

4 - 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.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

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

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
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.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
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).

Argument

Argument

COTC maintains a practice of regular program reviews. The College and its programs are guided by the mission, vision and values as well as KPIs related to student outcomes and academic excellence. Program review is an important part of the continuous quality improvement cycle, reflecting the values of the College and assuring its mission is met. The College maintains regular program reviews through both internal and external processes. For example, academic advisory committees provide valuable feedback and recommendations to the various programs and technologies, serving as an integral part of the systematic plan for evaluation for the programs.

The College's formal program review process is linked to the assessment of student learning and the budgetary process. The process includes comprehensive program performance data, including but not limited to demographics, program completion statistics and regional market data. The program review process is mapped on a public multi-year schedule available on the IR&E webpage. The guidelines and program review template are available at this same webpage, as well as all program review supporting documents.

Accredited programs complete comprehensive program review when submitting self-study documents to their accrediting agencies. These same reports are utilized for internal program review processes to maintain an efficient process and avoid duplication of work. In addition, many of the College's technology programs (e.g. Health Sciences, EMS, Early Childhood Education, etc.) provide comprehensive annual reports to their regulatory and accrediting agencies. Several of the technology programs also engage in systematic review of their programs on an ongoing basis. One example of this is the Nursing program, which is required to have a structured systematic evaluation plan by both the Ohio Board of Nursing and the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). Other examples include Basic Police Academy audits, Ohio Department of Health audits of the Radiologic Technology program, and annual reports submitted by the Diagnostic Medical Sonography (DMS) and Surgical Technology programs.

COTC has defined policies on the evaluation and transcription of all transfer credit, non-traditional credit and other forms of credit for prior learning. The institution has a designated administrator to evaluate transfer credit and all forms of non-traditional course credit. In addition, a Prior Learning Assessment Policy is in place to ensure the proper articulation and transcription of statewide courses such as TAGs, Career Technical Assurance Guide (CTAGs), Military Transfer Assurance Guide (MTAGs), and OTMs.

Evaluation of transfer credit occurs for all courses transcribed for college credit at COTC. Guidelines for transferring college credit from another regionally accredited institution is outlined in the Prior Learning Assessment Policy. Transfer credit is evaluated and articulated by a member of the Gateway using course descriptions from the Transfer Evaluation System (TES) from College Source. TES is a resource that allows the transcript evaluator to examine almost any college course description from any regionally accredited institution, which helps uphold the quality of the course work the college transfers. Once an equivalency has been determined, it is built in the student information system within Ellucian Colleague to ensure consistency on credit evaluations of that course. If the course cannot be determined as a college-equivalent course through the course description, the course syllabi may need to be provided by the student to determine the possibility of transfer credit. Any student wishing to challenge their transfer credit award can appeal to have their credits re-reviewed per the Prior Learning Assessment Policy.

The College offers diverse opportunities for students to earn non-traditional credit. A student can earn non-traditional credit through National Standardized Placement Test such as CLEP, AP

exams offered through College Board, International Baccalaureate (IB) credit, portfolio assessment, industry and workplace credit, and institutional proficiency examination, all of which are clearly defined in the Prior Learning Assessment Policy. The College has clear standards on the AP, CLEP and IB credits it accepts, and the minimum scores needed for all of the exams are outlined accordingly in the Prior Learning Assessment Policy.

The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer. COTC's credit policy is established within the tenets of The Ohio Articulation and Transfer Policy adopted by the ODHE in 1990. To ensure the quality of the credits that the College accepts, COTC only accepts transfer credit from post-secondary institutions holding regional and/or professional accreditation from an association recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). In addition, the College accepts international transcripts, but only after they have been evaluated by a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES).

COTC is a member of the University System of Ohio (USO) which comprises all public two- and four-year higher education institutions in the state. This provides guaranteed portability of courses approved for transfer within the USO. The USO-approved transfer courses are comprised of TAG, OTM, MTAG and CTAG courses. TAG courses are generally associated with courses that students take in their major or plan of study. OTM courses fulfill freshman or sophomore level GE requirements such as English, mathematics, arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, and in some cases, interdisciplinary studies. MTAG refers to college-level learning that took place through military training, experience and coursework. College credit will be granted to students with military training, experience and/or coursework that is recognized by the American Council on Education (ACE) or a regionally accredited military institution, such as Community College of the Air Force. CTAGs refer to course credit for students in secondary or adult career-technical schools who successfully complete specified technical programs and thus have technical credit transfer to public colleges and universities. Technical transfer courses older than 10 years at the time of planned graduation may need to be repeated and should be discussed with an academic advisor. Additionally, no more than 75 percent of the credits required for the degree or certificate will be accepted through the combination of non-traditional credit transfer options as outlined in the Prior Learning Assessment Policy.

