

Chapter One – Introduction

Introduction

This chapter gives an historic description of Blue Ridge Community and Technical College (Blue Ridge CTC) and its association as the former Community and Technical College of Shepherd. The chapter also outlines the chronology and organization of the self-study process and confirms involvement from stakeholders.

History of Blue Ridge CTC

Blue Ridge CTC is located in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and enrolls approximately 2,500 students from Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties and neighboring states of Virginia and Maryland.

The institution's mission and goals are the framework and foundation of the self-study. The mission is intimately linked to Blue Ridge CTC culture and the strategic planning process, and it is the driving force of the institution. Chapters Two and Three cover in great detail the mission and goals.

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College is dedicated to providing a diverse student population with collaborative programs and support services to improve the quality of life and promote economic development in its service area. The quality academic programs are learner-centered and focused on career entry, university transfer, developmental education, and workforce development.

The community college was formed when Shepherd College (University) began offering two-year programs in disciplines such as Business in the 1960s. In 1972, under the guidance of the West Virginia Board of Regents, a *Plan for Progress: West Virginia Higher Education in the Seventies* was implemented. An integral portion of the *Plan for Progress* required existing state colleges such as Shepherd to expand their roles and missions to

include regional community college components. Free-standing community colleges were created and funded in some regions of the State, and the four-year schools expanded the scope of their missions to include the community college components.

Officially, Blue Ridge CTC began in 1974 when the Nursing Department became the first associate's degree program to be adopted by Shepherd College (University). In 1989, the West Virginia State Board of Directors requested Shepherd to re-confirm its point of interest in operating a community college. Dr. Peter Checkovich was chosen to become Dean of the Community and Technical College; he was later named Provost and became President in 2004.

Until August of 2001, administrative offices of CTC Shepherd were located in Gardiner Hall on the main campus of Shepherd College in Shepherdstown, WV. The CTC offered a significant number of courses and degree programs at that time, and courses were held on the Shepherd College campus. While this arrangement facilitated administrative links with the four-year institution, it restricted the ability of the CTC to expand its course or program offerings because of limited classroom space and resources on the Shepherdstown campus.

In the spring of 2000, the Martinsburg City Council contacted college officials about the possibility of moving the Community and Technical College to Martinsburg, WV. The City Council offered a grant for the college if it would relocate and proposed to help the college find a suitable location in Martinsburg. The site selected was the former Blue Ridge Outlets. The proposal was presented to the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission in the fall of 2000, and the move to Martinsburg was approved. In June of 2001, renovation of the Berkeley Building of the former Blue Ridge Outlet Complex was initiated. Classes began at the Community and Technical College in Martinsburg on August 20, 2001.

In early 2002, the Berkeley County Commission purchased the Blue Ridge Outlets complex; negotiations resulted in the May 2003 relocation of the college to the newly renovated Dunn Building. This move, which increased the number and size of classrooms and provided additional office space for the increasing number of faculty and staff, took place in May 2003. The college's main campus remains at that location currently, and there is a strategic plan in place to locate property and build a college-owned building in Martinsburg-Berkeley County in the near future.

Blue Ridge CTC is dedicated to fulfilling its mission and vision as discussed in Criterion One. Along with the consideration of regional economic and educational needs, strategic planning must also align with specific legislative initiatives and mandates. A listing of relevant legislative actions can be found in the Resource Room.



Blue Ridge Community and Technical College Initial Accreditation

As a result of meetings between Dr. Checkovich and representatives of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), Blue Ridge CTC began a major reorganization in preparation for accreditation. During the fall of 2002, committee structures were reorganized within the CTC, and the first meeting of the CTC Board of Advisors took place on October 30, 2002.

In March 2003, CTC Shepherd filed the Preliminary Information Form (PIF) addressing the twenty-four General Institutional Requirements (GIRs). During this same time, Blue Ridge CTC, under the guidance of the General Education Committee, adopted General Education requirements for associate degree programs. In June 2003, NCA notified the CTC of its eligibility status, appointed Dr. Mary Breslin as NCA staff liaison, approved the CTC's initiation of the self-study phase with a two-year time limit to submit the request for independent accreditation, and provided a list of specific areas and issues to be addressed in the self-study document.

On October 4-6, 2004, a Higher Learning Commission (HLC) team visited Blue Ridge CTC to conduct a comprehensive evaluation. The team met with President Peter Checkovich, the Self-Study Steering Committee, administration, faculty, staff, Board of Governors, community members, James Rumsey Technical Institute, and Shepherd University to confirm the effectiveness of Blue Ridge CTC in meeting its goals and the HLC's requirements for accreditation.

The HLC notified Blue Ridge CTC during March 2005 that the college had been accredited as an independent institution. A follow-up report was requested to be completed by October 2007 to address issues relating to assessment and strategic planning. The HLC accepted and approved the follow-up report. A copy of this report, and the subsequent review by HLC staff, can be found in the in Resource Room.

