Update to the Higher Learning Commission
January 26, 2016
Introduction

Washtenaw Community College (WCC) is providing the following information at the request of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). This update serves as a follow-up to information previously presented by the College to the Commission in January 2015, which was requested at that time in response to a complaint regarding the College that had been submitted to the Commission in June 2014. The Commission was clear in its last correspondence of July 13, 2015 that the College was “not out of compliance or at risk of becoming out of compliance with the Criteria and Core Components” related to the issues raised in the complaint and addressed by the College in its response last January. The following update is intended, as requested, to describe continuing progress made by the College on broad issues relating to filling of leadership positions, shared governance, and communication. While this update was requested specifically of the President, the following information reflects efforts made collaboratively by the College to enhance communication and promote involvement in decision-making and implementation of College initiatives across the campus.

This information in this document builds upon the actions, initiatives, and efforts described in the response submitted one year ago as a result of the original complaint. This complaint was prepared by and represented the leadership of the Washtenaw Community College Education Association (WCCEA) faculty union. As noted one year ago, Washtenaw Community College’s leadership takes all concerns raised regarding the institution very seriously; in the College response last January, substantial evidence was presented that many of these issues had been or were being addressed, and other items were clarified. College leadership has continued efforts toward improved communication, increased involvement of all employee groups in college processes, and promoting an environment that will best enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

The items on which the Commission requested be updated, per correspondence from Carrie Caine on July 13, 2015, are the following:

- Currently vacant positions, the progress of currently open searches, and any turnover in leadership positions from January 2015 to January 2016
- Ways overall climate related to shared governance and communication has improved
- Any challenges that still exist and how they will be addressed
To address appropriately the items requested by the Commission, this update is divided into three sections, each addressing one of the bullets above. Supporting documentation and links are listed at the end of this update and included in an appendix. These sources are also cited within the document.

I. Current Vacancies, Searches, and Turnover in Leadership

Summary of Vacancies, Searches, and Turnover since January 2015

At the time of the College’s January 2015 response, the institution had interim appointments in several key academic leadership positions, including the following: the Vice President for Instruction, the Dean of Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, the Dean of Math, Science and Health, the Dean of Business and Computer Technologies, and the Dean of Advanced Technologies and Public Service Careers. Efforts to fill a proposed new position for a Dean of Health Sciences had been put on hold following unsuccessful searches in 2012 and 2013; the decision was made by the President and then Interim Vice President for Instruction to postpone subsequent searches until the other permanent deans were in place. The Interim Dean of Career Services and United Association Programs was an additional non-instructional interim position created in part to fill a vacancy.

At the time of the January 2015 response, interviews for permanent academic deans were in progress, and a process for a full search for a Vice President for Instruction had been established and launched. Since then the permanent deans have been hired, and the divisions restructured, and the Vice President has been hired, as the following actions have occurred:

Winter semester 2015:
- The positions of Dean of Math, Science, and Health, Dean of Business and Computer Technologies, and Dean of Advanced Technologies and Public Service Careers were filled permanently in January 2015 following full searches. This information was communicated to faculty and staff by the President in January 2015 (Email from President Regarding Dean Hiring, January 16, 2015). The
individuals who had filled the interim positions were hired in the permanent positions following the search process; all are experienced College personnel and two are former long-term faculty. This allowed for continuity and continued strengthening of relationships in the academic organization. Faculty feedback regarding the deans, as already noted in the response submitted a year ago, has been and continues to be very positive (Example of Faculty Feedback Regarding Dean of Math, Science, and Engineering).

- It was determined to continue to fill the Dean of Humanities, Behavioral, and Social Sciences position on an interim basis with the existing personnel until a permanent Vice President for Instruction was in place (assumed by fall 2015).
- Plans for a full search process for a permanent Vice President for Instruction had been implemented with the input of the WCCEA faculty union leadership by the beginning of 2015 (as described in the January 2015 response to HLC), and included the use of a search firm to ensure the best match of qualified candidates. More information regarding this search can be found later in this document.
- The Interim Dean of Career Services and United Association (UA) Programs position was reevaluated following a one-year appointment as planned. The position was slightly restructured to refocus on the UA and growing apprenticeship programming, and made permanent as the Dean of Apprentice and Skilled Trade Programs. The individual serving on an interim basis, a long-time administrator with lengthy experience with trades and occupational programs, continues in that role, providing knowledge and consistency in maintenance of internal and external relationships in this area.
- As noted in the January 2015 response, a previously existing Dean of Distance Learning position reporting to the Vice President for Instruction that had been vacated had not been filled while the college underwent an assessment of its distance learning processes. This assessment and the subsequent development of an institutional strategy for e-learning moving forward was led by a faculty member on temporary alternative assignment together with two faculty/staff advisory groups. As a result of this work, in Winter 2015 the position of Senior Director of E-Learning, reporting to the Interim Vice President for Instruction, was
hired to begin working with faculty and staff in overseeing the ongoing implementation of the College’s e-learning office and activities.