COTC 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.

The College maintains authority over the quality and rigor of courses, programs and the qualifications of program faculty. The authority rests with the Office of Academic Affairs and faculty-driven committees such as the Curriculum Committee and the Student Learning Assessment Steering Committee (SLASC). Quality and rigor are achieved through effective collaboration among faculty, administration and academic advisory committees.

Course prerequisites are identified in the development of course or program proposals. These proposals are then submitted to the Curriculum Committee by faculty through academic deans/directors for review and approval prior to recommendation to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. All course prerequisites are explicitly stated in the published course descriptions and reviewed on an annual basis. In instances where students request a course substitution, the appropriate dean/director and the Director of Academic Operations review and evaluate submitted materials to ensure that the courses meet the requirements of the program. Full-time faculty and the Director of Academic Operations also evaluate requests for prior learning to ensure that the documented experiences match course learning outcomes.

Rigor of courses is ensured through both internal and external processes. Internally, courses are developed and recommended for approval through the Curriculum Committee. Externally, courses are submitted to the ODHE and, when applicable, reviewed through a state-mandated process for TAGs, OTMs, CTAGs, and MTAGs. State and national regulatory bodies and programmatic accrediting agencies provide guidance for the technical programs. Faculty regularly update courses in response to changing requirements and submit courses to the Curriculum Committee for review. All of these processes validate consistency and rigor as well as transferability of the courses. Additionally, program review and academic advisory committees aid in providing recommendations for program and course development and assessment.

Expectations for student learning are clearly articulated at the college, program and course levels. The College has identified general education outcomes that should be achieved by every student completing a plan of study. Programs have identified student learning outcomes that students accomplish upon completion of that program. Finally, every course utilizes a syllabus to clearly identify the student learning outcomes as well as the performance objectives that each student must meet to successfully pass the course. This process is monitored by the Curriculum Committee. Full- and part-time faculty are also encouraged to file early alerts when they see evidence that students are not meeting the expected outcomes.

Faculty qualifications are ensured by the Office of Academic Affairs in collaboration with HR. Academic deans/directors review application materials and transcripts to ensure compliance with minimum programmatic accreditation requirements. In addition, the Director of Academic Operations reviews the credentials of full-time faculty to ensure compliance with policies established by the College in accordance with standards and guidelines set forth by the HLC. The Director of Instruction completes this process for all part-time faculty. A standard background check performed by HR confirms the conferral of academic degrees listed on the applications of potential instructors, and official transcripts are housed in Academic Affairs.

Courses that are offered as part of Ohio's dual enrollment program, College Credit Plus (CCP), must comply with all standard college courses offered by COTC. Each public high school must offer at least one dual enrollment course and must work to develop two pathway opportunities through CCP, one that allows students to earn 15 transcribed credits and one that allows students to earn 30 transcribed credits. These pathways must be developed in coordination with at least one partnering institution of higher education. The faculty credentialing process for CCP instructors is the same as the process outlined above for all COTC faculty.

COTC takes great pride in seeking, acquiring and maintaining specialized accreditation for its academic programs. Attaining and sustaining programmatic accreditation demonstrates the College's commitment to maintaining specialized accreditation as both financial and personnel resources are dedicated. Between March 2016 and March 2017, eight programs completed the programmatic accreditation process with their respective accrediting body. Of those eight, four were initial accreditation attempts. All programs were successful with attaining accreditation status. At present, COTC has program accreditation for the following associate degree programs: Early Childhood Education, DMS, Surgical Technology, Radiologic Science Technology, Nursing, Human Services, EMS, Business Management, Fire Science, and Engineering.

The Culinary Science, Accounting, DMD and Computer Information technologies have begun the process for obtaining accreditation and are at various stages in the process. A master document that tracks the accreditation status of these programs is presented to the Board of Trustees and the SPC, and is available on the website.

