

*Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*

A Comprehensive Evaluation Committee Report

Dixie State College  
St. George, Utah  
October 8 – 10, 2012

*A Confidential Report Prepared by the Evaluation committee for the Northwest Commission  
on Colleges and Universities*

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## **I. Evaluators**

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## II. Introduction

An eight-member evaluation committee, accompanied by a staff-liaison from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Dixie State College (DSC). The evaluation, carried out on behalf of the commission, included an on-site review over the period October 8—10, 2012. This report details the findings of the committee's comprehensive evaluation of the college.

Several factors made this self-report and evaluation process unique for all involved. Dixie State College's first site visit in the context of NWCCU's revised standards, this evaluation followed one year after completion of their Year-One Report. In essence, a self and peer-review process designed for seven years was compressed into two. The college did not have the benefit of the Commission's year-three evaluation and the accelerated time frame impeded the collection, analysis and use of the kind of longitudinal data that demonstrations of mission fulfillment more typically depend on.

More importantly, this comprehensive evaluation occurred amidst stunning institutional growth and change. Since the submission of the college's 2007 interim report—and despite the economic recession and reductions in state support--student FTE at Dixie State College has grown by more than 60%. Simultaneously, the college has aggressively moved toward its state-endorsed goal of seeking university status. While the institution established its three original baccalaureate programs in an "incubation period" between 2004 and 2007, program planning and development in the last five years has dramatically accelerated with the approval of four associate of science degrees and thirty-eight new baccalaureate programs in twenty-two content areas (p.112). Several more new programs await approval or are currently being developed. Additional programs, including master's degrees, are under discussion.

The self-study and comprehensive evaluation process is like a time-elapsd portrait taken of stable institutional features and processes over an extended period of time. In contrast, the essential features of Dixie State College—its size, program offerings and purpose—are all changing rapidly. Seeking to simultaneously increase enrollment, establish new majors, and raise program quality commensurate with its aspirations for regional university status, the institution is moving very quickly in three directions at once. Combined with the compressed evaluation cycle, these factors created a quickly moving subject and a challenging evaluation context. Indeed, the self-study was out-of-date before we even received it. In response, the evaluation team worked intentionally to balance our evaluation of the "snapshot" of the college provided by the self-study and our visit with attention to the processes and infrastructure that will determine the future features of the institution. For instance, we looked both at current staffing levels and at the processes used to guide hiring and staffing over the current period of growth and expansion. Fortunately, the accreditation standards, by virtue of their emphasis upon processes of planning and evaluation, permit this very balance.

### **III. Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report and support materials**

This comprehensive evaluation commenced upon receipt of the college's Comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report and supporting documents. These included the Comprehensive Report Appendix of Academic Department Self-Study Profiles, the Comprehensive Report Appendix of Administrative Non-Academic Department Self-Study Profiles, the Basic Institutional Data Form, an electronic copy of the Dixie State College 2012-2013 catalog, an electronic copy of the Dixie State College fall schedule, the institution's most recent annual report and strategic plan, a student-produced short movie of the institution's core themes, and access to the college's new institutional archive.

Evaluators found the Comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report well organized, succinct and clear. Despite the compressed time span, the college was able to articulate its core themes within the larger narrative framework of its institutional context and mission and its strategic planning processes. Supporting documents were provided in both electronic and hard copy formats. Documents that only exist in digital form—such as the on-line catalog—were accessible and easy to navigate. Nearly all electronic links worked. The self-study included frank discussion of self-identified areas of concern, such as faculty workloads and the ratio of full time to adjunct faculty, and progress in the institution's efforts to address these concerns.

Evaluators noted a few exceptions to this general pattern of quality within the self-study. The "Balance Sheet Data" reported on page 6 of the self-study included several errors. In a few instances statements in the self-study were disconfirmed. The self-study notes that "Staff performance appraisals are conducted annually by supervisors," for instance, (p. 56), but staff in some colleges reported they had not been evaluated in several years. In a very few instances a link promised data that was not provided. The link for "Benchmark data collection for Core Theme outcomes and indicators" (p. 164) did not lead to any collected data, for example. Once again, these instances were the exception and not the rule and were largely explained by the compressed time frame; the report fully served the purpose of helping the committee establish an understanding of the institution appropriate to the scope of a comprehensive evaluation.

The eight-member evaluation committee carefully reviewed the Comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report and all supporting materials well in advance of the on-site visit. During the visit, committee members toured campus facilities, reviewed additional documents, and conducted interviews with numerous administrators, faculty, staff and students. When an interview or document led an evaluator to request additional interviews or information, the administrators and staff graciously adjusted their schedules and provided the information. A list of all those interviewed is included in Appendix A.

#### **IV. Actions requested by the Commission**

In response to Dixie State College's 2011 Year-One Self-Evaluation Report to the Commission, peer evaluators made the following recommendation:

*The panel recommends that the College develop specific measurable benchmarks and criteria for each indicator under each Core Theme, assigning specific designations of an acceptable level of performance for each outcome indicator, outlining in clear terms for each what successful mission fulfillment looks like. (Standard 1.A.2)*

Dixie State College has had less than a year to respond to this recommendation. However, significant core theme changes have been made. First, the recommendation initiated a closer consideration of the core themes. This led a college review team to conclude that the themes did distill the essence of the DSC institutional mission but were not perceived as meaningful by the campus community. In response, the college modified the titles of the core themes. Core Theme One, "Quality Undergraduate Education" became "A Culture of Learning"; "Campus Culture" became "A Culture of Values"; and "Community Partnerships" became "A Culture of Community." The evaluators find that these changes did make the core themes more meaningful for stakeholders. Indeed, nearly everyone interviewed as part of the on-site evaluation could cite the themes and explain their significance.

The evaluation team also finds that Dixie State College has made progress in developing specific measurable benchmarks and in designating acceptable levels of performance for outcome indicators. However, these efforts remain incomplete and continued improvement is warranted. Some benchmarks remain vague or depend on surveys or instruments that have not yet been developed. In other instances indicator data has been gathered but not reported, analyzed or acted upon. Specific discussion of these instances occurs in this evaluation's consideration of core theme assessment.

## V. Eligibility Requirements

Dixie State College is authorized by the Utah State Legislature in Article X, Section 4 of the Utah State Constitution as a publicly funded, open-admission state college within the Utah System of Higher Education. The college serves the educational interests of its students, devoting substantially all of its resources to support its educational mission and core themes. Mission and core themes are appropriate, clearly defined and adopted by its governing board, and consistent with legal authorization. The college has sufficient operational and organizational independence to be held accountable and responsible for meeting the commission's standards and eligibility requirements. Services and programs are predominantly concerned with higher education and administered and governed in a nondiscriminatory manner. The institution, its faculty, staff and students uphold ethical standards in relationships and operations.

The evaluation team finds that Dixie State College regularly evaluates the performance of appropriately qualified faculty. In addition, and as noted later in the report, the college has worked with intention and planning to hire additional faculty to meet the institution's rapid enrollment growth and to achieve the transition to university status. However, because program expansion is self-funded, hiring necessarily lags growth, creating periods of transition in which the number and qualifications of faculty may be temporarily insufficient. Faculty and staff have demonstrated great dedication and professionalism in such periods, volunteering for overloads and otherwise extending themselves to serve students and to guarantee the quality and integrity of academic programs. Consequently, the evaluation team finds that the institution is in compliance with all eligibility requirements concerning faculty but that planning for and strengthening the processes and infrastructure of the college related to institutional effectiveness and sustainability are warranted.

Dixie State College maintains and provides access to sufficient library and information resources consistent with its mission and core themes. Recent additions to the physical infrastructure of the college, including buildings, have greatly improved the physical resources of the campus. Rapid enrollment growth and program expansion have created challenges in the maintenance of technological infrastructure but faculty and staff have worked to meet this challenge with professionalism and dedication. Dixie State College maintains an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom and independence exist for faculty and students. Every faculty member interviewed expressed support and approval for the institution's provisions for and guarantees of academic freedom.

Dixie State College is an open-enrollment institution. Specific instructions and details concerning its admission policy are clearly published on its website and in its catalog, providing accurate information regarding its mission and core themes, grading policy, admission requirements, tuition, fees, and refund policy. Opportunities and requirements for financial aid are published and easy to locate. The academic calendar, rules and regulations for student conduct, and information concerning the academic credentials of administrators and faculty are appropriately published and available.

As previously noted, Dixie State College is currently funding program expansion through its enrollment growth. This creates challenging periods of transition. In many such instances, the college uses a combination of temporary, adjunct, part-time and full-time employees in such periods, funding them with one-time dollars and other temporary means while providing more permanent support in the next budget cycle. This fiscal balance is delicate but the evaluators find that the college effectively shepherds its financial resources through such periods and remains in compliance with Eligibility Requirement 18. The college undergoes an external financial audit, conducted by appropriate personnel in accordance with current auditing standards, for each year of operation. Results of each audit are appropriately considered and acted upon by the administration and governing board. The college accurately discloses to the Commission all information necessary for evaluation and accreditation functions.