**Spring/Summer 2015**

- As work toward hiring a permanent Vice President for Instruction neared a conclusion, the College again embarked on the search for a Dean of Health Sciences. Following a search, in April 2015 Valerie Greaves, a nursing faculty member and department chair at the College, was hired in the newly created position.

- With the new Dean of Health Sciences position overseeing the new Division of Health Sciences, the Division of Math, Science, and Health became the Division of Math, Science, and Engineering Technology. The individual serving in the role of Interim Dean of Humanities, Behavioral, and Social Sciences chose to return to her previous faculty position in May 2015, and at that time, the Dean of Math, Science, and Engineering Technology assumed those duties as Acting Dean over that division. This was communicated to faculty by the Interim Vice President for Instruction in April 2015 (Email from Interim VPI Regarding Dean Changes, April 23, 2015). This arrangement was maintained as the new Vice President for Instruction completed the first semester working with the deans and evaluating the effectiveness of the organizational structure, and is hoped this may become permanent in the next 2-3 months. An update on the VPI search and information regarding the changes in dean positions was communicated to faculty and staff by the President in June 2015 (Email from President Regarding VPI Search/Dean Changes, June 9, 2015).

- During this time, work related to the search for a permanent Vice President for Instruction proceeded as planned, including a multi-tiered selection process, interviews, and meetings of candidates with multiple groups on campus. Details of the full process are below. Dr. Michael Nealon was hired as Vice President for Instruction in July 2015 and began duties on August 10, 2015, with this news communicated to faculty and staff on July 15, 2015 (Email from President Regarding VPI Hiring, July 15, 2015).
Vice President for Instruction Search

An area of focus in the College’s January 2015 response to HLC was the status of the Vice President for Instruction position. As mentioned above, this position was filled last August following a documented and rigorous search process throughout 2015. This was the second search for this position, the first in 2014 having resulted in no acceptable candidate by consensus of all members of that faculty/staff search committee. Because of the results of the first search, it was determined the use of an executive search firm, RPA, Inc., would provide more appropriately matched candidates. Members of the WCCEA faculty union leadership were involved in the development of the process, selection of the firm, and the search itself, along with other faculty members. A summary of the process that took place is as follows (Vice President for Instruction Search Process Documentation):

- The search firm met with the search committee, executive cabinet, deans, VPI direct reports, and WCCEA union leadership to determine the position needs and qualifications of the ideal candidate.
- The search firm, in collaboration with the College, developed the job description; advertised the position; recruited candidates; completed phone screening interviews; and completed reference checks.
- Candidate materials were shared with the search committee to review, and the committee identified seven semi-finalists who were interviewed by the search firm. Results were discussed with the search committee.
- The search committee narrowed the selection to three finalists for on-campus interviews.
- Finalists had separate interviews on campus with the search committee, President, and Executive Leadership Team. In addition, they participated in open sessions with all faculty and VPI direct reports. Participants in all sessions could complete feedback surveys on the candidates, results of which were shared with the search committee and President.
- The final candidate was identified by the President and met with the Board of Trustees and executive staff; an offer was then made.
Status of Current Positions

There are currently no vacancies in instructional leadership areas. In non-instructional area, there are several positions currently undergoing evaluation. The first is the position of Dean of Support Services and Student Advocacy. This position is currently being filled on an interim basis following the retirement of the former long-serving dean at the end of 2015; the position is currently being assessed as the student services area evaluates best practices and appropriate resources for meeting the support needs of students.

In addition, the institution’s Information Technology area is also currently undergoing an assessment of organizational needs and capacity related to the College’s short- and long-term technology planning. The institution’s Chief Information Officer resigned in 2015, and this position will not be filled or continued at this time. The area is overseen by the Office of Administration and Finance, which is led by the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, who has prior experience as a CIO.

Lastly, an additional non-instructional position that was vacated in summer 2015 was that of Executive Director of Marketing and Public Relations. This has been filled since that time on an interim basis and will be posted in the next several months.

II. Updates on Shared Governance and Communication

The College has long been committed to promoting a climate that fosters clear lines of communication and opportunities for inclusion in the work of the institution from faculty and staff across employee units. To that end, the College continues to put forward efforts to improve campus climate in the spirit of Washtenaw Community College’s existing shared governance policy, the Board of Trustees Staff Collaboration and Governance Policy 5085, and improve efforts to communicate and seek input and participation within that policy. (This policy was discussed in depth in the January 2015 response.) The College continues to support the functional implementation of this policy through increases in cross-campus committees and teams, as well as opportunities for all employees to provide feedback as desired. Broad potential for involvement in teams and through other means has been a priority and a primary mechanism for participation, even while recognizing that administration is responsible for final decisions concerning the institution, per the policy statement of Policy 5085: “The Board of
Trustees endorses the development of collaborative processes among College staff groups and encourages the President and staff to develop teams and self-improvement mechanisms which foster problem solving with diverse representation and participants. College administration has the decision-making authority, but will use processes to assure staff involvement and influence as policy recommendations are prepared and decisions made.”

