 is to "enhance alignment between the work of the state's higher education system and the needs of the Kansas economy." This goal has filtered down into WATC's *performance agreements* with KBOR and into the strategic planning process. *Strategy 4, Goal 4.3*, of WATC's 2011–2015 strategic plan is to "provide for excellence in academic standards", and it uses end-of-program assessments, certifications, and licensures as performance indicators.

> *The NAC project will allow some WATC programs that would not have had an opportunity for program accreditation, standards, or credentials to have these items integrated into the curriculum.*

Core Component 4.A.6

The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

WATC uses a variety of methods to evaluate the success of its graduates. End-of-program testing assesses the degree to which WATC's graduates are prepared for employment in the industry. For example, students in the Auto Collision Repair program take the *ASE Student Certification* exam, which measures students' knowledge of program learning outcomes. The results indicate students' proficiency, which is based on industry standards, and provide benchmark comparisons to state and national peer institutions. This data is used as an indirect measure of student learning throughout the program-review and assessment processes. The exam was developed by industry members and is a standard measurement used across the country to measure automotive student knowledge of NATEF areas of instruction.

Annual Follow-Up Survey

Each year, the director, Career and Disability Services, administers an *annual survey* to former students asking about their current employment status. The survey assists the college in gathering information that provides administration, program directors, and

faculty with wage, job, and industry information. Specifically, the survey asks if the students had a good experience at WATC; if they would recommend WATC to family or friends; if they are employed in a field related to their education; and, if employed in a related field, what their wages are. If former students are not currently employed related to training, Career Services staff use this opportunity to offer services to them. The survey also tracks whether they passed a technical skill assessment and/or earned industry-recognized credentials. The information gathered in this process fulfills federal and state reporting requirements. This critical data on whether WATC graduates are gaining employment and earning livable wages is provided to WATC administration, faculty, and IATs.

> *Although WATC invests in job placement and follow-up, with consistently positive results, many times these results are not utilized within the program review process.*

Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

Core Component 4.B.1

The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.

As the mission states, WATC is committed to providing quality higher education. An essential part of ensuring that students are receiving quality higher education is through assessment of student learning. Most of WATC's educational programs include both technical and general education courses. The technical courses are the core of technical programs and promote workforce preparation within fields of healthcare, aviation, manufacturing, transportation, and design. General education courses are transferrable and provide general education knowledge for students. The assessment processes are similar throughout the college with slight differences between technical programs and general education courses that reflect the goals of these two areas.

Program Review Process - Section C

The assessment process used at WATC is outcomes based and driven by faculty involvement and input. IR and ID&T support the process by assisting faculty in developing outcomes, analyzing data, and implementing assessment practices. Based on the data analysis, faculty identify outcomes and standards, collect data, and determine revisions to curriculum and instruction. Outcomes and standards are reviewed with IATs for currency with industry standards.

> *WATC faculty utilize numerous methods for measuring student learning and achievement of learning goals.*

Direct and indirect measures are part of the assessment process and, whenever appropriate, scoring keys help identify the knowledge and skills through direct documentation of student learning. Indirect measures of learning, including certification/licensure exams, student course evaluations, student satisfac-

tion surveys, and follow-up placement survey results, are also obtained. The process is repeated annually, not only to assess the current group of students, but also to measure the impact of any changes that were implemented.

Core Component 4.B.2

The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and cocurricular programs.

Student Learning Outcomes in Technical Programs

WATC incorporates the concepts of goal-directed learning via an outcome-based system of assessment. For each technical program, measurable outcomes are created that enable faculty to assess learning and achievement.

For many of the technical programs, outcomes were developed at the state level through a program-alignment process under the direction of KBOR. These programs include Air Conditioning Technology, Auto Collision Repair, *Automotive Service Technology*, Dental Assistant, Machining Technology, Medical Assistant, Practical Nurse, Surgical Technology, and Welding. The purpose of *program alignment* is to establish a common curriculum for all KBOR two-year colleges and facilitate transfer between postsecondary programs. In addition, program alignment identifies external, industry-based credentials to assess student outcomes and establishes a framework for program curriculum and credit hours to ensure consistency across the state. Program alignment involves faculty and industry representatives from around the state to establish the outcomes and competencies in agreed-upon courses. When possible, the outcomes and standards of external, industry-based organizations have been integrated into program alignment. This includes end-of-program assessments that were created by external agencies. For example, the Automotive Service Technology program went through program alignment in 2010. Three areas of instruction were agreed upon for program alignment — Engine Performance, Electrical and Electronic Systems, and Automotive Brakes. These three were selected because industry and faculty felt the instructional areas were important and were commonly taught across the state. NATEF competencies, standards, and student assessments were adopted for *Automotive Service Technology program alignment*. Some programs, such as this one, have only select courses or areas of instruction with established program and course outcomes. Other programs, such as *Auto Collision Repair*, have program and course outcomes for all areas of instruction that are defined through program alignment. When only some outcomes are provided through program alignment, either the external agency's standards are utilized or WATC program faculty create their program outcomes.

A few WATC programs have not been through program alignment and do not have an external agency that designates program outcomes. With the help of ID&T, these programs develop their own program outcomes to align with local or industry workforce standards and WATC's mission.

Faculty turnover in programs and disciplines with only one full-time faculty interrupts some assessment processes that occur over multiple semesters or cohorts.

