

# *Fostering Student Success*



**GLENDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**SELF-STUDY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2012**



*Photo by student GCC student Chan Chhoun Rasme, winner of the HLC Photo Contest held in 2011*

*Executive Summary*  
Glendale Community College

## *F*ostering Student Success

During the past two-and-a-half years, GCC faculty, staff, and administrators conducted a self-study as part of the formal application process for reaccreditation. While voluntary, accreditation is critical to quality assurance for institutions offering post-secondary programs and degrees, and for GCC students to have continued access to federal financial assistance. While this self-reflection was an important and required step for the reaccreditation process, it also afforded the College a time for intense introspection and review. The process, in and of itself, has been worthy, productive and revealing.

GCC's Self-Study, now embodied in a comprehensive report, functions as a formal request to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) for continued 10-year accreditation. From April 16 to 18, 2012, members of an HLC Peer Consultant Evaluator team will visit the College to confirm GCC's reported conclusions and supporting documentation. Six to eight weeks following that visit, the team will provide a final report in two parts: assurance (evaluation of the extent to which the College meets accreditation criteria) and advancement (observations and suggestions for improvement).

As an overview, this Executive Summary highlights institutional characteristics and provides a digest of the College's progress since its previous peer evaluation in 2002 and how it continues to fulfill the five criteria for accreditation.

### **INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND CHANGES SINCE 2002**

Glendale Community College (GCC) serves as a beacon in the West Valley of the Phoenix metropolitan area in Arizona, a proud leader in the Maricopa Community Colleges with a long-standing commitment to students' access and success. A public, associate degree-granting institution, GCC stands as one of the oldest and largest of the 10 colleges, two skill centers, and multiple satellite locations of the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD or District). Known among District colleagues as home to passionate, exemplary and highly committed faculty and staff, GCC has educated more than 485,000 students since 1965. Employees take great pride in guiding students purposefully toward their goals. Dedication to student success is demonstrated at GCC from all levels, bottom up and top down.

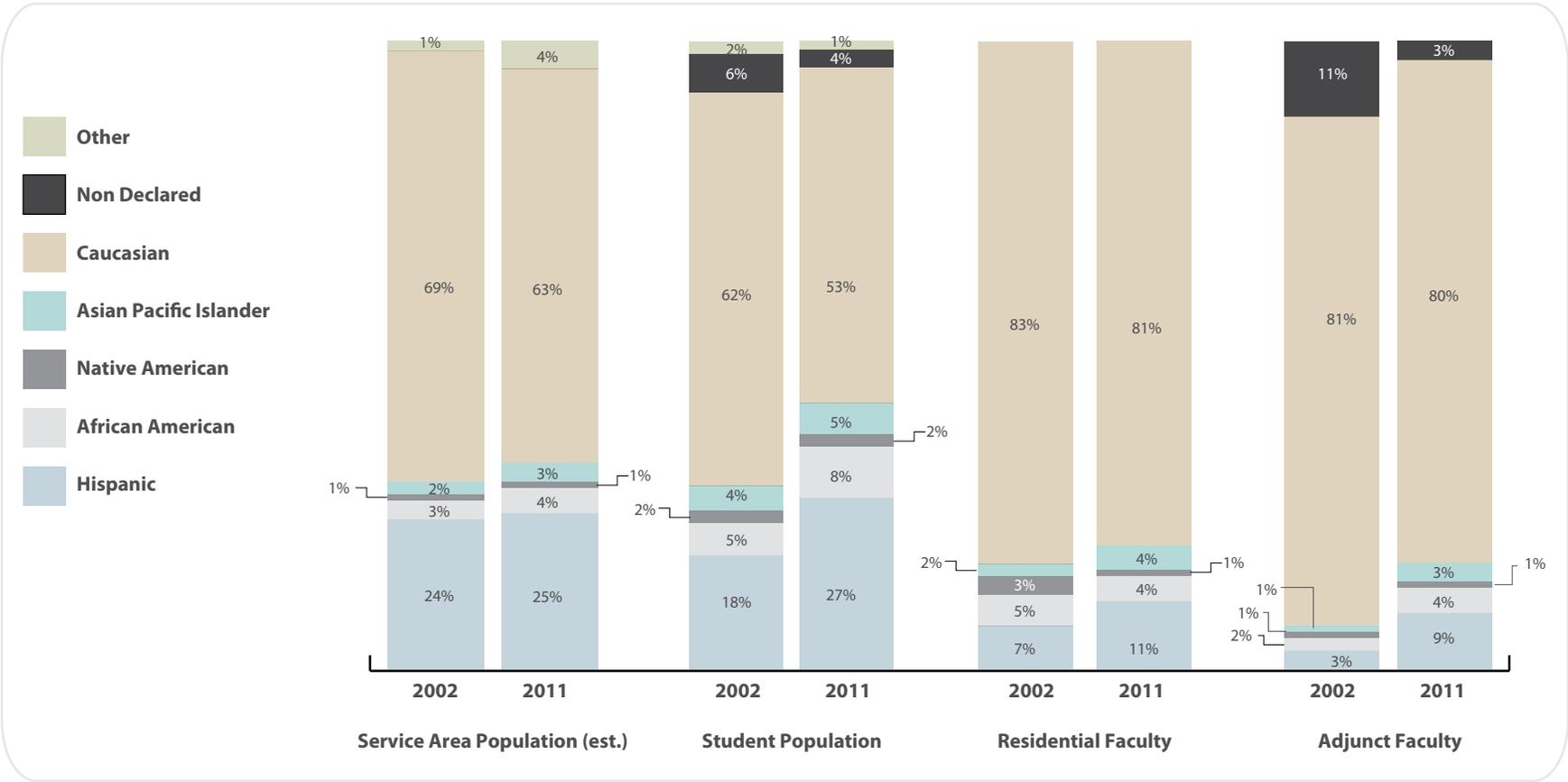
Since 2001 GCC's student population has grown not only in size but also in diversity. Though the total student population grew by just 1.8%, the percentage of minority populations have increased significantly, particularly the African-American and Hispanic populations GCC now educates a sufficient percentage of Hispanic students to qualify as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) (Figure R.1).