Supporting Shared Governance and Communication through Groups and Initiatives

Supporting a climate that promotes open communication and opportunity for involvement, especially of faculty, is a clear organizational structure that encourages participation in decision making at the unit level as appropriate, and a communication flow that has been strengthened in the last year through existing channels. Having a permanent academic leadership team now in place has already led to improved levels of communication from faculty to department chair to dean and Vice President for Instruction. In addition, the President in late 2014 added the deans to the biweekly meetings of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), joining the Vice Presidents and several other senior administrators. This has enabled deans to be on the front edge of communication, and be empowered in relaying consistent information to faculty and chairs. Likewise, the Administrative Leadership Team (ALT), which meets monthly and includes ELT members as well as many mid-level administrators, also provides an opportunity to ensure full, appropriate, and consistent communication about important issues, and also allows a forum for seeking input or involvement in College initiatives. Both ELT and ALT provide opportunity for open dialogue, input from the administration, and discussion of opportunities for communicating and involving faculty in various initiatives (Sample ELT and ALT Summaries).

Collaboration in decision-making and implementation in many critical areas of the College continues to be supported among faculty and staff through representation on cross-functional committees (Updated Committee Summary, January 2016). The representation on committees of all employee groups, and especially the inclusion of faculty, is a priority and has expanded over the last year. As of January 2016, faculty were represented on more than thirty College committees, task forces, or other decision-making or advisory groups. This is an increase of faculty representation from approximately twenty groups a year ago. These groups include, but not limited to: Curriculum Committee, Assessment Committee, and Faculty
Professional Development Committee (all of which are contractual per the faculty union collective bargaining agreement); Faculty Evaluation Committee (an ad hoc committee, per faculty collective bargaining letter of agreement); Guided Pathways Steering Committee; Distance Learning/Blackboard Committee; E-Learning Steering Committee; Diversity and Inclusion Task Force; Global Strategy Committee; Instructional Innovation Team; Sustainability Council; Technology Planning Committee; and most of the Strategic Planning priority team groups. Office professional/technical staff, facilities and custodial/maintenance staff, and multiple levels of administration are likewise represented on many of these committees focused on broad institutional issues.

Inclusion in Strategic Planning and Institutional Initiatives

In 2015, the College entered the second three-year cycle of its strategic plan, Shaping our Future. The plan, which is based upon broad eight priorities, has been a primary opportunity for campus input and involvement. To date, nearly 150 faculty and staff have had direct participation in the design or implementation of the strategic plan priorities, not including many of those who have been part of committees or other groups involved in the realization of goals connected to the plan (Strategic Plan Involvement 2012-15). In addition, since 2014 faculty have been able to apply for strategic initiative funding that is available to allow them to engage in projects related to the College’s strategic priorities, to date, nearly 40 faculty have been approved for funding.

The design and implementation of goals aligned with each priority is overseen by priority teams of faculty and staff. In spring of 2015, as the goals of the first three years of the plan were completed, priority teams employed a visioning process to draft new and continuing goals for 2015-19 (Strategic Plan Goals 2015-19 Draft). To provide accessible opportunities for faculty and staff to participate in the next phase of the process, priority teams held an open Strategic Priority Fair session during faculty/staff In-Service in August 2015 to seek input and participation from any faculty or staff interested in providing feedback or serving on a priority team. In addition, an online form has been created so that at any time, employees may give feedback or ask to serve on a team (Strategic Planning Involvement Form). Forms and updates have been maintained on the College intranet for all faculty and staff to access since 2013.
Faculty/staff sub-groups and initiatives that have evolved from strategic planning work have continued to grow in the last year. Examples include the development of a conceptual faculty innovation portal by the Instructional Innovation group, the creation of a faculty team leading efforts in piloting and implementing Open Educational Resources (OERs) in the classroom, and the development of an advising syllabus for use by counselors and advising to enhance advising for student success. An additional example of participatory decision making and involvement through the priorities of the strategic plan is the ongoing work of the Priority One team, which oversees the priority of professional development and organizational health. This cross-functional team, co-led by a faculty and an administrator and with representatives from every employee group, jointly chooses and develops professional development training that has value for all employees. In the last year they have led the creation of employee training, including “Leadership, Collaboration, and Mediation,” “Speaking to Influence Others,” and “Providing Stellar Service,” as well as sessions on project management and a panel and speaker on LGBTQ issues in the educational environment. Faculty and staff representatives from each priority team presented updates on their work at the most recent faculty/staff in-service in January 2016, highlighting progress on some of these projects.