Dixie State college publishes expected learning outcomes, consistent with its mission and core themes, for its degree and certificate programs. The evaluation team finds that degree designation is consistent with program content in recognized fields of study and that academic programs require a coherent and substantial component of general education. However, as noted later in this report, there is variation in the degree of thoroughness and consistency with which academic programs at the college engage in regular and ongoing assessment to validate student achievement of learning outcomes. The evaluators find that the college is in compliance with Eligibility Requirement 22 but needs improvement in this area.

Dixie State College has clearly defined planning processes and robust procedures for monitoring its external environment and the needs of its many constituencies. In addition, a great deal of activity and planning has occurred concerning mission and core theme achievement. However, the evaluators find that the college has not yet fulfilled its plan to collect and analyze data to evaluate the accomplishment of core theme objectives and course and program outcomes, and to use the data to inform program improvements and resource decisions in a systematic manner. The evaluation team finds that the institution is in compliance but warrants improvement concerning Eligibility Requirement 23.

Dixie State College has experienced both dramatic enrollment growth and a rapid expansion in its programs and degree offerings. There is tremendous excitement and a contagious sense of collective effort associated with these changes, but also a sense of stretched or over-extended human resources. In addition, schools vary in the maturation of their assessment practices and plans. Programs that lack this infrastructure are not as equipped to assess the quality of new programs or to make data-informed program improvements--especially in periods of rapid change and expansion. For these reasons, the evaluators find the institution is in compliance with Eligibility Requirement 24 but warrants improvements in monitoring institutional effectiveness and in demonstrating that it can sustainably ensure the quality and integrity of its programs.

## **VI: Standard One -- Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations**

### **Mission**

Dixie State College has a widely published mission statement developed through a two-year process and approved by the Utah Board of Regents in 2005. The mission statement is valued by faculty and staff for its functional and aspirational components, and for its attention to values and goals as well its summation of the college's dual role as a community college and a state college. In 2010 an internal review of the mission led to a distilled "mission summary," reducing the two-page comprehensive mission to a more manageable paragraph. The evaluation team expects that the mission will be revised in keeping with the transition to university status. Like many institutions, Dixie State College defines mission fulfillment in terms of the achievement of core theme objectives.

### **Core Themes**

Dixie State College identified three core themes, each of which is derived from the mission. The institution created the core themes and their indicators of achievement during an 18-month long process that included all campus constituencies in campus-wide meetings, focus groups and departmental meetings. The information gathered in this process was used by the Accreditation Steering Committee to finalize the core themes and their indicators. After presentation to the campus community, the Board of Trustees approved the core themes and indicators. Following receipt of the Commission's response to the college's Year-One Self-Evaluation Report, the core theme titles were revised. The institution has directed each unit to tie their activities to the core themes and indicators.

Some indicators of core theme achievement remain undeveloped. Others depend on instruments, such as satisfaction surveys, which have been planned but not yet developed. In other instances indicators and instruments are identified but the college has not yet had an opportunity to collect or, more commonly, analyze the data. These gaps and inadequacies are discussed more specifically within discussions of each core theme in section IX of this report.

## **VII: Resources and Capacity**

### **Governance**

As established by the Utah State Constitution, Dixie State College is governed by the Utah State Board of Regents, which approves programs, policies, operations and services at all state institutions of higher education. The Dixie State College Board of Trustees oversees the college and reports to the Board of Regents. The Regents appoint the college president and chief executive officer, who is evaluated in a comprehensive review by the regents with input from the trustees and other constituents following the first year in office and every four years thereafter. In addition, the president undergoes an annual review with a Resource and Review Team comprised of the Board of Trustees chair and two members of the Board of Regents. The Board of Trustees has 11 voting members. Stephen G. Caplin serves as Chair of the Board of Trustees. The evaluation team finds that, in collaboration with the Board of Regents, the Board of Trustees ensures that the college's mission and core themes are being achieved, and that the institution employs a sufficient number of qualified and appropriately evaluated administrators who provide effective leadership and management of the institution.

The Policies and Procedures Manual of Dixie State College contains nearly all of the college's academic policies pertinent to faculty and students. The evaluators find this manual, available from an easy-to-find link on the homepage, to be exemplary. The manual is nicely organized with simple sections, clear headings and consistent formats. The manual provides relevant and effective policies pertaining to academic freedom, transfer, faculty expectations, student rights and responsibilities, admissions, academic freedom, prior learning assessments, campus publications, extra-curricular activities, academic freedom and other relevant topics pertinent to Standard 2. Many handbook policies are also available at other sites, including the New and Adjunct Faculty Handbook, the registrar's website, and the admissions site. Library policies are physically posted in various locations throughout the library and accessible via the "Library Information" link on the library homepage.

### **Human Resources**

Dixie State College has experienced significant enrollment growth in the past few years, creating strain on staffing and workload. Careful planning and training by the college has ameliorated this strain in some areas. Staff praise recent improvements in training opportunities and new structures, such as the adjunct faculty advisor positions, citing these innovations as improvements that increase efficiency and student services. However, the evaluators find that these efficiencies have not sufficiently ensured the integrity of the college's programs and services given the leap in enrollment. According to the self-study, the 60% increase in student FTE had been matched by a comparatively small 12% increase in staff FTE, straining even the most efficient staff to cover current responsibilities. The college reports that staffing increased dramatically after completion of the self-study and that the 60% increase in student FTE is now in alignment with a 58% in fulltime staff over the period 2010-2012. Altogether, the college reports that 27 fulltime faculty positions and 127 fulltime staff positions have been added since 2010.

Concerns about resources and staffing are not new to Dixie State College. These concerns, caused by both growth and declining state support, are raised in the self-study itself and discussed frankly (e.g. p. 53, 57, 102, 121, 129, 169). The evaluation team heard testimony of such strains throughout their interviews. Many staff reported that they had not been evaluated in several years. The most common explanation for this omission was simply that everyone was too busy. While the team found ample evidence of the dedication of staff, we also found widespread concern that continued growth and expansion will present challenges that over-burdened staff cannot meet.

The rapid jump in enrollment has also strained staffing levels among faculty. To accommodate the burst in enrollment, many faculty volunteered to overload their schedules—some in extraordinary fashion—raising questions about the capacity of faculty to guarantee the quality of their programs. However, the college has recently revised its faculty workload policy and created a standing workload committee and a “Faculty Workload Model” with definitions and formulae to account for a variety of variables, including class size, lab responsibilities and clinical contact time. Moreover, while the size of the faculty did not immediately increase proportionately with the increase in enrollment, the percentage of faculty who are full time increased by 25% over the three-year period November 2007—November 2010, raising the percentage of full-time faculty on campus from 29% to 40.5%. Fulltime faculty produce 55% of total SCH.

As its self-study documents, Dixie State College is well aware of the stresses growth and expansion have placed upon its faculty. The institution closely tracks faculty workload, the percentage of institutional credit taught by full time and part time faculty, and the percentage of faculty who have terminal degrees with the help of Utah State Higher Education data books. While Dixie State has higher contact hour expectations for faculty than most schools nationally, they fall somewhere between regional universities and community colleges in Utah. In addition, an additional 20 faculty positions had been funded at the time of the completion of the self-study and, in keeping with the benchmarks established by the institution for achieving university status, a goal and timeline for reducing faculty workloads to parity with other regional universities in Utah has been established.

The evaluation team believes the human resources of Dixie State College to be effectively managed. The institution understands the costs and risks of funding expansion with enrollment growth and is well-planned and intentional in its hiring. Moreover, the campus has achieved a remarkable consensus regarding the benefits of growing enrollments and, simultaneously, expanding programs to achieve university status. All the faculty we spoke to who had taught with overloaded schedules had volunteered to do so. Yet faculty and staff also expressed concerns and doubts about their ability to ensure quality amidst the college’s rapid growth and expansion. These fears echoed concerns of the evaluators as we examined educational resources.

### **Educational Resources**

When the self-study was written, Dixie State College offered 27 BS or BA programs, 6 AS programs, 10 AAS programs, and 9 Certificate programs. However, the college reports that,

as of fall 2012, there are now 36 BS/BA programs, 6 AA/AS programs, 10 AAAS programs and 9 certificate programs. The evaluators find these programs to be comprised of designated, sequenced, college level courses with content appropriate to the particular disciplinary area. At least thirteen of these degrees are subject to specialized accreditation.

While the institution has developed both program and course learning outcomes, the evaluation team finds many to be difficult to locate. Some exist in the catalog, others in the assessment archive or on program web sites. Similarly, a random sampling of course syllabi in Science & Technology revealed that 52 out of 92 of these course syllabi contained course learning outcomes. Laboratory course syllabi frequently did not contain learning outcomes.

The evaluators also find that many programs have begun assessment activities but that steps in the assessment cycle were incomplete or unfulfilled. For instance, the Geology Program in their annual program review presented data on the assessment of individual course objectives relative to benchmarks. This data was then used to suggest changes in pedagogy to improve student performance. No data was presented to indicate whether these changes were effective or not. The Physics Program Review in their annual program review also indicated that test data was being used to assess their teaching and to suggest changes in pedagogy, but the assessment data driving these changes was not presented.

