Introduction

Linfield College welcomes the opportunity to address the two recommendations specified under “General Commendations and Recommendations” on page 38 of the Commission on Colleges’ report of the evaluation committee for Linfield College. That report was based on the college’s August 1998 Institutional Self-Study, complete with supporting exhibits, and on interviews conducted by the evaluation team during its visit, September 23-25, 1998.

The two recommendations are as follows:

1. The Evaluation Committee commends Linfield College for the widespread participation and representation of all constituencies, including students, in the self study and strategic planning processes. The Committee was impressed with the level of community involvement, the investment of time by faculty, administrators, staff and students, and the institutional commitment to assessment and self study. Linfield seems to be at that point in its strategic planning and assessment processes where much data have been generated. Some departments have initiated assessment measures to examine the effectiveness of the academic programs; others are farther behind. What is unclear to the present evaluators is how the assessment activities will influence academic planning, and how the self study and planning processes will form the basis for an ongoing and cyclical process linking planning and assessment—a concern raised during the regular, fifth year interim visit in 1993, and the last full scale evaluation in 1988. Consequently, the Committee recommends that Linfield act quickly to insure the development of satisfactory assessment measures in those units that do not presently have them, and that the College make explicit how it intends to utilize the results of its assessment activities to influence the planning process in a systematic way. (Standard IIB, Policy 2.2)
2. The Committee recommends that Linfield address the deficits in the Division of Continuing Education listed below:

--2.G.3. Full-time faculty representing the appropriate disciplines and fields of work are not involved in the systematic recruiting, staffing, or oversight of Linfield’s continuing education and special learning activities.

--2.G.4. The responsibility for the faculty-based administration of continuing education and special learning activities is clearly not defined as revealed by the institution’s own *Self Study* (p. 132).

--4.A.2. Full-time residential faculty do not systematically participate in academic planning, curriculum review, advising and any meaningful governance at all in regard to the DCE.

--4.A.5. The full-time residential faculty do not provide for regular and systematic evaluation of faculty performance in the DCE.

--4.A.10. The institution has failed to demonstrate that it periodically assesses institution policies concerning the use of adjunct faculty within the DCE.

Following the summary comments of this introduction, we shall address part of Recommendation 1 under the heading *Strengthening College Assessment Programs*. We shall address Recommendation 2 under the heading *Strengthening Faculty Engagement in the Division of Continuing Education*. We shall return to the second part of Recommendation 1 in the concluding section, *Closing the Loop Between Assessment and Planning*.

Two general comments seem appropriate to introduce the body of this report. Each concerns particularities of the college that could not help but influence the judgment of the Evaluation Committee in September 1998.

The first comment concerns the broadly participative self-study and planning processes that the Evaluation Team members found worthy both of praise and of skepticism. In September 1998, the college was operating under the *Linfield Long-Range Plan, 1995-2000*. Our self-study (p. 34) accurately characterized this plan as a foundation for the college’s impending capital campaign. We noted specifically that the 1995-2000 plan did not fully qualify as a strategic plan under *Standard 1.B* of the *Accreditation Handbook*. 
While recognizing that the 1995-2000 plan did not serve as an effective guide to resource allocation or provide a framework for applying assessment information to the improvement of academic programs, we also recognized that successfully concluding the institutional self-study is a prime requirement of a solid strategic plan. To publish a strategic plan in advance of (or even simultaneously with) the self-study report seemed to violate the spirit of accreditation review. Accordingly, we chose to grow our planning process out of our self-study process—though the two were linked through a college-wide Planning and Accreditation Steering Committee, appointed by President Vivian Bull in fall of 1996. Core membership of that committee has overlapped with the Augmented Planning Committee, the group responsible for drafting Planning for the Future: The Linfield College Strategic Agenda 2000-2005 (see Appendix A).

As a consequence of the college’s choice to put the self-study horse in front of the strategic planning cart, it is fully to be expected that the Evaluation Team would find its assessment and planning questions unanswered. They were unanswered within the Linfield community itself. On the positive side, however, these questions lay at the very foundation of the planning process, as we shall discuss below in detailing the recommendations of Strategy VII of Planning for the Future, which is aptly titled, “Linking Assessment, Planning and Budgeting Within an Enhanced Governance Structure.”

