

Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution:

Northwest Vista College (NVC) is a public, Level I institution, of approximately 18,000 students, located in San Antonio. The institution just celebrated 20 years of operation and is located in one of San Antonio's fastest growing areas. The institution is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution and is led by President Ricky N. Baser. NVC began offering classes in the fall of 1995 as one of the newest additions to the Alamo Colleges. Students enrolled take courses at NVC in a traditional daytime classroom setting as well as evening, internet, hybrid and weekend courses. Most of the classes offered lead to a two-year associate degree or one-year certificate option.

Student Profile:

Enrollment - 18,103 (Fall 2016); 23% Full-Time, 75% Part-Time, 54% Female, 46% Male; 19% Dual Credit, 47% Require Remediation, 10% Workforce Programs.
Ethnicity - 62% Hispanic, 7% African-American, 25% white, 6% Other.

The mission of NVC is to create opportunities for success by offering quality academic, technical and life-long learning experiences to its diverse communities in a collaborative, student-centered, data-informed and shared leadership environment.

Part II. Assessment of Compliance

A. Assessment of Compliance with Section 1: The Principle of Integrity

1.1 The institution operates with integrity in all matters. **(Integrity)**

The narrative and documentation provided by Northwest Vista College demonstrate that the institution operates with integrity in all matters.

B. Assessment of Compliance with Section 2: Core Requirements

2.3 The institution has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. **(Chief Executive Officer)**

The President of Northwest Vista College serves as the chief executive officer and has primary responsibility for the operation and administration of the institution. The President is not the presiding officer of the board.

Alamo Community College District (ACCD) policy B.2.1 Organizational Plan states that “each Alamo Colleges’ President serves as the Chief Executive Officer of his/her respective college...”. The Alamo Colleges job description for President of the College indicates that the President is responsible for “directing all operational areas of one of the colleges”. It further indicates that the President is responsible to the Chancellor of the district (Alamo Community College District).

The Special Committee interviewed the President of Northwest Vista College as well as the Chancellor and confirms that the President is the institution’s chief executive officer. A review of the Alamo Colleges Organizational Chart, board minutes, and interviews confirm that the President is not the presiding officer of the board.

The Special Committee’s review of policy along with interviews indicate that the President has appropriate authority to lead the institution.

C. Assessment of Compliance with Section 3: Comprehensive Standards

3.2.2 The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution’s governance structure: **(Governing board control)**

3.2.2.1 the institution’s mission;

3.2.2.2 the fiscal stability of the institution; and

3.2.2.3 institutional policy,

The Board of the Alamo Community College District has the final authority to establish and interpret policies that govern the College District and within limits imposed by other legal authorities has complete and full control over the institutions that comprise the District.

The Special Committee reviewed board minutes, the Board Policy Manual, and interviewed board members and the College District Chancellor. The Special Committee determined that the Board of the Alamo Community College District has the responsibility for formulating broad public policy in community college education for each of the Alamo Colleges.

According to Texas Educational Code, Chapter 51, Sec. 51.352, "It is the policy of the state that the governing boards of institutions of higher education being composed of lay members, shall exercise the traditional and time-honored role for such boards..... and shall constitute the keystone of the governance". Further, the same statute instructs the board to appoint the president or other chief executive officer of each institution under the board's control and management and evaluate the chief executive officer of each component institution and assist the officer in the achievement of performance goals. Our review determined that such authority granted by the State of Texas was accomplished through the board's executive and administrative structure.

The Board of the Alamo Community College District functions as the board for each of the five colleges as well as for the College District to whom the Chancellor reports as the District's chief executive officer. The College presidents report to the Chancellor as prescribed by Board Policy, B.2.1.

- 3.2.7** The institution has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies. **(Organizational structure)**

Northwest Vista College has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies. The organizational chart outlines the reporting structure of the college. The organizational chart is published in several places on the college's website as well as in institutional documents..

Interviews with the President, Vice President for Academic Services, Vice President for College Services, and Dean of Student Success provided additional information regarding the college's organizational structure and responsibilities for the administration of policies. The organizational structure appears appropriate for the overall management and operation of the college.

