INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAM REVIEW

STUDENT SERVICES DIVISION

JUNE 2004

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Introduction

A committee of nine Amarillo College administrators, classified personnel, and faculty was appointed by Dr. R. E. Byrd to review the Student Services Division. The initial meeting on April 9, 2004 was followed by meetings on May 11, June 10, and June 15.

At the initial meeting, the committee was introduced to the online Student Services Program Self Study and assigned the task of reading and reviewing this document. Small groups of two to three committee members were assigned to serve as primary evaluators of specific sections of the report. These small groups focused on their assigned sections and brought results of their analyses to the entire committee for review and comment. Having read all sections of the Student Services Program Self Study, the committee then commented as each small group led discussions on their assigned sections. The committee then formalized and approved the External Review report.

The committee wishes to thank Dean of Students, J. R. Couser, and the devoted members of the Student Services Division for the time and effort they expended in preparing the Self Study Report. Having the report available online was extremely beneficial and made the work of the committee much easier to accomplish. All necessary documents were easily accessible with the exception of the Internal Auditor’s Report, referenced in the Policy/Security Program portion of the Self Study, and the organizational charts, which could not be read online.

Interviews were kept to a minimum and conducted only for obtaining clarification and additional information. The committee recognized that the self study and external review process was developed to be a productive, positive experience. Toward this end, the committee developed both general and specific commendations, areas of concern and recommendations.

General Commendations

1. The committee commends the Student Services Division for preparing a thorough, well written self-study document. The information provided was complete and comprehensive in most cases.

2. The committee commends the Student Services Division for the breadth and quality of its services provided to students. The Division embodies the ideal of service to others. Setting an example for the entire college, the Division is dedicated to assisting students throughout their education experience, from their first call seeking enrollment to their graduation or transfer. The Division, as a
whole, is commended; and specific commendations are included in departmental sections.

General Concerns and Recommendations

1. The committee is concerned about the probable impact on Student Services Division function and morale because of extensive shifting and realignment of departments, changes in responsibilities for individuals and departments, and retirement of the current Dean and other key personnel.

   The committee recommends that the Student Services Division review duties and obligations after the realignment is complete and the new Dean has taken office in order to formulate a new vision.

2. The committee is concerned that personnel across Division departments reported the need for newer, more efficient equipment. Examples include, but are not limited to, a variety of equipment that should be replaced, particularly outdated computers that have insufficient speed or memory to run required programs, scanners, and printers.

   The committee recommends a formal evaluation of equipment needs and resources across Student Services departments in order to develop an equipment replacement and “roll down” plan and to effect more efficient and effective sharing of resources.

3. The committee is concerned that the Student Services Division reports inadequate Information Technology Services Division (ITS) service and staff support. Required Colleague modules are not being implemented, and programming and training needs of various departments are not being met. The committee finds that ITS assigns specific personnel to meet the needs of specific departments. However, due to the limited number of personnel in ITS, each person is assigned to support more than one department. ITS personnel cannot meet the required workload.

   The committee recommends that the Student Services Division review the current Colleague Committee structure for procedures to expedite programming requests and to address problems, that ITS provide current status reports on all requests for service, and that ITS acquire the necessary staff and staffing levels to assure timely response to Student Services Division requests.

The following chart reflects the organizational structure of the Student Services Division at the time this program review was initiated.
The external review report is presented in the following order:

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**Dean of Student Services**

**Commendations**

1. The Dean of Student Services office operates in an efficient, organized manner. Staff members listen and respond to student comments and complaints and act within AC policies in the best interest of students and the institution.

2. Staff in the Dean’s office is unquestionably student oriented, highly motivated, and well qualified. They support all student and college activities with enthusiasm.