Regardless of how program outcomes were developed, they are linked to industry standards through input from local industry leaders who serve on IATs for each program. As required by the program-review process and many external accrediting agencies, IATs annually review program outcomes to ensure that they are relevant to their industry standards, *see Appendix F.* By having this review step in the assessment process, students who achieve the program outcomes are prepared with the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful in the workforce.

Program Outcomes

Assessment Matrix

The college utilizes a consistent assessment process in all technical programs across the college. This process is structured around a documentation methodology that employs an assessment matrix comprised of seven columns. Program outcomes are the foundation of the assessment matrix. Annually, faculty select one outcome to review and analyze student learning using the assessment matrix as the framework. Two measures are identified to determine the student's ability to meet the outcome; typically, one is a demonstrative measure, such as completion of a competency checklist, and the other is a knowledge assessment, such as an exam. The measurements link directly to the outcome being measured and usually occur at the end of the instruction period. Once the outcome and measures are selected, faculty define an expectation of the results of each measurement, for example, students will achieve 90 percent on the exam. Actual results of each measurement are provided to determine current and actual achievement of the selected outcome. Faculty analyze the differences between their expectations and the actual results and, if warranted, then provide changes to curriculum and instruction based on that analysis. The final column is reserved for the following year to compare year-to-year results if changes were implemented.

Seven-column matrix:

- Column 1: Student Learning Objectives (Competencies/Outcomes)

- Column 2: Measurement (How should it be measured?)

- Column 3: Expectation (What's good enough?)

- Column 4: Actual Results (How did students actually perform?)

- Column 5: Analysis (Why is there a difference between expected and actual results?)

- Column 6: Recommendations (What should be done?)

- Column 7: Outcomes (Did it work?)

Core Component 4.B.3

The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

Using Matrix Results

Results of the faculty analysis are reviewed to obtain possible explanations for discrepancies in expectations and actual results. Based on this analysis, faculty decide what modifications need to be made and what recommended changes will be implemented. The cycle is then repeated with the recommended changes in place. Below are some examples of actual curriculum and instruction changes that were implemented and documented in technical programs utilizing the *assessment matrix*.

In 2012, Medical Assistant faculty selected the following program outcome to document using the assessment matrix: "Students will be able to calculate, administer, and document medication administration." They expected that the students would achieve 98 percent accuracy on the drug card assessment. Actual results showed that although all students scored 80 percent or higher, this was not in line with the effort and expectations of faculty. For 2013, faculty increased instruction time related to drug cards and allowed more time for the completion of the drug cards assessment. They also emphasized the importance of accuracy on the drug cards and the impact of accuracy in the workplace.

The final column of the assessment matrix indicates whether the previous year's changes were successful. In 2012, Automotive Service Technology implemented additional classroom time to areas specific to Engine Performance. This included troubleshooting and diagnosing engine-start issues and emphasizing the importance of knowing the codes and resources to check codes. Following the measurement and results, faculty found that students continued to struggle with codes and using a scan tool to communicate with the vehicle's computer. As a result, in 2013, faculty implemented additional instruction in the classroom and the laboratory for this learning outcome.

Faculty do a good job of constantly checking, correcting, and adding to the knowledge and skills of their students. Improving documentation of how these processes take place would be useful for demonstrating the involvement of faculty in program decisions.

Additional Assessment Methods

The assessment matrix provides a formal documented method to capture assessment results across all technical programs. However, WATC utilizes other methods to analyze student learning. Beginning with pre-learning assessments and continuing after graduation, learning and student expectations are measured and changes to programs, courses, curricula, instruction, technology, and other related items are implemented continuously across technical programs.

Program Review Process

External Program Accreditations

Assessment Handbook

Assessment Matrix Folders

Pre-Learning Assessment

Pre-learning assessments include one or more of the following processes to select students who are well-prepared and ready to be successful in programs — admission criteria, placement testing, and/or prerequisite courses.

Each technical program has a set of specific *admission criteria* that the student must meet to be accepted into that program. Faculty within each program establish these criteria to identify students who are adequately prepared to be successful in the program. IATs review these criteria to ensure they are congruent with industry requirements. Technical programs use standardized *placement tests* to assist in determining which students are prepared to enter the program. These criteria primarily consist of COMPASS math, reading, and writing assessment scores, but sometimes the criteria are specific to industry requirements. For example, the *Aerospace Manufacturing Technology program* uses the VALPAR dexterity test as an admission requirement. The *Practical Nurse program* uses the Test of Academic Skills® with minimum requirements for the composite and the reading scores. Cut-off scores are established at a level that indicates students are adequately prepared in these areas so they have a good chance of being successful in the program.

Faculty and academic leadership are continually examining the entrance needs of their program to target what requirements would help students be successful when entering the program.

In some technical programs, coursework must be successfully completed prior to program admission. These courses lay the foundation for success in the program. For example, health programs require courses such as Medical Terminology, Computer Applications, CPR for Healthcare Providers, Human Anatomy and Physiology, Development Psychology, and Microbiology courses. Programs related to aviation manufacturing have an established core set of courses that serve as a foundation for success.

Pre-learning assessment of students and prerequisite learning for program admission ensure that students have attained the basic academic requirements for each program. Faculty rely on these assessment factors to create a baseline to begin technical education instruction.