Many of the departmental and program assessment plans reviewed by the evaluation team rely heavily on course bound assessments of reading, class participation, exams, and graded homework. However, very few of these described procedures for collecting and analyzing such data for the purpose of program improvement. Program assessment plans which include licensure or nationally normed assessment procedures were typically much stronger. Perhaps because data collection and analysis is simplified in such instances, departments which use such measures stood out for their ability to document program quality. For instance, Mathematics gives its majors the ETS Major Field Test (MFT) in mathematics and the ETS PRAXIS II Mathematics Content Exam. Student results presented in the Mathematics Program Review showed that all of the students achieved a score higher than the mean of the national average for these exams, thus meeting the program assessment benchmark of 50% of the students meeting this standard. The data for these mathematics students also demonstrated that these students met the acceptable benchmark for Core 1.1.2 that "80% of applicable programs have first-time pass rates on licensure/certification exams that are at or above national means."

Departmental program reviews and other evidence in the self-study materials underscore the advantage of such assessment measures. For instance, an Evaluation of DSC Biology Program Review in Nov 2010 by Robert R. Robbins, Ph.D., Professor, Biology, Utah Valley University, suggested the biology program seriously consider using an external nationally normed test for discipline content to validate the internal evaluation. No data was presented that indicated that this suggestion has been acted upon. In their program profile Biology notes that "... a representative standardized test (e.g. GRE Biology or MCAT) will be administered to students in their senior year ...", but no data is provided on whether this test was administered. With some exceptions, as noted above, the Dixie State College self-

study contained spotty and uneven evidence of the aggregating, archiving, and systematic analysis of program assessments to inform improvement or document the integrity of the college's degrees and programs.

A loyal, dedicated enthusiastic faculty and staff constitute the heart of instruction at Dixie State College. In 2011 161 full-time faculty and 308 part-time faculty delivered 98,895 SCHRs of instruction. Fifty-five percent of this instruction was generated by fulltime faculty; forty-five percent was generated by adjuncts. As of fall, 2012, 68% of fulltime faculty hold a terminal degree. Of tenure-track faculty in bachelor degree programs, 83% hold a terminal degree.

According to the Dixie State College Self-Study, from 2009 to 2011 total FTE enrollment at DSC increased from 5569 FTE to 6593 FTE, an 18% increase in two years. In this same time period full-time faculty increased from 143 in fall 2009 to 170 in fall 2011 and adjunct faculty actually decreased from 262 to 249. In 2011, at the time data was provided to the self-study, 66% of the faculty held adjunct status.

The increase in the number of new faculty was the result of a conscious decision by Dixie State College to use tuition from increased enrollment to hire new faculty in national searches. As a result of a good hiring environment tied to the downturn in the economy and a commitment to hire new faculty at 90% of CUPA, the college was able to hire new faculty who predominately held terminal degrees in their fields and were from recognized institutions. It is the policy of the college to hold all faculty salaries at 90% CUPA; equity adjustments are made where necessary. In the same period the college attempted to stem the turnover in adjuncts, paid at \$550 per credit hour, by offering these adjuncts 0.74 FTE part-time contracts. As a result of these efforts, the overall student FTE to faculty FTE ratio was held to a 14% increase, an increase smaller than the 18% increase in student FTE. The current faculty to student ratio is 1:24.

At least two faculty and administrators noted that the pool of qualified adjunct faculty available in the St. George community is being exhausted. Data reported in the USHE Data Book reveal that the 18.5 average faculty contact hours at DSC are within the Utah Board of Regents recommended range of 16-19 for a State / Community College. The average 15.5 instructional credit hours per faculty is, however, higher than the Utah Board of Regents recommended value of 13.5. Dixie State College plans to reduce faculty workloads with the change to regional university. However, increased expectations of scholarship and advising, which typically accompany the change to a regional university, could offset any relief provided by this reduction.

### **Education Resources in the School of Science and Technology**

The School of Science and Technology is led by a dean who reports to the Executive Vice President of Academic Services. Department chairs lead the departments within the School. The School includes Automotive Technology; Life Sciences; Computer and Information Technology, Mathematics, and Physical Sciences.

The Department of Automotive Technology offers a Certificate and an AAS degree both in Automotive Mechanics. Faculty in the department consist of a tenure stream assistant professor and instructor who hold bachelor's degrees and four adjunct automotive technicians who are ASE Certified. Recent increases in enrollment were addressed by separating the automotive class and shop and by hiring adjuncts to supervise students in automotive shop. This program appears to be well run, placing students in local repair shops and manufacturing facilities.

The Department of Mathematics offers BS and BA degrees in Mathematics, Mathematics Education, and Integrated Study in Mathematics. These degrees are all fairly new. Faculty in the department consist of nine tenure stream faculty, four of whom hold terminal degrees. There are two part-time contract faculty, one of whom holds a terminal degree, and 17 adjunct faculty, of whom one holds a terminal degree. All faculty hold at least a master's degree. From 2007-2008 to 2010-2011 student FTE increased by 49% from 833 FTE to 1239 FTE. During this same period the number of faculty increased by 36%. Currently the department is in the process of hiring two new faculty, including one with a background in statistics, to address the increased instructional load.

The Department of Computer and Information Technology offers BS degrees in Computer Science and Computer and Information Technology. The latter degree has emphases in Computer Science, Information Science, and Visual Technologies. The department also offers a Certificate in Visual Technologies and BS and BA degrees in Integrated Studies with Computer Science and Integrated Studies with Visual Studies. Faculty in the department consist of eight full-time faculty, one part-time contract faculty, and 13 adjunct faculty. From 2007-2008 to 2011-2012 student FTE increased by 74% from 246 FTE to 427 FTE. During this same period the number of faculty increased by 144%. The large number of degrees and emphases in this department requires careful advising of students. In addition, while hiring in this area has been robust, the breadth of program offerings stretches faculty across eight curricular groupings.

The Department of Life Sciences offers BS degrees in Biology, Biology/Secondary Education and Biology with Integrated Science/Secondary Education. Faculty in the department consist of ten tenure stream faculty, nine of whom hold terminal degrees; two part-time contract faculty, one of whom holds a terminal degree; and 29 adjunct faculty, ten of whom hold terminal degrees. From 2007-2008 to 2011-2012 student FTE increased by 63% from 677 FTE to 1101 FTE. During this same period the number of faculty only increased by 28%. Faculty hires have not kept up with growth in this program. As noted in the Life Sciences Program Profile provided in the self-study, "... the faculty recognizes that they are performing at their maximum effort with the current personnel and our ability to maintain this level without drastic change is decreasing." A current building remodel should provide for more office, classroom, and laboratory space.

The Department of Physical Sciences offers a recently approved BS degree in Physical Sciences Composite Teaching and an AS degree in Pre-Engineering. Faculty in the department, whose course work primarily supports other programs, consist of eleven tenure stream faculty, eight of whom hold terminal degrees; two part-time contract faculty,

one of whom holds a terminal degree; and nine adjunct faculty, five of whom hold terminal degrees. From 2007-2008 to 2011-2012 student FTE increased by 60% from 434 FTE to 695 FTE. During this same period the number of faculty only increased by 38%. As two new proposed BS degrees in Environmental Science and Chemistry come on-line, the current faculty will not be able to keep up with the instructional demands without new hires. A current building remodel should provide for more office, classroom, and laboratory space.

### **Education Resources in the School of Education**

A dean who reports to the Executive Vice President of Academic Services leads the School of Education. Department Chairs lead the departments within the School. The School includes the following departments: Developmental Studies; Elementary and Secondary Education; Early Childhood Education, Family and Consumer Sciences, Food and Nutrition; and Integrated Studies.

Similar to other academic programs at Dixie State College, the School of Education has talented professorial faculty, comparatively small in number. Consequently, contract and adjunct faculty members teach a majority of the classes and perform most of the advising. In addition, some faculty report equipment deficits, particularly involving information technology, in some programs within the School.

In the area of developmental studies it appears that there is active conversation about the future of the program, both in what ought to be provided to students and in how the university might be organized to deliver developmental education. Given the open admissions policy of the College and the high proportion of students needing developmental assistance, these conversations need to continue and experimentation would seem to be in order.

The elementary and secondary education programs appear to be well conceived and effective. They both have close working relationships with the Washington County Schools and the elementary education program, particularly, has a high completion rate.

Three tenure-track faculty anchor the early childhood, family and consumer sciences, and food and nutrition program, stretching faculty resources very thinly across these disciplines. The evaluation team finds that the long range vision for the program is not particularly clear, though there is suggestion that a focus on early childhood education might be an important niche. Physical education and health education courses are also administrated in this area; one tenure-track faculty member and 29 adjunct faculty members provide instruction in these important areas.

Integrated Studies is the newest department in the School of Education. Its existence was stimulated by the interests of two faculty members and it has attracted hundreds of students. The students are required to take a set of integrated courses and then to combine two more traditional disciplines while developing a curriculum that meets their educational goals.

Overall, the School of Education appears to be well administered and it appears to have the support of the central administration. It has close relationships with the local public school system and it supplies many teachers for this system. In its innovative developments such as the integrated studies degree it is serving the needs of the students and they are exhibiting demand for the program by enrolling in it in large numbers.

### **Education Resources in the School of Business and Communication**

The School of Business and Communication is led by a dean who reports to the Executive Vice President of Academic Services. The School contains an eclectic collection of programs and Department Chairs lead the departments within the School. The School includes the following departments: Udvar Hazy School of Business, Communication, and Computer Information Systems. It also includes the Dixie Business Alliance, the Center for Media Innovation, and the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC).