The second comment concerns the state of the Division of Continuing Education at the time of the Evaluation Team visit in September of 1998. The division, which had been budgeted to return $350,000 to the college as an offset for fixed overhead costs, fell short of this mark for the 1994-95 and 1995-96 fiscal years. The revenue shortfall coincided with a change of leadership, and under the guidance of interim director Professor Rich Emery in fiscal 1996-97, the division was able once again to cover its budget responsibilities to the college as a whole. This solvency with respect to overhead has continued under the leadership of Dr. Kathleen Bemis in fiscal 1997-98 and 1998-99. Accordingly, the college is in the enviable position of having resources to direct toward incentives to bolster full-time faculty engagement with the Division of Continuing Education.

This focus on incentives—and the fiscal ability to provide incentives—is a key to addressing the concerns of the Evaluation Committee. The college must address a decline in the willingness of full-time Linfield faculty to teach and otherwise engage with DCE that is attributable largely to a marked improvement in overall compensation relative to the additional compensation received from participation in DCE.
Since the college’s previous full-scale accreditation visit in 1988, average compensation for full-time Linfield faculty has risen 81.7 percent. This gain is impressive in itself, but is made even more so when one considers that the national Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose only 36.8 percent during that same period. Linfield’s 17-College Comparison Group increased 56 percent during this same period. Thus, average compensation for full-time Linfield faculty increased by 44.9 percent above the national CPI and 25.7 percent above the ten-year average for the 17-college comparison group. (See December 1998, *Linfield College Institutional Data*, p. 29 for the tables from which these statistics are calculated; see also Appendix B to this report.)

Average full-time faculty compensation for DCE instruction has gone up only 41 percent over the ten-year period in question. In 1988-89, an assignment of a 3-credit course in DCE resulted in additional salary to the participating faculty member of $1560. This amount was 4.4 percent of average 1988-89, compensation. In 1997-88, an assignment of a 3-credit course in DCE resulted in additional salary to the participating faculty member of $2,205. In contrast to the 4.4 percent of average compensation in 1988-89, this amount was only 3.4 percent of 1997-98 average compensation. In terms of financial incentive to allocate effort to DCE instruction, full-time faculty in 1988-89 clearly had more reason to participate than did faculty in 1997-98. This greater incentive was a function both of lower average compensation and a higher DCE rate as a portion of total compensation in 1988-89.

Just as the college chose to put completion of the self-study before the articulation of a strategic plan that includes the use and analysis of its multiple sources of assessment information, so also did the college place putting the DCE financial house in order prior to addressing the governance challenges we face with regard to DCE. Without a turn around in DCE’s contribution to the largely fixed overhead of its own maintenance, we were on our way toward having to subsidize the program from tuition revenues generated in McMinnville and Portland. Happily, the revenues generated by the DCE program over each of the past three fiscal years have positioned the college such that we are able to make the fiscal commitments detailed later in this report.

**Strengthening College Assessment Programs**

The Evaluation Committee expressed two related concerns in its recommendation with respect to assessment and planning. First, though the college has come a long way in its grass-roots strategy to create a culture of assessment, several programs were identified as having weak or non-existent assessment programs. Second, though there was much activity and multiple meetings among the thirteen sub-groups feeding into the deliberations of the
Augmented Planning Committee, the strategic plan itself was in process, with few tangible results for the committee to judge. In this section, we shall address actions taken to remedy the first of these concerns. The second concern will be addressed in the concluding section of this report.

Actions on Weak or Non-Existent Assessment Programs.

The majors in art, computer science, economics, and history were judged by the evaluation committee to be weak. “Humanities and social science” was also judged to be weak. Assessment programs for the interdisciplinary majors and for distance learning in DCE were judged equally to be lacking (See evaluation team report, Appendix A, p. 40).

We begin by noting that no such degree program as “humanities and social science”, either major or minor, exists now or ever has existed at Linfield College. We surmise that one of two things happened: either the committee members took the “Humanities and Social Science Department” on the Portland Campus to be a degree program, or they combined portions of the two interdisciplinary degree programs in DCE--namely, the “arts and humanities” and “social and behavior sciences” degrees. If the former, the assessment for courses taught by the Humanities and Social Sciences department is covered by the assessment program for general education. If the latter, the assessment program is covered by the programs for the DCE interdisciplinary majors listed below. As the Curriculum Committee issued, following its charge by the Faculty Assembly, an assessment report on the two-year old Linfield Curriculum in spring of 1999, we feel confident that by discussing this report, along with the improvements to the assessment programs of the other majors, we shall cover the territory requested in the evaluation team report.