Student growth from 2008 to 2011 showed a 26% increase in FTSE and 17+% increase in headcount. For the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the College served 32,962 credit students at two campus locations, GCC main and GCC North, and multiple sites – a six-year high for headcount and all time high for full-time student equivalent (FTSE).

Fall 2011 Headcount 21,376 and 11,429 FTSE  
 Spring 2011 Headcount 20,182 and 10,391 FTSE

GCC offers 10 academic degrees, 34 Associate in Applied Science degrees, 63 occupational Certificates of Completion, and 7 academic certificates. Far and away the most common degree awarded is the Associate in Arts. In its commitment to foster student success, the College has launched initiatives to address retention and persistence (iStart Smart), and completion (iFinish Smart).

**Figure R.1 Campus and Community Diversity**



The West Valley cities of Glendale, Peoria, and Surprise constitute the core of GCC's service area. The College has collaborated directly with these municipalities most significantly in the fields of public safety, nursing and allied health, and, indirectly, through university transfer with the public universities establishing a presence in the West Valley. The College also enjoys many long-term relationships with local businesses and industry through occupational program advisory committees.

Since the last accreditation visit, facilities have been greatly enhanced. College facilities have been greatly enhanced due to funds provided by the passage of a 2004 bond initiative, and both campuses have expanded. GCC North added four buildings and transitioned from a small satellite location to a full-service campus while the main campus added two new buildings and remodeled six more.

At the same time as this tremendous growth, economic volatility and ever-looming budget restrictions influenced college leadership to preserve approximately 60 open positions to mitigate potential financial impacts. As a result, all employees have felt the effects of increased workloads; however, forestalling hiring has prevented layoffs.

In August 2011, GCC welcomed its seventh president, Dr. Irene Kovala. Under her leadership and guidance, the College is well-positioned for the future, embracing challenges and opportunities alike.

#### **RESPONSE TO 2002 ACCREDITATION REPORT**

An essential portion of the Self-Study for reaccreditation involves summarizing the College's response to issues identified by the previous peer evaluation team. The Response Chapter encapsulates measures taken to address six challenges noted by that team: diversity, climate, assessment, strategic planning, integration of District systems and policies for enhancing student success, and extensions of accreditation. GCC reports progress for all six and, addresses each of 19 observations and suggestions for improvement made in 2002.