Medical Assistant - Assessment Matrix

Core Component 4.B.4

The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Auto Service Technology - Assessment Matrix

Course Assessment

Individual courses within the technical programs employ course-based assessments that include competency checklists, safety exams, skills checks, rubrics, quizzes, and exams. Vital to technical education, these assessments reflect students' acquisition of skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis as they progress throughout their program.

These assessments reflect students' ability to achieve program outcomes and ultimately demonstrate skills and knowledge needed to be work-ready employees. Consistently checking and enhancing students' skills and abilities supports the college's mission to provide quality higher education in workforce training that supports local market needs.

Examples of Course Assessment

Healthcare programs use *skills checklists* that students must pass at a satisfactory level to continue in the program. For example, Medical Assistant students must successfully demonstrate skills in *capillary puncture*, intramuscular injections, measuring blood pressure, and administering intradermal skin tests. Dental Assistant students must complete competencies regarding how to handle *medical emergencies*, including allergic reactions, breathing problems, chest pain, convulsive seizures, diabetic emergency, and stroke. The *simulation laboratory* for the Practical Nurse program was built to provide students additional *clinical*-type experiences in a controlled environment. Faculty utilize the laboratory to more effectively assess students' skills prior to sending them out into a clinical environment.

Welding faculty use a *welding skills assessment* at the end of the course that includes a variety of welding methods. *Automotive Service Technology* students take a written final and a hands-on skills exam at the end of each course. *Aviation Maintenance Technology–Airframe and Power Plant* have cumulative *final exams* at the end of each program. These examples reinforce the importance of course-based *assessment practices* that underlie student learning assessment at WATC.

Many technical programs at WATC also include a *work ethics assessment*, completed by faculty for each student in specific courses based on qualities that demonstrate good work ethics. A standardized form used throughout technical programs addresses areas such as attendance, character, teamwork, appearance, attitude, productivity, organizational skills, communication, cooperation, and respect. The assessment is completed and shared with students at mid-term and at the end of the semester. The mid-term assessment provides students with feedback so they can make any changes needed to improve their work ethics grade. The final work ethics grade appears on the *transcript* in addition to the course grade.

Faculty have the flexibility to observe student learning in numerous settings utilizing a variety of assessment materials. Due to the nature of technical education, these assessment activities occur frequently in all programs.

Program Review and Assessment

The program-review process at WATC occurs annually and is utilized consistently throughout technical programs. Basic information concerning the program, including faculty and curriculum, are compiled and evaluated. Faculty review their program data and make decisions about program changes based on the data. Program outcomes are

Aviation Course Assessment - Example

Fuel Metering Systems - Course Standard

Manufacturing Course Assessment - Example

Direct and Alternating Current - Course Standard

Health Course Assessment - Example

Surgical Technology - Principles and Practices

General Education Course Assessment - Example

Public Speaking - Course Standard

reviewed annually by IATs as a part of WATC's program-review process. This review process verifies to faculty that program outcomes are either still current or need revision based on business and industry suggestions.

Program Accreditation and Assessment

In addition to the program-review process, many programs have external oversight that adds another layer of review to student learning and related assessment principles and practices. Every year, select WATC programs participate in self-study/evaluation processes as required by their appropriate external organization. Results of these external program reviews are analyzed by administration and changes are often recommended that have budget implications for the program and the college. For example, a recent self-study and accreditation visit revealed some issues with program evaluation within the *Practical Nurse program*. As a result of one identified weakness, a faculty position was designated as *curriculum coordinator* with one of the major responsibilities being ongoing program evaluation. The Automotive Service Technology program participated in its five-year *NATEF review* in 2012. In response to the review, faculty now complete student *competency rating sheets* for each of the job tasks for all eight areas of NATEF accreditation.

External Testing and Credentialing

Many of the external accreditation and oversight organizations have developed and offer exams that lead to industry-recognized credentials. Numerous technical programs at WATC culminate with students taking these external credentialing exams, *see Appendix F* for a list of programs and exams.

Exam results are used in assessment by faculty to provide either direct measurable information on individual student results or aggregate data that is used for indirect measures of assessment. Both types of test results are valuable to faculty. *Automotive Service Technology* external exams provide detailed exam results, which faculty include in their assessment matrices in conjunction with final exams. Because the Practical Nurse National Council Licensure Examination–Practical Nurse® *(NCLEX-PN)* exam only provides aggregate data, faculty have supplemented exam data by integrating *Health Education Systems, Inc.* (HESI) exams prior to program completion. Although not an external exam, HESI exams are comprehensive, standardized exams taken at the end of specific courses and at the end of the program. They provide students with feedback on course content mastery and readiness to take licensure exams. Specific remediation is also available for students who have low scores to help them prepare for licensure exams. Composite results are used by Practical Nurse faculty to evaluate specific courses and the program.

> *KBOR Program Alignment and the NAC project have aided in emphasizing and expediting the implementation of end-of-program and external testing opportunities for students.*

General Education Assessment

When WATC acquired an expanded general education curriculum in 2008, the assessment of general education courses was integrated into the current assessment process. WATC took steps to integrate general education offerings with associate of applied science (AAS) degree requirements. This enabled the college to implement general education assessment practices. The first step was accomplished by involving general education faculty in creating outcomes specific to general education. WATC's overall general education statement is, "Productive citizens need to communicate effectively, apply basic mathematical strategies, critically and creatively solve problems, interact in social settings, and effectively utilize technology. WATC has established a set of general education learning outcomes to include these areas."

Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to…

1. Communicate effectively by writing clearly, concisely, and accurately in a variety of contexts and formats.

2. Communicate effectively by speaking clearly, concisely, and accurately in a variety of contexts and formats.

3. Demonstrate mathematical skills utilizing quantitative problems and drawing conclusions within various contexts.

4. Identify, define and systematically analyze a problem from a global perspective.

5. Identify and express awareness, sensitivity and respect for self and the diverse needs of others within the community.

6. Demonstrate computer literacy by applying current technology within course work and career fields.

Each outcome supports the general education statement and is measured within a specific general education course or discipline area. Furthermore, the areas selected were those most frequently required for the AAS degree. The following were designated as the core courses for each of the general education outcomes:

- Outcome 1: English Composition I

- Outcome 2: Public Speaking

- Outcome 3: Intermediate Algebra and College Algebra

- Outcome 4: Introduction to Biology, Chemistry I, Physical Science, and Microbiology

- Outcome 5: General Psychology and Introduction to Sociology

- Outcome 6: Computer Applications

General Education Statement

In addition to linking courses with outcomes, WATC implemented a standardized measurement within each course. This practice was created specifically to use in course-embedded assessment for general education, as well as to maintain consistency across course instruction methods. Specific measurements to assess student learning are used in each course:

- Outcome 1: *English Composition I* — common rubric for final essay

- Outcome 2: *Public Speaking* — common rubric for persuasive speech

- Outcome 3: *Intermediate*/*College* Algebra — common final exams

- Outcome 4: *Science* Courses — common rubric for a synthesis project paper

- Outcome 5: General Psychology and Introduction to Sociology — common rubric for *service-learning project*

- Outcome 6: *Computer Applications* — common final exam

General education faculty use the same formalized *seven-column assessment matrix* and accompanying method of assessment that is used by technical education faculty. Each

Since the implementation of general education assessment, the college has struggled to tie together outcome #4 and its assessment in science courses in the standardized format that is utilized for other general education outcomes.

outcome forms the base and is identified in the first column. The standardized measurement for each course is listed in the second column. Faculty follow the same process to examine and document assessment in these courses. The outcomes measurements are used by the faculty who teach these courses to determine changes. Changes are implemented, and the cycle starts over again.

General Education Assessment Examples

Assessment results for general education courses are used to drive changes in these courses. In academic year 2009–2010, math faculty found that 29 percent of students in Intermediate Algebra and College Algebra were not able to meet the faculty expectation of achieving 70 percent or higher on the standardized comprehensive final exam. While analyzing the data, faculty noted that not all College Algebra students have completed the appropriate prerequisites and some students had gaps between completion of the developmental sequence and entering College Algebra.

Based on their analysis, faculty recommended that

- new textbooks be adopted for Intermediate Algebra and College Algebra that are more aligned with WATC competencies;

- resources be implemented to enhance the course (myMathLab); and

- outcomes be reviewed in developmental sequence to ensure that students obtain necessary skills to successfully continue the math sequence.

Following implementation of these changes, assessment scores and mean scores increased.

The *Computer Applications* course has also been *revised* based on assessment data. In 2008, faculty developed and implemented a final written exam for all sections and instructional methods. Initial results of the exam were below faculty expectations. Subsequently, faculty agreed to rewrite the exam to better correspond with course materials and to create a course schedule of instruction and assignments that would be common to all sections of Computer Applications. The changes were implemented in fall 2009, and the average score on the final exam improved from 50 percent in 2009 to 95 percent in spring 2012.

General education faculty have used assessment to make changes to curriculum, instruction, standardized measurements, textbooks and other course resources since the implementation of the assessment matrix.

General education faculty also participate in annual program reviews to ensure that student learning assessment data is being collected and that it drives decision-making processes to improve student learning.

Cocurricular

Another element of assessment is cocurricular activities at WATC. These activities are created when there is an academic relationship between program-specific courses and other course offerings, including general education courses. A prime example at WATC is the *Global Professional Standards* course that is required for the majority of programs. This course assesses student soft skills in the areas of teamwork, conflict-resolution, and listening. Students are also assessed on their understanding of work ethics, writing résumés and cover letters, and interviewing.

All technical certificate programs have specific general education requirements. Some programs have identified these courses as prerequisites, while others allow students to take their general education requirements throughout the program. In both situations, the combination of technical and general education creates another cocurricular assessment. For example, in the Automotive Service Technology program, students must be able to utilize computers, talk to customers, and perform measurements. Although these skills are assessed in individual general education courses, they are applied throughout the technical curriculum.

Overall, cocurricular assessment occurs in technical program assessment and as a part of the assessment of general education courses. Faculty provide immediate feedback using a variety of course assessment methods and follow formalized assessment utilizing the seven-column assessment matrix.

WATC has struggled to implement an assessment tool that measures cocurricular results for associate degree students; instead the college has focused on technical and general education separately.

Survey Results

The final component of the assessment process is the integration of survey results. _Student evaluation_ and placement survey results provide faculty feedback regarding the WATC student experience. _Noel-Levitz SSI_ results give faculty insight into student satisfaction and expectations. These and all other survey results are utilized as indirect measures in the program-review and assessment processes.