Assessment in the Division of Continuing Education. All majors in DCE that are in common with majors found on the McMinnville Campus are assessed by the same programs as articulated in the Linfield College Assessment Program, 1999-2000. There are, of course, relevant adaptations required. Because DCE students come to Linfield with many credits already in hand from other colleges and universities, the usual assumption that an assessment program measures the “value added” over four years of education at Linfield College does not apply. Students in the DCE program may earn as few as 30 Linfield credits; most earn no more than 60 credits. Accordingly, the kind of “mid-program” assessment cited in Policy 2.2 is impractical, if not downright impossible when applied to DCE students.

Our limited ability to employ mid-program assessment in DCE does not, however, necessarily signal a weakness with respect to its population of
students. Coming to Linfield as they do with a mix of experience at other institutions of higher education and in the workplace, DCE students are sophisticated critics of what they encounter in the Linfield classroom. In addition, the market for adult education in Oregon is highly competitive. Unlike students in residence, DCE students are not bound to the college on the basis of athletics, other student activities, living groups, or extensive socializing outside the classroom. Their entire Linfield focus is on academics and on the “second chance” provided by Linfield. Altogether, these circumstances make for meaningful use of the assessment measures that Linfield does employ for DCE students--namely, end-of-program assessment, program review, student and alumni satisfaction, and employment satisfaction.

With respect to end-of-program assessment for DCE accounting majors, for instance, these students are subject to the same performance measures as majors on the Linfield campus. In most cases these measures--e.g., production of an audit case study--can be required of students independently of any particular course, thus focusing entirely on learning outcomes.

With respect to program review, the DCE programs identical to majors on the McMinnville Campus will share in the comprehensive, college-wide program reviews in progress between now and the five-year interim visit from the Commission on Colleges. Every academic program will bring in an outside consultant to conduct a review, and for those majors that are in common between DCE and the McMinnville Campus, a portion of the review will focus on the DCE component. The interdisciplinary majors (Arts and Humanities, and Social and Behavioral Sciences) are slated for independent program reviews.

Student satisfaction is measured for DCE graduating seniors, as for graduates on the McMinnville and Portland Campuses, by use of a comprehensive senior survey (See Exhibit E). Results of the senior survey are discussed at meetings of heads of academic program and within individual units, and serve a useful role in planning. In order to extend the usefulness of this measure, the college has piloted a survey of graduates in their fifth year after leaving Linfield. This survey recapitulates many of the questions asked in the senior survey. The information will be helpful, especially in recording shifts in students’ appraisal of their experiences of general education and of their majors over time.

Finally, DCE tracks their students’ employment experiences and expectations of advancement from earning a Linfield degree (See Exhibit F). In this dimension of assessment, DCE leads the remaining units of the college.

The Evaluation Committee report cited the lack of assessment programs for the two interdisciplinary majors. Those programs are now in place. We provide
them in full, with discussion, excised from the Linfield College 1999-2000 Assessment Program.

To develop the assessment plan for the Arts & Humanities major, the Director of the Division of Continuing Education worked closely with Dr. William Millar, chair of the Religion Department, coordinator of all Arts & Humanities senior projects, and the professor for the Arts and Humanities Senior Seminar. The means for assessing the goals listed below have been reviewed and approved by the chairs of the majors most deeply involved in the Arts & Humanities major – English, Religion, and Philosophy.

Arts and Humanities Major

In successfully completing a major in Arts and Humanities, a student will:

- be conversant with major figures and period in Western World Civilization
- have learned to think critically about philosophical arguments, literary genres, and/or works of art.
- have developed skills in oral and written discourse to allow effective communciation of that knowledge to others, both inside and outside academic contexts.
- have complete a major research projects which draws from at least two but no more than three humanities disciplines to focus on a particular artifact.
- demonstrate competence in a language other than English.

Means of Assessing Achievement of the Goals for the major.

To assess the achievement of these goals, the departments:

- Give close attention to the level of mastery of students for assigned reading
- Gives frequent written examinations
- Grades rigorously the content, expression, syntax, grammar, spelling of the examinations
- Returns the examinations in a timely fashion
- Require a course of all majors IDS485 Arts & Humanities Senior Seminar
- Senior project
- Require a senior research project
- Require a course in research methods in support of the senior project
- Oversee the development of a thesis statement for the senior project
- Oversee the required senior research project
- Grade rigorously the content, expression, syntax, grammar, spelling of research papers
- Require evaluation of the senior project by at least 2 readers
• Invite interested observers to share in the student’s defense and celebration of senior projects
• Survey recent graduates by telephone interview and written survey to assess their perception the degree goals having been met.