**Concern**

1. The Dean of Student Services office personnel have more than 35 combined years of experience at Amarillo College and a wealth of knowledge that will be lost when the Dean and staff assistant leave in August of this year and the Executive Secretary retires, as planned, in less than two years.
Advising and Counseling

Commendations

1. Advising and Counseling staff members are very well qualified, diverse, and are genuinely eager to help students meet their educational and career goals.

2. Community Link, an outreach program in northeast Amarillo, is reaching an under-served population and providing services that prepare and encourage clients to enter traditional programs at Amarillo College. Program growth is sustained by external funding, and first-time AC funders are providing support for this program.

3. The Adult Students Program provides one-to-one help for vulnerable adult students, most of whom are experiencing life challenges. Almost half of them receive welfare-type assistance from one or more federal or local sources. External funding is especially strong for this program and is the result of years of donor cultivation.

Concerns and Recommendations

1. The Testing Services Department reported that existing space in the Student Assistance Center is insufficient.

   Recommendation: Initiate a student use study of the Testing Services Department. Identify space needs and usage patterns to determine if available space can be better utilized. If not, investigate other options and pursue appropriate action.

2. Job titles in the Testing Services Department do not reflect the chain of command and reporting structure.

   Recommendation: Reconcile the differences between job titles and organizational structure. Consider revising either or both job titles and the organizational structure and make appropriate changes that will clearly define the reporting and referral structure.

3. The present advising plan contributes to a “run around” effect, which reduces efficiency and effectiveness for staff and students.

   Recommendation: Consider restoring divisional liaison advisors.
4. Technology is not fully utilized by Advising and Counseling staff. In some cases, negative attitudes about the capabilities of technology, primarily WebAdvisor, are communicated to students.

Recommendation: Advising and Counseling should work with ITS to understand improvements to WebAdvisor software. Build Advising and Counseling staff confidence in using WebAdvisor and encourage student use.

5. The lack of cross training among Advising and Counseling staff contributes to reduced efficiency and delayed project completion. For example, the online Advisor’s Handbook has not been updated since retirement of the counselor who was previously responsible.

Recommendation: Advising and Counseling should institute cross-training procedures.

Financial Aid

Commendations

1. The Colleague system has enabled Financial Aid staff to process students’ financial files in an efficient and timely manner.

2. Financial Aid staff members are knowledgeable, service- and student-oriented professionals who work in a one-to-one relationship with students to reduce the financial burdens of education. The staff fosters excellent working relationships with high school counselors, lenders, and other institutions of higher education.

Financial Aid personnel conduct or participate in a variety of programs each year to help students and families consider options for financing college education. Staff members are knowledgeable about federal, state, and local financial aid programs as well as private funding sources.

3. Because student client surveys were last administered in 1996, Financial Aid developed and is administering a new client survey. Survey data will provide the basis for evaluating staff members in the areas of services provided, timeliness, courteous service, knowledge, and communication. Financial Aid will make the survey available on the AC website.
4. The Committee commends Financial Aid for the following initiatives:
   
a. use of the web and Web Advisor to provide student financial aid documents, to inform students of the status of their financial aid applications, and to inform students of their financial aid and scholarship awards
   
b. use of computer document imaging to increase both the efficiency and effectiveness of service to students
   
c. emphasis on cross-training and teamwork among the staff to ensure timely and efficient service to students.

5. The dollar amount and number of students receiving financial aid continue to increase each year, and yet the cohort default rate remains under 10 percent.

Concerns and Recommendations

1. Financial Aid appears to need at least a one-half appointed classified position in order to maintain quality service to a growing number of students. The staff member could also be responsible for maintaining financial aid information on the website and for updating office procedure manuals.

   Recommendation: Justify an additional half-time classified appointed position, request the position in the budget process, and prioritize this position with other departmental needs.

2. The open design of the Financial Aid offices on the Washington Street and West Campuses does not provide an environment that ensures confidentiality and student privacy. Students are advised in open cubicles, and private conversations are not possible. Security of information is also a concern. The placement of computer terminals allows unauthorized people to view confidential information. The printer and fax machines are located in an open area, potentially compromising security and confidentiality.

