

Report to the
Trustees, Administration, Faculty and Students

of

**North Shore Community College
Danvers, MA**

by

An evaluator representing the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
of the
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Prepared after study of the institution's Substantive Change Report
and a visit to the institution's Middleton instructional location

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This report represents the views of the evaluator. Its content is based on the evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

Introduction

Throughout the Substantive Change visit the administration, faculty, staff and students were candid in their comments and offered full assistance. Meetings were conducted on a one-on-one basis and with small groups with representatives and leaders from various areas of the North Shore Community College's instructional location, the former North Shore Technical High School in Middleton, MA, (now known as the North Shore Business Center). A session was also conducted with students.

The original substantive change proposal of August 19, 2014 and the substantive change update dated March 19, 2015, along with other material provided were comprehensive and an accurate description of the off-campus site. A review of these documents before and during the visit to the Middleton site has provided the basis for the evaluation judgments contained in this report which addresses the Standards of Accreditation of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

It was clear by touring the facility, talking with administration, faculty, staff, and students that an appropriate learning environment has been created. The specific instructional requirements of both the Cosmetology and Culinary Arts programs have been met and according to the opinions of many, exceeded. Through conversations it became evident that students and faculty are enjoying the new space and benefitting from the many upgrades from antiquated equipment and facilities. The transformation has exceeded the expectations of everyone involved. According to faculty, the location is brighter, cleaner, nicer and healthier. It should be noted, however, that the smaller footprint will result in the growth of both programs being limited by the size of the facilities. Through its master planning process, however, NSCC expects to develop and implement plans for a new permanent location of these two programs that will allow for growth.

NSCC is invested in the Cosmetology and Culinary Arts programs and that is a belief that was expressed by everyone the evaluator spoke with. Although the programs may have lost a little steam due to decreased enrollment, lots of effort is going into building the programs back up with the end result being bigger and better than before.

Two areas of emphasis were requested by the Commission.

The first area was "Securing licensure from the Board of Registration of Cosmetology for the Cosmetology program at the Middleton Instructional site." The program was successful in meeting the requirements of the Board of Registration and is fully licensed and approved as a School of Cosmetology by the Board of Registration. A letter of approval was issued on October 8, 2014.

The second area was "Developing and implementing plans to establish a permanent location for the Cosmetology and Culinary Arts programs on the institution's campus in Lynn, MA." NSCC continues its commitment to the Cosmetology and Culinary Arts programs, and securing permanent locations for both is among the primary objectives in the college's long-range planning. It is anticipated both programs will remain at the Middleton location visited for at least three to five years while the Master Academic Plan and Master Facilities plan move

forward, and State bonding is received, providing the funding necessary to build on the Lynn Campus.

The Master Academic Plan is being worked on by a cross-functional committee from across the college. The plan will be a living document that will articulate a five-year plan for implementing strategic directions for academic programs that meet educational priorities. The final report is expected in May 2015. The Master Academic Plan will be an essential driver for the Master Facilities Plan with the goal of maximizing space and resources to support programs and student outcomes. College employees are currently in the process of planning and preparing for the next round of State bond bills. The Master Facilities Plan Committee includes constituencies from across the college. The master planning process will look closely at space utilization, building conditions, and recommendations for future space options. A final report with recommendations will be completed in September 2015. It is expected that a permanent location on the Lynn Campus for the Cosmetology and Culinary Arts program will be an integral piece and outcome of the Master Facilities Plan.

Standard One: Mission and Purpose

North Shore Community College (NSCC) was established in 1965 and has gained status as a comprehensive community college, with four locations in Danvers, Lynn, Middleton and Beverly, serving approximately 11,000 annually. In part, the current Mission Statement emphasizes the college as “a source of hope and opportunity and a regional leader for social and economic change.” NSCC fosters a diverse and caring community of learners where all are welcome and each is challenged. Its greatest contribution to the commonwealth is the success and achievement of its students.

The college has been offering programs in Cosmetology and Culinary Arts since 1999. It is clear there is a strong demand for these programs in the local marketplace. The programs were previously located at the Essex Agricultural and Technical High School (the Aggie) in Danvers. Demolition of the Aggie, and construction of a new regional vocational high school, forced the college to find a new location for the Cosmetology and Culinary Arts programs. The programs needed to vacate the premises in May of 2014. The search for a suitable site got underway in 2012, and for a time, it appeared as though a unique public/private partnership with Higher Education Partners (HEP) for the relocation of the programs to Lynn was going to be the solution. But in October 2013, the project was deemed fiscally unfeasible. This resulted in an urgent need to find a location for the 2014-2015 academic year, thus keeping with their mission to provide career education opportunities in high demand fields.

Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation

In December 2013, the college informed NEASC it appeared it would be unable to relocate the Cosmetology program. The college suspended admission to the program assuming that without a suitable location, and therefore no license from the Board of Registration of Cosmetology, the program would have to end. The college indicated it would continue to search for a kitchen facility for Culinary Arts, and had made plans for the academic course needs of the students in that program. Admission for new students was suspended until a new site was located. On March 18, 2014, the college was notified of the Commission’s review of the information

submitted to NEASC, approving the teach out plan for Cosmetology and requesting an update regarding a new location for Culinary Arts.

Under leadership of a new president, Dr. Patricia Gentile, who arrived in January 2014, an internal team was created to review all space opportunities in the college's service area. Space for both Cosmetology and Culinary Arts was found. In April, 2014, the college notified the Commission that a location had been identified that would accommodate both programs at the North Shore Business Center, just a few miles from the Danvers campus. On July 21, 2014 the developer entered into a license (short term lease) with the college for approximately 12,500 square feet of appropriate space. Renovation got underway immediately and the college took occupancy in October 2014. Faculty and staff appreciated the role they played in the planning of this new space. This site is deemed to be temporary, but is a significant facilities improvement and will serve both programs well until a permanent move is made to the Lynn Campus.

Standard Three: Organization and Governance

There is no site director at the off-campus location, but key administrators make themselves available on an as-needed basis. The faculty, students and programs now based in Middleton continue to be part of the NSCC community. The 3.5 miles of separation between Middleton and Danvers is manageable for faculty who need to attend meetings and for students who need to access key services and general education courses. Faculty members confirmed that they feel connected to the College and for the most part are able to be full participants in governance and academic issues.

Standard Four: The Academic Program

The academic and experiential core of both programs is largely unchanged, although the smaller spaced has necessitated some adjustments in the delivery of instruction.

At the former Aggie site, first and second year Culinary Arts students were separated. The current kitchen facilities are one large space, with all students working side by side. Opinions vary on whether this is a good option for students. Prior to the site's mid-October opening, Culinary Arts students were attending lecture classes at the Danvers campus. This was important for curricular continuity and helped new students become familiar with NSCC while keeping senior students on track for graduation.

The Cosmetology program lost approximately half its space with the relocation. The stations seem a bit cramped but faculty are managing and are appreciative of what equipment upgrades they did receive. A decrease in space led to less enrollment, which resulted in the elimination of one faculty position. Adjustments were made to coverage and instructional activities. Four faculty substitutes were added to the staffing pattern to insure clock hours were met, and students are adequately supervised. The Cosmetology program also has the services of an Administrative Assistant five hours per week to assist with clerical responsibilities.

Both programs seem to be maintaining quality despite the loss of space and enrollment. The updated facilities, equipment and technology do provide a more than adequate learning and working environment.

The Cosmetology and Culinary Arts programs both feature an on-site specialized facility which provides a service aspect to the programs, and there is a good balance between practical experiences vs. didactic instruction. The Culinary Arts program, through its Beacon Café, offers a 48 seat restaurant environment that provides a real-world experience in the preparation and serving of meals, as well as in the business and customer transactions normally performed in a restaurant. The Cosmetology program provides a full complement of salon services to the public through its facility. These activities count towards the required student-clock hours for completion of the program. Both faculty and students commented that the service aspects of their programs need to grow. It was suggested that better signage and advertising would help bring in clients for both programs. Faculty are also thinking creatively about ways in which to expand the service aspect of the two programs.

Standard Five: Faculty

The two faculty members teaching in the Cosmetology program, and the three faculty teaching in the Culinary Arts program are appropriately credentialed, as are the adjuncts and substitutes used in both programs. They feel they are connected to the main campus and they actively participate in department meetings when they can. They feel very supported by administration.