- 3.2.9** The institution publishes policies regarding appointment, employment, and evaluation of all personnel. **(Personnel appointment)**

The institution follows Alamo Colleges and Northwest Vista College Human Resources policies and procedures for the appointment and employment of

faculty and staff. The policies and procedures are published on the Alamo Board web site.

Through interviews conducted with a variety of faculty, staff, and administrators, the Special Committee verified that the institution is responsible for the hiring and evaluation process.

The institution uses Hiring Managers to select search committees. The faculty search committees are comprised of faculty from the institution. The search committee reviews applications and interviews qualified candidates. The committee makes a recommendation of one to five individuals to the President for full-time faculty positions. The President, Vice President for Academic Success, Department Chair and Dean then conduct a second interview. The President then submits the preferred candidate to the District Human Resources Office. There are also Hiring Managers for non-faculty positions. The Hiring Manager selects a search committee and applications are reviewed and candidates interviewed. The committee recommends one to three candidates to the appropriate Vice President and/or President. The hiring manager then submits the preferred candidate to the District Human Resources Office.

The Human Resources Department at the district is responsible for background checks, drug testing, and verification of academic qualifications. If the applicant satisfies the checks, Human Resources will notify the Hiring Committee Chair/Vice President/President as appropriate and send an employment offer to the selected applicant.

The institution publishes policies on evaluation of employees. Performance evaluations are prepared by institutional personnel. District Board Policy describes the individual responsible for the evaluations and the timing of evaluations. Department Chairs evaluate full-time faculty, Deans evaluate Department Chairs, supervisors evaluate part-time faculty, full-time faculty evaluate department chairs and supervisors of full-time non-faculty employees evaluate those employees. Interviews with hiring managers verified that the institution is following published policy. Copies of redacted evaluations were also provided to the Committee.

3.4.1 The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration. **(Academic program approval)**

There is a clearly defined process whereby faculty have the ability to initiate a new program. In discussion with multiple faculty groups, it was evident that all faculty are aware of the process for academic program approval. Each educational program for which credit is awarded is approved by faculty and administrators through the Northwest Vista College Curriculum Review Team, a team that includes faculty and administrators. Faculty provided an example of a recently approved Customer Service program that was created and implemented at the institution.

New programs and program modifications are initiated by the faculty who bring these proposals to the Curriculum Review Team, a group that includes both faculty and administration. In interviews with both faculty and administration, it was evident that everyone is cognizant of the process necessary to initiate program modification.

- 3.4.4** The institution publishes policies that include criteria for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, credit by examination, advanced placement, and professional certificates that are consistent with its mission and ensure that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution's own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript. **(Acceptance of academic credit)**

The institution publishes policies for awarding credit in the institution catalog and on the institution's website. These policies contain required criteria for awarding, evaluating, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, credit by examination, advanced placement, and professional certificates.

The institution uses the Center for Student Information (CSI) for processing incoming transcripts. CSI is an Alamo College District Office. CSI uses courses that are built in SHATATR (Banner transfer equivalency database) for courses previously articulated. The CSI also uses the Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCN), the Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual, and Workforce Education Course Manual to determine equivalencies not built in SHATATR. The Service Agreement between the Institution and CSI states "If an equivalency does not exist, relevant chairs and faculty members from the college will review the institution's course catalog and course syllabus (if available) and determine whether the course will be accepted. If accepted, the decision will be stored in the Course Equivalency List." The Committee interviewed the following personnel from the Center for Student Information: Director for the Center for Student Information, Process Function Manager and the Associate Director for CSI. These personnel reported that they are not following the procedures outlined in the Service Agreement. Courses that do not currently have an equivalency are not being sent to Northwest Vista College chairs and faculty members for review.

Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript.

- 3.4.5** The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These policies are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. **(Academic policies)**

The Special Committee reviewed transcripts for students with transfer credit from within the Alamo District and outside the Alamo District. Intra-district courses are included as institutional credit, rather than transfer credit, and only a district wide

GPA is calculated on the transcript. An institutional GPA is not calculated. Interviews with the Registrar and financial aid personnel confirmed that the institution includes intra-district courses as institutional credit and that a separate institutional GPA is not calculated. These individuals also confirmed that the new transfer agreement with the Alamo District Colleges (dated August 29, 2016) stating that transfer credit among the district colleges are transcribed as transfer is not being followed at this time and has not been implemented.