Similar to other academic programs at DSC, the School of Business and Communication has talented professorial faculty members but they are few in number for the student enrollment of the School. Numerous contract and adjunct faculty members are engaged in teaching and advising. While part-time faculty members from the community bring significant experience to the curriculum, it usually is full-time tenure-track faculty members who provide continuity and sustainability. In an important step toward establishing this sustainability, the college added four additional tenure-track faculty and 1.74 FTE non-tenure track faculty since 2011..

The Udvar Hazy School of Business enrolls a large number of students who are served by a relatively small permanent faculty. The School is making efforts to enhance its accounting program since that is a program in demand and a program that distinguishes the School from many other institutions that offer a general business degree. In the area of assessment the School of Business has embraced the development of assessment data and how those data might be used to enhance the program.

The Communication department has four emphasis areas: mass communication, human communication, digital film production, and organization and leadership. This program, too, serves a large number of students with a relatively small permanent full-time faculty. It also is challenged by a pedagogy that emphasizes independent study and senior projects that was developed when the student population was much smaller. Currently there are ten tenure-track faculty and about 500 students.

Computer Information Systems is the smallest department in the School. It has one full-time tenure-track faculty member and one non-tenure contract faculty member complimented by nine adjunct faculty members. Given that the department is responsible for teaching computer literacy, it serves a large number of students. It does not offer a degree. Given that this department offers courses in a highly technological area, it is important that it have the resources to keep up with the basic trends in hardware and

software in the industry. There is some indication that there have not been sufficient resources for the department to keep up.

The Reserve Officer Training Corps is a relatively recent addition to the College and thus to the School of Business and Communication. It is a US Army unit. This unit appears to be well staffed by the US Army and it has good support from the Utah National Guard.

The Dixie Business Alliance Small Business Development Center is a service unit of the School which works closely with economic development activities in the community. It provides assistance to businesses.

### **Educational Resources in the School of Nursing and Allied Health**

The School of Nursing and Allied Health is comprised of 9 separate programs: Dental Hygiene, Emergency Medical Services, Medical Radiography, Nursing, Phlebotomy, Respiratory Therapy, Physical Therapist Assistant, Certified Nursing Assistant and Surgical Technology. The School offers certificate programs, associate degrees and two bachelor degrees: one in Nursing and one in Dental Hygiene.

The School of Nursing and Allied Health is located in the Taylor Health Science Center, a facility open since 2008. The Taylor Health Science Center is located off of the main Dixie State College near the community hospital. This 78,000 square foot building provides classrooms, labs and office space for the School. Among the building's impressive features are simulation labs where students can practice simulated patient care in a life-like setting while under the observation of clinical faculty members.

The Certified Nursing Assistant, Dental Hygiene, Emergency Medical Services, Medical Radiography, Nursing, Physical Therapy Assistant, and Surgical Technology programs within the School of Nursing and Allied Health are accredited through (or in the process of seeking accreditation through) specialized accreditation bodies. The additional focus on assessment and evaluation that specialized accreditation bodies bring to programs is evident in the extensive assessment activities and "closing the loop" examples found in the program overviews for this School.

Three programs within the School of Nursing and Allied Health have only one full-time faculty member (EMS, CNA and Surgery Technology), and one program, Phlebotomy, has no full time faculty members. This reliance on adjuncts to provide instruction and support to students is illustrative of the challenges DSC faces in trying to meet enrollment demands without adequate resources and raises questions about the sustainability of programs so reliant upon part time and adjunct instructors.

### **Educational Resources in the School of Arts and Letters**

The School of Arts and Letters is the largest school at Dixie State College, employing 35% of faculty. The school offers nine BS/BA degrees in Art, Criminal Justice, English, English Education, Music, Music Education, Psychology, Theatre and Theatre Education. Additionally, the school, in coordination with the Integrated Studies Program within the school of education, permits concentrations that include Art, Criminal Justice, History,

Music, Psychology, Theatre, Philosophy, modern languages, and other areas. Associate degrees in Arts, Science or Criminal Justice are also offered by the college.

The School of Arts and Letters is organized into two divisions: The Fine Arts Division and the Humanities Division.

The Division of Fine Arts includes the Fine Arts Department, offering courses in Art, Dance, Music, and Theatre, and the Music Department. The division produces plays, productions, recitals and performances for the college and the community.

The Humanities Division includes the departments of English, Humanities and Social Sciences. The Department of English offers BA and BS programs in English Education, Professional and Technical Writing, and Literary Studies. The Department provides a range of supportive resources for its faculty, including sample syllabi, assignments, and recommendations on grading criteria. Professional development workshops on teaching composition, engaging students, creating rubrics and responding to student writing, and preventing plagiarism have been offered for faculty. The Humanities Department offers courses in Criminal Justice, American Sign Language, Mandarin Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Spanish, ESL, History, Philosophy, and Political Science. The Social and Behavioral Sciences Department offers courses in psychology and sociology and both a BA and BS option in psychology. The school plans to add additional BA and BS options.

Programs and departments in the School of Arts and Letters are housed in a variety of buildings, including McDonald Center, the Holland Centennial Commons, and the Dolores Dore Eccles Fine Arts Center.

### **Faculty Involvement in Curriculum, Hiring, and the Library**

Faculty at DSC propose, develop, and recommend curricular changes. Changes in the curriculum are typically initiated by the faculty at the departmental level. In a structured process based on DSC Policy 3.41, these curricular proposals are passed to a Curriculum Committee, comprised largely of department heads, which recommend these proposals to the Academic Council (composed of Deans). The Academic Council recommends the proposals to the College Council (composed of Vice Presidents who have final say on course proposals). Proposals for minors, etc. are recommended by the College Council to the Board of Trustees (who have final say on proposals for minors, etc.). Finally proposals at the program level are recommended to the Utah Commissioner of Higher Education. This curricular approval process appears to work well and has appropriate faculty involvement in initiating curricular changes.

Faculty at DSC have an active role in the selection of new faculty as outlined in Policy 3.27.VI. Selection committees are required to be comprised of 2 full time faculty members from the hiring program and 2 other members from other DSC programs (including one from outside the hiring school).

The Academic Profiles indicate that faculty members play a role in evaluation of assessment data, but that practice is uneven across programs. Some programs utilize quantitative data; for example, pass rates on state licensure exams for programs in the School of Nursing and Allied Health. Reviewing the data can provide an indication of the successful preparation of students in those programs. The report provides examples of faculty using evaluation data to make changes in instruction (see pp. 25; 46; 57; 64; 73; 85; 97; 108; 117; 123; 149). Some programs appear to have plans for assessment, but have not yet implemented assessment activities, or have not yet had time to evaluate the assessment data to guide instructional changes (pp. 31; 54; 113; 136; 145; 163). Other programs note assessment activities, but do not mention faculty evaluation of those activities in regard to curriculum changes (p. 4; 9; 16; 20; 39; 43; 81). In summary, there is uneven development of assessment practices across all programs, and uneven faculty processes for “closing the loop” in using assessment data to improve curriculum.

In a number of ways, faculty who have teaching responsibilities partner with library and information resources staff and faculty to ensure that library and information resources are integrated into the learning process. At the most basic level, the core curriculum includes mandatory online courses CIS 1200, Computer Literacy, and LIB 1010, Information Literacy. Together, they ensure that students have essential technical skills and information gathering and synthesizing skills required to succeed academically. In a number of discipline-specific courses throughout the curriculum, teaching faculty work with librarians to help students build on those fundamental skills through the development of library guides and/or class instruction in information skills needed to complete the course assignments. Library research guides are available on the library’s website for the use of all students. Dixie State College fulfills this standard and is encouraged to expand their efforts as the curriculum grows.

### **Prior Learning and Transfer Articulation**

DSC policy 5.15 guides the acceptance of prior experiential learning. Students are limited through DSC Policy 5.15 to 32 credits for experiential learning. Policy 5.15 requires that credit not be granted for experience alone and that experiential learning credits are designated as such on the transcript. A faculty committee reviews the acceptance of experiential credits to ensure that faculty have input in the process.

DSC has a policy (5.47) that governs the transferring of credit to the institution and outlines the procedures for transfer of credit (Standard 2.C.8). DSC also participates in the Utah System of Higher Education articulation agreements so that students with associate’s degrees are considered to have completed the general education core. The policy (5.47) also allows the receipt of a letter from the other institution’s Registrar to certify that the general education core has been completed.

### **General Education**

Dixie State College has identified a General Education program of 31-49 total credits consisting of the following requirements: a set of General Education Core Requirements

(12-18 credits), General Education Breadth and Depth Requirements (18-25 credits), and the recent addition of a Global & Cultural Perspectives Requirement (0-6 credits). Associates of Arts and Bachelors of Arts degrees also require a Foreign Language Requirement of 8 or 16 credits, respectively. An Institutional Requirement in Computer Literacy (0-6 credits) is a required “pre-requisite” for all degrees requiring complete General Education. This General Education program seems to be applied consistently across the baccalaureate curricula. AAS and Certificate degrees of more than 30 semester credits require 14-25 and 9-14 credits, respectively, of General Education courses (some of which may satisfy degree requirements).