Another recent opportunity for campus-wide involvement has been the announcement of the President’s Six Institutional Initiatives. These were first introduced to the Board of Trustees in September 2015, and have since been discussed in multiple forums, such as faculty/staff in-service sessions ELT and ALT meetings, and student forums. The six initiatives, intended to be addressed over the next three years, are: Campus Safety; Retention and Completion; College Affordability; International Education; Diversity and Inclusion; and Campus and Technology Master Plan. In all cases, the initial stage of the initiative is exploratory and includes gathering campus opinion through focus groups, feedback sessions at existing meetings, surveys, or other methods. For the issue of campus safety, for example, sessions gauging opinion on the topic were held over the last year at general faculty meetings, and in meetings with Office Professional/Technical staff, Custodial/Maintenance staff, and administrators; additionally, a survey was administered to all employees and students. Thus, feedback solicited from the entire campus community was incorporated into conversations held during a working retreat of the Board as issues relating to campus and security were discussed.
Often, existing groups that include faculty as well as staff are very involved in work related to both the strategic plan priorities and the six institutional initiatives, even when those groups may not have been specifically created as part of those initiatives. A few examples of such groups and their work include the following:

- The faculty-led Global Strategy Committee, which has existed for several years to review and improve the College’s study abroad offerings, is overseeing the many aspects of the international education institutional initiative, and is in the process of gathering best practices and feedback on multiple international opportunities to lead the development of long-range goals to direct institutional planning in this area.

- The cross-campus Diversity Task Force, which was developed in 2013-14 as a faculty/staff advisory group under the guidance of the then new Dean of Student Diversity and Inclusion to guide diversity awareness and programming, is now working in tandem with the Strategic Plan Priority One team on professional development to research and implement deeper trainings for employees and students as part of one of the institutional initiatives.

- Two groups that are majority faculty that have participated in the reassessment and reimagining of the College’s distance education continue to provide guidance as WCC implements more intentional strategies for its online programs and courses, supporting both the work of Priority Three on instructional agility, innovation, and responsiveness, as well as goals being implemented by the administrative Strategic Enrollment Team (SEP) focused on the institutional initiative of retention and completion.

- The recently formed OER team already mentioned primarily supports the instructional innovation work of Priority Three. However, with its focus on creating open educational resources in the classroom in order to provide flexibility and mitigate textbook costs for students, this group is contributing to work related to the institutional initiative of promoting college affordability.

- Aspects of the work of the WCC Sustainability Council, a group of faculty/staff from across the institution, have become incorporated into the strategic planning goals for Priority Seven on Funding and Resources. The Council’s mission is to guide the implementation of the WCC Climate Action and
Sustainability Plan (CASP), and to provide leadership in integrating sustainability concepts into all core functions of the College.

**Increased Collaboration with WCCEA/Faculty Leadership**

As noted in the College’s response to HLC one year ago, in some cases, WCCEA faculty union leadership is also represented on committees. In addition, two groups are designated to facilitate collaboration specifically between administration and the WCCEA: Contract Implementation and Liaison. Contract Implementation, which convenes monthly and consists of WCCEA leadership and representation as well as the Vice President of Human Resources, the Vice President for Instruction, instructional deans, and the Director of Labor Relations, meets primarily to address issues specifically related to or impacting the faculty union collective bargaining agreement. Guests are brought in as appropriate to address specific issues. Agendas and minutes from monthly Contract Implementation sessions demonstrate that these meetings continue to provide a forum for communication between faculty leadership and administration, and offer opportunities for informing faculty and seeking their input on both faculty and institutional issues. Just a few topics over the last year have included the following: policies for department chair elections; changes to the structure of the student newspaper; updates on searches (e.g. the Health Sciences Dean and VPI); College web page redesign process updates; changes made to faculty credential requirements per HLC; the budget process; and classroom, space and scheduling issues.

Liaison Committee, in particular, has provided an improved venue for communication and collaboration in the last several months. Liaison meetings provide a less formal opportunity to discuss initiatives, follow up on questions or concerns, allow dialogue on College issues, and seek means to collaborate outside of contact negotiations. One year ago, these meetings, which typically have included the President of the College and the President of the WCCEA, as well as the Interim Vice President for Instruction and the WCCEA’s Chief Negotiator, were on hiatus while discussions continued regarding the composition of the group. Upon the hiring of a new permanent Vice President for Instruction in July 2015, the monthly meetings resumed with the two Presidents, the Vice President for Instruction, and the Chief Negotiator. Meetings to date have been valuable in providing a vehicle for faculty and administrative leadership to address jointly significant broad issues affecting instruction, including faculty evaluation.
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faculty credential requirements, and other topics (Sample Contract Implementation Meetings and Agendas 2015 and Liaison Meetings and Topics 2015).

The President meets as needed with the WCCEA President and communicates directly with her as the representative of the faculty union membership on some issues. In addition, the Vice President for Instruction typically meets with the WCCEA President and Chief Negotiator weekly to discuss current academic issues. In both cases, these individual sessions provide a dedicated time to ask for feedback from faculty union leaders on planned initiatives and inform them of progress on current projects.