COTC regularly evaluates the success of its graduates, and ensures that the degree or certificate program prepares the students for advanced study or employment. A variety of metrics are utilized to analyze graduate success at the college and program level. Results of the various measures are available to the public on the website and on the specific program webpages, and are routinely reported to communities of interest such as the Board of Trustees and academic advisory committees. Certain measures are monitored as KPIs. The institution also utilizes external sources such as state and national pay scale results to assess graduate success, as well as progression and completion reports from state agencies such as the ODHE.

Additional metrics related to graduate success include but are not limited to job placement rates, graduate satisfaction, employer satisfaction, program completion rates, program licensure/registry/certification rates and graduate articulation to advanced degree programs. These results are obtained either through IR&E or periodic surveys distributed by the College or technical programs. Results are then aggregated, analyzed and shared appropriately.

All technical programs have end-of-program student learning outcomes against which graduates are measured for successful completion. Various programs have systematic evaluation plans that specify expected levels of achievement for program standards and criterion. These evaluation plans are required by program regulatory and accreditation agencies.

Anecdotal feedback is also received from graduates through communications with faculty and social media. Employers provide informal feedback through preceptorships, practicum experiences, clinical site visits and academic advisory committee meetings.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
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.

Argument

COTC has clearly stated goals for student learning, and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals. The College clearly defines student learning outcomes for each program of study and individual course. Program learning outcomes are clearly stated online under each program of study, and through program Fact Sheets distributed on the website and by the Gateway. Student learning outcomes include common GE outcomes in all programs. In the technologies, learning goals and outcomes include skills and professional competence essential for an employee working in a diverse workforce. They are also influenced by the specific goals and ethical standards of the field of study.

All courses at COTC articulate learning outcomes and skills required to meet these outcomes. If a course is part of the TAG or OTM, the College employs the learning outcomes established by the ODHE. A syllabus further defines student learning outcomes. The class syllabus details instructional and assessment strategies. In many cases, faculty members can alter it to reflect their individual approach to addressing the learning outcomes. Some courses have common assessment detailed specifically. The standardized course syllabus defines learning outcomes and corollary performance objectives. It ensures curriculum integrity, and it cannot be altered without going through the curriculum approval process. Syllabi are distributed to students on the first day of class to clarify faculty expectations and curricular requirements.

The SLASC assesses courses based on student achievement of established program learning outcomes. As part of the process, faculty set benchmarks for the desired percentage of students who meet the learning outcome, and employ a specific assignment to determine whether students are meeting that outcome. The specific guidelines for assessing courses are presented on the SLASC organization page in the portal.

COTC and the SLASC have created an integrated, college-wide approach to learning outcome data collection and assessment activities. The assessment process involves a continuous practice of assessing, reviewing and implementing. Annual presentations are given by program area

faculty and reflect program learning outcomes as measured in the courses that make up that program.

Measures for program assessment of courses and sections utilize a variety of assessment methods and tools as designated by the program's assessment master plan. Within programs, outcomes are assessed using a variety of methods such as the use of rubrics, homework, projects and items embedded into course examinations. In many of the technical programs, assessment may be provided by guidelines of external accreditation agencies and national examinations specialized for content. This historical assessment data is used to "close the loop" on the assessment process by capturing changes proposed in the previous assessment cycle for comparison with future assessment reviews. The SLASC is currently developing a process for action items based on the committee's recommendations to presenters.

COTC uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning. The College routinely collects and analyzes student learning assessment data in order to help faculty better understand how and why they need to implement necessary changes in curriculum and instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. The SLASC reviews student assessment data and the processes of COTC departments and programs. All program assessment reports are stored in a common folder on the College's portal. Minutes of the SLASC meetings are posted on the portal. The following examples demonstrate how the College has used assessment data to improve student learning:

- Several COTC programs evaluate student learning outcomes through pass rates on nationally-normed examinations. These pass rates are also employed in the process of improving student learning. For example, the Nursing program pass rates on the NCLEX were below an acceptable level, so faculty and staff meticulously reviewed the curriculum to identify gaps and areas that were in need of further development.
- In the Human Services course, HSV-120 Direct Practice Skills, one of the stated learning outcomes is to apply interpersonal skills in helping relationships, including crisis intervention and group dynamics. Student performance is assessed by having students complete a final videotaped project where they demonstrate interviewing and interpersonal skills. A grading rubric was designed as an assessment tool, and a new, more detailed assessment tool was also implemented. The results of overall student performance based on this rubric were compared to the student performance results from the previous, less detailed assessment tool. This analysis showed an improvement in student performance on this final project. The College has continued using the new, more detailed assessment tool to analyze specific skills and determine areas that may need strengthening.
- The Department of Biological and Physical Sciences established the learning outcome "demonstrate how scientific literature is retrieved and synthesized" to ensure students developed this important science process skill. After reviewing assessment data, it was determined that students could efficiently retrieve scientific articles; however, they struggled with the synthesis of the information from those articles. Several changes were incorporated to improve students learning in regards to this learning outcome. More detailed instruction on paraphrasing was included in Moodle to assist students with information synthesis. Additionally, a practice assignment was created to provide