Breadth in the General Education at DSC is achieved by requiring General Education course choices distributed across five curricular areas, each containing course choices from multiple academic disciplines. In addition, students complete an “Exploration” requirement in which they choose a General Education course with a different course prefix than they have previously used. Depth in the General Education at DSC is manifest in completing two required courses in English, two required science courses, and an appropriate course choice in meeting the Global & Cultural Perspective.

General Education requirements for all degrees are listed in the DSC Catalog preceding the full requirements for the particular degree. Degree Worksheets, which are accessible from the Catalog in many instances note that students need to complete the General Education requirements, listing the total General Education credits required, but refer the student elsewhere for the detailed requirements. Integrated Study degrees require completing the full General Education core.

Proposals for courses to be added to the General Education Curriculum require completion of a General Education Addendum form, available on the DSC web site. This form requires listing the General Education Objectives that will be satisfied by this course, a description of the broad disciplinary foundation of the course, a listing of the student learning outcomes and the methods of assessment of those outcomes.

All major curricular areas represented by General Education (American Institutions, English, Fine Arts, Foreign Language, Global & Cultural Perspectives, Information Literacy, Literature Humanities, Life, Physical and Laboratory Science, Math, Social and Behavioral Sciences) on the DSC web-site, list outcomes for general education courses and in some cases student based assessments for these outcomes.

The course outcomes listed on the college website were somewhat different and usually more specific than the student General Education Learning Goals listed in the Catalog. The assessments of these outcomes that were listed on the DSC web-site, in most instances, again relied heavily on common course bound assessments of reading, class participation, exams, and graded homework. Only Information Literacy established quantitative benchmarks for these assessments, e.g., “...scoring at least 80% on a quiz for each module.”. These curricular specific and course-aligned assessments listed in the DSC web site were the only assessments being used to assess the General Education Learning Goals listed in the catalog.

Following training by a nationally recognized assessment expert and participation in the Utah State Regents' Task Force on General Education, each academic program or department was charged with developing student learning outcomes that align with both the college mission and the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs). In 2012, DSC hired an Academic Assessment Specialist, and a Director of Program Assessment and Institutional Research. The eight-member General Education committee is involved in planning a comprehensive assessment system for general education at DSC. These steps and activities are very positive. The college must be vigilant in ensuring that data supporting general education assessment is regularly collected and accessibly archived, that appropriate assessment benchmarks are defined, and that analysis of these assessments is used to improve general education.

Within Adult and Community Services there is a Continuing Education unit focused on continuing education in the community. St. George has an active population of retirees with a wealth of experience, and DSC has used these human resources wisely in its Institute for Continued Learning (ICL). Non-credit courses in a wide variety of subject areas are offered, with volunteer instructors and no cost to the attendees. Each year about 35,000 to 40,000 participants are engaged (duplicated head count). These programs are offered in cooperation with Washington County Schools, the city of St. George, and surrounding cities and towns. The Institute for Continued Learning serves seniors through multiple courses per year. It has about 850 members.

Concerning educational resources, the evaluators find that the schools at Dixie State College and the programs within them are composed of dedicated faculty and staff who embody the Dixie spirit. These programs offer a variety of degrees and emphases, which exhibit curricula containing a core of General Education and logically sequenced disciplinary coursework of appropriate length. Faculty are engaged, typically serving on two committees and leading curriculum development. Recent substantial growth in enrollment has, however, stretched faculty resources thin. In spite of new faculty hires and the significant employment of adjunct faculty, growth in instructional resources has not kept pace with the growth in enrollment in all areas. Without careful planning DSC may not be able to absorb continued growth while ensuring program integrity, putting at risk the planned transition to a regional university.

### **Student and Support Services**

In alignment with its recent growth in enrollment, Dixie State College has expanded student services offerings. Many areas have been scaled or developed to offer new services or have been developed to serve an institution of their size and potentially a university. This includes: an expanded Academic Advising Center, Campus Recreation program, Student Health and Wellness, International Student Services, Multicultural/Diversity Center and a Testing Center. The Evaluators find that DSC has done a commendable job adjusting the services provided for their changing student population and preparing for a shift in mission. Moreover, credentials of the directors within the Student Services areas are adequate to meet their needs; the college maintains a staff of campus security officers and publishes campus crime statistics as required.

As previously mentioned, Dixie State college had a very short time period to formulate their Self Evaluation Report, core themes and objectives. Hence, while each area within Student Services supports the achievement of the core theme objectives, the assessment of these objectives had not been consistently completed and will be an ongoing task.

The college provides adequate learning space and recently dedicated the new Jeffery R. Holland Centennial Commons. The Holland Commons provides a central location for the library, additional classroom space, and a “one stop shop” for student services. Such services are key at an open enrollment institution like Dixie State College where 60% students are placed into remedial level course work.

The recruitment of students at Dixie State College is based upon an open enrollment mission. Student recruitment has been highly effective as seen in the recent enrollment increases. New Student Orientation occurs during the summer. During this time, new students meet with an academic advisor and learn college policies. The institution ensures that students can graduate in a specified period of time after a program has been discontinued and publishes all entrance requirements, licensure and employment information in appropriate and accessible locations. Electronic student records are maintained through the Banner student information system and an electronic imaging system. These records are backed up at an off-site location in Richland, UT. Policies are in place for Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Utah Government Records Access Management Act (GRAMA).

The Office of Financial Assistance administers over \$55 million of federal aid to students. This is in direct support of the mission of Dixie State College to provide open access and support students during their educational career. The Financial Aid Handbook provides information on loan repayment programs and exit counseling for students. The Office of Financial Assistance is well staffed to assist students.

Advising at Dixie State College consists of professional advisors in the Academic Advisement Center, as well as program-specific lecturer-advisors. The lecturer-advisors also teach within the First Year Experience program. However, the students do not have a mandatory advisement process and are not advised by tenure-track faculty advisor within their academic area.

### **Library and Information Resources**

Librarians define the library’s mission in its role as support for the college’s mission. They prepared a chart that crosswalks the college’s core themes with academic library principles (as defined by the Association of College and Research Libraries) and identifies the Val A. Browning Library’s outcomes, benchmarks and evidence relevant to the DSC’s core themes. This work was completed very soon after the college completed its Year 1 work in the NWCCU accreditation process and was made public through the library’s 2011 annual report. Demands of final planning, moving, and opening the library in the new Holland Centennial Commons severely hampered further action by librarians to apply their work explicitly in assessment for this comprehensive review.

In recent years, the library has not formally evaluated resources or services. However, staff does use data relevant to operations and usage of collections and services and available feedback from faculty and students to ensure that collections and services meet the needs of students and faculty.

A review of the list of electronic databases for journals, books, and reference sources reveals an impressive breadth and depth of resources relevant to courses of study offered by Dixie State College. This level of resources is possible in large part as a result of consortial arrangements and funding for shared resources. In addition, the library effectively leverages its funds through collaboration with other libraries to achieve price breaks for group purchases where possible. The spending of the library's budget for owned and accessible collections is a joint effort of librarians and teaching faculty.

Planning for library services is driven by demonstrated service demands, the academic programs offered by the College, collaboration with teaching faculty, and feedback from students. Hours and staffing at service points within the library are adjusted to support changing patterns of demand. The recent move into the multi-purpose Holland Centennial Commons building has also required adjustment of building service schedules to accommodate some non-library purposes of the building.

In collaboration with teaching faculty, the library provides an active and far-reaching instruction program. An online information literacy class, LIB 1010, is a pre-requisite for the mandatory composition class in the college's core curriculum. In LIB 1010 students learn how to obtain, evaluate and use information resources and how to avoid plagiarizing or inappropriately using copyrighted material. This is one place where the library receives formal feedback through student evaluation of the course and then uses that feedback to revise the class. Building on these basic skills, teaching faculty and librarians collaborate to develop written library guides for specific disciplines or courses and provide instruction tailored to meet the research assignments of selected classes. The library guides are posted on the library's website so that they are available broadly, not just to students in the target classes.

The library does not have in place a formal assessment program at this time. While that is a concern, librarians do develop and adjust collection development and services on the basis of data collected routinely, collaboration with teaching faculty, and various types of feedback from faculty and students. Librarians have done the intellectual work of devising benchmarks and evidentiary proof for future assessment. At this point in time, that is adequate to fulfill accreditation standards. Interviews with students, comments by faculty and collaborations in place between librarians and teaching faculty or information technology staff, as well as the self-study segment about libraries and information resources, indicate that the Dixie State College is well served by current library and information resources.

The staff has been fully engaged for more than two years in the implementation of a new library information system and in planning and bringing to fruition a new library concept in a new shared facility, the Holland Centennial Commons. They are to be complimented on

the excellence of their intense work during that time. They now have the perfect opportunity to put in place an assessment process that explicitly supports the college's mission and core values and objectives while ensuring ongoing success of the information commons that will provide library and information resources to the college for the next century.

