

# **Year One Peer-Evaluation Report**

**Stone Child College**

**Box Elder, Montana**

**March 1 - May 20, 2011**

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

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## **Evaluation Committee**

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## **Introduction**

Stone Child College achieved initial accreditation from the NWCCU in 1993. The college is tribally controlled and located on the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation in north central Montana. More than 95% of the current students are of American Indian ancestry.

### **Assessment of Year One Self Evaluation Report**

A three-person peer-evaluation team from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities conducted a Year One Peer-Evaluation of Stone Child College in an off-site virtual environment from March 1 – May 20, 2011. The review was conducted via a pre-review conference call, a shared draft of the initial evaluation report via email, and a panel-wide review of the final evaluation report via conference call and email.

The Evaluation Committee was supplied with both an electronic and a hard copy of the college's Year One Report, along with a hard copy of its 2010-2011 College Catalog in advance of the Commission's deadline. The evaluation panel found that the quality of the Year One Evaluation Report could be improved with the addition of details in several areas that the panel attempts to note herein. The institution should consider aligning the Mission Statement to the Core Themes and using this alignment as an organizational template for the logical sequencing of main points. The Stone Child College Assessment and Accreditation committee met fall of 2010 and reviewed the Mission and Guiding Principles. It is not clear if revisions occurring from this review were formally adopted by the Stone Child College Board of Regents.

### **Topics Addressed as an Addendum to the Self-Evaluation Report**

Stone Child College has taken steps in response to four recommendations.

- 1. The committee recommends that Stone Child College finalize assessment plans for all certificate programs (Standard 2.A.3).**

Stone Child College provides evidence in Appendix 1 that a general framework for assessment of certificate programs has begun in earnest. However, an additional level of specificity clarifying college level achievement of the Intended Educational (Student) Outcomes could assist in rounding-out the effort. The panel is concerned that assessment plans for certificates lack appropriate details/clarification as to the level of achievement that is expected of students (Eligibility Standard 2.A.3).

- 2. The committee recommends that Stone Child College 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).**

The College implemented/revised several worthy services likely to buoy students on their journey to success, including a Child Care Center, training for this center's caregivers, timeliness of orientations, improvements to processes in the registrar's office, study nights/tutoring, and expanded library hours. However, the report fails to clarify how programs were improved. A list of degree titles is included (2.c., p. 3) but an explanation of how this list was derived and why is lacking. As the college continues to create, clarify, and apply assessments to program planning processes, it may consider using several data points when creating programs in addition to student surveys including, but not limited to, program relevancy, industry need, qualified staffing, budget requirements/limitations, and general community support.

The panel is concerned that assessment of program offerings be conducted systematically, and that reliance on student surveys for this assessment as a sole assessment is not asufficient for program planning and quality (1.B).

- 3. The committee recommends that the General Education Learner Outcomes be accessible and assessed (Standard 2.B.2., 2.C).**

Stone Child College has developed clear protocol and timelines for assessment of General Education Learner Outcomes. Faculty members are clearly and appropriately integral to the Outcomes Assessment Plan efforts. However, it is not clear in the report how the General Education Learner Outcomes will be imparted to students and appropriate stakeholders (including appropriate college staff). The accessibility of outcomes is not apparent in the Year One Report. The phrase "Data to Action" also requires clarification. Does this phrase refer to continuous quality improvement? Ideally, faculty recognize one key element of the assessment process also known as "closing the assessment loop" via constant reflection and revision of strategies designed to deepen student learning and improve student success.

- 4. The committee recommends that the faculty evaluation plan gain final approval and be implemented in fall 2010 (Standard 4.A.5, Policy 2.C.)**

Stone Child College has implemented an annual evaluation of all faculty members that includes multiple indices and is thorough in scope.

Stone Child College is complimented (Standard 4.A.5, Policy 2.C.) for implementing a thorough and thoughtful annual evaluation process for all faculty.

## **Report on Eligibility Requirements**

Regarding Eligibility Requirements, the evaluators understand that the request to write an executive summary of the ERs 2 and 3 with this report was a late addition to the guidelines. The institution is encouraged to follow the guidelines released March 2, 2011 to ensure that its next report addresses these requirements as noted in the guidelines.