   Recommendation: Consult the Director of the Physical Plant and develop realistic plans to redesign existing space to ensure privacy, confidentiality and security. Ideal plans would include remodeling to provide privacy for every financial aid assistant and a secured area for printing, copying and transmitting fax documents. Develop a renovation plan with cost estimates, recommend plans to the Dean of Student Services, and seek action.
3. Although funding is budgeted for required travel for the Director and Associate Director of Financial Aid to attend certain meetings each year, travel budgets have been severely cut for other staff members. Broader attendance at meetings is important for Amarillo College to comply with state and federal regulations.

**Recommendation:** Continue to seek funding from a variety of sources to send staff to professional development meetings. Consider using innovative methods to update all staff such as the web, video streaming, videoconferencing, telephone conference calls, etc.

4. Staff efficiency, especially during peak times, is compromised by telephone call frequency.

**Recommendation:** Determine if automated messages can be implemented at AC without significantly compromising a desired level of personal attention. Work with the AC telecommunications staff in ITS to assess the feasibility of adding an “automated Financial Aid message” to the existing telephone system. If an automated message is appropriate but not feasible within the existing system, develop a plan with cost estimates and benefits and prioritize the request among departmental needs.

**Enrollment Management**

**Commendations**

1. The Enrollment Management staff is dedicated to providing student access to higher education and demonstrates a strong customer service philosophy.

2. Front-line staff in the Student Assistance Center often becomes the first personal contact with students. In addition, staff frequently addresses concerns of disgruntled students in a public venue. These responsibilities are critical to the image of AC in the community, and staff addresses both in a very professional and positive manner.

3. Enrollment Management maximizes staff performance and effectively uses fiscal resources.

4. Innovative programs, such as the START Center, Counselors Roundtable, Sneak Peek, Career Connections, and Straight Through to U serve AC’s diverse constituencies well.

5. Enrollment Management personnel assist those in other departments during peak times. For example, they process data for the Registrar’s Office,
prepare mailings for Financial Aid, and collect students’ green light requests for Advising and Counseling.

6. Enrollment Management staff has cultivated excellent relationships with high school counselors and representatives from four-year universities, such as Texas Tech University.

Concerns and Recommendations

1. Enrollment management functions include both student recruiting and retention, but a greater emphasis has been placed on recruiting.

Recommendation: AC should work to improve student retention. Enrollment Management personnel should facilitate analysis of retention data, and involve appropriate AC staff, faculty, and students to develop an effective plan to address student retention.

2. Enrollment management can be most effective when student and community (both employee and employer) needs are matched with appropriate academic and continuing education course offerings. AC should and must improve that evaluation process in a rapidly changing environment.

Recommendation: Consider utilizing the Community College Strategic Planner program, available at no cost through the Texas Association of Community Colleges, together with continual local assessment.

3. Student Assistance Center employees must provide multiple services, including registration, cashiering, and referral. Confusion exists because responsibility and oversight is divided between Student Services and the Business Office. In addition, responsibility and oversight vary from one campus to another.

Recommendation: Assess problems encountered in the Student Assistance Center philosophy and program, consider alternatives, and recommend appropriate changes to better serve the needs of students and the institution.

4. The concept of the Student Assistance Center is exceptional. The design of the Washington Street Campus Center, however, does not permit optimum student service nor contribute to staff efficiency and effectiveness. For example, while performing cashiering duties, staff members may not be facing students waiting in line for assistance. Additional staff cannot be accommodated.
Recommendation: Assess student and institutional needs in the Student Assistance Center, consider alternatives, and redesign the existing space and counter to better serve students and the institution.

**Student Activities**

**Commendations**

1. The well-qualified and experienced Director and administrative clerk administer the Student Activities program. Both have more than 15 years of service in Student Services. Student Services staff on the East and Moore County Campuses provide quality activities on their campuses, including cookouts for evening students, pool tournaments, canned food and blood drives, and a variety of other activities and seminars.