Faculty were able to validate that they were involved in the planning, transition, set-up, and relevant curricular adjustments needed to ensure the success of their respective programs in the new facility. The faculty agreed that the facility is an improvement over where they were previously located. Some, though, stated the spaces are cramped (Cosmetology) or awkward (Culinary Arts), and although much of the equipment is new, it's not enough. The technology available is adequate and up-to-date. The faculty have a lot of energy and are a hard-working group dedicated to making things work.

The faculty see lots of opportunity for the two programs and expect that things will only get better. A common complaint from both programs is that the community does not know they are there. They believe signage is critical to growing the service aspects of both programs.

The faculty also expressed concern about their students not being connected to the main campus. They collectively feel it would be a benefit at the beginning of the school year if the Dean of Students and representatives from the library, financial aid, student life, etc. could build time into their schedules for open meetings with students at the Middleton site.

Standard Six: Students

Due to the uncertainty of whether or not the programs would have a home, recruitment for both programs was temporarily put on hold. Accommodations were made for the currently enrolled Culinary Arts students, so they could continue with their didactic portion of the program.

Overall numbers were affected by the transition to a new location. The Cosmetology program lost nearly half of its enrollment, and after starting the year with 22 students, is down to 20 due to attrition. At the new location, Cosmetology can accommodate 25, down from 40 at the Aggie. Culinary Arts numbers have also declined. This academic year there were 62 enrolled, they had projected 50. Enrollment numbers the past few years were:

2010 - 110

2011 - 112

2012 - 94

2013 - 100

Those who attend are for the most part pleased with the education they are receiving. Students report that things are going well. Technology and equipment have been updated and “it’s like going from rags to riches! It’s pretty incredible.”

Students are pleased with the faculty and agree they are qualified to be teaching. They are grateful for the assistance the faculty provide them on a daily basis, including academic advising, and indicate that faculty keep them informed of important dates and initiatives. Faculty serve as their link to the main campus. Some of the students I spoke with take advantage of the free campus shuttle service to get them back to the Danvers campus for their general education courses. Their one complaint is that the shuttle is not always on time. Students confirmed they have easy access to all essential college services (financial aid, library, tutoring) and say that faculty will often call ahead to a department to let the other office know the student is headed their way. For the most part, they say course schedules are convenient, but they have experienced some cancelled courses due to low enrollment.

Students say they feel safe at the Middleton site and they often see campus security making stops there. They also pointed out the need for signage, saying the community does not know the two programs are located there.

Although there is space for students to take breaks and have lunch, no food service is available. They would be elated to have vending machines in the building, and a picnic table outside so they do not have to sit on the pavement.

Standard Seven: Library and Other Information Resources

Information technology resources at the Middleton site are of the same quality and provide the same access as offered at all NSCC locations. Four networked computers and a printer are easily accessible in the break room. Students can access the Internet, email, library catalog and other online resources as needed throughout the day. The area is equipped with wireless networking for those with laptops or other mobile devices.

The three classrooms are outfitted with technologies at an equivalent level of quality and capacity as is available at the Danvers and Lynn campuses. This allows faculty to integrate electronic information resources into their teaching to enhance student learning. Faculty and students agree that the room-based systems are more convenient and a vast improvement to what was offered at the previous Aggie site in Danvers.

Both programs have a mobile presentation system equipped with a large LCD monitor and laptop that can be used within their respective practice areas.

There is no on-site library facility, but students have the same access privileges as all NSCC students to the Danvers and Lynn campus libraries. Librarians visit the Middleton site to deliver library orientation and bibliographic instruction.

Standard Eight: Physical and Technological Resources

NSCC occupies approximately 12,500 square feet of space on the first floor of the North Shore Business Center. Several facilities improvements and build-outs were included within the space to accommodate program needs, including classrooms, offices, kitchen space, restroom facilities, break room, power and networking. The renovation was successful in meeting the requirements of both programs. Each program has space and equipment appropriate to the curriculum and specified learning outcomes. Essential services such as security, maintenance, mail delivery, and technology support are provided by the college.

The Cosmetology area was designed and furnished in accordance with the requirements of the Board of Registration of Cosmetology. The clinical area is a working salon that provides services to the community.

The Culinary Arts program has fully-functional kitchen facilities for prepping, cooking and baking a full complement of multi-course meals. Appropriate industrial-sized appliances are in place. The Beacon Café is the program's restaurant-laboratory. The 48-seat facility provides a real-world practice venue preparing and serving meals as well as the business and customer transactions typical of a restaurant business. The Beacon Café is open to the public. The students I met with were pleased that they very recently had the opportunity to host a function for the college president. They are looking forward to more such opportunities.