Use of Assessment in Planning. To make use of assessment information in planning and curriculum design, the departments will regularly:
• Evaluate the Arts & Humanities curricula
• Evaluate faculty staffing for appropriateness and quality of teaching
• Evaluate the requirements for the major itself
• Survey recent graduates about their satisfaction with the program

Social and Behavioral Sciences

To develop the assessment plan for the Social and Behavioral Sciences major, the Director of the Division of Continuing Education worked closely with Drs. Tom Love and Jeff Peterson of the Sociology and Anthropology Department. The means for assessing the goals listed below have been reviewed and approved by the chairs of the majors most deeply involved in the degree

In successfully completing a major in Social and Behavior Sciences, a student will have:

• the disposition to think critically and responsibly about the world and the place of humans as social beings within it.
• the sociological imagination to see the connections between individual lives and the social forces which impact them.
• an awareness of the major issues, problems, and questions that have provoked the emergence of the human sciences over the past two centuries.
• the skills in oral and written discourse to allow effective communication of that knowledge to others, both inside and outside academic contexts.
• the ability to access, organize, scrutinize critically, and analyze knowledge about humans as social beings and about the social groups to which humans belong and from which they derive their social identities.

Means of Assessing Achievement of the Goals for the major.

To assess the achievement of these goals, the departments:
• Give close attention to the level of mastery of students for assigned reading
• Give frequent written examinations
• Grade rigorously the content, expression, syntax, grammar, spelling of the examinations
• Return the examinations in a timely fashion
• Senior project
• Require a senior research project
• Require a course in research methods in support of the senior project in the appropriate discipline
• Oversee the development of a thesis statement for the senior project
• Oversee the senior research project
• Grade rigorously the content, expression, syntax, grammar, spelling and critical thinking of research papers
• Survey recent graduates by telephone interview and written survey to assess their perception the degree goals having been met.

Use of Assessment in Planning. To make use of assessment information in planning and curriculum design, the departments will regularly:

• Evaluate the Social & Behavioral Sciences curricula
• Evaluate faculty staffing for appropriateness and quality of teaching
• Evaluate the requirements for the major itself
• Survey recent graduates as to their satisfaction with the program

Distance Learning in DCE. The Evaluation Committee deemed as non-existent the assessment program for distance learning. To the extent this concern implies that the college should develop a program similar to its other assessment programs, we would respectfully take exception. Distance learning is a mode of delivery of Linfield courses, not a program of study. What is more, it is a highly restricted mode, taking at present three forms: 1) courses delivered over the statewide ED-NET (one way video/two-way audio) and 2) computer-mediated instructional courses, and 3) guided study. These modes of delivery represent only ___% of DCE offerings. Otherwise the division relies on classroom based instruction--much of it scheduled flexibly to meet the needs of working adults. For the overwhelming majority of its educational programs, then, the assessment challenges facing DCE are grounded in instructor-student interactions in the classroom--exactly as for the McMinnville and Portland Campuses.

The Evaluation Team did not contest the college’s documentation that its controls on and oversight of distance delivery are consistent with Policy 2.6 on Distance Delivery of Courses, Certificate, and Degree Programs (See Linfield College Institutional Self-Study, p. 128 &129). Because the alleged deficiency was expressed as an assessment issue, we infer that the college did not do a sufficient job of expressing in its self-study the multiple ways it monitors delivery of course content at a distance. A review, then, is in order.

The college evaluates all distance courses via the same Student Evaluation of Teaching instrument as it employs for traditional courses. It also employs
student satisfaction surveys. For example, the open-ended questions on the most recent Adult Degree Program surveys have revealed that for some sites (e.g., Salem) computer-mediated courses are perceived by students as a program “weakness.” These data were discussed extensively at the August meeting of DCE advisors and staff. Because most students overwhelmingly prefer face-to-face classroom contact to less personal forms of contact, this particular survey points to the need for assessing distance delivery results against traditional classroom results.

Happily, the college is in the midst of a two-year project to compare educational outcomes in courses delivered by traditional as against non-traditional formats. The survey methodology holds constant as many other variables as possible. We have selected various courses and paired off sections taught by the same instructor, with the same content, and the same learning objectives, but delivered by different means. One of the pair is delivered in a traditional semester format and its correlate either in a compressed timeframe or by a distance format. A total of six such comparisons feature a standard classroom course against the same course in distance-delivery format, such that by the conclusion of the study in 2001, we will have some data that will greatly improve our assessment of courses delivered in this format. (See Exhibit __, Assessment of Non-Traditional Courses.)

Assessment Programs Deemed Weak

Art Department.

The 1998-99 assessment program for art has been strengthened for 1999-2000 by two important changes, both of which stress measures that are independent from the particular course work undertaken by the department’s graduates. These changes are reflected both in studio practice and proficiency and in students’ abilities to write interpretatively about works of art.

