

## Chapter Two – Progress Since the Last Visitation

### Significant Changes Since 2005

Since the last comprehensive self-study, Blue Ridge Community and Technical College (Blue Ridge CTC) has continued to follow its mission of improving the quality of life and economic development through learner-centered academic programs. Today, the College has progressed considerably since it underwent the first self-study in 2004-2005. The most significant changes since 2004-2005 are related to becoming an independent and freestanding college. In 2004-2005, many services and academic programs were contracted with a host institution, Shepherd University. By January of 2007, all but three services were transitioned to Blue Ridge CTC. These services were finally transitioned on July 1, 2007, and Blue Ridge CTC solidified its standing as an autonomous institution. This evolution from an administratively linked institution into a freestanding community college has been marked by significant change. The following list highlights the more salient changes since the last visit:

- A Board of Governors was established, consisting of 12 members, including nine laypersons and three college representatives who have been critical in setting the direction of the College.
- The institution was renamed.
- Approximately \$2.1 million reallocated to establish services and programs that were formerly contracted by Blue Ridge CTC.
- Four division deans were appointed.
- General studies and technical program faculty were hired independently, including approximately 25 full-time and 80 part-time faculty.
- Several student organizations were formed.
- \$4.5 million in competitive grants has been obtained to support workforce development and academic initiatives.
- Institutional enrollment has been increased by 1300 students.
- Formerly contracted services for students, faculty, and staff have been established in the areas of admissions, marketing, financial aid, registration, student services, finance, procurement, human resources, information technology, academic services, library services, security, housekeeping, and legal services.

- \$3 million has been procured to purchase land for a new and expanded facility.
- Approximately \$13.5 million has been earmarked by the state to design and build a new facility.
- A technology center of 23,500 square feet was designed and opened to meet the need of technical education for employers. An additional 7500 square feet was added in the summer of 2009.
- An executive staff was established to plan, manage, and assess the operations of the College.
- The College was restructured into two schools: the Career School and the School of Liberal Arts and Transitional Studies.
- Partnerships were formed to provide library services.
- A President's Advisory Council was established to seek community input concerning college issues and to share information about college initiatives.
- Access to distance learning programs has been increased significantly.
- State and federal funding was acquired to construct a chemistry lab and a nursing lab.
- Student access to technology was expanded through the College's website, wireless capability, the E2 Campus program, additional lab facilities, and the Technology Center at Berkeley Business Park.
- New curricula were developed to address the needs of students and employers in the service area.
- A comprehensive program to assess student learning outcomes, to conduct program reviews, and to determine institutional effectiveness was established.
- Three off-campus degree sites have been added and approved by HLC through its Change Process.
- The goal of maintaining student tuition and fees at 60 percent of the cost of attending a four-year institution has been achieved.
- An active Enrollment Management and Student Affairs office with disabilities services is now in operation.

### **Reponses to the Assurances Section of the Last Self-Study Evaluation**

From the initial self-study, the visiting team and the accrediting body cited challenges that Blue Ridge CTC needed to address. These concerns evolved from the Assurances and Advancements sections of the report. This document provides evidence that Blue Ridge CTC has addressed these areas and has generated processes and services that are now integrated into the fabric of the institution.

**Assurances Concern: Physical Resources**

“Currently, the CTC leases the remodeled ground floor of the former Blue Ridge Outlet Mall. This facility appears to provide sufficient space; however, the anticipated growth of the CTC suggests that a more spacious permanent location will need to be found within a few years.”

**Response to Concern:**

Blue Ridge CTC was able to obtain \$3 million to purchase land for a new facility. The goal of the institution is to purchase at least 50 acres of land to build an expanded facility. As of the summer of 2009, Blue Ridge CTC is scheduled to receive 13.5 million dollars of an 80 million dollar bond issue for construction of the facility. In response to community need, Blue Ridge CTC also opened a technology center in the summer of 2008. This center is 23,500 square feet and houses the Electric Distribution Engineering Technology program. It also hosts other programs, including Cisco Networking, Medical Assisting, and Physical Therapy Assisting and other Allied Health programs.

**Assurances Concern: Security**

“CTC shows awareness of concern for the safety of its students; however, a number of issues were mentioned that cause some concern: students and college personnel indicated that parking areas within close proximity to the building are not adequate, and the situation is expected to be exacerbated when the County Commission moves into the second story of the building.”

