

# HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION: 2013 CMU SELF-STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Concluding Remarks

### CMU Moving in the Right Direction

As expected, the self-study has revealed a great deal about the various facets of the institution and the ways they interact. In doing so, it has reminded many at CMU of the accomplishments being realized every day and has fostered satisfaction among the University's faculty and staff. This is reflected in recent survey data that show a majority of CMU employees are satisfied being a part of this institution. The survey data also show that most CMU employees believe that CMU has significantly improved over the last five years and is also currently heading in the right direction as it moves forward. The spirit of enthusiasm for applying new ideas, building on our successes, and advancing together will surely lead to continued success and continuous improvement at Colorado Mesa University.

CMU FACULTY AND STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL DIRECTION

Employment Category	Percent of CMU Survey Respondents Indicating Agreement or Strong Agreement with Survey Statement -		
	The institution is headed in the right direction.	I feel that the institution has overall significantly improved over the last 5 years.	I am satisfied with being a part of our organization.
<b>Faculty</b>			
Tenured/Tenure-track	58.9	60.9	70.7
Instructors (full-time, non-tenure-track)	62.3	73.3	71.7
Lecturers (part-time)	60.0	59.0	72.5
<b>Staff</b>			
Exempt	82.0	85.2	84.2
Classified	75.0	74.6	73.5

Source: Data from Self-Study Survey of Faculty and Staff, August 2012.

## Strengths

Specific institutional strengths are described throughout this report and listed at the end of each criterion chapter. Examination from a wider perspective has revealed how many of these strengths work together to make CMU an effective institution that delivers rigorous, yet accessible, programs to a wide variety of students. Effective academic programs, and the services necessary to support them, are recognized as the foundation of the University. Programs and services are supported by student and faculty scholarship, active collaboration in academic planning and decision-making, and information sharing by the many components of the institution. CMU's close ties to the community and its clear and public statements about its nature and purpose have helped the University to increase regional accessibility via multiple modes of course delivery and variety in the program options it offers. All of this has been made possible, even through economically challenging times, by a clear strategic vision, sound fiscal planning, and the effective leveraging of traditional and non-traditional resources.

## Recommendations

Although the evidence in this report shows that CMU meets the criteria set forth by the Higher Learning Commission, several areas of needed improvement have been identified. Areas of improvement that are considered less urgent but in need of consideration are found in the list of further opportunities for continuing improvement. Areas which are considered more pressing are listed at the end of each criterion chapter in the form of recommendations, and they are compiled here. These represent actions recommended by the findings of this self-study.

### • Criterion 1 - Mission:

- ✓ ○ Recommendation 1: CMU should establish and clearly articulate the mission, role, scope, and intended constituents of its two-year division, Western Colorado Community College. Additionally, CMU should make clear how its two-year and four-year divisions are differentiated and integrated within the context of accomplishing the institution's overall mission.
- Recommendation 2: CMU should build on its current efforts and processes to actively recruit and retain faculty, staff, and students from all backgrounds to further enrich the diversity of the campus community. As CMU makes additional full-time faculty and staff hires, continued efforts should be made to find candidates from diverse backgrounds. The University should also move forward with setting goals for increasing enrollments from underserved populations and

ensuring greater student success rates among the same. The University recognizes the value of enriching the campus community with increased diversity, and while there are active efforts to promote diversity at CMU, continuous attention is needed. In this regard, the University should direct additional efforts toward supporting a campus culture of respect and understanding among students, faculty, staff, and the community at large.

• **Criterion 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct:**

- ✓ ◦ Recommendation 3: CMU should make clear to potential and current students which programs are delivered by CMU's four-year division and those that are offered by WCCC in all of its marketing materials, including the CMU and WCCC websites.

• **Criterion 3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support:**

- Recommendation 4: CMU and WCCC full-time faculty members not holding a degree at least one level higher than the courses they teach should have a professional development plan that leads to degree completion.
- Recommendation 5: CMU should better ensure the comparability, rigor, and consistency of courses taught in multiple modalities and at multiple locations, particularly those offered through the High School Scholars program. A "White Paper" was developed which contains recommendations for achieving consistency of courses. These recommendations were formally adopted by the Academic Council in spring 2012. Processes for ensuring implementation should be put in place. Methods should also be implemented to better combine the efforts of personnel at the WCCC campus with the academic department heads who have the responsibility for the courses being taught in the high schools.
- Recommendation 6: The University should develop an operational plan for the continued development of a more vigorous and inviting culture for its graduate students. CMU should coordinate application, admission, registration, and financial aid processes for its graduate students in a centralized location with a dedicated staff. In addition, CMU should work to promote increased support for both faculty and students in graduate programs.

• **Criterion 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement:**

- Recommendation 7: The University should continue its initiatives for involving all faculty members in assessment and for implementing program changes based on assessment outcomes. Faculty members will continue to develop assessment plans based on the program learning outcomes that were created in 2012-13. Departments will begin structured data collection in fall, 2013. The Assessment Committee has been tasked with critically reviewing all program assessment plans and working with programs to assure compliance. Revisions in the program review manual also include an enhanced assessment review process.
- Recommendation 8: CMU should work to connect assessment of student learning on the main campus more closely to assessment on the Montrose and WCCC campuses. Course assessment and evaluation also need to be expanded to include the High School Scholars Program.
- Recommendation 9: As CMU monitors assessment of program effectiveness in co-curricular activities, it should also continue to develop assessment of student learning in these areas. Both academic departments and academic and student service support offices will work in the curricular and co-curricular aspects of student learning. As assessment is strengthened across the campus, continuous improvement will be evident not only in academic areas but in the co-curricular areas, student services, and campus life as well.

• **Criterion 5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness:**

- ✓ ◦ Recommendation 10: CMU should appoint a working group that represents the stakeholders of CMU, WCCC, and the Grand Valley Board of Cooperative Educational Services to evaluate the successes, challenges, and future of the University's two-year division, Western Colorado Community College. Once the future framework is established, a strategic plan that guides subsequent operational planning and budgeting for WCCC should be developed.
- Recommendation 11: As the University plans for future full-time hires, it should balance the needs for additional staff positions, resulting from the recent significant growth of the institution, with those for faculty members.
- Recommendation 12: CMU should implement a process for formally evaluating and prioritizing future technology investments using a business model that leverages campus-wide solutions, takes advantage of economies of scale, and aligns expenditures with strategic initiatives. The process should assist with assessing technology solutions, scheduling projects within staff resources, and allocating campus resources within the broader institutional goals.

The recommendations listed above will guide CMU toward clear improvement during the next four years.