2. The Student Government Association (SGA) is a well-organized and active organization, which is dedicated to providing a variety of activities for students. For many years, SGA leaders have been active and served as officers in the Texas Junior College Student Government Association (TJCSGA). AC representatives have served as TJCSGA directors for 15 of the past 17 years and have been previously elected to the offices of president, vice president, treasurer, parliamentarian, and host college for TJCSGA. An AC student will serve as secretary next year. AC’s Director of Student Activities has served as a state advisor two years.

3. The Distinguished Lecture Series is one of the highlights of AC’s academic year. The SGA sponsors and produces this series each year and dedicates the net proceeds to scholarships.

4. The Student Activities staff effectively coordinates and works with faculty, who sponsor 35 student clubs. They collaborate with others on all four campuses to provide student activities. This effective teamwork provides AC students with opportunities for recreation and fun, travel, networking, and programming, as well as professional and leadership development.

5. Student Activities staff devotes significant time, energy and resources to New Student Orientation. Orientation on the AC website provides that opportunity for students who live outside the AC service area, including commuters and those enrolling through AC’s distance education programs.

6. Student Activities staff members maintain good relationships and communicate and work with Advising and Counseling, Adult Students Program, Financial Aid, and others.
7. The Student Activity Advisory Fee Committee apparently functions well. The new budgeting policy regarding student development, activities, and travel encourages more student involvement. Only occasionally do students express concerns about expenditure of activity fees.

**Concerns and Recommendations**

1. No Student Activities staff is dedicated to provide student activities on the West Campus.

**Recommendation:** Determine if, and to what extent, students want student activities at the West Campus. If such services are desired, develop a plan to provide that service. Consider appropriate staffing models, including assignment of a new staff member.

2. Space is limited or not available for student programming and recreation on the West and Moore County Campuses.

**Recommendation:** Assess the need and potential use of fitness centers, study areas, and space for student organization functions at the West and Moore County Campuses. Conduct a feasibility study including cost estimates for reconfiguring existing space or expanding facilities to provide additional space for student activities.

3. Facilities for student activities on the lower level of the Washington Street Campus College Union Building show wear and tear. Function, safety, and appearance issues should be addressed.

**Recommendation:** Assess function and configuration of the existing student activities facilities on the Washington Street Campus. Develop a plan with cost estimates to address upgrades of wall treatments, carpeting, stair treads, and student organization office partitions.

4. Security is inadequate in student activities areas on the Washington Street and East Campuses; the current security camera system appears to be ineffective. For example, students and others may choose any of three entries to the lower level Student Activities area on the Washington Street Campus. The north exterior entrance, in particular, is extremely unsafe. There is no security camera or offices nearby. On the East Campus, only two old security cameras are operational and cover only the Student Assistance Center counter and the weight room.
Recommendation: Develop an appropriate plan to improve security in all student activity areas on the Washington Street and East Campuses. Consider the entire lower level of the College Union Building on the Washington Street Campus and the basketball court, cafeteria, and hallway as well as the Assistance Center counter and weight room on the East Campus.

5. Providing student activity services to distance education students presents a number of challenges.

Recommendation: Determine SACS criteria for distance education student services, examine programs offered by other community colleges, and develop an appropriate plan to provide services for AC distance education students.

6. Student activities must be provided at the new campus in Hereford.

Recommendation: Work with appropriate college personnel and Hereford representatives to develop a student activities plan, which can be implemented in phases at the Hereford Campus.

7. Signs for the East Campus Activity Center are inadequate.

Recommendation: Develop a plan to provide appropriate signs for the East Campus Activity Center. Contact the Physical Plant for sign construction and installation.

8. New Student Orientation does not meet the needs of Industrial and Transportation Technology students, particularly those who are part-time, at the East Campus.

