

# **AD HOC PEER EVALUATION REPORT**

**Stone Child College**  
Box Elder, Montana

**Spring 2012**

*A confidential report of findings prepared for the  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*

## Roster of Evaluators

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## Introduction

In spring 2011, Stone Child College submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) a *Year One Self-Evaluation Report* that responded not only to Standard One of the 2010 Standards for Accreditation but also, in an addendum, to four prior recommendations from a 2010 *Focused Interim Evaluation Report*. A three-evaluator panel completed an off-site review of the college's spring 2011 report for consideration at the Board of Commissioners' July 2011 meeting.

At that meeting, the commissioners requested that by spring 2012 Stone Child College prepare an *Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report* to address Recommendation 1 of the spring 2011 *Year One Peer Evaluation Report*, as well as Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 from the 2010 *Focused Interim Evaluation Report*.

In April-May 2012, the current evaluator conducted an off-site review of Stone Child's *Spring 2012 Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report*. The evaluator's findings comprise this peer evaluation report.

## Assessment of the Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report and Support Materials

The college's seven-page *Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report* was forwarded electronically to the evaluator by NWCCU in March 2012. The document included three appendices, each a collection of what the college calls Assessment Record Books. Altogether, the appendices totaled some 100 pages.

The self-evaluation narrative was concise, clear, and readable, with the text organized recommendation-by-recommendation. Though appropriately brief, the report's sections provided helpful updates on activities and accomplishments responding to each recommendation.

## Recommendations Addressed in the Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report

Though they differ in their particulars, the four recommendations addressed in Stone Child College's *Spring 2012 Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report* share a collective focus on assessment. Within that general arena, the recommendations individually call attention to two key expectations of effective practice — first, the disclosure of expected outcomes to stakeholders and, second, the systematic use of assessment findings to improve programs and services. To some extent, the distinctions among the recommendations are a matter of their application — whether to certificates versus general education, for instance, or to educational programs versus services. In its report, the college addresses these related concerns.

***Recommendation 1 of the Spring 2011 Peer-Evaluation Report: The evaluation panel recommends that general education outcomes be accessible to students and other College staff (Standard 2.C.2).***

Stone Child College's General Education Learner Outcomes appear verbatim in the *Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report* (page 5). The report's narrative notes that those outcomes now appear in not only the 2010-2012 *Stone Child College Catalog*, but also in program brochures, student orientation packets, and Freshman Seminar course materials.

Though the current evaluator did not receive copies of these hard-copy materials, a visit to the college's website confirmed that the outcomes are easily accessed in the on-line catalog posted there.

There is some inconsistency, however, between the catalog copy and the accreditation materials. The college's on-line catalog (<http://www.stonechild.edu/pdfs/catalog.pdf>) identifies six outcomes (page 32) while the *Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report* names nine. The discrepancy is around arts and humanities and Cree language and culture, which are absent from the catalog list. The *Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report* (page 5) notes that the General Education Learner Outcomes were updated in May 2011, offering one possible explanation for the difference between the two listings.

In short, while the evaluator was able to confirm that the college has met the recommendation's intent — that general education outcomes are accessible to students and other college staff — it is also important to ensure consistency in disclosure of those outcomes to constituents.

***Recommendation 1 of the Spring 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report: The committee recommends that Stone Child College finalize assessment plans for all certificate programs (Standard 2.A.3).***

The *Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report* (pages 2-3) recaps the four-year history of Stone Child College's efforts to develop and implement assessment plans for its certificate programs. Beginning in 2008, with the help of an outside consultant, the college's faculty and academic leadership began crafting assessable outcomes — and, subsequently, designing assessment strategies — for those credentials. A college-wide Assessment Committee guides those efforts. The *Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report* is candid in describing the institution's progress as "somewhat slower" here than for other areas, in part due to the heavy reliance on adjunct faculty in Stone Child's certificate programs.

The college has made significant strides in establishing its Assessment Record Book (ARB) form as a framework for organizing and documenting the assessment cycle for the institution's various programs and services. The ARBs provide a convenient repository for cataloging intended outcomes, assessment methods, achievement criteria, summaries of collected data, and assessment-driven improvements.

The *Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report's* Appendix 1 includes ARBs for all seven of Stone Child College's certificate programs — an encouraging sign that the strengths of the ARB framework have been applied to those credential areas. Also encouraging is the college's evident progress in addressing the 2011 evaluator panel's concerns (*Spring 2011 Peer-Evaluation Report*, page 4) around the absence of expected levels of achievement in the certificate-program ARBs. The current evaluator noted that nearly all of Appendix 1's ARBs included a threshold — often expressed as "C or better" or "N percent or better" — in the "Means of Program Assessment and Criteria for Success" section of the ARB form.

However, the completeness and quality of these ARBs vary. Of the seven completed forms, only three — Pre-Nursing, Building Trades, and Physical Fitness Training — include entries in the "Use of Results to Improve Instructional Programs" section of the ARB. In others, even the required data-collection steps have yet to be completed.

While Stone Child College clearly has continued to institutionalize the ARB framework as a promising tool in the assessment of its certificate outcomes, the college has yet to ensure that all certificate-level programs have fully implemented a complete, useful assessment cycle.

***Recommendation 2 of the Spring 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report: The committee recommends that SCC analyze and utilize assessment results in a more consistent, structured, and documented manner to improve programs and services (Standards 1.B, 2.B; Policy 2.2).***

This recommendation frames institutional assessment in its broadest terms, incorporating both educational programming and, presumably, college-wide support services. In its response, the college's

*Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report* again references Stone Child's development of the Assessment Record Book (ARB) framework as the foundation of its assessment activities across all sectors. The discussion suggests that the ARB form not only documents but also structures and formalizes Stone Child's yearly institutional assessment cycle. Beginning with data collection by faculty and staff, the process moves next to program- and unit-level analysis under the guidance of the Assessment Committee and culminates, finally, in an *Annual Strategic Planning and Assessment Report* to stakeholders. A yearly SCC Retreat and Strategic Planning Meeting provides a venue for reporting results and outlining next steps, area by area, for use in both internal planning and external accountability.