students with direct feedback before they complete the assignment. Finally, the librarians are asked to come into the face-to-face classes to review how to synthesize information from peer-reviewed sources.

The College's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members. COTC faculty follow proper procedures for approval of course descriptions and course learning outcomes as outlined by the Curriculum Committee and the ODHE as TAGs, CTAGs and OTMs, where applicable. Faculty members revise and update the program master plan where student learning outcomes are the central theme. The program master plan evaluation and annual assessment report are then presented to the SLASC. Any resulting recommendation to revise student learning outcomes or create a new course go through COTC's curriculum approval process. The faculty members on the Curriculum Committee review a number of criteria, including credit hours, contact hours, syllabus format, Blooms vocabulary, student learning outcomes, delivery mode, outcome assessment and grade distribution for quality instruction.

COTC's Center for Student Success participated in both the GE and the Developmental Education program reviews in order to provide perspective regarding academic support services that complement in-class instruction.

4.C - 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.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
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.)

Argument

The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings. COTC's strategic plan identifies "Enhancing Student Success" as its top priority. The College is committed to promoting a learning environment dedicated to student achievement by developing and implementing a recruitment, enrollment, and retention plan that grows enrollment and fosters successful student completion, job placement or further education; provides educational pathways for under-prepared students; and provides a comprehensive array of effective student and academic support services.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the plan, the College has identified a number of KPIs, including several in the areas of persistence and completion. "Retention" is defined as a measure of persistence at COTC that is separated by full- and part-time status, and based upon first-time degree and/or certificate-seeking students from the previous autumn who either re-enrolled or successfully completed their program by the current autumn. In connection with the plan launched in 2014, this metric has been redefined to include all students who are new to the College regardless of prior postsecondary education experiences. The indicator is called "two-year cohort outcomes". "Graduation rate" is the number of full-time, first-time degree- and/or certificate-seeking students completing their program within 150 percent of normal time to completion, and "completions" is the total degrees and certificates awarded. During the five-year life of the plan, a baseline and target are identified for each of the KPIs, and progress is assessed annually. Under the current plan, the College is striving to improve its outcomes rate by 4 percent and its graduation rate by 6 percent. With respect to completions, the College is targeting 67 additional degree completions each year, a 13 percent increase. These key metrics become even more critical in the future as the State of Ohio utilizes an outcome-based funding formula.

By design, these measures will further heighten COTC's focus on student success and will directly correlate to additional revenue for the institution.

The College utilizes a variety of key metrics to assess student retention, persistence and completion of programs that reflect good practice. The completion plan articulates a variety of measures, including but not limited to placement, course progression, graduation rates, time to completion and term-to-term persistence rates. The strategic plan encompasses KPIs, and the COTC operational plan identifies initiatives underway, with the overarching goal of both plans being quality and performance improvement. External reports such as survey results from the CCSSE and the National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP) are also utilized to determine quality improvement in the student experience.

A variety of internal reports are generated to assist with assessment of student retention, persistence and program completion. Various reports related to student retention, early alerts, and enrollment are provided to Gateway and academic leadership. An Early Alert Coordinator position was designated in 2016 as a result of some of these report results. Reports are generated and maintained to assist with program review, including demographics, occupational information, enrollment, graduation rates and completion rates. The Office of Career Development also generates reports based on graduate and employer surveys.