## **Report on Standard 1.A Mission**

***"Stone Child College (SCC), a tribally controlled community college, exists to deliver post-secondary education in the Rocky Boy Community. SCC will provide student access for educational training needs through accredited certificates and degree programs for transfer, workforce entry, continuing and developmental education."***

The mission statement of Stone Child College is straightforward and clear. However, the panel would like to note an observation regarding the use of the word "training" in the mission. The word "training" typically does not connote what occurs in the realm of transfer education, continuing education, and many elements typical to developmental education teaching and learning. "Training" fails to connote higher order thinking and synthesis traditionally attributed to general education and liberal transfer studies. The panel questions the accuracy and intent of the word "training" as it is used in line two of the mission statement. The institution may want to consider a revision that captures a broader scope of the programs offered by the college and clearer alignment to Core Themes that appear to extend well beyond the current mission statement.

The explanation of Mission Fulfillment appears to be in development. The college notes that benchmarks will be set in part based upon historical trends and upon acceptable thresholds of performance yet to be articulated. The emphasis upon data collection as vital to both progress and to mission fulfillment is duly noted.

## **Report on Standard 1.B Core Themes**

Stone Child College has identified five Core Themes:

1. Stone Child College will provide Chippewa Cree language, culture and history preservation and promotion to students and community.
2. Stone Child College will provide tribal organizations with training in staff development, planning, research and other needed services.
3. Stone Child College will provide opportunities for collaborating with other institutions and agencies in furthering the interests of the college and community.

4. Stone Child College will contribute to increased efficiency of programs and student achievement through continual assessment.
5. Stone Child College will provide the students with a life-long learning oriented environment focused on students, leadership, and community service.

While it is clear that Stone Child has given significant thought to these Core Themes, they are much broader than what is implied in the Mission Statement which only emphasizes "educational training" needs. The narrowness of the Mission Statement fails to encompass the broader activity emphasized in the Core Themes: Chippewa culture, staff development, collaboration with other institutions, student achievement, and lifelong learning. The alignment between Mission and Core Themes is simply not clear.

Core Theme One emphasizes the integration of Chippewa Cree language, culture and history into campus life. The indicators certainly address this emphasis. Whether or not every student will be touched by this theme, however, is unclear. The indicators focus on measuring success in a Chippewa Cree language course offerings, in workshops and events, and in increased library holdings. Student engagement in the theme appears to be an "option" as opposed to an element woven throughout program offerings and required campus activities.

Core Theme Two emphasizes the college's role in providing tribal organizations with services. It is not clear based upon this report how this Core Theme relates to the mission that narrows the work to post-secondary education and students. Linkages between tribal organizations to post-secondary education and students may exist, but these are not apparent in the Self-Evaluation Year One Report.

Core Theme Three leverages institutional partnerships that can be directly verified via articulation agreements, rates of transfer, student explorations of Bachelor's degree program, and an ambitious grant agenda. Objectives and indicators are clear and effective.

Core Theme Four emphasizes across-the-board assessment; including assessment of institutional processes (links to strategic planning), staff satisfaction and community needs assessment, curriculum/Gen Ed Outcomes, faculty evaluation processes and assessment of financial resources. Indicators for this theme are clear and adequate. The panel assumes that benchmarks related to student achievement are a work in progress. At some point it will be critical to define what student achievement is for Stone Child College (example: degree completions, cultural deep learning and transformative sharing of culture, job placement and salary advancement).

Core Theme Five emphasizes a student-centered environment, student leadership, and community service. Objectives are clear and indicators are appropriate. Student engagement in leadership opportunities and community service appears to

be an "option" as opposed to an element woven throughout program offerings and required campus activities.

The panel is concerned that, because the Core Themes are less functional and more holistic, the college will attempt to weave the Core Themes throughout the experience of all students. If this is the case, indicators of achievement will need to include efforts that permeate the college journey for the majority of students. Currently the indicators typically allude to optional connections to the themes that students will experience only if they choose to avail themselves of the opportunity. The institution may wish to consider whether or not the holistic themes in their current form, and indicators of their achievement, capture the thematic impressions that the majority of students will experience. (Standard 1.B)

### **Summary**

The Stone Child College Year One report provides documentation of several important improvements that move the college toward achieving a quality educational experience, strong community connections, cultural preservation, and leadership opportunities for students. The college is encouraged to consider further revisions to the Mission Statement and Core Themes so as to accurately clarify linkages and alignment between Mission, Themes, and Expectations. Mission Fulfillment at this point in time is defined fairly narrowly by the Mission, and yet, Core Themes as presented appear to be much broader in scope.



## **Commendations**

**None**

## **Recommendations**

- 1. The evaluators recommend that General Education Outcomes are made accessible to students and other appropriate college staff. (Standard 2.B.2., 2.C)**
- 2. The evaluators recommend that the Mission Statement be inclusive of, and aligned directly with the Core Themes. (Standard 1.A and 1.B)**