

Response to 1993 Concerns

In their "Report of a Visit to Cottey College," the 1993 consultant-evaluation team identified two areas of concern:

- Facets of the assessment plan are not well-integrated nor is the plan fully articulated according to the guidelines found in the North Central Association Handbook.
- The College needs to continue to work on improving communication among the faculty and administration.

Assessment

Significant progress has occurred since 1993 in developing an integrated and well-articulated assessment plan. The team requested that Cottey file a report with NCA by June 30, 1995. That report, filed in March 1995, was subsequently approved. Cottey's plan has become a program. The College's commitment to assessing student academic achievement has been steady over the last ten years.

The College has an active Assessment Committee comprised of faculty, staff, and students that has evolved as the College has worked toward implementing the assessment program. Cottey's faculty have put forth considerable effort to establish a culture of assessment at the College. In addition to involvement in the comprehensive assessments of student academic achievement, nearly all faculty conduct some sort of course assessment activity each year. Cottey's students are also involved in the program through Assessment Day. Students are not just participants, but take an active role in promoting the activity.

In the last year, the College has made significant steps toward a more efficient program by forming groups to analyze the considerable data collected from Assessment Day activities 1999-2002.

Complete information on the College's response to this concern is contained in Chapter 13 and 14.

Communication

Progress has occurred since 1993 in improving communication between the College's faculty and administration. Most importantly, collaborative problem-solving through official lines of communication has emerged strongly at Cottey in the last decade. The role of the division chairs as the liaisons between the two sectors has increased. Collaborative efforts to develop a well-integrated assessment program have enabled the faculty and administration to share information and concerns and strengthen communication.

The capstone trip to a European city, begun in 2000, has provided opportunities for members of the faculty and administration to work together and communicate as they develop the educational modules that are the fundamental element of the trip. The trip itself has allowed members of these groups to share travel experiences and establish a common ground on which to build communication.

In an institution of Cottey's size, faculty members and administrators work in close proximity to one another. It is not unusual for faculty members to speak with administrators regularly, including the President. Proximity, however, does not guarantee that communication is taking place, and both the faculty and administration have worked hard to establish processes to communicate with each other.

Improvements to the College's physical resources have played a role in increasing communication. Enhanced technology implemented in the last decade has included a voice-mail phone system and the introduction of e-mail

in the mid-1990s. Every full-time faculty member has a computer in his/her office which facilitates access to electronic communication. The renovation of Alumnae Hall allowed academic support offices--academic affairs, academic records (registrar), institutional research, and the academic assistance center--to relocate in the Rubie Burton Academic Center. With offices just down the hall rather than in another building or across the street, working together is facilitated.

Campus publications continue to be important in the communication process. The Cottey Chronicle, a weekly newsletter in place since the late 1980s, disseminates information to faculty and staff during the academic year. In August 2002, a human resources column was added to the publication to keep faculty and staff informed of personnel changes.

Informal lines of communication are also important. Annual events like the President's dinner before the fall term begins, the VPAA's post-graduation party at B.I.L. Hill, and a reception for the outgoing member of the trustees, are opportunities for faculty and administrators to visit in a relaxed setting. In the late 1990s, the Chellie Club (snack bar) discontinued its lunch service due to lack of patronage. This prompted Food Service to offer reduced lunch prices in Raney Dining Room to employees (who were the primary patrons of the Chellie Club). The conversations generated by sharing a meal together have contributed to improved informal communication.

The President has initiated activities that strengthen lines of communication among the faculty, the administration, and the trustees. A representative from each of the divisions is invited to make a presentation at meetings of the trustees on a rotating basis. The member (not necessarily the chair) updates the board on a particular aspect of his or her division's activities. All faculty members also have the opportunity to interact with the trustees when they are invited by the President to have dinner with the

trustees, administrative council members, and the academic top ten students from both classes in the spring.

Meetings are the primary method of exchanging information between and among the faculty and administration. Already in place in 1993, faculty-administrative staff meetings have become more normalized--scheduled to follow the three trustees meetings each year. The President and the administrative council members share information about their areas and answer questions. In addition, academic affairs staff attend monthly faculty meetings (without vote unless they have faculty status), and members of the administrative council are invited to attend faculty meetings either to discuss an issue with the faculty, or to learn more about a particular issue--assessment for example. The VPAA has regularly scheduled bimonthly meetings with the division chairs to exchange information and address concerns.

To check progress on the improvement in communication among the faculty and administration, the PACE survey was administered in April 2002. The overall results for all areas measured indicate a healthy campus climate exists at Cotney. NILIE identified an overall mean score of 3.78 for Cotney, placing the College as a high consultative system according to their research. In the more than 100 studies compiled by NILIE, few organizations have achieved the collaborative environment. Cotney's overall average is higher than the NILIE norm base of 3.58.

One of the seven climate factors on the PACE survey is communication. The following table summarizes the average responses for the faculty and the administration on the nine questions directly related to communication. The fact that faculty reported a high rate of satisfaction with the information they receive on their work, as well as important college activities, is an indication that the College has made progress toward continued improvement in communication among the faculty and administration.

Table 2.1 - Items Related to Communication

PACE Survey Item	Admin.	Admin. Support	Faculty	Technical/ Operations
11. The extent to which I receive information related to my work	3.75	3.54	3.82	3.50
12. The extent to which information I receive is useful in my work	3.97	3.81	3.69	3.86
13. The extent to which the information I generate is shared with others	3.78	3.50	3.68	3.64
14. The extent to which positive work expectations are communicated to me	3.56	3.54	3.61	3.50
15. The extent to which unacceptable behaviors are identified and communicated to me	3.65	3.42	3.52	3.31
16. The extent to which work outcomes are clarified for me	3.56	3.54	3.56	3.44
17. The extent to which open and ethical communication is practiced at this institution	3.56	2.96	3.55	3.22
18. The extent to which I receive adequate information regarding important activities at this institution	3.94	3.69	4.03	3.42
19. The extent to which information is shared within this institution	3.63	2.81	3.68	3.31

Two areas related to communication--"the extent to which open and ethical communication are practiced at this institution," and "the extent to which information is shared within this institution," appear on the list of priorities to be addressed at the College according to NILIE analysis of the data; however, the scores for the faculty and administration are not the cause for concern. It appears that the low scores generated by the responses of administrative support and technical operations employees to these items cause them to appear on NILIE's list of things to be addressed. While the

responses of the administrative support and technical operations employees indicate a concern that should be addressed, the responses of faculty to the item on receiving adequate information generated the highest score (4.03) among the communication questions. The administration response was also high (3.94). The data resulting from the PACE survey will be useful in the continuing effort to improve communication among the faculty and administration.

As in all human endeavors, communication is a continual challenge. At Cottey this seems especially true when new programs are added or new committee structures are put in place, until processes evolve to integrate the activity into the culture of the campus. The faculty and the administration will continue to be attentive to communication