The three on-site classrooms available for the lecture components of the programs are furnished adequately and students say they are comfortable in those spaces. The classrooms are equipped with technology at a level that matches the other campuses. Faculty are satisfied with the technology and up-to-date instructor presentation stations. Dry erase boards are in each classroom. A separate break room is available and highly utilized. There is seating for 30 people as well as access to four networked computer stations and a printer. There are multiple printers on site including two all-in-one machines that provide multiple functions such as copying, scanning, fax and large-volume printing. The telephone system is the same as the other college locations.

Infrastructural hurdles in the form of change orders were encountered during the transition which significantly increased expenditures. These were added electrical needs, plumbing, power for classroom presentation technologies, locks for doors, and window treatments. All change orders were completed.

The HVAC system in the Cosmetology clinic area continues to be difficult in regulating temperatures. The property owner is working to find a resolution. Although it was quite warm in the salon during the visit, the faculty and students seem to deal well with the situation.

The North Shore Business Center facility is still under construction/renovation. To ensure safety, the college has taken action to deny access to those areas from the NSCC site. Direct entry to the NSCC space is currently at the rear of the building until renovation of the main lobby is complete.

Standard Nine: Financial Resources

When the Substantive Change Request was submitted, the overall budget for the transition to the new location had been set and approved at \$456,356 to cover program expenditures, operating costs, lease, and start-up costs for the new location. As reported above, there was a series of change orders and the result was unexpected additional costs of \$180,530, requiring a revised budget of \$636,886. The college was able to meet these expenses.

Program revenue in the form of tuition, fees, services and products is projected to cover the core cost of instruction, specifically faculty and staff salaries. Enrollment goals were met for both programs in FY'15. Cosmetology can support itself with an enrollment of 25 students and they are very close to that number today. The expectation is that Culinary has the capacity to grow, while Cosmetology enrollment is more limited due to space restrictions. Other sources of revenue are under consideration, such as expanding hours of program operation into evenings. In the event of a huge shortfall, Foundation and Reserve money in the form of unrestricted assets can be accessed to fill the gap.

Standard Ten: Public Disclosure

Cosmetology and Culinary Arts faculty ensure that their program information is kept current in all NSCC publications and the college website. The college was steadfast in keeping the public informed regarding the status of the programs and the selected location. The website does in fact list the accurate location for the two programs. Marketing efforts are underway to attract students to the programs. A positive event has been the initiation of 'Walk-in Wednesdays' that are open to the public to promote/provide services as well as a means of recruiting students.

Standard Eleven: Integrity

NSCC operates with integrity and adheres to ethical operating and behavioral standards. The college's mission, policies, procedures, and day-to-day operations incorporate these standards. The Middleton site supports economic development and provides educational opportunities as set forth in the college mission.

The college received approval from the Board of Registration of Cosmetology on October 8, 2014. The college also received authorization from the Department of Education to operate the Middleton site on October 9, 2014. The Culinary Arts Program's Beacon Café is also approved to operate as a food establishment, effective October 20, 2014 until June 1, 2015. That certificate is approved on an annual basis.

In interviews with administration, faculty, staff, and students, supportive statements confirmed the institution's integrity.

Summary

The substantive change proposal of August 19, 2014 and the substantive change update of March 19, 2015 were found to be sufficiently comprehensive and an accurate description of the off-campus site in Middleton. There is a need for this site, as both the Cosmetology and Culinary Arts programs are crucial to the area's economy. Although the site has been deemed temporary, NSCC has done the utmost to provide a safe, comfortable and appropriate learning environment.

Strengths

The commitment of NSCC administration, faculty, and staff has been integral to getting the Middleton site open and growing.

Individuals are to be commended for their work on the Master Academic Plan and the Master Facilities Plan, as both will be the critical to finding a long-term location for the Cosmetology and Culinary Arts programs.

Concerns

Current space constraints hinder the growth of the Cosmetology program and eventually will limit the enrollment in the Culinary Arts program as well. The relocation of the two programs is contingent upon approval of a State bond and there is no guarantee that the bond will be forthcoming.