Program Sheets
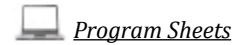
Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

WATC recognizes the role it plays in meeting regional workforce demands and the importance of increasing enrollment, retention, and completion to meet this demand. As is common with most two-year colleges, many students come to WATC underprepared for postsecondary education and need significant support to bring their academic skills up to a level where they can be successful. Many times these same students have difficulties navigating the admissions, registration, and financial aid processes. In addition, a large percentage of students are economically disadvantaged; in 2012, over 1,800 students were eligible for a _Pell grant_. With these factors in mind, the college made a strong commitment to design, implement, and continuously improve processes and interventions that positively impact student success. Improvements include significantly upgrading technology at the college; implementing a new academic-coaching model; designing an admissions process that is better suited to the needs of WATC's students; and providing leadership to focus on retention, engagement, and student success.

Core Component 4.C.1

The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its missions, student populations, and educational offerings.

WATC has goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are guided by KBOR's Foresight 2020 plan, a ten-year strategic agenda for the state's public higher-education system. This plan sets long-range achievement goals that are measureable and reportable, and it ensures that the state's higher-education system meets Kansans' expectations. The strategic agenda filters down into the college's objectives through the performance agreement between WATC and KBOR.

Performance agreements for public higher-education institutions in Kansas were established by the Kansas legislature and tied to new state funds to these improvement plans. KBOR is responsible for reviewing and approving performance agreements and for providing technical assistance to the institutions as they develop, implement, and revise their particular performance agreements. With the approval of KBOR's strategic plan, Foresight 2020, each institution's agreement is expected to reflect the goals of that

plan in a way appropriate to the institution's characteristics and mission. KBOR is also responsible for determining the amount of new state funds to be awarded based on the institution's level of compliance with the performance agreement and the funds available for distribution. WATC submits a new performance agreement to KBOR every three years.

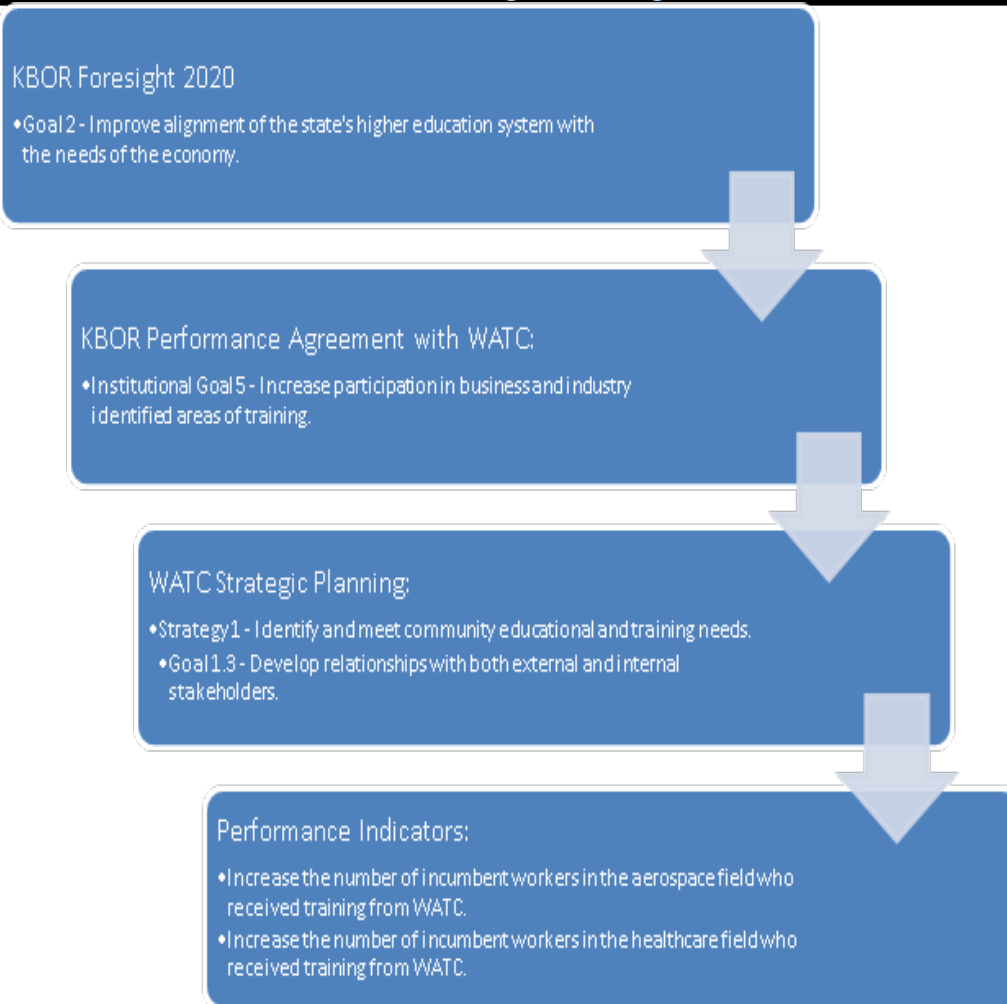*WATC leadership has made progress in integrating KBOR strategic measures with those of the college.* In WATC's *2012–2014 Performance Agreement,* Institutional Goal 5 is to increase participation in business and industry identified areas of training. Specifically, the performance indicators are to increase the number of workers in healthcare and aerospace fields who receive training from WATC. This goal is directly tied to the KBOR Foresight 2020's goal of enhancing alignment between the work of the state's higher-education system and the needs of Kansas' economy. It is also tied to the WATC *2011–2015 Strategic Plan*, specifically Strategy 1, Goal 1.3, where action plans are established to meet the targets. See Figure 4.1, Kansas Board of Regents Foresight 2020.