The following are ways in which the institution currently collects and monitors student retention, persistence and completion:

- IPEDS data is used to track college-wide retention, persistence and graduation rates for full-time, first-time students and completion for all enrolled students. This data is used as part of the annual KPIs for the college-wide strategic plan which is analyzed by executive leadership and the Board of Trustees.
- Since the majority of the COTC student population does not fall into the full-time, first-time student category used by IPEDS, the College uses additional methods to analyze retention, persistence and completion rates. Beginning in 2014, COTC started using a measure which includes essentially all students. The new two-year cohort outcome measure is the percentage of students entering a specific term who fall into one of these mutually-exclusive groups: earned a credential by the end of their second year, transferred out before earning a credential prior to the end of their first year, or were still enrolled the second year divided by the total number of students entering that particular term.
- COTC participates in the NCCBP and has collected four years of data. The College utilized the NCCBP information about which institutions were achieving the most recognition for best practices to define a group of aspirational peers to compare IPEDS and CCSSE data.
- Reporting used for measuring retention and persistence include HEI reporting, National Student Clearinghouse, Student Tracker research, NCCBP research, OACC Benchmarking Student Connection and OACC/CCRC Momentum KPI's research.
- Internal reports include two-year cohort outcome measure research, Retention Alert reporting, fail/withdraw reporting, sequential course completion reporting, stop out reporting, duplicative transfer credit reporting, potential graduate reporting, AmeriCorps

College Completion Coaching reporting, felony student reporting and Multiple Measure Cut Score reporting.

- Retention Alert is a software utilized by the College that assists faculty, staff and students with retention issues. Additionally, the College has 1 FTE staff member dedicated to retention.
- The College implemented the Student Planning Software by Ellucian that will assist faculty, staff and students with retention and persistence in Autumn 2017.
- Specific requirements for collecting and analyzing retention, persistence and completion data are embedded in the College's academic program review process. Faculty analyze data from IR&E, which includes factors such as cost of program and equipment to determine how improvements can be made to increase completion rates. Program reviews are presented to executive leadership to allow for comment and recommendations. The program review schedule is available on the website.

Furthermore, programs that are specifically accredited by an external accrediting agency may require their own set of retention and completion standards. For example, the Nursing program collects and analyzes multiple data sets, including program completion data by program and by campus, completion within 150 percent of program length, and performance on national licensure examinations. Thresholds for licensure pass rates are set by the Ohio Board of Nursing and the ACEN. Reports are submitted to regulatory and accrediting bodies on an annual basis.

The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data. In addition to attention to educational improvement at the college level, the technology programs also utilize various data sets for operational and regulatory purposes as well as quality management. Programs such as Nursing have formal systematic evaluation plans that include assessment and response to identified metrics. Programs monitor enrollment, attrition, program completion, graduation rates, employment rates, and licensure and registry rates. This data is analyzed and program adjustments are made as appropriate to facilitate educational improvement.

The College carries its commitment to educational improvement through to the course level. Programs such as Nursing regularly complete course reports that are shared across the department, monitoring grade distribution, problem areas and achievement of outcomes. All faculty members participate in assessment of student learning, collecting focused data to evaluate student progression and success. Various surveys, such as end-of-course and end-of-program surveys, are also utilized.

The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice.

Information collected on student retention is used by Gateway staff to compile weekly reports on student enrollment per term. Using this information, Gateway staff adjust their retention strategies to recruit and encourage returning students to enroll and persist to the following term. One example is COTC's Gateway call center initiative. The center receives reports of students earmarked at various potential points within their college career. These reports guide each week's retention call center efforts. Additionally, advisors will use these reports to specifically identify and target students who are close to graduating in an effort to ensure they persist to

degree completion. The information gathered on student retention is used by several committees to specifically address student retention and persistence.

Student success data is also considered in making curricular changes. For example, Multiple Measure placement is now utilized to allow students to use their high school GPA to place into college-level classes. Further curricular changes include redesigning the mathematics pathways for college statistics. The new pathway allows a co-requisite to be used for students to place into college statistics. Multiple pilot sections ran in Autumn 2017 with full implementation in Spring 2018. Additionally, ENGL-112 is moving towards a co-requisite model as well with pilot sections beginning in Autumn 2018.

Another resource the College has implemented to help students persist to degree completion is to offer independent studies. The Office of Academic Affairs offers independent course studies to students who need a course to complete degree requirement. The independent study gives students the flexibility to complete their degree and is offered on a case-by-case basis.

Retention Alert software was purchased and implemented by the College specifically to address college-wide concern about retention. Faculty and staff use Retention Alert to identify students early in the term who are in need of advising intervention and/or student support services. The Retention Alert program gives advisors an advantage when advising and working with students because it collects and compiles student data in one centralized file per student.

Retention programs and resources have been implemented and are offered throughout the College to address specific concerns with student retention and persistence. The Center for Student Success works with students who require additional academic support. It offers assistance in math and writing to students who require it.