Taking its cue from the final phrase of the 2010 recommendation, the college includes some discussion of support services in this section of the report. Indeed, the text's examples of assessment-driven improvements are exclusively from support areas like orientation, tutor training, financial aid, and library resources. The list is substantive and suggests, encouragingly, that the college has in fact "utilized assessment results . . . to improve programs and services," as recommended by the 2010 evaluators.

The college did not include an *Annual Strategic Planning and Assessment Report* as documentation with the current self-evaluation. Appendix 2 is instead another collection of Assessment Record Books (ARBs), this time from a mix of associate degree (A.S. and A.A) programs, Student Services, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness/Assessment. In this group of ARBs, evidence of full-cycle assessment activities is more prevalent — and convincing — than in Appendix 1. Of the seven degree offerings included, four ARBs cite concrete examples of program improvements. The Student Services and Office of Institutional Effectiveness/Assessment ARBs likewise document a full cycle of assessment, culminating in service-delivery changes for future evaluation.

Room for improvement remains, however. Though four of the degree-related ARBs in Appendix 2 illustrate a full assessment cycle, the other three do not. Further, not every relevant area appears to be represented there. For example, the college's web site lists a total of 15 A.A. and five A.S. degrees — nearly three times as many as are included in the appendices. Likewise, services like the library, though mentioned in the report narrative, have no ARB appended.

Interestingly, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness/Assessment's ARBs include a 2008-09 recommendation that the college provide "further training follow-up" on the Use of Results to Improve section of the ARB forms college-wide — an accurate and insightful finding, given the evidence at-hand.

***Recommendation 3 of the Spring 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report: The committee recommends that General Education Learner Outcomes be accessible and assessed (Standards 2.B.2, 2.C).***

The college's *Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report* correctly notes that the first element of this recommendation — around the accessibility of General Education Learner Outcomes — overlaps with Recommendation 1 of the *Spring 2011 Peer-Evaluation Report*. As indicated earlier (page 2), the current evaluator was able to confirm that the college has addressed that common component of the two recommendations.

The recommendation's second element speaks to the more challenging matter of general education assessment, which remains a work in progress at Stone Child College.

Page 6 of the *Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report* describes that progress in largely process-building terms. The text notes that Stone Child has established a General Education Committee and has developed a General Education Learner Outcomes Plan. Faculty have "had many discussions" and "agree on the need" for rigorous and consistent assessment of general education outcomes, the report claims. To achieve that goal, the General Education Learner Outcomes Plan includes a management structure, data-

gathering and –interpretation protocols, and a timeline for these activities: That plan reportedly “encourages using a variety of approaches and tools for assessment” and has incorporated faculty training as a necessary component of the work.

The General Education Learner Outcomes Plan itself was not included as an appendix to the current *Ad Hoc Self-Evaluation Report*. Instead, as documentation, the report’s Appendix 3 provided Assessment Record Book (ARB) forms for general education-related program areas.

As with other appendices, the general-education ARBs offered mixed evidence of the college’s progress. On the positive side, the ARBs themselves appear, once again, to provide a valuable, sustainable tool for guiding users through the assessment cycle and documenting the results. Also encouraging is the college’s progress, as evidenced by the general education ARBs, in setting benchmarks for the evaluation of data. In a couple of cases — General Education/Cree Language and General Education/General Biology — the Appendix 3 ARBs document a complete cycle of assessment. There, the faculty’s data-gathering and analysis have clearly led to informed conclusions about next steps in program improvement, even if the determination is to “keep the [approach] the same” for now.

While this evidence of Stone Child’s progress is certainly promising, additional work remains to be done. The other six ARBs included in Appendix 3 do not reflect the same level of completeness as those for Cree Language or General Biology. In three of the others, the Summary of Assessment Data Collected cell is either left blank or marked “No data collected.” The ARB for General Education/Writing outlines an exceptionally thoughtful, rubric-based evaluation approach, but indicates that data collection was to “begin fall semester 2009,” with no results presented. An ARB labeled General Education Program — presumably intended as a summary for all General Education Learner Outcomes — lists only the outcomes themselves.

### Summary

In the current evaluator’s opinion, Stone Child College has demonstrated that it takes seriously the recommendations of its 2010 and 2011 evaluators. With respect to Recommendation 1 of the *Spring 2011 Peer-Evaluation Report*, the current evaluator finds that the disclosure element of this recommendation has been satisfied, with the proviso that the college should move promptly ensure consistency in publication of its general education outcomes to different constituencies.

In evaluating progress on Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 of the *Spring 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report*, the evaluator believes that the college has made — and continues to make — progress toward institutionalizing a standard of assessment practice that meets the requirements of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, college-wide. The Assessment Record Book (ARB) framework provides a credible, sustainable, and meaningful foundation for structuring and documenting the college’s assessment processes. In the documentation provided with the current report, a number of the ARBs offer clear evidence that Stone Child’s faculty and staff have successfully employed that tool to complete a full assessment cycle of gathering data, analyzing it against benchmarks, and using the results to improve programs and services. Other evidence, however, reveals some continuing unevenness and incompleteness in the college’s assessment efforts. Stone Child College is encouraged to leverage the ARB process to complete the assessment cycle in all remaining areas where that goal has not been achieved, ensuring that every certificate, associate degree program, service area, and general education outcome is accounted for.