KBOR Foresight 2020 (2014)

KBOR Foresight 2020 (2012)

Figure 4.1

Kansas Board of Regents Foresight 2020

KBOR Foresight 2020
- Goal 2 - Improve alignment of the state's higher education system with the needs of the economy.

KBOR Performance Agreement with WATC:
- Institutional Goal 5 - Increase participation in business and industry identified areas of training.

WATC Strategic Planning:
- Strategy 1 - Identify and meet community educational and training needs.
  - Goal 1.3 - Develop relationships with both external and internal stakeholders.

Performance Indicators:
- Increase the number of incumbent workers in the aerospace field who received training from WATC.
- Increase the number of incumbent workers in the healthcare field who received training from WATC.

Core Component 4.C.2

The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.

Investment in Banner Enterprise Resource Planning System

The college has made substantial investments in technology resources to improve students' learning experiences and to better equip faculty and staff so they can perform processes more efficiently and make better-informed decisions. The biggest of these investments began in academic year 2008–2009 when the college chose to invest in a new *Enterprise Resource Planning* (ERP) system, Banner. The college's previous ERP system, Jenzabar, did not have the flexibility to properly support lean and competitive processes, and it did not provide easy access to data for decision-making purposes. Jenzabar's financial stability was also an ongoing concern. The timing of these concerns coincided with the commitment from Sedgwick County Board of County Commissioners to build NCAT and name WATC as the managing partner. These factors prompted the college's leadership to replace the existing ERP system with a more comprehensive system to allow WATC to meet current needs and manage the growth anticipated with the opening of the new facility.

> *The implementation of Banner allowed the college to do a better job of monitoring student enrollment-based measures; however, more possibilities exist for Banner to aid in this endeavor.*

The investment in a comprehensive ERP system provided numerous benefits to the college and to students and demonstrated WATC's commitment to improve retention, persistence, and completion rates. The most significant benefit is the ability to quickly pull data for decision-making purposes. This allows college personnel to track trends, calculate retention and degree completion rates, and track the effectiveness of intervention strategies. The ERP system also provides the ability to track cohorts through their time at WATC. Faculty, staff, and administration can examine factors that enhance or inhibit student success in specific populations, track completion trends among different programs, and provide disaggregated data for analysis. Other college benefits include improved access to student information, more timely internal and external reporting, better evaluation of current processes to improve efficiencies, and seamless integration of all systems used by the college.

Data Collection and Analysis

Effective assessment and improvement efforts require accurate and accessible information about the college's students, their activities, and factors that enhance or inhibit their chances of success. WATC continuously collects and analyzes this information and uses it in the college's planning processes as well as in assessment-related activities across the college. Much of this collection occurs in IR, but many other departments work collaboratively with IR to collect, analyze, and disseminate the information.

> *Common definitions are used when examining retention and graduation rates, allowing for meaningful comparisons.*

Contract for Banner Purchase

Board Minutes Authorizing Banner

WATC's data collection and reporting initiatives include an annual summary report and the Noel-Levitz SSI reports.

Annual Summary Report

Annually, the director, IR, compiles a *summary report* that provides an overview of the academic year and compares it to previous years as a means to identify trends. The data is disseminated to stakeholders across campuses to be used in strategic planning, enrollment management, and assessment activities. The data is used as a reference in developing performance agreements and division, department, and program goals. The report examines enrollment trends by looking at total enrollment and breakdowns by semester, program, award level, academic subject, campus, time, and mode of delivery. Student characteristic information is included, such as age, ethnicity, and gender. Spe-

Annual Summary Reports provide the college overview data from the previous year that can be used in the planning process.

cial attention is also given to the county and ZIP code area where the college's students reside. Program completion is measured by examining graduation and completion rates, which are broken down by degree level, gender, and age. Program cohorts are examined to illustrate any trends in attrition from semester to semester as a student progresses through a program. Since many of WATC's students transfer to other colleges or universities, a section is devoted to the location of transcript requests. Finally, information is provided on placement testing, use of ASCs, and data on the progression of students through developmental math and English courses into upper-level courses required for technical certificates and AAS degrees.

Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory

Student feedback is crucial to WATC's improvement efforts and is used throughout the strategic planning process as well as in individual departments. The primary instrument used to gather student feedback is the *Noel-Levitz SSI*, which is administered annually. The Noel-Levitz SSI provides a measure of what is important to WATC students and their corresponding satisfaction with those items. The results provide a gap measure of the difference between the level of importance and satisfaction. Items with large gaps indicate that WATC is not meeting the expectations of students. Small gaps indicate strengths or areas where WATC is meeting student expectations. IR analyzes the surveys and disseminates an annual report that provides each department a summary of student responses. The Noel-Levitz SSI provides comparison tools for two-year colleges in Kansas and nationally. The Noel-Levitz SSI data is used to improve multiple aspects of student experiences at WATC. Areas that have large performance gaps are given special attention in the strategic planning process and are often used as measurements for action plans across the college. *Strategy 2, Goal 2.5*, of the strategic plan has several performance indicators that utilize the Noel-Levitz SSI. For example, satisfaction with processes for student's complaints was one area that students rated low over a three-year period beginning in 2009. This was addressed by defining clear processes

for appeals and grievances in the _Academic_ and _Student_ Code of Conducts and providing an _online form_ for students to submit complaints through their myWATC accounts. Other responses to student feedback from the Noel-Levitz SSI include improvements to the _Student Academic Reports_ (SARs), an early-alert warning system and the implementation of the academic coaching model. The Noel-Levitz SSI is integrated into the academic program-review process. Section C of program review asks for the items with the highest gap rating and then prompts the faculty member to identify action plans to address these issues.

Core Component 4.C.3

The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of program to make improvement as warranted by the data.

WATC is committed to a process of continuous improvement in the areas of retention, persistence, and completion. The college has researched, planned, and initiated a variety of programs and initiatives based on the data that is collected and analyzed. As a technical college, WATC looks not only at the retention, persistence, and completion rates, but also at indicators, such as licensure, certification, job placement, and student satisfaction, to gauge the effectiveness of programs and to make improvements. WATC is cognizant of the make-up of its student population and the fact that many students face challenges that can have a tremendous impact on their success at WATC. Many of WATC's students fall into one or more of these categories: economically disadvantaged, first-generation college student, minority, non-traditional, and/or works full-time to support themselves and their families. Many students come to WATC underprepared and require developmental coursework to improve math, reading, and writing skills. This information, along with results from student satisfaction surveys and analysis of institutional retention and completion rates, has led to design and implementation of several initiatives aimed at improving support services and retention/completion rates.

Faculty must become more involved in the usage of retention, persistence, and completion data.

myWATC

In addition to the data reporting and analysis benefits, the upgraded ERP system provides many benefits to students and the college that foster student engagement, increase efficiency, and improve retention and persistence efforts. The benefits for the students include the ability to complete numerous processes online via Banner's Luminis Portal, myWATC, which provides individuals with a single entry point to the digital campus. This provides a gateway to collaboration and community building by facilitating an online experience tailored to each individual's role and relationship within the college. This online environment can be customized by the college and the individual. The _myWATC portal_ helps meet increasing demands from students by allowing them to access

information and complete the following processes online:

- Track admission requirements

- Register for courses

- Access to online learning

- Print unofficial transcripts

- Update personal contact information

- Track the financial aid application process and awards

- Check account balances and make payments

- Correspond with faculty, staff, and other students

Math and English Progression Reports

myDegreePlan

The college made another investment in software that directly supports and enhances student retention and persistence to graduation. DegreeWorks is a complement to the Banner system and provides a comprehensive degree-audit system for use by students, academic coaches, and faculty to track progress toward program completion. The system provides a real-time academic plan that students can access from their myWATC account. DegreeWorks, dubbed myDegreePlan at WATC, provides students with the information they need to navigate the college's academic requirements through an intuitive online self-service interface. Allowing students access to their degree plan helps them better understand what is needed to graduate so they can plan accordingly to maximize their time. The system also provides a what-if feature, which allows students or academic coaches to quickly plan for a change in courses, major, or program award level. This allows students to immediately see the impact the decision will have on their future semesters and anticipated time to completion.

While the system has features that allow students to invest personally in their academic advising, it is not intended as a replacement to face-to-face advising. Rather, it provides a more efficient way for academic coaches to access data because the information is now available in one location. The increased

myDegree plan empowers students to take ownership of their own educational plan.

efficiencies allow academic coaches more time to foster personal relationships with students, which is the key to WATC's academic coaching model. Finally, *DegreeWorks* provides enhanced academic reporting tools that give WATC's academic departments better information to plan for course demands and enrollment management.

Transition to Academic Coaching Model

In 2011, as part of an overall focus on improving student support services, WATC began work to update the traditional advising model to an academic coaching model to

provide more support to at-risk students and to boost retention and completion rates. The academic coaching model is a major change in the way the college approaches academic advising. Traditionally, academic advisors would meet with students early in the admissions and enrollment processes and guide them through the initial steps of selecting programs and registering for courses. Students would then return each semester to meet with an advisor and re-enroll for the upcoming semester. Advisors were available throughout the semester for advice and support, but many students did not take advantage of this opportunity. Instead, they only returned to meet with an advisor to re-enroll for the subsequent semester. An analysis of the annual Noel-Levitz SSI results showed that the traditional advising model was not meeting student expectations. The 2010 and 2011 Noel-Levitz SSI results both indicated that there were large performance gaps with items related to academic advising. According to Noel-Levitz, large gaps (i.e., 1.25 or higher) indicate that WATC is not meeting student expectations. Specifically, the "my academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual" and "my academic advisor helps me set goals to work toward" items both had large performance gaps and were areas where the college could make improvements. The college collected data on the demographic make-up of the student population. A large percentage of the student population had one or more factors that the college believed put *students at-risk*. These factors included being economically disadvantaged; being a first-generation college student; being employed more than 20 hours a week; being a single parent; and/or having poor fundamental math, reading, and writing skills. The combination of the Noel-Levitz SSI results and the large percentage of at-risk students prompted the college to re-examine the role of academic advising.