#### **CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY**

*Glendale Community College operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.*

Over an 18-month period beginning in 2009, the College reviewed and simplified the language of both the vision and mission statements and also conducted a series of strategic conversations with employees, students, and community members to hone the list of strategic goals from 25 to 13. The College's vision of fostering student success is realized through commitments to student access, effective teaching and learning, strategic planning and budgeting processes, partnering and collaboration, regular assessment, and organizational integrity.

At GCC, giving to scholarships is perhaps the most significant achievement since the last accreditation visit. In 2001-2002, the College publicized \$46,570 to award; in 2010-2011 the amount had grown to \$2,792,900 – all from increases in private donations and District funding. During that same period, the number of scholarships has grown as employees, former employees, community members, and alumni understand the mission of the institution and demonstrate their willingness to support that mission through their generosity.

### **Strengths**

- Focused mission, modern vision.
- College efforts in the area of diversity have facilitated GCC's eligibility as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), positioning the College to seek federal grant funding at the next application opportunity.
- Strong ACE Plus, International Education, Veteran Services, Multicultural Affairs, and Honors Programs.
- Unique Adapted Fitness Program for those with physical limitations.

### **Select Challenges and Opportunities**

- Obstacles to attracting job candidates of diverse backgrounds: limited advertising funds, inability of the College to offer travel funds, Arizona's political climate, and public stance on illegal immigration.
- Further discussions may be merited on the question of how much may be implied reasonably in the College mission documents and which commitments need to be stated overtly.
- Faculty will need to address age diversity, different generational learning, and communication styles.

### **CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE**

*Glendale Community College's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.*

Approximately 80% of the college budget goes to instruction, academic support, and student services. A review of the College's operational costs from 2002 (last accreditation visit) to 2011 reveals that even though the budget has increased each year (a result of increasing enrollment and District-formulated FTSE incentive monies), the distribution of resources has remained relatively unchanged. Equally impressive is the College's ability to maintain the lowest administrative cost profile in the District and one of the lower FTSE cost profiles as well.

GCC continues working toward aligning all levels and conducting annual reviews of all plans. As the College continues to improve program review processes, review outcomes will also inform planning efforts. College and departmental plans support the vision and mission of the College and are informed by accreditation agency findings, environmental scanning, assessment plans and, as of the writing of this report, Governing Board goals, and District strategic directions. All levels of planning will shift toward the revised outcomes adopted by the Governing Board and will subsequently follow a new planning framework (currently under development).

Careful stewardship of resources logically points to sustainable practices for GCC's overall learning environment. By designing new buildings and remodels to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards, utilities costs are reduced, negative environmental impacts are avoided, and sustainability is promoted and modeled for students. Furthermore, these projects were designed to be improved upon or converted at some future date. Actions such as these maximize available resources now and for the future. In September 2011, Dr. Kovala joined college presidents around the nation in signing the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, a pledge committing GCC to accelerate progress towards climate neutrality and environmental sustainability.



## Strengths

- Well-developed Master Plans for both campuses.
- Well-developed Strategic Plan with linkages to other plans and budget process.
- Regular reporting of outcomes and communication tools to inform stakeholders.

## Select Challenges and Opportunities

- Lack of understanding of what is operational and what is strategic in the budget process.
- Lack of unified tier 2 strategic plans.
- Need to include assessment mechanism in budget process.
- Updating Master Plans will allow for better integration of both campuses and additional sites and partnerships in the West Valley as well as the inclusion of sustainability and climate neutral actions.
- Loss of State Aid.
- Soft housing market inhibiting growth and property tax revenues.

## CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING

*Glendale Community College provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.*

GCC strives to cultivate an assessment community focused on specific outcomes that truly prepare students for further higher education, employment, and advancement. Taking steps to improve assessment of student learning outcomes, a team representing GCC attended the HLC Assessment Academy and made a four-year commitment to improve course assessment beginning in June 2009. The Assessment Academy Project identified by GCC is threefold: addressing faculty participation, closing-the-loop reporting, and implementing a mechanism for the systematic integration of assessment at course, program, and college levels.