It was noted in the January 2015 response to HLC that in late summer 2014, in an effort to enhance collaborative governance, the President of the College offered to pursue mutual gains bargaining with union leadership, “not just for negotiations, but also for communication, collaboration, and problem solving” (President Mutual Gains Email to WCCEA Leadership). This good faith overture was rejected by the WCCEA leadership as an unnecessary measure at that time. While this overture did not have the desired results, as a positive related outcome, 17 members of the executive leadership underwent training in interest-based strategic communication in May 2015, with a focus on improved communication and collaborative work with groups across the College.

WCCEA Faculty Union Communication with the Board of Trustees

The college continues to support the WCCEA union leadership in its communication to the College’s Board of Trustees. The WCCEA President reports at each monthly meeting of the Board during dedicated time allotted to the WCCEA as part of citizen participation per the By-Laws of the Board. In addition, while not denoted in the By-Laws, the chairs of the Curriculum and Assessment committees have the opportunity to report on instructional activities related to these areas during the year. Faculty in other areas may also participate in reporting on a specific topic during the “Special Reports” period of the monthly meeting. Such reports may include sabbatical reports, reports on special initiatives, or highlights of student or program successes. Individual faculty may, of course, at any time speak to the Board as part of citizen participation.
Other Opportunities for Communication and Collaboration

The administration continues to utilize regular opportunities to encourage increased communication between employees. Regular meetings with various employee groups provide the best ongoing venue for sharing information, seeking feedback, and, in most cases, including key stakeholders in decision making.

MEETINGS RELATED TO INSTRUCTION

Meetings of the faculty with the Vice President for Instruction and deans have proven integral to ensuring clear lines of communication. As the deans and new Vice President continue to become more settled in their roles at WCC, it is expected that collaboration and communication will continue to improve. The Vice President for Instruction oversees monthly meetings (which are stipulated in the faculty union collective bargaining agreement) with department chairs and the general faculty. In both cases, agendas include items related to faculty work as well as institution-wide initiatives. Both meetings are increasingly being used as opportunities to encourage faculty collaboration or consider participating in new initiatives. Most recently, the new Vice President has shifted focus in faculty meetings to significant, larger issues for faculty input and, potentially, action. Recent agendas have ranged from operational items such as program accreditations, online learning procedures, enrollment updates, and information on the International Student Center, to broad issues affecting all of higher education, such as completion and retention, outcomes assessment, and Guided Pathways (discussed further later in this document). A significant portion of an early faculty meeting shortly after the new Vice President arrived was dedicated to soliciting new ideas for instructional success, which are now being followed up on (Sample Department Chair Agendas and Faculty Meeting Agendas). This is a shift toward opening more doors for faculty input and participation in the initiatives of the institution. In addition, in January 2016, the Vice President proposed that chair meetings be co-led by a dean and faculty chair to promote shared participation in the work of the chairs.

In addition to chair and full faculty meetings, the Vice President meets with deans three times a month and regularly with each individual dean. This academic administrative team is a critical unit in communicating with and working cooperatively with faculty. As already mentioned, the Vice President also meets weekly with the president of the WCCEA faculty union to discuss current issues and seek collaborative solutions to concerns.
The role of the deans in promoting smooth communication is also crucial to ensuring faculty are informed and have the opportunity to provide feedback on academic matters in particular. All instructional deans meet with their divisions and their department chairs monthly, and, as noted in the response one year ago, also provide regular email communication and monthly updates to their divisions. The deans have worked collaboratively in the last year to promote cross-department and cross-division cooperation, holding joint division meetings, projects, and social events several times a year; for example, in November 2015, the divisions worked together to collect basic necessities such as toothpaste, deodorant, and soap for the College’s REACH program for foster and other at-risk students in need.

IN-SERVICE
Another opportunity for cross-campus communication and involvement is in-service, which is held at the start of fall and winter semesters (August and January), as well as late November. In-service has long been contractual professional development for faculty; current administrative leadership has encouraged in-service as an all-staff opportunity for development and interaction. The Faculty Professional Development Committee works closely with the Vice President for Instruction and also confers as needed with the President’s office to ensure that as many employees as possible can take advantage of these professional development days. In-service days also provide excellent opportunities to seek input and participation in College initiatives, such as the strategic plan fair offered in August 2015, mentioned previously. Other examples of input opportunities from past in-services include sessions for faculty and staff to offer feedback on the website design and input on the budget process (Fall 2015 and Winter 2016 In-service Schedules).

DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS
In addition to the opportunities to be informed and involved already mentioned, there continues to be a concerted effort on the part of administration to maintain and increase direct communication with the college community. This includes meetings with faculty/staff, one-on-one meetings with WCCEA union leadership, and email communication. Examples include the following:
• Between January 2015 and his return to faculty in August 2015, the former Interim Vice President for Instruction held 96 meetings with faculty; 15 of those were with the WCCEA faculty union president (VPI Meeting Count).

