
Central Piedmont
Community College
Self-Study Report
2000-2002

Prepared
for the
Southern Association
of
Colleges and Schools



smart for life

Central Piedmont Community College Self-Study Report

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**Central Piedmont Community College
SACS Self-Study Report**

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INTRODUCTION

Thirty-nine fall seasons have blanketed Central Piedmont Community College in brilliant color since the school opened its doors in 1963.

One of North Carolina's first community colleges was in many ways a pioneer in educational achievements. Growing from small and simple to vast and complex, it continually redefined what it was and reexamined where it was going.

From the beginning, the College cultivated new ideas: commitment to excellence in all things; an open-door policy and egalitarian spirit; pragmatism, flexibility, and innovation; the notion of life-long learning; student-oriented values; and inclusiveness.

Central Piedmont Community College was officially established September 18, 1963, with the merger under one administration of the primarily black Mecklenburg College and the primarily white Central Industrial Education Center (CIEC). Dr. Richard Hagemeyer, assistant superintendent of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System and director of the CIEC was selected as the first president. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Board of Education accepted a recommendation to close one campus and put the college in a central location, the old Central High School building on Elizabeth Avenue. This building, still being used as a major facility, was later renamed Garinger Hall in honor of Dr. Elmer Garinger, longtime superintendent. The fall class schedule included a comprehensive listing of liberal arts, technical, vocational, and basic skills courses.

At the end of 1963, Charlotte's newest college had made some major strides: received its official name; enrolled 1300 students; accepted its first corporate gift, a computer and data processing unit; and awarded its first scholarships. A significant number of adults were well on their way to new starts in life—via job retraining and general education courses. The College was facing many challenges: acquiring 31 acres of property, constructing new buildings, securing equipment, soliciting scholarship funds, implementing new courses and programs, dealing with constant budget crises, and serving the needs of an increasing number of students.

By the end of the decade, the College had opened five adult education centers offering low-cost evening courses to the community; established a college transfer program; added degree programs in nursing and dental hygiene, police

science, and fine arts; began its “war” on adult illiteracy by opening 32 centers throughout Mecklenburg and surrounding counties; developed a 10-year vision for a multi-million dollar expansion of the College along Elizabeth Avenue; created the Central Piedmont Community College Foundation, Inc.; and received accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

Central Piedmont Community College was not tied to the idea that the classroom lecture method of imparting knowledge was sacred, and faculty were willing to try new methods of teaching an increasingly non-traditional student body. Soon the College faculty and staff began actively experimenting and innovating, bringing it a national reputation and an invitation to join the prestigious League for Innovation in the Community College. During the 60s and 70s, faculty and staff pioneered the use of slides and audiotapes to teach automotive students how to repair a carburetor; established a learning lab using programmed materials; developed a revolutionary information retrieval system including slide projectors, tape recorders, film strips, and a new tool—the computer; and began using television, radio, telephone, and the newspaper to reach the off-campus community.

Thousands of returning Vietnam veterans helped the student body grow to over 54,000 by 1980. Central Piedmont Community College’s open door meant that the College wanted to serve all educational levels: citizens learning to read, the academically talented needing new academic challenges, students with disabilities, and the foreign born facing an English language barrier. To respond to the adult-literacy challenge, a unique approach, using television and microcomputers instead of a classroom setting, became known as Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) and later became nationally recognized. Taylor Hall, an activity/classroom building complete with a gymnasium, and a multi-level parking deck were built. A large donation from the Belk Foundation allowed the College to build a computer laboratory. The College opened the Small Business Center on Central Campus and learning centers (forerunners of campuses) in outlying areas of the County.

In 1986, Dr. Ruth Shaw, president of El Centro Community College in Dallas, became the College’s second president. Under her leadership, the College launched its first public fundraising campaign, added the Advanced Technologies Center, started the Center for Automotive Technology, and began acquiring land for new campuses.

As Central Piedmont Community College’s third president, Dr.

P. Anthony Zeiss, former President of Pueblo Community College in Colorado, has guided the College since 1992. The College became a multi-campus college with the conversion of the North Area Learning Center to the North Campus. Three other campuses subsequently opened: South Campus in 1998, Southwest Campus in 1999, and West Campus in 2001. With the opening of the Northeast Campus in 2002, the College now has six full-service campuses across Mecklenburg County. The College also reaches thousands of students via distance learning offered through its Virtual Campus. In addition, the College teaches classes in over 200 public schools, churches, YMCAs, and business and industry locations.