Not only does GCC host a diverse array of course offerings, but it also offers courses in a variety of formats to meet the needs of its students through face-to-face, online, and hybrid courses in 5-week, 8-week, 12-week, and other compressed schedule formats, in addition to its standard 16-week schedule. Each semester these eCourses serve the educational needs of full-time and part-time GCC students. Since the time of last accreditation, GCC has increased its online course offerings from 60 (2002) to 313 (Fall 2011 only). No hybrid courses were offered in 2002; however, 60 ran in Fall 2011, with 85 scheduled for Spring 2012.

Numerous initiatives, strategies, and programs designed to promote student success simultaneously cultivate supportive relationships between and among students, faculty, and staff. The First Year Experience Program (FYE) offers a structured academic program designed to increase the likelihood of entering students' success through learning communities. GCC's excellent athletic programs foster student athletes' success not only on the field or court but in their classes. The Honors Program has grown tremendously since the last accreditation visit and now benefits from a remodeled building housing honors faculty, staff, and student learning spaces.

GCC has recently restructured the Teaching and Employee Development Center (TED) to become part of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Engagement (CTLE). Now reporting to Academic Affairs, the Center will continue to provide comprehensive learning opportunities for all GCC employees and can expand offerings to more specifically address faculty needs. The vision of the CTLE, while still a work in progress, is to provide a motivating and engaging environment for employees and to serve as an educational showcase for the College.

### Strengths

- Assessment processes have improved continuously; an online portal eases the documentation burden for faculty and improves access to reporting.
- A long-established mentoring program for new residential faculty provides extended orientation to the College.
- Numerous learning resources are increasingly available to students at both the main and North campuses.

### Select Challenges and Opportunities

- Fulfilling the mission of the new Center for Teaching, Learning, and Engagement will require additional staff positions.
- College-wide assessment efforts would benefit from directly facilitated dialogue for suggested uses of assessment data for improving student learning..
- Assessment of student learning outcomes in non-instructional areas has progressed unevenly.

### CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

*Glendale Community College promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.*

GCC's commitment to lifelong learning is evidenced through professional development and training for staff and faculty, diversity of the curriculum, and partnerships with community. GCC sponsors and promotes co-curricular activities that provide learning opportunities beyond classroom and online instruction. These activities can enhance student self-confidence and self-esteem by encouraging them to apply their learning to non-classroom activities.

The success of students and graduates depends on keeping curricula relevant and up-to-date in both local and global contexts. Maintaining this relevance depends on regular interaction with occupational advisory committees and coordination with transfer partners in higher education.

As the College has grown over the past 40 years, the amount of energy, time, and analysis spent on occupational planning has increased dramatically. Whereas meeting the demand of an increasing westside population was once the emphasis, now tools and systems have been created to maintain programs and to evaluate them for effectiveness.

The process for determining the ongoing usefulness of areas of the curriculum differs by discipline as does the discussion of student preparedness for coursework. In the company of community colleges across the nation, GCC is challenged by the underpreparedness of significant numbers of students. Shifting from the open door/no-barriers-to-enrollment approach to one of ensuring student success increases college-wide efforts aimed at student retention and persistence.

### Strengths

- GCC emphasizes lifelong learning of employees by providing training opportunities and recognition for faculty and staff. GCC faculty and staff also have available and use a wealth of opportunities that are managed at the District level.
- GCC has comprehensive general education curriculum and statewide articulation through the Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC) articulation program.
- GCC collaborates successfully with MCCC curriculum processes, ensuring articulation between the College and universities state-wide.

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*“Integrity is the essence of everything successful”*

*-William Buckminster Fuller*

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### **Select Challenges and Opportunities**

- Lack of realistic course prerequisites confirming students' skills in reading, writing and critical reasoning must be addressed if students are to be educated with a challenging curriculum that prepares them for the rigors of the new global economy.
- Training for faculty, staff, and students regarding intellectual property rights and regulations lacks prominence.
- Inconsistent supervisory support for employees attending professional growth events when doing so temporarily removes an employee from work duties.
- Service learning efforts need funding and college-wide mobilization.
- Underpreparedness of students entering GCC challenges course success rates in academic courses and creates increased need for developmental (below 100-level) courses.
- Statewide course articulation is largely dependent on state universities; this challenges GCC and MCCC'D's control over course articulation and facilitation of seamless transfer for students.