## **Financial Resources**

Dixie State College appears to have sufficient financial stability, cash flow and reserves to support its mission, programs and services. There are appropriate processes in place to develop plans and budgets, to monitor the multiple revenue sources and expenditures as well as appropriate levels of internal and external audit oversight. Planning and budget development are done locally, at the college level, at the state level through the Utah State Higher Education (USHE) and also at the state legislative level. The planning and budget development cycles at the college level are designed to include multiple opportunities for input from faculty and staff. Budgets are submitted to the legislative process after being vetting by a budget board on campus. There are regular Trustee meetings at which budget reports are discussed; upon approval by the Trustees, such reports are sent to the state Board of Regents for review and approval.

The substantial drop in state funding coupled with the recent significant growth in student enrollment has applied noticeable pressure to the institution. The planning and budget development processes are striving to stay in synch with these two dynamic variables. Long-range planning and budget development have been impacted by changes in legislative procedures and assumptions; such changes can occur annually, sometimes with relatively short notice. Short- and long-range planning has also been affected by the recent enrollment growth and budget reductions.

Since 2003, the College has used the SunGard-Higher Education software system, which is based on generally accepted accounting principles. This system feeds data directly to USHE. The college has an internal auditor and the Office of the Utah State Auditor performs the financial audits for Dixie State College. In addition, the college is audited by federal, legislative and agency auditors in areas such as federal grants, sales tax and retirement.

All capital projects go through a multi-year state process before being approved by the Utah State Board of Regents. Thru this process, the proposed projects are reviewed for: adherence to the campus master plan; securing of necessary funding (if funding is expected to come from sources other than the state); and connection to the mission of the institution.

Dixie State College has been successful in obtaining donated funds for several buildings that have covered some of the cost of construction. This has been an important source of funding for the growing campus. Operations and maintenance funding for non-state funded buildings is generally made available by the state, if it is determined that the space/building was necessary.

The provision of some level of O & M funding for projects with private funding helps to assure that a new project, coming on line, will not immediately result in an additional

financial burden for the college. O & M funding is provided for state funded buildings, although the level of funding is often lower than the campus would consider optimal.

While the college does not have an institutional policy on debt for capital outlay, all bonds must be approved by the state legislature. Dixie State College's debt is reviewed annually via its financial statements and other reports which go to the Regents and the legislature. Auxiliary units (Campus Dining, College Bookstore, Housing and Resident Life, Elderhostel) are all intended to be self-sustaining. The Bookstore, in particular, notes that it contributes "a substantial amount of funds" for college use. The other units cite revenues in excess of expenses. Auxiliary units also noted the additional burden on staff due to the enrollment growth.

Within the college self-evaluation, the Institutional Advancement and Development Office is identified as "the major fundraising entity for the college." The self-evaluation also references the DSC Foundation, a non-profit 501 (c) (3). The evaluators found some confusion concerning responsibility for development funds. In the self-study the Foundation is noted as "managing \$11 M in assets" while in another section there is a note that the college contracted with the University of Utah as money manager for its endowment in FY10. In addition, the evaluators were unable to find a statement of ethics for professional fundraisers or anyone who knew of such a statement. Similarly, the evaluator was unable to find a written agreement that clearly defines the relationship between the college and the DSC Foundation or anyone who knew of such a document.

Finally, and like nearly all the staff interviewed by evaluators on this visit, auxiliary units, development officers and business office staff noted the additional burden staff had had to bear due to the enrollment growth and the loss of state funds.

## **Physical and Technological Infrastructure**

The Dixie State College buildings and grounds are clean and well tended, offering faculty, staff and students accessible, safe and secure spaces in support the College's mission. The campus has a broad range of buildings, from old to very new, from quite basic to technologically advanced. The inventory includes a converted grocery store, a donated steel building as well as many structures built specifically for the College's needs. All appear to be in reasonable to good repair and are able to support the current needs of faculty, staff and students, despite recent budget cuts. The planned future growth will further strain the capabilities of the staff, the budget and the structures.

Both the hazardous waste handling and storage policy and the campus master plan are available to all, via the DSC website. The campus master plan supports the stated desire of DSC to become a regional university as it includes additional student housing, classrooms and additional wet lab space in the renovation of the old library. The plan is reviewed and updated regularly; many prior versions of the plan are available on the website.

Currently, there appears to be sufficient equipment to support the College's mission and goals for its programs and services. While there is no funded pool for equipment

replacement, emergent equipment needs are heard during the annual budget reallocation process. The rapid growth in enrollment has also made additional funds available. The College uses a "trickle down" process, by which new equipment is first assigned to those areas deemed most in need. Older equipment freed up from the first round is then distributed to areas further down the list. While the intention is to match the needs to the equipment being passed down, some faculty and staff felt that this system is less than optimal.

The current technology infrastructure appears to be sufficient to support the College's mission and programs. The College's Information Technology department reports to the Vice President for Administrative Services. This unit supports a broad range of academic, student and staff systems and needs. Such support includes training, the student help desk and campus e-mail, for instance.

Because of the wide variety of physical conditions and modernity, some areas are more current with their infrastructure. Generally speaking, laboratories have sufficient and reasonable quality infrastructure but offices lag behind.

Students are required to take a specific class, CIS1200, as part of their core curriculum. The course is pass/fail and it ensures that students know how to use the essential hardware and software essential to their success. Training is also available for faculty and staff, but it is not as structured as the instruction for the students. Staff members who use the Banner system modules receive annual training. In general, the staff seems to know the technology to do their jobs.

Dixie State's infrastructure planning includes input from its constituencies and the process seems to work very well. There is both an annual plan and a project plan (longer term than an annual plan) for the area. There are good collaborations with USHE and other higher education institutions that identified common system needs and have then presented the state with consolidated requests. These consolidated requests, when funded by the state, relieve the individual institutions of a significant financial burden.

### **VIII: Planning and Implementation**

Institutional Planning at Dixie State College has matured through four key stages over the last seven years, each of which has been characterized by the collection and analysis of useful data, clear priorities, and by broad participation of constituents. These processes have resulted in a remarkable campus and community consensus regarding the future of the college and the steps necessary to get there. In addition, these institutional planning processes have usefully identified "weaknesses or challenges" the college must account for in its growth and development.

In the first key stage in this institutional planning process, Dixie State College developed a new strategic planning structure. This structure, adopted in 2006, led to a strategic planning process characterized by four pathways, each with specific goals: strategic academic planning; strategic enrollment planning; strategic campus planning; and strategic

financial, institutional advancement, community engagement and economic development planning. To inform this planning, Dixie State College commissioned two studies. First, institution asked the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) to conduct an economic and demographic analysis of Washington and Kane Counties that would enable the institution to “align college resources with southwester Utah’s emergent and dynamic needs.” Second, president Lee Caldwell commissioned a planning task force with the task of examining the adequacy and alignment of college resources with the institution’s current needs and goals. These efforts resulted in a strategic plan approved by the Board of Trustees on September 7, 2007.

The second stage in Dixie State’s recent institutional planning process was occasioned by events on the college campus and within the Utah State Board of Regents. On campus, Dixie State, under the new leadership of President Stephen D. Nadauld, entered its recent period of rapid growth as FTE increased by more than 50% between 2008 and 2011. Over this same period, the Utah Board of Regents created its master-planning document, “HigherEdUtah 2020 Action Plan.” This plan called for the creation of another regional state university. Within a year, the Board of Regents selected Dixie State to be that university.

The combination of rapid enrollment growth and a new, state-endorsed mission created the need for a third stage in recent strategic planning: a new capital facilities plan. Called the “Ten-Year Capital Facilities Planning Model 2009-2019,” this plan drew on the longstanding strengths of the college’s relationship with the local community, and the support and participation of local donors in building construction.

Integrating these previous three stages, Dixie State College next entered the most important stage of its recent strategic planning process--one that would lead to the creation of a plan wherein enrollment growth could be combined with program expansion to help the college achieve university status. This effort, called the “Second Century Strategy,” was led by a five-person steering committee but included a larger Second Century Strategy Committee comprised of fifty-five individuals, including faculty, staff, students, and community leaders. This larger group was divided into four subcommittee areas: enrollment and retention planning; academic planning; campus planning and budgeting; and financial and developmental planning.

The evaluators found this institutional planning process sweeping in scope and scale but usefully sequential and coordinated. We found the Second Century Planning efforts to be exemplary in its inclusiveness and design. Nearly everyone we met on campus could speak informatively about the process and results, suggesting a remarkable sense of campus and community consensus concerning the plan for achieving university status. In addition, we found the planning process nicely informed by data. While this was perhaps most evident in the large commissioned studies, it was also evident in smaller ways. For instance, when the college sought clarity over the designation of “university” it worked with the Board of Regents to conduct an informal benchmarking study. This study identified comparison universities and established benchmark standards and characteristics deemed necessary for the university to achieve to warrant university status. Informed by this study, the college planned the sequence of baccalaureate majors it would first develop.

Parallel planning efforts have occurred within advising, student services and the library to support the growth in baccalaureate programs. Adjunct faculty advising positions have been created and training has been provided so that students can be informed and advised concerning the institution's new and existing programs. New retention efforts, including an early warning system, have also been planned. Planning for library services is driven by demonstrated service demands, the academic programs offered by the College, collaboration with teaching faculty, and feedback from students. Hours and staffing at service points within the library are adjusted to support changing patterns of demand. The recent move into the multi-purpose Holland Centennial Commons building has also required adjustment of building service schedules to accommodate some non-library purposes of the building.