Central Piedmont Community College has grown from a small college with a dozen programs to one with over 100 degree, diploma, and certificate programs serving over 60,000 students in an array of credit and non-credit offerings. The College has also become the County's premier workforce-development resource. The College is embarking on more capital improvements and expansions to serve the needs of its growing region, and the Central Campus is slated for major renovations.

A look at the current student population reveals the following:

- 34 is the average age;
- 42% are ethnic minorities;
- 5% are international students, representing 157 countries;
- 20% are in basic skills, adult high school, GED, or ESL;
- 40% are seeking one-year certificates or two-year degrees, many transferring as juniors to universities; and
- 40% are employed workers upgrading their occupational skills.

As soon as the College received word in April 2000 to begin the Self-Study process in anticipation of a reaffirmation visit in October 2002, President Zeiss appointed a SACS Self-Study Steering Committee including a Self-Study Director, Chair of the Steering Committee, Editor, Cabinet Liaison, and Chair of Local Arrangements. Chairs of section committees were also appointed: Principles and Philosophy of Accreditation, Institutional Purpose, Institutional Effectiveness, Educational Programs, Educational Support Services, and Administrative Processes. Section committee chairs recommended

committee members from all campuses representing faculty, professional staff, classified staff, administrators, and students. Members were asked to serve by the appropriate member of College Cabinet.

To guide the Self-Study, the Steering Committee adopted two primary purposes:

- To analyze how well the College promotes student learning and how well it provides services that support the learning environment, and
- To demonstrate continued compliance with accreditation guidelines under which Central Piedmont Community College operates within the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The Committee also agreed to the following:

- To conduct a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the current status of the College;
- To expand awareness and understanding of learning outcomes, College programs, services, resources, and processes by ensuring that the Self-Study is broadly participatory;
- To strengthen the expertise of faculty and staff in the continuous process of institutional analysis;
- To create a greater sense of responsibility and accountability among faculty, staff, and students;
- To strengthen connections, communication, and collaboration within a multi-campus community, and to realize the educational and collegial benefits that derive from such participation;
- To examine the effectiveness of the College's current planning, budgeting, and evaluation processes across all divisions and to recommend improvements in policies, procedures, and records; and
- To use the results of the Self-Study to recommend, suggest, and propose enhancements that provide direction for future growth in programs and services throughout the College.

Furthermore, the Steering Committee developed a Self-Study Plan including a budget to cover expenses of conducting the Self-Study and of hosting the Visiting Committee, and a

timeline to ensure an orderly process. In addition, it developed an electronic process to document its research and to keep track of documentation used in research, drafts of sections, and minutes of meetings.

The Committee also held orientation sessions to acquaint the College community with SACS and the Self-Study, and to sustain the importance of the Self-Study over a two-year span by regular written communications and a number of fun activities.

As each section committee completed its first draft, it was read and discussed by the Steering Committee, reviewed by the appropriate vice-president, proofed by the editor assigned to that section, and finally critiqued by an outside consultant, Dr. Barbara Jones. With this feedback, each section committee chair made revisions and wrote the introduction and conclusion to his or her section. Members of each section committee signed off that they had read their section and agreed with its contents.

This year the College is experiencing serious challenges. In spite of its physical growth to a six-campus institution, Central Piedmont Community College still ranks 55th of the 58 North Carolina community colleges in space per student, and 58th in State funding. Due to State budget shortfalls, last year the College had to revert 3% of its State and 1% of its County budget. This year the College reverted 4% of its State budget. As this Self-Study goes to press, the College is building its 2002-2003 budget based on the worst case scenario of an 8% cut and no allocation for growth.

In spite of major challenges, including budget shortfalls, preparing a Self-Study, opening new campuses, and converting to a new state-mandated computer information system, the Self-Study committees have been impressed with the excellence they have found. The many strengths of Central Piedmont Community College include:

- A smooth transition from a quarter system to a semester system with a concomitant restructuring of all programs to meet statewide standards;
- A faculty and staff who meet the needs of a student body rich in diversity, from students needing the most basic skills to students doing honors level work;
- A commitment to accommodating a 640% growth in international students since the last self-study;
- A national reputation recently enhanced by receiving

several prestigious awards, recognitions, and grants;

- An Information Technology Services department that maintains a regular schedule of computer upgrades, that responds quickly to requests for help, and that follows up to see that work is performed satisfactorily.
- A continuing education unit that provides training for over 600 companies in the Charlotte area.

While conducting this Self-Study has taken a great deal of time and energy on the part of hundreds of faculty, staff, administrators, and students, all who have participated have grown personally and professionally as a result of this experience, and Central Piedmont Community College is a better college because of this thorough analysis.