Studio art lends itself to assessment in that students produce visible and enduring (at least in photographic form) works that can be viewed and reviewed at multiple stages of the student’s development. With a relatively small number of majors, art faculty members know their students and the capabilities very well. It has long been normal practice for faculty members in art to encourage students to develop portfolios as documentation of their evolution over time. Both for students who seek careers in fine or applied art as well as students who major in art because it is the subject they most love in their quest for a well-rounded education, portfolio development is a tool of critical analysis. The portfolio is indispensable both for student self-analysis and critical review by faculty mentors. What the art faculty members have done is formalize the process of
portfolio development, using this tried-and-true mechanism to provide data directed toward curricular revision and the improvement of student learning. In future, student’s senior portfolio reviews will incorporate an element of reflection on and connection to their earlier artistic work. Faculty will build review of these products from different “time-slices” of each graduate’s development into their thinking about what practices best promote progress in achieving the department’s learning goals.

With respect to critical writing and reflection skills, the department will preserve and compare an earlier student essay with the reflection pieces written as part of the student’s final portfolio. Because students sometimes declare majors after they have taken their art history courses, where typically they would do their first reflective writing about art, the department will preserve a student essay from all students who take art history. From this bank of essays they are certain to cover their majors who spend all four years at the college, for art history is required in the major. As with other departments using this mechanism, transfer students may prove elusive, but this difficulty cannot be laid at the feet of the art department alone. The reality is that for transfer students (including, of course, nearly all DCE students), end-of-program assessment measures are the best the college can provide.

Computer Science Department. At the time of the evaluation team visit, the computer science department was in transition. A tenure denial in 1997-98 had left it without established leadership, and facing the difficulty of filling a vacant position in a market not particularly favorable to the college. We were fortunate in attracting Assistant Professor Ronald Tenison to join with Chairperson Martin Dwomoh-Teneboah. Together, they have extensively revised the curriculum, focusing on information management and software engineering--both of which are areas suited to the liberal arts orientation of the college’s curricula outside computer science. Because both Tenison and Dwomoh-Teneboah have extensive education, experience, and certification in industry-based software programs, they have encouraged many Linfield students to attain certification in particular software applications. Several students have already successfully availed themselves of the certification option, giving the department independent evidence that their curriculum prepares students for their future working environments.

Comparison of the revised Computer Science Assessment Program with the 1998-99 version reveals a significant refinement of learning goals. For instance, the rather vague initial goal, “Understand the bread of the the field of computer science” has been replaced by “Understanding of the fundamental principles and concepts of computer science.” Added have been the important goals of “Ability to plan, design, implement, and maintain a hardware, software, or networked
project both individually as a part of a group,” “Ability to orally present information and write clearly” and “Ability to develop in-depth understanding of at least one speciality area of computer science through independent research and wherever possible internships in industry.”

Measuring achievement of the goals has been significantly improved. In addition to the previous curriculum-based measures of successful completion of course and project requirements, the department has added assessment of its curriculum by American Computing Machine standards and established connections to industry certification programs. All this activity has taken place against a backdrop of marked improvement of hardware, software, and networking options. For example, Oracle has donated to the college licenses for instructional use of its state-of-the-art software—a package that retails for hundreds of thousands of dollars. In cultivating these important ties to industry for acquisition of software and hardware, the department has simultaneously taken a vital step in achieving an assessment program that utilizes measurable outcomes that can be assessed independently of course completion and classroom grades.

Economics Major.

History Department.

The strengthening of the history department assessment plan provides a good example of the interplay between general education assessment and departmental assessment. History Department Chair Peter Buckingham was coordinator of the Hewlett Distinguished Visiting Scholar Program visit by Dr. Richard Roediger, an historian from the University of Minnesota. The workshops conducted by Dr. Roediger were attended by ten faculty members with responsibilities for teaching The Vital Past portion of the Linfield Curriculum. With Dr. Roediger’s provocative work in “whiteness studies”—black perceptions of whites in the Americas—as backdrop, a central question of the workshops was to better define what is described in the Linfield Curriculum as “historically-minded study.”

Using the deliberations of the Hewlett workshop participants to augment department discussions, history has markedly refined its assessment program. For example, a single-sentence statement of learning goals from the 1998-99 program has been replaced by a statement that delineates seven qualities of mind and accompanying skills that are to be produced by the department’s curriculum. As a traditional liberal arts department committed to close contact with its students, history’s assessment program stresses the close attention faculty members give to reasoning and writing skills developed through essays.