The evaluation team was thoroughly impressed by this planning process. As described above, the recent institutional planning processes was exemplarily marked by inclusive, systematic, comprehensive and purposeful planning informed by the collection and use of appropriate data and the achievement of a remarkable consensus over priorities. These processes have created a campus and community-wide sense of shared ownership for a template that usefully guides decisions on program planning and resource allocation. The same processes have also created a positive campus climate in which faculty report increasing involvement in university planning activities. Faculty interviewed for this report expressed approval of President Nadauld, and the Second Century Planning process, for instance.

Dixie State College's institutional planning process has also usefully identified weaknesses or challenges that must be acknowledged and dealt with if its planning template is to be realized. The first "weakness or challenge" identified in the strategic plan is "Maintaining quality during high growth." The evaluation team finds this a very accurate assessment of the challenges we found evidence in our visit. To put it simply: the rate at which strategic planning efforts are being implemented may be excessive.

For instance, Dixie State College plans to reduce faculty workloads with the change to regional university. However, the evaluators remain unclear as to how this can be achieved, given declining state support, limitations in the lecturer pool, current resources, and new restrictions on overloads. The ability to increase class size, for instance, is limited by the availability of large classrooms and internal agreements. Similarly, faculty workloads can be addressed by continuing to prioritize faculty hiring over staff hiring, but the evidence we find suggests that staff responsibilities have already been stretched to the breaking point in many areas. At the faculty open forum some faculty indicated that they were working with aging equipment. Consequently, targeting increased tuition funds to hire new faculty may also be expected to diminish the institution's ability to buy new and replace old equipment. In this sense, the college's planning processes, while useful, inclusive and well structured, may not be structured to sufficiently ensure quality amidst expansion.

## **IX: Core Theme Planning, Effectiveness and Improvement**

### **Core Theme Planning**

Dixie State College's Second Century Planning process coincided with the drafting and revision of the institution's core themes, permitting a close alignment of strategic planning and accreditation preparation. Led by an Accreditation Steering Committee, this 18-month process resulted in the institution's initial core themes, as described in its year one report, and in the revised version described in the self-study for its comprehensive evaluation. In order to make the core themes more memorable and accessible, and more tightly wedded to the institution's mission, the core theme titles evolved over this period, acquiring their current titles.

### **Core Theme One: A Culture of Learning**

#### **Introduction**

The institution's self study describes *Core Theme One, A Culture of Learning* in the following way: "DSC will produce knowledgeable and competent scholars who are trained to think critically and solve problems, equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful in their chosen work; flexible and resilient in the face of new and dynamic situations; and prepared to be life-long learners" (p. 22).

The institution has identified two objectives for Core Theme One A Culture of Learning: (1) Students possess the knowledge and skills to succeed in a rapidly changing and competitive world; and, (2) Students achieve their desired educational goals (pp. 24-25). Each objective has outcomes; each outcome has indicators of achievement and benchmarks associated with it.

#### **Assessment and Improvement**

The institution intends to assess Core Theme One A Culture of Learning by identifying *objectives* that have several *outcomes*, each of which has *indicators of achievement* and *acceptable benchmarks* for those indicators. These are displayed in chart form for each Core Theme (p. 145-146). Some of the indicators of achievement build upon existing measures such as student learning outcomes already in place or licensure pass rates. The institution has not yet created or completed other measures, such as employer satisfaction surveys (p. 145).

The institution acknowledges that there is some "unevenness" in the progress made in having units connect their activities to the goals of the core themes and in formulating the measures to assess success in reaching the benchmarks (p. 116). The institution has devoted resources to this area in the hiring of Dr. Hardy as Assessment Specialist and Director Brown in Program Assessment and Institutional Research. Having staff identified as responsible for the development and implementation of assessment will help keep the institution focused on completing this assessment model.

Some of the benchmarks for Core Theme One depend on instruments, such as satisfaction surveys, that are not yet developed. Other benchmarks depend on resources, such as those

provided by AACU's Liberal Education for America's Promise (LEAP) initiative the college has not yet had time to make use of. In other instances benchmarks, such as licensure pass rates in selected disciplines, are in place but their use is uneven or unclear. The evaluators could find NSSE survey responses, for instance, but no evidence of discussion of the results of the survey relative to the benchmark. Other benchmarks, such as a 2% increase in retention, are listed, but results—such as the recent 5% decrease in first year retention-- are not mentioned (Student Services Accomplishments, 2011-2012 p. 107). The institution expects to revise the benchmarks as needed in the next three-year period (p. 117). Completion of the benchmark measures will improve the assessment of Core Theme One.

The institution has already spent considerable time and effort in creating student learning outcomes in each major and in the general education core. Utilizing these student-learning outcomes as one set of measures or indicators of achievement will help integrate the assessment of Core Theme One into ongoing university assessment activities.

## **Core Theme Two: A Culture of Values**

### **Introduction**

The institution's self-study describes *Core Theme Two, A Culture of Values* in the following way: "DSC will support a culture of respect, integrity, honesty, service, engagement, and diversity that strengthens citizenship" (p. 22).

The institution has identified three objectives for *Core Theme Two, A Culture of Values*: (1) Students and employees are engaged in service and citizenship activities that enhance their educational experiences; and, (2) In general practice, students and employees act with honesty and integrity; and 3) Employees work as a team and act with professionalism and are encouraged to pursue opportunities to enhance their professional skills and knowledge (pp. 28-29). Each objective has outcomes; each outcome has indicators of achievement and benchmarks to measure them.

### **Assessment and Improvement**

The institution intends to assess *Core Theme Two, A Culture of Values*, by identifying *objectives* that have several *outcomes*, each of which has *indicators of achievement* with *acceptable benchmarks*. These are displayed in chart form for each Core Theme (p. 147-148). Some of the data to measure achievement are being collected now, such as results from the NSSE surveys, and the inclusion on syllabi of the "Rights and Responsibilities Code." Many of the measurement tools for the acceptable benchmarks have not yet been created, such as the reflective essays in the FYE program, so this is really future planning for assessment. The benchmarks for outcome #3 do not have numbers associated with them, so they cannot yet be used as benchmarks. The institution has not yet created or implemented the Employee Participation and Satisfaction Survey, intended to be used to measure this outcome (p. 148). There are no *indicators of achievement* or *acceptable benchmarks* pertaining to diversity, a component of the core theme. Locating the Multicultural/Diversity Center was difficult, as it is housed in an obscure location with minimal signage.

Dixie State College acknowledges that there is some “unevenness” in the progress made in having units connect their activities to the goals of the core themes and in formulating the measures to assess success in reaching the benchmarks (p. 116). The institution has devoted resources to this area in the hiring of Dr. Hardy as Assessment Specialist and Director Brown in Program Assessment and Institutional Research. Having staff identified as responsible for the development and implementation of assessment will help keep the institution focused on completing this assessment model.

### **Core Theme 3: A Culture of Community**

#### **Introduction**

Dixie State College has a long history of engagement with the local community. This ranges from the production of cultural events to business partnerships and engagement of students in the community through internships and other activities. There are three objectives for this core theme:

- Benefit the community and students by providing effective, high quality educational opportunities for community members and businesses
- Benefit the community by providing services in which students, faculty and staff assist individuals, businesses and community organizations to nurture and encourage the creation and growth of new businesses
- Benefit the community providing a steady variety of quality events and opportunities for campus involvement.

Six indicators are identified for the three objectives.

Historically the community and Dixie State College have been very close. The college was started by the community and was a private school until the 1930s when the state assumed responsibility for it. This historical ownership of Dixie College persists today in the ways that the community interacts with the College even though the College is a state asset.

Relationships between the College and the Community are deep and varied. The College is engaged in providing performances and exhibitions in culture and arts and in supporting community culture and arts activities; it partners with the community in business and economic development, it works closely with the local public school district and the Dixie Applied Technology College to provide education development and opportunities, it has substantively partnered with the local health community to provide training and services needed by the residents of southwestern Utah, it has a vital athletic program that not only engages in competition but also partners with the local community in athletic and non-athletic service, it manages media production through a local television station and a Center for Media Innovation, and it fosters the engagement of students in the community through internship, cooperative education, service learning, and other engagement programs. The local community has assisted the College through the donation of land and financial resources, through community projects to beautify the campus, through the sharing of equipment and resources such as in public health, and through partnerships that have enhanced the education of students. The list of mutually beneficial activities between

the College and the Community is very long and rich: With the help of the community the College has assumed the role of the center of higher education, with its multiple and varied services, for southwestern Utah.

The College has extended these partnerships beyond the towns and cities immediately surrounding St. George, where it is located. For example, the College has partnered with the arts community in Kanab, 80 miles distant, to offer an annual Business of Art conference that is deemed very successful. It manages the Allen Joseph Stout Hurricane Education Center in Hurricane, UT where courses are offered that directly benefit place-based students in the Hurricane region. This nine-classroom facility allows a variety of programs to be offered, including concurrent enrollment for high school students. The land, materials, and labor costs were donated, and all aspects of instruction are overseen by DSC.