Recommendation: Appoint a representative committee to assess East Campus student orientation needs and develop a new program for implementation.

9. No specific personnel are charged with the responsibility to plan and orient new students on the East and West campuses.

Recommendation: Assess orientation of new students on the East and West Campuses. Determine the most appropriate staffing for orientation. Consider volunteer, faculty, staff, and committee assignments. Implement the most appropriate model for each campus.

10. The Student Activities calendar on the AC website appears to be inconsistently updated and is underutilized.
Recommendation: Determine the expertise and process required to address this issue. Make required changes to maintain a current student activities calendar, which includes dates, times, locations, purposes, and incentives for student participation.

Registrar and Admissions

Commendations

1. Functions in the Registrar's office are supervised and managed by competent and experienced staff. Both supervisory personnel and staff employees are service oriented and dedicated to assisting students and faculty.

2. Internal communication in the Registrar's office appears to be quite effective. Regular weekly and monthly staff meetings encourage communication and discussion of problems and solutions. The importance of teamwork, which stresses cooperation and collaboration, is a vital element of the culture in the Registrar's office.

3. The Registrar practices four excellent standards of personnel management:
   - Careful selection of employees
   - Thorough job training and orientation
   - Quality leadership with incentives for effective communication
   - Employee involvement in planning and goal implementation.

4. The security and integrity of student records has been ensured through the implementation of a document imaging system. Records are scanned and indexed by social security number, name, and AC identification number for easy retrieval. The original document is shredded.

5. The Registration Review Committee, comprised of diverse representatives, meets at timely intervals and operates effectively. The committee has recommended a number of changes, which have made the registration process more efficient and effective. For example, the decision to discontinue arena registration and to implement continuous registration has proven to be appropriate, wise and successful.
Concerns and Recommendations

1. The Registration Review Committee has become a vital planning committee, which is charged with evaluating registration procedures and improving the system for the benefit of students and the institution. The registration process affects all AC campuses, but not all campuses are represented on the committee.

   Recommendation: Include personnel from all campuses on the Registration Review Committee, and share committee recommendations with appropriate personnel on each campus.

2. The program review document indicates that Registrar office personnel are no longer clerks. They are technicians whose compensation should be commensurate with that for other positions that require comparable technical expertise.

   Recommendation: The Registrar should request Human Resources to conduct an audit of all classified positions in the department and to make appropriate revisions to salary schedules.

3. Registrar's Office supervisors do not believe the current Amarillo College performance evaluation process is appropriate or effective.

   Recommendation: Request permission to develop and administer an appropriate and effective evaluation instrument for all Registrar's Office employees in addition to the existing performance review instrument.

4. The current document imaging software used by the Registrar's Office is inefficient.

   Recommendation: Investigate and purchase appropriate software to ensure efficient document imaging and accessibility.

5. Historic student records are maintained in hard-copy format or on microfilm. The first is difficult to retrieve and the latter is deteriorating.

   Recommendation: Investigate the feasibility and cost of converting all hard-copy and microfilm documents to an appropriate medium.
Occupational Safety

Commendations

1. The Director of the Occupational Safety and Environmental Program provides countless classes and training opportunities for employees at Amarillo College.

2. The Director of the Occupational Safety and Environmental Program provides leadership for the Amarillo College Safety Committee.

Concerns and Recommendations

1. The Director has been given the responsibility for AC's security camera system, but the responsibility aligns directly with similar responsibilities in the Police Department.

Recommendation: Return the responsibility for campus video security to the Police Department.

2. The AC Board Policy Manual requires that all accidents, injuries, serious illnesses, or emergencies occurring on college property be reported and reviewed by the Police Department. That policy does not reconcile with stated responsibilities of the Occupational Safety and Environmental Department.

Recommendation: Make necessary revisions which place responsibility in the Occupational Safety and Environmental Department for reviewing and maintaining all records concerning on-the-job accidents and safety/environmental related incidents, including those involving students.