• Between his start date in August 2015 and mid-December of 2015 alone, the current Vice President for Instruction held 75 meetings with faculty; 7 of these were with the WCCEA president (VPI Meeting Count).

• Between January 2015 and the end of December 2015, President Bellanca had 656 meetings. During the 2014-15 academic year, she had over 50 scheduled meetings with faculty from across divisions and over 70 meetings with staff, not including direct reports. Since January 2015, 9 of these were meeting including the WCCEA faculty union leadership (President Meeting Count 2015).

• Executive staff have been encouraged by the President to communicate important information in a timely fashion via broadcast emails or other means when appropriate. Examples include notification of facilities issues from the Vice President of Facilities, Grounds, and Campus Safety regarding renovations that impact faculty in particular. The Vice President for Administration and Finance continues to work with Deans and in involving faculty department chairs in the annual budget process, which began undergoing revision in 2013-14. In addition to holding sessions during in-service, he holds quarterly budget meetings with deans and other budget managers, and in 2015 met with department chairs and each of the employee groups to discuss the process.

• The Vice President for Instruction has demonstrated on multiple occasions his willingness to communicate with and involve faculty in discussions around academic issues. One recent example of this is the revision of the faculty evaluation model, which was developed through the collaborative work in 2014-15 of a faculty/administrative team (VPI Email Regarding SOQs). In winter 2016 this group came to consensus on a Letter of Agreement regarding the revised model.

• All instructional deans communicate with their faculty regularly, and, as noted in the response one year ago, also provide monthly updates to their divisions highlighting faculty and student achievements, important information, and College news (Sample Dean Updates to Faculty).

• The Water Cooler continues to serve as the key communication that is emailed to all employees weekly when classes are in session during Fall and Winter semesters (and
Examples of Increased Communication and Involvement through Recent Initiatives

In addition to the efforts already mentioned, there are several recent activities that have provided the College with excellent opportunities to expand collaboration with faculty and staff. The College looks forward to continuing to working jointly with groups from across the campus on the following projects and initiatives:

- **Guided Pathways:** As one of the few colleges in the state of Michigan not participating in Guided Pathways, it was determined in December of 2014 that a team from WCC should investigate the possibility of becoming part of a cohort through the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA). After initial email correspondence with the WCCEA president to seek input and suggestions on faculty participants, a team attended a workshop, but the College did not join a cohort at that time. Upon the hiring of a permanent VPI, this was revisited. A new steering committee of faculty and staff has now been assembled; participation was solicited through the Curriculum and Assessment Committees, the general faculty, and in collaboration with the deans, and faculty participation shared with WCCEA union leadership. The College was accepted in cohort two for Guided Pathways in fall 2015. The VPI continues to work with all faculty to ensure full understanding of the benefits of Guided Pathways to students, provide information, and mitigate any concerns (VPI Emails Regarding Guided Pathways).

- **Web Redesign:** The College has been engaged in a major redesign of its website. As part of this multi-year project, a number of teams will be assembled to lead various aspects of design and implementation. While many of them are technical teams, there will be a large Web Technology Advisory Committee comprised of key stakeholders from across campus, including a substantial faculty representation. At January 2016 in-service, two sessions seeking input into the design process from faculty and staff were held.

- **HLC Faculty Qualifications:** As with most institutions, addressing the new faculty credential requirements in the revised HLC Assumed Practices has been a challenging task. However, this task did give the administration, especially the new VPI, an
opportunity to choose to involve faculty in the process from the very beginning, starting with conferring with the WCCEA faculty union leadership about how best to relay information to faculty as early as July 2015. Additional meetings were held with the WCCEA in the fall, and plans were presented to the Board of Trustees in October on the College’s plans for addressing the qualifications (Flowchart HLC Faculty Qualification Process). Multiple in-person communications regarding the process took place at general faculty meetings in October/November, at in-service in November, and at chair meetings in the fall (Timeline of HLC Revised Assumed Practices Communication).

It was determined that, while administration would be responsible for reviewing existing faculty credentials, faculty departments would be responsible for determining the new hiring qualifications for each course in light of the revised HLC standards. The deans were instrumental in this process, assisting chairs by providing best practices and rough drafts of base qualifications. Once chairs and departments had crafted qualifications for each course, the dean and chair met with the Vice President and ALO to refine them. The revision process is still not fully complete, but is being done with in-depth faculty participation. President Bellanca has communicated with WCCEA leadership at liaison meetings and via email and sent multiple updates to faculty and staff, and worked with them in developing a plan for addressing the needs of those faculty members whose qualifications will no longer align with their current teaching assignment under the new requirements. The Vice President and deans continue to communicate regularly with faculty and WCCEA leadership on this matter. While difficult, this situation has provided an opportunity to work with faculty leadership in finding solutions to meet the requirements of the Commission, as well as the needs of the institution (Sample Emails from VPI Regarding HLC Faculty Qualifications).