Given this history of community-college engagement, the emergence of A Culture of Community as a core theme for Dixie State College is understandable. This engagement is a signature characteristic of Dixie State College and of its surrounding community of people and businesses. It is embedded within the mission of the College and directly speaks to the needs of the Colleges constituents. The challenge going forward will be to maintain this engagement in view of the tremendous growth of both the College and the surrounding community; planning for enhancing performance in this core theme will need to be aggressive and innovative as the environment in which Dixie State College nests undergoes change.

The core theme “A Culture of Community” was identified through a planning process very inclusive of multiple constituents. This process included the identification of objectives, indicators of achievement, and acceptable benchmarks for each indicator, developed to enable assessment of both the meeting of the promise of the core themes and of mission fulfillment.

### **Assessment and Improvement**

Dixie State College has identified indicators of achievement and corresponding benchmarks (targets) for each indicator of Core Theme Three. Achieving the benchmarks will indicate advancement toward the intended outcomes and fulfillment of the objectives. Most of the indicators can be readily measured and thus judging performance against most benchmarks is possible. Keeping track of events and participation, and using participant surveys to garner satisfaction information appear to be prime data collection means. Somewhat more difficult to measure will be, *demonstrating benefit to participants and to student learning as the result of community outreach programs*. Creativity focused on this form of assessment likely will be necessary to fully demonstrate the value of community engagement programming to individual development. While a framework for assessment is given, to date data are not provided regarding performance and it is not clear how the data, once obtained, will be used to make program changes. Developing guidelines for systematically obtaining necessary data and developing guidelines for how data are to inform program change need to occur for future assessment and evaluation leading to

meaningful advancement of educational programming and continuation of the extraordinary Dixie Spirit that comes through community engagement.

In addition to developing the guidelines noted above, improvement will come when programs are clearly aligned with the core theme and program development and modification are done in response to program assessment. This statement implies a purposeful approach to community engagement that is focused specifically on one or more of the objectives for the core theme. Each existing program and those that are proposed should be assessed for their relevance and effectiveness in working toward meeting the objectives.

As programs, events, camps, athletic contests, and other forms of community engagement are undertaken, attention should be focused on enhancing the tremendous notion of Dixie Spirit that is well ingrained in DSC and the community. In addition, since DSC has a dominating mission for two and four year undergraduate education, the relevance of all programs to the learning of DSC students should be assessed.

## **X: Mission Fulfillment, Adaption and Sustainability**

Like many institutions, Dixie State College defines mission fulfillment in terms of the achievement of core theme objectives. However, as detailed in previous sections in this report, many core theme indicators of achievement remain vague or depend on surveys or instruments that have not yet been developed. In other instances indicator data has been gathered but not reported, analyzed or acted upon. Program assessment measures are also uneven in development and use. In this sense, Dixie State College lacks the assessment infrastructure necessary to sufficiently document mission fulfillment and achievement of its core theme objectives.

The college has had only one year to implement its core theme processes and to gather and assess data pertaining to mission fulfillment and other indicators of achievement. Moreover, the evaluation team finds that institutional planning processes, and non-accreditation based evaluations of resources and capacity, are often exemplary. For instance, the college's benchmarks for achieving university status, established in collaboration with the Utah Board of Regents, provide grounded, useful data upon which the college bases resource decisions.

Dixie State College is also exemplary in its monitoring of its external environment. It effectively identifies current and emerging patterns, trends and expectations and uses those findings to assess its strategic position and to review and revise its future direction, mission.

## **XI: Summary**

The evaluation team found much to praise in its evaluation of the Dixie State College Comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report and in its on-site evaluation. Dixie State College is a vibrant and engaged campus community united in a collective sense of place and purpose and deeply connected to its region. Evidence suggests that core theme development and institutional planning processes have created a remarkable consensus concerning the shift to university status and the college's role within its region and state. This consensus and sense of shared goals and mission is demonstrated in the spirit and dedication of faculty and staff, and in the depth and vibrancy of the institution's relationship to St. George and the public schools, industries and communities of southern Utah.

Dixie State College has experienced both dramatic enrollment growth and a rapid expansion in its programs and degree offerings. There is tremendous excitement and a contagious sense of collective effort associated with these changes, but also a sense of stretched or over-extended human resources. This sense of being over-extended, which connects to concerns regarding quality, is not simply a matter of the number of employees as faculty and staff may be stretched and over-extended for a variety of reasons. In many instances, for example, we found departments to have a sufficient number of staff but to lack the institutional infrastructure, such as effective annual evaluation processes, necessary to help them effectively fulfill their duties. Similarly, while the evaluators find that some departments do struggle to ensure program quality with their current configuration of faculty, other departments have a sufficient number and combination of faculty, when compared to national norms, but stretch those faculty over a larger number of degrees, certificates and emphases, at both the Associate and the Bachelor level, than the evaluators find typical.

Compounding these challenges, colleges and programs vary in the maturation of their assessment practices. The evaluators find that programs with robust assessment measures are typically able to demonstrate quality. For instance, use of standardized field and praxis exams in mathematics demonstrates that graduates of that program achieve scores higher than the mean of the national averages for these exams. In this way, math's assessment procedures inform program improvements while ensuring quality amidst growth and expansion, providing documented evidence that the institution deserves to be recognized as a university. Programs which lack this infrastructure are not sufficiently equipped to make data-informed improvements or to document the knowledge and abilities of their graduates.

Consequently, the evaluators find their key concerns closely related: they recommend that the college plan for and strengthen its human and institutional infrastructure to assure the quality of its programs, and they recommend that assessment practices be established and improved so that useful designations of quality can be made.

## **XII: Commendations and Recommendations**

### **Commendations**

The Evaluation Committee commends the staff and faculty for their whole-hearted dedication to Dixie State College through this period of rapid change.

The Evaluation Committee commends the faculty, students and staff of Dixie State College for long standing and extraordinary community engagement in a wide variety of areas ranging across arts and culture, business, internships and student service, education, health and government. College and community relationships are deep and strong.

### **Recommendations**

The evaluators found current human and institutional resources insufficient for the rate of growth and expansion. Therefore, the evaluators recommend that the institution plan for and strengthen its human and institutional infrastructure to assure the integrity of its programs (Standards 2.B.2, 2.B.4, 5.B.1; Eligibility Requirement 10 and 24).

The evaluators found evidence of a great deal of activity concerning the assessment of student learning and core theme objectives. However, the evaluators did not find that the assessment of student learning was sufficiently conducted, documented or acted upon. Therefore, the evaluators recommend that the institution fulfill its plan to collect and analyze data to evaluate the accomplishment of core theme objectives and course and program outcomes, and use the data to inform program improvements and resource decisions in a consistent and systematic manner (Standards 3.B.3, 4.A.1, 4.A.3, 4.B.1, 4.B.2; Eligibility Requirement 22, 23, 24).

### **XIII. Appendix A: List of Interviewees**

The following individuals participated in one or more scheduled conversations with members of the NWCCU Evaluation Committee. In addition, open meetings with student, faculty and staff involved more than 150 additional individuals. We regret that the names of these individuals were not recorded and wish to acknowledge and thank them for their participation.

Stephen D. Nadauld, College President and Chief Executive Officer  
Steve Caplin, Chair: Board of Trustees  
John Pike, Vice Chair, Board of Trustees  
Elisabeth Bingham, Trustee  
Hal Hiatt, Trustee  
Lon Henderson, Trustee  
Brody Mikesell, Trustee and Associated Students President  
Gail Smith, Trustee  
Julie Beck, Trustee  
David Clark, Trustee  
Max Rose, Trustee  
Donna Dillingham-Evans, Ex. VP Academics  
Frank Lojko, VP Student Services  
Stan Plewe, VP College Services  
Christina Schultz, VP Institutional Advancement  
George Whitehead, VP Institutional Advancement  
Bill Christensen, Dean, Business & Communications  
Steven Bringham, Dean, Adult Studies  
Donald Hinton, Dean, Ed-HASS  
Victor Hasfurther, Dean, Science & Technology  
Carole Grady, Dean, Nursing & Allied Health,  
Brenda Sabey, Dean, Educations  
Del Beatty, Dean of Students  
Daphne Selbert, Dean Library,  
Becky Smith, Assoc. Dean, Academic Outreach  
Gary Koeven, Chief Information Officer  
Pamela Montrallos, Exec. Director HR  
Scott Talbot, Exec. Director Business Services  
Jason Boothe, Athletic Director  
Don Johnson, Classified Staff Association President  
James Miller, Exempt Staff Association President  
Ami Comeford, Faculty Senate President  
Jill Elliss, Director, Dixie Business Resource Center  
Dr. Eric Pederson, IT faculty  
Jordan Sharp, Director, Student Involvement & Leadership  
Kathy Kinney, Career Services/Internships  
Dr. Max Rose, Superintendent, School District  
Mary Nell Lindquist, Student Service Coordinator

Jordyn Hanevold, student  
Lydia Jeppson, student  
Felicia Olmos, student  
Brad Last, Legislator  
Kelle Stephens, President, DXATC  
Scott Hirschi, Executive Director, WC Econ. Development  
David Clark, past legislator  
Sherry & Ralph Atkins  
Mayor Dan McArthur  
Robert Carlson, Chair: Faculty Development  
Julie Stender, Registrar