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the institution follow generally accepted practices in higher education for the posting of transfer credit.

Faculty, staff and administrators indicated in interviews that they are considering the need for separate GPAs on the academic transcript. Currently the academic transcript has only an overall GPA (district GPA that includes all district credit). The institution does not calculate an institutional GPA. The calculation of the GPA has implications for academic standing, honors for graduation, degree GPA, and federal financial aid. The institution requires a 2.0 district GPA rather than institutional GPA for degree requirements.

Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that the institution establish policies for GPA calculation in accordance with good educational practice.

- 3.4.7** The institution ensures the quality of educational programs and courses offered through consortia relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing compliance with the *Principles* and periodically evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the purpose of the institution. **(Consortia relationships/contractual agreements)**

The institution ensures the quality of educational programs and courses offered through consortia relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing compliance with the Principles and periodically evaluates the consortia relationship and/or agreement against the mission of the institution.

As evidenced through multiple consortia agreements, the institution not only has memoranda of understanding between the institution and other institutions within the district, but also with the local secondary schools in the district.

Primary responsibility for consortia relationships and contractual agreements resides with the Vice President for Academic Success, academic deans and program directors, as well as the coordinator for dual credit programs.

Additionally, there are memoranda of understanding between NVC and its neighboring state and private colleges and universities. The consortia agreement between institutions within the Alamo District describes the processes needed for the autonomous institutions to work in concert with each other. A review of these agreements demonstrates that each agreement ensures ongoing compliance with the Principles and that each agreement is reviewed periodically. The dual credit agreements with the local school districts clearly define the arrangement of

these classes from all aspects: admissions policies, scheduling, staffing, and delivery.

- 3.4.10** The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty. **(Responsibility for curriculum)**
The process of curriculum approval is jointly shared by the faculty and the administration of the institution as demonstrated through the various committees and committee processes that handle curricular issues. The institution provided numerous examples of these committee meetings and schedules, as well as agendas and minutes of those meetings.

The curriculum review process is demonstrated through numerous examples and shows that the responsibility clearly lies with the faculty. A Curriculum Review Team meets monthly and involves faculty from each of the academic areas and allows for a faculty member to present a potential curricular change to the team for discussion. Once a proposal is approved by the NVC CRT at the institutional level, it goes to the Alamo College Curriculum Team (ACCC) for review at the district level and then to the Presidents/Vice Chancellors Team (PVT). Specific examples were provided of two new proposed courses that were approved at the CRT and have been tabled at the PVT. Faculty at NVC have a clear understanding of this process and what the next steps are. The institution has a clear process for approvals as well as checks and balances to ensure wise curricular decisions. Additionally, everyone who was interviewed had a clear understanding of the entire process followed for curriculum review and approval, including the steps necessary for that approval at the district level. It was very clear that the actual curriculum approval is at the individual institutional level, not at the district level.

There are indications that the board, through board policy, has required certain content (The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People) to be included in the curriculum. This is stipulated in Board Policy B.9.1. It appears that this bypassed the faculty review process.

Recommendation 4. The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate that it places primary responsibility for the content of the curriculum with its faculty.

- 3.7.5** The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. **(Faculty role in governance)**

Faculty at NVC are responsible for both academic and governance matters. Interviews with faculty across the disciplines clearly demonstrates that faculty are included in academic decisions at various levels, including department chairs and program directors, full-time faculty and part-time faculty. Faculty members have a clear voice in academic matters and include all faculty in that communication. Examples were provided to illustrate how faculty are involved in these decisions, one specifically related to a potential new academic program in Mexican-American studies.

Through its Faculty Senate, the institution provides a clearly defined avenue for faculty to express ideas, concerns, and generally contribute to open communication for all. The faculty senate provides a voice for faculty to bring up concerns, improve communication between all constituents, and offers a line of communication between full-time faculty and part-time faculty outside the communication between part-time faculty and their department chairs. Several faculty members were interviewed and expressed an appreciation for the transparency in the governance process. Additionally, through interviews with faculty and academic leaders, it is clear that faculty are involved in the strategic planning process.