Updates on President’s Communication Efforts

A number of the efforts focused on communication and collaboration described above have emerged under President Bellanca’s leadership that did not exist prior to her assuming office in 2011. Some efforts represented a shift in campus culture from the previous administration, which concentrated on ad hoc groups and processes rather than more systematic mechanisms for communication and participation such as strategic planning.
Other measures, including increased dedicated communication with WCCEA faculty leadership, regular campus-wide communications from the President, and additional efforts to engage faculty in College initiatives have been increased in the last two years specifically to respond to faculty concerns regarding communication and shared governance.

**INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION PLAN**

In 2014, the President created a communications team to assist her in developing a detailed plan for improving communication with all constituencies. The development of this plan was part of larger efforts made at the request of the Board of Trustees for a concentrated effort to improve communication with faculty in particular. Many of the measures taken were described to the Commission a year ago and additional recent activities are presented in this document. The communication plan is the President’s personal outline for communication with internal and external stakeholders. It is not solely a plan for inter-college communication, but rather guides the development of remarks for events, email communications, press articles, and other communications. The team consists of individuals with expertise directly related to communication matters. The team meets weekly to discuss new communication initiatives, prepare for upcoming events, review news coverage about the College, ensure messaging is consistent across all platforms, and assess the effectiveness of communication efforts.

Still in the early stages when the College reported to HLC a year ago, the first year of implementing the plan has been completed, focusing on goals including the following: providing transparency, visibility, and engagement; ensuring key messages are understood by audiences; reinforcing that College administration is seeking and listening to input and feedback; and enhancing the regularity and consistency of communications. The 2014-15 WCC Communication Plan Year End Report and 2015-16 Goals and Objectives delineate the ways the in which the President is achieving a number of outcomes related to these goals. Several of these are highlighted below:

**Engaging and communicating through meetings and dialogues:**

As noted earlier, the President engaged in a large number of meetings with faculty and staff on campus in 2014-15. These included, in addition to regularly scheduled meetings:
Meetings with committees, including the Strategic Planning priority teams, the Global Strategy Committee, the Advanced Transportation Center (ATC) planning group, the Women of Washtenaw group, and other teams

Liaison and other meetings with WCCEA leadership

Crisis Management feedback sessions with staff in fall 2015

Veterans Day staff meetings in November

Lunches with the Office Professional employee group

“Coffee with the President” dialogues for all staff during 2014-15

Attendance at multiple College events with faculty/staff, such as in-service sessions, Cheers luncheons and holiday events, Free College Day, Diversity Extravaganza, faculty performances, and student activities

Recognizing/celebrating faculty and staff achievements:

The President has put in place several mechanisms for recognizing faculty/staff achievements:

In 2015, she inaugurated the first annual Bravo Awards in collaboration with student activities, to honor faculty members who had been nominated by students for exceptional work, recognizing nearly 250 faculty and staff members who were nominated for their achievements.

Faculty and staff are publicly recognized for achievements at State of the College addresses (presented at in-service and to community organizations) and at Board meetings during special report or remarks of the President.

The President has since 2014 prioritized sending personal thanks and congratulations to faculty and staff upon professional achievements (e.g. awards, graduation, time dedicated to a college initiative, employment anniversaries) and personal milestones. She sends personal birthday wishes to each employee every year.

Since 2012, the President has met with students each month during the academic for a special “Lunch with the Presidents,” and now utilizes these students as a sounding board for feedback on College initiatives and activities. Faculty/staff kudos that are frequently raised in the lunches are shared via email with recipients (President Email Regarding Student Lunches).
Provide College updates via email to faculty/staff regularly during the academic year

The President communicates through direct email to all faculty and staff, most notably through Updates from the President, on an average of once a month. This represents an improvement in the level of consistency in email outreach to the campus community over previous years. Samples of recent emails sent during her tenure include: updates on personnel changes; communication regarding College and national events; recognition of faculty, staff, and student work and achievement; and latest news on College accomplishments and work in the community (Sample President Communications).

The goals and strategies of the communication plan have assisted in ensuring communication efforts remain ongoing and targeted to each appropriate audience. Activity has continued to increase, as documented. For further details on the goals and progress of the communication plan, see the referenced documents in the appendix.

III. Challenges and Opportunities

The leadership of Washtenaw Community College is committed to continuing to improve communication and provide opportunities for input and involvement across and among all employee groups on campus. Administrative leadership has made a concerted effort, in particular, to promote ways for faculty to participate in initiatives that will help the College fulfill its mission of making “a positive difference in people’s lives through accessible and excellent educational programs and services.”