Context and Nature of the Self-Study Process

This comprehensive Self-Study Report by Blue Ridge Community and Technical College is submitted as part of the formal application process for continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA). The institution began this self-study in 2006 to review of all aspects of the institution as reflected in the criteria for accreditation to be conducted on October 5-7, 2009. The primary purpose of the report is to document the findings of the comprehensive self study.

The report contains extensive descriptions, analyses, and assessments of Blue Ridge CTC's effectiveness in meeting its goals and in meeting the Higher Learning Commission's requirements for accreditation. Also, it is important to reflect on the leadership of the Steering Committee and countless others who worked endless hours to assure the accuracy of the findings contained in this report. A timeline chart for the Self-Study process is located in the Resource Room.



Development Process of the Self-Study

In July 2006, Blue Ridge CTC began the comprehensive and evaluative self-study process to seek continued accreditation. Members of the Self-Study Steering Committee were appointed by President Peter Checkovich, including Margie Ways, the Self-Study Coordinator. During the fall of 2006, the Steering Committee was given an overview of the *Handbook of Accreditation*, and criterion chairs were appointed. The following mission and goals were developed and affirmed by the Steering Committee.

Mission: Complete the Self-Study and receive a full accreditation with no follow-up report.

Goals:

- Establish Steering Committee with Criterion Sub-Committees
- Write the Self-Study
- Involve all Faculty/Staff/Students within the organization and educate constituents about accreditation
- Establish an Accreditation Newsletter
- Improve the organization through this process to make the institution a better place

The Steering Committee held monthly meetings in which members discussed the most viable means of gathering data and completing the writing of the institutional Self-Study document. The writing of chapters was assigned as follows:

- Accreditation Coordinator - Introduction chapter
- President Peter Checkovich - Progress since last visit
- Criterion chairs – Criterion chapters with input from the sub-committees

Subcommittees met monthly during 2007 and early 2008, working diligently to gather data and put the criteria together for their respective chapters. During the summer of 2008, the Steering Committee began meeting weekly to review and revise each chapter. In September 2008, the revised drafts of the Self-Study were sent to the writer, and the writer began the first edit of the Self-Study Document. The edited chapters were reviewed

in January 2009 and again sent to the writer for edits. A mock review was held in March 2009 with a review of the self-study draft. Suggestions from this review were incorporated into another edit of the self-study. A final review of chapter edits was held in June 2009. The document was sent to be formatted July 1, 2009, with a July 21 date set for the final document to be printed. A goal deadline for sending the document to HLC was set for August 7, 2009.

The entire Accreditation Steering Committee attended the 2008-2009 NCA conference and brought back activities and electronic copies of self-study documents written by other institutions to serve as models for the revision of Blue Ridge CTC's draft document.

Organization of the Self-Study Report

The report is organized around the five criteria of the Higher Learning Commission and includes background about the college, as well as progress since the last accreditation visit. Separate icons in the margins of the text identify the four cross-cutting themes. An organizational summary of the report is given below.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview of Blue Ridge CTC, its operations, and its constituents.

Chapter 2 – Progress Since the Last Visitation

This chapter details the significant progress of the institution since 2005 and its response to the two concerns raised in the last self-study.

Chapter 3 through 7 – The Criterion Chapters

Each chapter addresses a separate criterion and includes information and examples of evidence supporting the assertions that Blue Ridge CTC meets the criterion. The information in each chapter is organized around the core components of the criterion.

Information and evidence are presented in forms of narrative, figures, and reference materi-

als. Strengths and opportunities for improvements conclude each chapter. The criteria are addressed as follows:

- Chapter 3 – Criterion 1: Mission and Integrity
- Chapter 4 – Criterion 2: Planning for the Future
- Chapter 5 – Criterion 3: Student Learning and Effective Teaching
- Chapter 6 – Criterion 4: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge
- Chapter 7 – Criterion 5: Engagement and Service
- Chapter 8 – Federal Compliance

This chapter describes Blue Ridge CTC's federal compliance with the following:

- Credits, Length, and Tuition
- The Higher Education Reauthorization Act
- Disclosure of Essential Information
- Advertising and Recruitment Materials
- Organizational Records of Student Complaints

Chapter 9 – Summary and Request for Continued Accreditation

Chapter 10 – Glossary of Terms and Acronyms Used in the Report

Throughout this report, reliable, valid, and objective evidence is presented to support the assertions that Blue Ridge CTC meets the requirements of the criteria. This information was collected and evaluated over a period of approximately three years, and much of the evidence comes from more than one measure, thus adding to its validity. Documents and sources can be found in the Appendix, the Resource Room, or the Electronic Resource Room for this Self-Study.