**Response to Concern:**

The College has increased and oversees its own security. The occupation of the second floor by the county offices has actually helped to increase security instead of exacerbating the situation. In the early stages of renovation, the building experienced lighting and power issues in the parking lots. Those utility issues are largely resolved.

Additionally, the College has surveyed its constituents regarding security issues and responds in a fiscally prudent manner to maintain a secure environment for its students and employees.

**Assurances Concern: Academic Support Services**

“Providing more services in Martinsburg needs to be addressed in future discussions of memoranda of understanding between the two institutions and will effectively ease the college towards offering these independently. Data show that CTC is paying an excessive amount for services provided by the University. Currently, 2.1 million dollars of the institution’s 3.6 million dollar budget currently goes to the University for a range of services, including academic. CTC pays nearly \$800,000 for undergraduate/general studies courses from Shepherd. Many of the faculty who teach these courses are adjunct rather than full-time. CTC would be better served financially and academically by offering these courses. In addition, CTC would gain ownership over hiring, course content, and scheduling.”

**Response to Concern:**

Blue Ridge CTC began the process of repurposing its finances in accordance with a schedule established by the president and the Executive Staff. Over a four-year period, Blue Ridge CTC recaptured \$2.1 million used to directly hire faculty and staff to meet this need. All support and all academic services are now under the administration of Blue Ridge CTC. Faculty and staff are also hired independently by the College.

**Assurances Concern: Assessment**

“Assessment of student learning should be more tightly focused on outcomes that are directly related to learner performance.... In addition, the components of the plan for assessment of student learning should include a set of overall objectives, as well as specific program, general education, and developmental education outcomes.

These objectives are likely to include items such as a time line for the various assess-

ment activities, dates for the preparation and presentation of assessment data, and deadlines for the inclusion of assessment data in institutional planning related to budgeting, staff development, and curriculum planning.”

### **Assurances Concern: Planning**

“In interviews with staff and reviews of documents, the evidence demonstrates that planning at CTC has been more reactive than proactive. During the transition to the development of an independent community/technical college much of CTC’s planning has in effect been dictated by requirements laid out by the legislature. The Self-Study documents CTC’s progress on meeting all of those requirements. However, up to this point, the College has not created a strategic plan suited to the needs of CTC. There the team recommends the College file a Progress Report.”

### **Response to Concerns:**

In 2005, the President appointed a Director of Institutional Planning and Assessment, organized a Transitional Review Team, and enlarged the Executive Staff to accommodate the strategic planning process. The director has brought intense institutional focus to the issues of assessment and planning. The Assessment Committee has produced a comprehensive methodology and process for assessing student learning and college services. The President and the Executive Staff, with input from a wide audience, developed the institutional strategic plan. Both the institutional strategic plan and the assessment plan were submitted in a progress report.

The progress report submitted on October 1, 2007, and reviewed by Katherine Delaney was accepted with no further reports required. As a special note, the Director of Institutional Planning and Assessment was invited to make a presentation at the Spring 2008 HLC assessment workshop with regard to the College’s assessment and planning progress.

## **Reponses to Recommendations in the Advancement Section of the Last Self-Study Evaluation:**

The recommendations of the team in this section relate to creating a unique, accepted identity in the community; developing academic and student services apart from Shepherd University; and funding.

### **Advancement Concern: Identity**

“CTC Shepherd has made significant strides in its establishment as an independent college. However, the team encourages the College to consider a different name for the institution. The team believes that adoption of a separate name would assist CTC in becoming distinct and creating a unique image in the community it serves.”

### **Response to Concern:**

Blue Ridge CTC engaged in an 18 month process to change its name. From over 160 suggestions, the final name of “Blue Ridge Community and Technical College” was selected and on July 1, 2006, became the official name of the College. The new name has greatly increased legitimacy and visibility of the College in the community.

### **Advancement Concern: Facilities**

The team recommended “... a small number of dedicated library terminals, a more responsive interlibrary loan system ... student monitors to lock/unlock classrooms ... and stronger contracts for parking lot supervision.”

### **Response to Concern:**

This recommendation concerning dedicated terminals has been met and exceeded. Terminals are now available on-site, and service has been contracted with Martinsburg Public Library, including ten dedicated terminals at the downtown library location.

The policy of supervising the parking lots has changed several times. Currently, the security staff monitors the parking lots and escorts students to their cars upon request.