3.13.4 Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports

3.13.4.b. Applicable Policy Statement. If an institution is part of a system or corporate structure, a description of the system operation (or corporate structure) is submitted as part of the Compliance Certification for the decennial review. The description should be designed to help members of the peer review committees understand the mission, governance, and operating procedures of the system and the individual institution's role within that system.

Alamo College Board Policy D.2.5 Hiring Authority, Status, Assignment and Duties states "All employees, except for internal audit department employees and the Board Liaison, are subject at any time to assignment, reassignment or transfer to vacant or new positions by the chancellor." In an interview with the Chancellor, he confirmed that he has exercised this authority on a few occasions.

In addition, the employment contract is between the individual and the Alamo Colleges District and not between the individual and the institution for which the faculty/administrator was hired.

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends that the institution retain its authority as a separately accredited unit for the appointment and employment for all institutional personnel.

The representation of institutional autonomy is unclear. This is evident in the following instances:

- Branding (language in College catalogs, website, College marketing materials, email) represents the district and not the separately accredited institution. For example, in all branded materials, Alamo Colleges is the predominant focus and the college name is secondary. In other examples, the college is omitted completely and the focus is on Alamo Colleges.
- College degrees conferred at each commencement ceremony are unclear. For example, the script read by the President at the commencement ceremony does not clearly confer the degrees on behalf of the college. In the language found in the script, it was unclear whether the entity conferring the degree was the institution or the district.

- Language in documents does not accurately portray the college and instead represents the district as if it were the educational institution. For example: memo templates, manuals, guidelines, consortia agreements, contracts, MOUs, minutes and agendas.

Recommendation 6: The Committee recommends that the institution accurately represent itself as a separately accredited institution.

D. Assessment of Compliance with Section 4: Federal Requirements

4.7 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the most recent Higher Education Act as amended. (Title IV program responsibilities)

It is unclear if practices at the institution are appropriate in calculating and reporting student Satisfactory Academic Progress for federal financial aid purposes. In interviews with the District Director of Financial Aid, district office financial aid personnel, and the Registrar it was reported that the institution uses cumulative grade point averages to determine students' Satisfactory Academic Progress status for the awarding of federal financial aid. It was further reported that the cumulative grade point average is calculated only from coursework taken at the Alamo Colleges rather than from all coursework (transfer, district and institutional) completed by the student. A review of student transcripts confirmed that only Alamo College credit is used to determine cumulative grade point averages.

Recommendation 7: The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate that it uses appropriate practices in the calculation of cumulative grade point averages in determining Satisfactory Academic Progress and for federal reporting in compliance with Title IV requirements.

Part III. Observations and Comments

While agreements exist that define credit transfer between institutions within the Alamo district, the acceptance of credits from sister institutions would be easier to validate if all institutions utilize the same faculty credentialing processes. St. Philip's College has developed a Faculty Credentials Manual that might be a starting place for a district-wide manual. Although the critical need for this document might be alleviated once Northeast Lakeview College is fully accredited, a Faculty Credentials manual provides a clear process.

APPENDIX C

List of Recommendations Cited in the Report of the Special Committee

CS 3.4.4, Recommendation 1:

The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript.

CS 3.4.5, Recommendation 2:

The Committee recommends that the institution follow generally accepted practices in higher education for the posting of transfer credit.

CS 3.4.5, Recommendation 3:

The Committee recommends that the institution establish policies for GPA calculation in accordance with good educational practice.

CS 3.4.10, Recommendation 4:

The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate that it places primary responsibility for the content of the curriculum with its faculty.

CS 3.13.4b, Recommendation 5:

The Committee recommends that the institution retain its authority as a separately accredited unit for the appointment and employment for all institutional personnel.

CS 3.13.4b, Recommendation 6:

The Committee recommends that the college accurately represent itself as a separately accredited institution.

FR 4.7, Recommendation 7:

The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate that it uses appropriate practices in the calculation of cumulative grade point averages in determining Satisfactory Academic Progress and for federal reporting in compliance with Title IV requirements.