### **CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE**

*As called for by its mission, Glendale Community College identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.*

Through reaching out to students, businesses, and the community at large, GCC makes an effort to connect with as wide a range of constituents as possible. The College attends to people of different cultures and interests; provides help for the disadvantaged; and creates a greater sense of community by bringing together diverse groups to meet educational, cultural, and economic goals. No longer confined to the geographic boundaries of Glendale, the College has expanded its programs and services throughout the West Valley of the Phoenix metropolitan area. With the addition of the North campus and the Communiversity @ Surprise, GCC continues to address the diverse needs of both internal and external constituents.

Long-term relationships continue to fortify and rejuvenate the College. GCC's full-service corporate training organization, The INSTITUTE, has sustained corporate connections for over 20 years in working with local firms and industries to help meet workforce needs in Maricopa County. Members of the President's Circle – a group of involved, proactive business, civic, and educational leaders in the community – meet regularly to advise the College president of community issues and needs. The Alumni Association, founded 10 years ago, has hosted over 24 "friendraising" and fundraising events to support the mission of the College. Such active engagement demonstrates GCC's enduring value for these former students.

### **Strengths**

- The College has enduring and recurring corporate engagements spearheaded by The INSTITUTE.
- The community widely recognizes the institution, its mission, and its role.
- Attendance and feedback indicate the popularity of GCC's various offerings for the community.
- The College has the physical capacity to meet the needs of constituents.
- Strong, long-lasting relationships formed with advisory committee members have created beneficial partnerships between the College and local employers.
- The President's Circle meets regularly to advise the College president of community issues. Together they have fostered a dynamic, reciprocal relationship for serving the needs of both College and community.

### **Select Challenges and Opportunities**

- GCC has no institutional support for service learning; all faculty efforts to embrace this pedagogy are strictly ad hoc and individually managed. The College needs structure to coordinate and facilitate these efforts for the mutual benefit to learners and community.
- GCC is experiencing challenges in analyzing community needs. There is a need for improving instruments to boost validity and provide a comprehensive understanding of community requirements.
- Many programs and events lack any systematic “closing the loop” feedback to discover and address shortcomings.
- Ongoing economic difficulties in the Phoenix metropolitan area strain existing corporate partnerships and risk compromising longstanding relationships. GCC must continue to bolster these partnerships where possible as well as seek new partners to replace possible attrition.

### **Conclusion**

The Self-Study process has provided a healthy examination and collaborative opportunity for GCC faculty, staff, and administrators to survey critically where the College has been; what it does and does well; and what it envisions for the future. The Self-Study report illustrates how GCC fulfills the five criteria for accreditation and serves as the College’s formal request for reaccreditation by the Higher Learning Commission. Maintaining accredited status serves the dual purposes of assuring continued access to federal financial assistance for students and preserving the quality of education and services the College provides to the community.

The report provides an honest, evidence-based reflection to serve as an action blueprint for amplifying the extraordinary faculty, staff, programs, and services already in place at the College. The request for continued accreditation of 10 years is respectfully submitted with the knowledge that our strengths are vast and our opportunities limitless. With greater self-knowledge as well as new leadership under Dr. Kovala, GCC is poised to continue as an educational leader among its institutional peers.

*Note: Appendices to the Self-Study include an Institutional Snapshot and a report for federal compliance among other key pieces of documentation such as the academic catalog, administrative policies, and financial statements.*



CHANDLER-GILBERT | ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN | GATEWAY | GLENDALE | MARICOPA SKILL CENTER | MESA  
PARADISE VALLEY | PHOENIX | RIO SALADO | SCOTTSDALE | SOUTH MOUNTAIN | SOUTHWEST SKILL CENTER

**GCC is a Maricopa Community College, EEO/AA institution, accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.**