> *The college must assess the effectiveness of the academic coaching process as well as other student services that impact retention and completion.*

The academic coaching model provided a more personalized approach to helping students succeed. Students are assigned an academic coach who stays with them throughout their time at WATC. The academic coach's role is to provide continuous support and intervention beginning with students' initial appointment and continuing through graduation. Academic coaches are trained to act in an intrusive or proactive manner, probe for warning signs or factors that may cause students to struggle, and then help students create a plan to overcome those obstacles. The tools used in this approach include attendance reports, faculty referrals, registrar reports, and predictive analytics based on student interviews during enrollment. For example, in spring 2013, the coaching model was directly responsible for dramatically reducing the number of *students being dropped* from their courses due to nonpayment. Academic coaches made the effort to contact students, to determine courses of action, and to work with internal and external funding resources to ensure that payments were made and students stayed in college. Two weeks prior to the start of the semester, the number of students who were at-risk for being dropped neared 500, but only 18 students were dropped for nonpayment later in the semester.

Role of the Dean of Students in Retention Efforts

In summer 2011, the responsibilities of the *dean of students* were re-evaluated in an effort to strengthen the focus on retention-related efforts. The review suggested that the existing practices could be strengthened by reassigning a number of smaller operational obligations to allow the dean of students to take on substantial responsibilities for ongoing retention assessment and proactive actions to improve retention. The redefined role of the dean of students signifies a strong commitment to the college's retention efforts by researching, developing, advising, and leading actions and services that result in documented improvements in student retention, persistence, and graduation rates.

Strategic Enrollment Planning

WATC has committed to a continuous improvement process using the strategic enrollment management (SEM) planning model. Beginning with the original SEM plan developed in 2005, the college made improvements to processes that have directly impacted student retention, persistence, and completion. Through this process, the college went through a reorganization of the admissions and registrations departments, implemented the SARs early-alert warning system, and streamlined the student services functions into a one-stop model. The most recent version was developed in 2012 and renamed a *Retention Plan*. It focuses on providing a strong foundation for student success. Improvements are underway to enhance the early-alert warning system to include at-risk indicators using predictive questions asked during the admissions process. Other improvements include transitioning to the academic coaching model and improving admissions, financial aid, and enrollment processes to better prepare students to be ready to learn on the first day of classes.

Course Schedules

As discussed earlier, the strategic planning process produced performance indicators and action plans designed to meet the goals outlined in the strategic plan. One goal that came about during the process was to increase the completion rate of technical certificate students enrolled in the Air Conditioning Technology, Automotive Service Technology, Machining Technology, and Welding programs. These programs suffer from low completion rates. *Goal 2.3 of the strategic plan* focuses on improving completion rates for these programs by targeting specific retention efforts for each of the programs identified. Research into the data revealed that many students were completing the technical portion of the program but either failing to enroll or failing to complete the required general education coursework. This prompted the director, Academic Coaching and Enrollment, and the dean, General Education, to research the days and times these courses are offered and make changes to *general education class schedules* so they better align with technical education class schedules to encourage more students to enroll and complete general education courses. The academic coaching model and myDegreePlan allow academic coaches to create individually prescribed plans of action to help students reach their goals. Overall, the college set a goal to increase completion rates each

Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction - Advising Breakdown

Annual Summary Report

Academic Coaching Introduction

Academic Coaching Manual

year from a baseline of 27 percent and will review the effectiveness of the strategies each year to make improvements.

Core Component 4.C.4

The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

WATC has developed a systematic approach for collecting, analyzing, and reporting information on student retention, persistence, and completion that satisfies both the college's internal assessment needs and the needs of external constituents. Many of these activities begin with *IR* whose mission is to collect, analyze, and disseminate accurate information that contributes to effective planning, decision-making, and continuous improvement. IR is also primarily responsible for responding to internal and external data requests and fulfilling data-reporting requirements by state and federal agencies.

SEM Plan - 2005

SEM Plan - 2008

WATC submits annual reports to KBOR based on the definitions and measures specified by its Data, Research, and Planning unit. Similarly, the college submits data to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) using IPEDS guidelines.

Embedding General Education Courses in Programs

> *Defining retention is a challenge. Many students come to WATC not for a degree or certificate, but to take a particular course or courses either to transfer to another institution or for their own edification.*

IR also responds to other DOE mandates, such as *Gainful Employment* and Higher Education Opportunity Act information. IR also provides data to business and industry partners, city and county governments, media, and external accreditors. Additionally, IR acts on internal data requests from college constituents and provides valid and reliable information to be used to make informed decisions that direct planning efforts, improve programs and services, and advance the college.

IR also compiles an *annual summary report* that provides a wealth of data that can be used by individual departments and administration to identify areas of concern and areas where there are successes. The report provides yearly statistics and comparisons to previous years to show trends. The report includes information on enrollment trends, student characteristics, completions and placement, testing and academic success, financial aid, and adult literacy. This report is provided to faculty and staff and is used throughout the assessment process.

WATC Federal and State Reporting Calendar

IPEDS Reporting Calendar