Classrooms are now unlocked in the morning by CTC staff and secured each evening by security staff.

### **Advancement Concern: Services**

“The team recommends the College strongly consider employing an individual to facilitate access to the student services available at Shepherd University.”

### **Response to Concern:**

This recommendation is no longer valid as all student services are now administered by Blue Ridge CTC employees.

### **Advancement Concern: Staff**

“The president would be even more effective in fulfilling his role if academic leadership on the operational level was clearly made the responsibility of someone other than the president. The team recommends that steps be taken to modify the job description and clarify the role of the president accordingly.”

### **Response to Concern:**

The president’s job description has been revised and clarified. The College was reorganized, and four deans were appointed to oversee the operation of academic programs. The president has encouraged the incorporation of career and academic educational goals and objectives throughout the structure of the College.

### **Advancement Concern: Staff, Continued**

“As CTC becomes more independent and self-sustaining, it is important for CTC to manage the collection and maintenance of faculty credentials and staff employment records.”

**Response to Concern:**

Blue Ridge CTC now provides a Human Resources office that includes a director and an assistant. The faculty credentials and staff employment records reside with that department and are generated through several offices, including Human Resources Director and Assistant, Finance, and the four divisions.

**Advancement Concern: Assessment of Student Learning**

“The team suggests that CTC work with experienced community colleges and other agencies to assist in the development of student learning outcomes.”

**Response to Concern:**

The College participated in the HLC’s assessment workshop. The Assessment Committee has been under the supervision of Dr. George Perry since 2005. The team now has several years of experience in driving the assessment program at the College. The efforts of this committee are covered in detail in Criterion Three.

**Advancement Concern: Transfer Education**

“The team believes as CTC continues to emerge as a fully independent college, that it investigate the implementation of General Education courses taught by instructors who are employees of CTC.”

**Response to Concern:**

As of the fall of 2006, all general studies courses have been taught by instructors directly employed by Blue Ridge CTC. This change has allowed the institution to exercise greater control over course offerings, evaluation, and curriculum.

**Advancement Concern: Academic Programming**

“The team believes that CTC may want to consider whether various courses listed as part of the General Education are truly General Education courses.”

**Response to Concern:**

The General Education Core is currently being reviewed and analyzed by the General Education Advisory Council. In addition to the College's General Education Core, there are courses which the College considers necessary to constitute a generally-educated person. The courses in the current General Education Core are those that are regularly accepted as transfer courses, while some of the courses that constitute a generally-educated person may have more limited transferability.

**Advancement Concern: Partnerships**

“CTC should explore the possibility of developing relationships with other two-year institutions in the area.”

**Response to Concern:**

Blue Ridge CTC is the only former component community college in West Virginia that is now completely independent of a parent institution. In the process of reaching independence, Blue Ridge CTC has developed working relationships with several community colleges in the West Virginia Community and Technical College System. The organization has mentored New River Community and Technical College and Marshall Community and Technical College in the processes and procedures for achieving independence. The partnership with the Community and Technical College of West Virginia University Institute of Technology has produced many options for graduates of the Printing Technology program at little additional cost.

Economies of scale have been achieved in being a part of the West Virginia system.

In addition, the partnership with James Rumsey Technical Institute continues to grow and prosper. There are a number of adult programs at James Rumsey with students who are dual-enrolled with Blue Ridge CTC. This partnership greatly reduces duplication of expensive labs and allows Blue Ridge CTC to offer options to students at a reduced cost.

### **Advancement Concern: Academic Programming Continued**

“CTC may wish to explore the idea of establishing its own foundation to assist with fundraising and for the establishment of unique CTC scholarships.”

#### **Response to Concern:**

Blue Ridge CTC has maintained its existing scholarships with the Shepherd Foundation. Recognizing the need to strengthen the college’s financial resources, the College has begun the process of organizing its own foundation. After reviewing potential partnerships with existing community foundations, the College decided to establish its own. The purpose of the Blue Ridge CTC Foundation is to support, strengthen, and further the mission of Blue Ridge CTC. The Blue Ridge CTC Foundation will oversee all donations to the college and will actively engage in seeking external funding.

The Foundation’s steering committee has organized the advisory board membership. This membership includes business and industry leaders who bring to this initiative a wide array of skills and knowledge regarding fundraising. The steering committee is organizing the articles of incorporation and bylaws and expects to complete the process of applying for a not-for-profit determination by the end of the fall 2009 semester.