Certainly progress has been made in the last year to promote frequent and open communication, seek employee input, and engage more faculty and staff in groups, projects, and decision making impacting the work of the institution. The President has continued to encourage and expand communication, engagement with faculty and staff, and opportunities for input and involvement in college committees. The communication plan demonstrates a high level of interaction with all sectors of the campus community. The strengthening of the academic organizational structure through a fully established strong team of deans and Vice President for Instruction has already improved the flow and quality of communication, as well as the level of involvement of faculty in College initiatives.
Certain challenges still remain. From the perspective of College leadership, some of these challenges, and ways in which they are currently being addressed, include the following:

- The College continues to seek to address the WCCEA faculty union’s concerns regarding providing faculty with opportunities for input and involvement on campus. As noted in January 2015 and in this document, opportunities to be informed, be involved, or provide input into institutional initiatives such as the strategic plan, budget process, web design, and other projects have been provided to faculty and staff throughout Dr. Bellanca’s tenure. Engaging faculty and staff, however, remains a challenge. While active faculty and staff participation on committees when invited has increased, opportunities to provide input are sometimes underutilized. For example, an open house session during faculty/staff in-service in August seeking input and participation on the strategic plan priority teams, which was even highlighted by the President in a broadcast email, drew only two faculty members. There have also been no follow-up requests to participate or input submitted by faculty/staff via the online forms since that time. Likewise, only one faculty and several staff attended two sessions seeking feedback on the college’s new web design held during January 2016 in-service. The College seeks to offer multiple ways for employees to be involved, and administration will continue to work with deans and other College leaders to identify appropriate faculty for specific teams and projects (see below).

In addition, The Vice President for Instruction has recently made it a priority to engage faculty more directly in regional and national conversations about the changes and developments in American higher education. Since fall 2015 his office has supported faculty attendance at the following: MCAA Student Success Summit in Lansing, MI; Summit on Open Educational Resources in Lansing, MI; the IUPUI Assessment Institute in Indianapolis; the 35th Annual FYE (First Year Experience) Conference in Orlando, FL; and the Innovations Conference (League for Innovation in the Community College) in Chicago. It is expected that this will encourage growth in faculty leadership and participation in College work.
The administration seeks to work in collaboration with WCCEA faculty union leadership in encouraging as large and diverse a group of faculty as possible to participate in College committees and initiatives. The WCCEA union leadership has requested that Association leadership be allowed to appoint faculty to all committees, including those that are not related to the faculty union collective bargaining agreement or do not include faculty release time for service. This has at times created challenges in the creation of institutional committees or groups by administration when seeking the desired balance of individuals with different attributes and types of experience or expertise on teams. The College is eager to foster the development of faculty leaders, and encourage WCC’s excellent faculty members, including those who may not have had opportunities to be involved in institutional initiatives, to participate in such work.

The College recently addressed this issue with the creation of the Guided Pathways Steering Committee. In this case, the desired committee composition included the following: faculty with experience in curriculum; faculty from a broad range of disciplines; and new faculty leaders (e.g. faculty who had not been part of major initiatives in the past). To do this, the Vice President for Instruction solicited potential participation from the Curriculum and Assessment faculty committees, as well as the general faculty, working very closely with the academic deans in determining potential members. He then shared the names of these individuals with the WCCEA faculty union leadership for their information. It is hoped that this model will be continued going forward.

A number of the concerns raised in the complaints by the WCCEA faculty union leadership relate to issues of culture that are not new, and will take the time and effort of both administration and faculty union leadership to fully change. Issues concerning a lack of common understanding of communication and collaboration date to the late 1980s, when the current Board of Trustees Policy 5085 on Staff Collaboration and Governance was first drafted to address a climate in which faculty union and administrative relations were strained. It is clear that the college leadership and WCCEA faculty union leadership must continue efforts to communicate and collaborate with mutual respect. In addition, both administration and faculty union
leadership must commit to focusing efforts on the joint goal of moving the College forward in the best interest of the institution and its students. As demonstrated throughout this document, College leadership has committed to increasing the level of communication and employee engagement on campus, and will continue to do so as faculty and staff work further to realize the strategic goals and fulfill the mission of the College. The President’s reinstated Liaison meetings, ongoing communication, and increased communication with the Vice President for Instruction and deans all provide opportunities to promote collaboration and a focus on student and community success. Continued work between College leadership and the WCCEA faculty union leadership to achieve shared goals for student success should be maintained to continue moving toward an increasingly positive culture on campus.

Conclusion

In keeping with its College vision, the leadership of Washtenaw Community College is committed to creating a campus environment that promotes faculty, staff, and student success. WCC continues to serve its students with excellence and integrity, with higher than national average student success rates according to National Community College Benchmark Project statistics, and an over 90% student satisfaction rate with instruction. College leadership will continue to enhance communication and collaboration on campus to ensure faculty and staff can continue to thrive and help WCC’s students succeed. The College is furthermore committed to ensuring that it meets the HLC Criteria for Accreditation, as it has since its initial accreditation in 1973. Further documentation or information in support of this response will gladly be provided as requested.