3. The AC Board Policy Manual does not include a comprehensive Fire Prevention Program.

Recommendation: Develop a comprehensive Fire Prevention Program to be proposed to the Board of Regents.

4. The job description for the Occupational Safety and Environmental Director is similar to that for police officers. The job description should require education and experience qualifications commensurate with appropriate skills and duties for the position.
Recommendation: Request Human Resources to perform a job audit of the Occupational Safety and Environmental Director position and to recommend appropriate action.

5. The Police/Security Department includes a majority of the functions provided by the Occupational Safety and Environmental Department

Recommendation: Investigate the appropriateness and feasibility of combining the Occupational Safety and Environmental Program with the Police/Security Department.

Police/Security

Commendations

1. The Amarillo College Police/Security Department provides round-the-clock coverage (24 hours a day and 7 days a week) of the Washington Street, West, East, Polk Street Campuses, and Community Link site.

2. Amarillo College employs sworn officers to insure professional law enforcement.

Concerns and Recommendations

1. The Internal Auditor’s Report identified nine programs offered by law enforcement agencies on other campuses but not provided by the AC Police/Security Department: crime prevention, date rape prevention, stranger rape prevention, student security patrol, alcohol education, drug education, self-defense training, victim assistance, hate crime education.

Recommendation: Determine if programs offered by other campus law enforcement departments are appropriate for Amarillo College. Of those programs that are appropriate, determine which programs are provided by other AC departments, and consider those not provided and the most appropriate manner in which to provide them.

2. Current resources may be too limited for AC Police/Security to provide adequate security for widespread facilities, employees and students.
Recommendation: Conduct a study to determine AC’s vital police/security needs, compare with current service, and make recommendations to the appropriate dean.

3. The Police/Security Department shares a majority of functions provided by the Occupational Safety and Environmental Program.

Recommendations: Consider the feasibility of combining the Occupational Safety and Environmental Program with the Police/Security Department.

4. The committee was disappointed with the Police/Security Department’s approach to the self-study component of the program review process. This established process has proven time-after-time to be an excellent management tool for Amarillo College departments to make continuous quality improvements. We believe the Police/Security Department relied too heavily on the Internal Auditor’s Report as a means of completing a requirement rather than reaping the benefits from serious self-study. The following illustrates our concern:

- Critical analytical details from Section VII, Recommendations, of the Police/Security Department Self-Study are answered “To be addressed in the Internal Auditor’s Report.”

- Many of the department’s responses to the SWOT analysis in the self study were “None observed”, “Not observed”, or “Not applicable.”

The committee is concerned about the department’s lack of a “student, service oriented” mission. The strength of the Police/Security Department is the employment of commissioned police officers and operation as a police department. As a result of this organization, there is a belief that the Police/Security Department answers to a higher authority than the College. This is evident in the department’s self-study. Two examples follow:

- “We are committed to the protection of life and property; the preservation of peace, order, and defense of the Constitution of the State of Texas and the Constitution of the United States of America. College police officers will exercise law enforcement authority on behalf of the people of the State of Texas and will faithfully discharge that trust.”

- “The Amarillo College Police Department is run in a quasi-military fashion, as are all police agencies, and is lead in a military style.”

The current organization of the AC Police/Security Department should not compromise the primary mission of serving the institution, students, and college personnel.
Recommendation: The purpose, philosophy, and culture of the AC Police/Security Department requires re-examination. Therefore, the committee recommends a more thorough self-study be completed and re-submitted to the Institutional Effectiveness and Advancement Office.

In conclusion, exemplary service and exceptional management skills are predominant in this division. The division is an integral part of the college, and its services are vital to the ability of Amarillo College to fulfill its mission and goals. The committee commends the Student Services Division for the numerous examples of exceptional performance and for its level of commitment to the students and the mission of Amarillo College.