

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

Cottey College

Date of Visit

April 27-30, 2003

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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ASSURANCE SECTION

I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

A comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation at the associate's level.

B. Institutional Context:

Founded by Virginia Alice Cottery in 1884 in Nevada, Missouri, a city of 9,000, Cottery College is an all-women's college which offers the Associate of Arts and the Associate of Science degrees to students drawn from forty states and more than ten foreign countries. In 1927, Virginia Cottery made a gift of the College to the P.E.O. Sisterhood, a philanthropic educational women's organization which currently owns the College and selects the members of the Board of Trustees. Over the past five years, more than 95% of percent of Cottery's students (whether or not they complete the associate's degree) transfer to baccalaureate institutions. During the past several years, the College has felt the impact of a decline in enrollment coupled with the effects of the decline in the stock market on the College's endowment. Nonetheless, the College remains a vibrant and healthy institution with an exceptional physical plant, strong faculty and staff, and students who express a high degree of satisfaction with their education.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

None

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited:

None

E. Distance Education Reviewed:

None

F. Interactions with Institutional Constituencies:

Executive

President of Cottery College
 Chair of the Board of Trustees
 President of the P.E.O. Sisterhood
 Members of the Board of Trustees
 Vice President for Academic Affairs
 Dean of Institutional Advancement
 Dean of Student Life
 Dean of Enrollment Management

Chief Financial Officer

Faculty

Chair of Fine Arts Division
Chair of the Humanities Division
Chair of Science and Mathematics Division
Chair of the Social Science Division
Chair of the Rank and Tenure Committee
Academic/Deans' Council
Faculty from each division
Assessment Committee
Chair, Faculty Senate
General Education and Academic Policies Committee
Academic Advising Committee
Open meeting with faculty

Staff

Director of the Library
Assistant Director of the Library
Director of Administrative Computing
Computing Committee
Coordinator of Alumnae and P.E.O. Relations
Coordinator of Institutional Research/Self-Study Coordinator
Director of Public Information
Coordinator of Financial Aid
Open meeting with staff

Students

Open meeting with students
Student Government Association Executive Committee

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed:

Self-Study Report	BIDs
Tax-Exempt Status Document	Articles of Incorporation
Board of Trustees Handbook	P.E.O. Constitution
Student Government Assoc. Constitution	Minutes of Governance Committees
Minutes of administrative committees	MOBIUS (Library) Agreement
Analysis of various surveys used in the Self-Study	Various public documents (e.g., Catalog)
Published invitations for third party comment	Course Evaluation Materials
Course Syllabi	Faculty personnel records
Student academic records	Physical plant master plan
Reports from NASM	Faculty Handbook
Staff Handbook	Student Handbook
Cottey College Web Site	Audited Financial Statements for 6 years
Campus Directory	Campus Map
Student Complaint Files	

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process:

Cottey College demonstrated a commitment to the self-study process and followed a plan which, making use of extensive survey and other data, resulted in a thorough, clear, and useful Self-Study Report. The self-study process began in 1999, with the distribution of a time-line for the process. In September 2001, the President appointed a self-study coordinator and a steering committee with representatives of the faculty, staff, and students. This steering committee recommended the goals of the self-study process and oversaw the gathering of draft reports, which were then reviewed by small sub-committees. The Self-Study Report went through four drafts before being disseminated, including being posted on the College's intranet in January 2003.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report:

Through meetings with various members of the faculty, staff, student body, administration—including open meetings with students, faculty, and staff—the team concludes that the campus constituencies had opportunity to be involved in the Self-Study process, were aware of the process, and regarded the final Self-Study Report as an accurate presentation of Cottey College.

C. Capacity to Address Previously Identified Challenges

The team considers the response of the institution to previously identified challenges to be adequate.

D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment:

Requirements were fulfilled.

Comment: The team reviewed the third-party comments received (including two negative comments) and determined that the institution adequately responded to the issues raised.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information.

Comment: The procedures for handling student complaints are well-organized and document each step of the process, from the initial complaint through the disposition. The team found documents about programs relating to compliance with a) the federal government (Title IV and the Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act of 1990), b) the National Association of Schools of Music, and c) the HLC guideline about a cumulative log of student complaints to be in good order. As noted in the Self Study, the contact information for the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association

needs to be added to the view book and the Cottey fact sheet, along with the HLC telephone number in the College Catalog.

IV. AFFIRMATION OF THE GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Based on the Self-Study Report and other documentation, the team confirms that the institution continues to meet each of the twenty-four General Institutional Requirements.

Comments: Cottey College itself recognized a possible issue with GIR 6, which calls for the inclusion of public members on the Board of Trustees. Cottey College's seven-member Board of Trustees is appointed by the Executive Board of the International Chapter of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, which also owns the College. All members of the Board are either members of the P.E.O. Sisterhood or are related to members of the P.E.O. Sisterhood. Recently, the Board has appointed a person who is not directly tied to the Sisterhood and who, thus, represents the public interest.

V. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

A. CRITERION ONE

The institution demonstrates that it has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:

- a. A revised statement of mission approved by the Board of Trustees in 1998 as the result of a planning process which included faculty, staff, students, and alumnae, and which has resulted in a clear and specific mission and purposes widely understood and accepted by the P.E.O. Sisterhood, the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students.
- b. A strong institutional focus on implementing the mission and goals.
- c. Academic programs and co-curricular activities which flow from the mission and goals.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention

None noted.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended.

B. CRITERION TWO

The institution demonstrates that it has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:

- a. The influence of the mission and goals in driving the College's plans and priorities, which results in the campus experiencing a unified sense of purpose.
- b. Strong academic divisions in Fine Arts, Humanities, Science and Mathematics, and the Social Sciences whose curricula clearly support the College's mission and, based on the transferability of their courses, prepare students to continue their academic careers while also meeting the goals of Cottey College itself.
- c. A highly-qualified faculty devoted to the College's mission and to the students' education, resulting in students who succeed when they transfer to four-year institutions.
- d. A Board of Trustees actively engaged with the College, as demonstrated by attendance at Board meetings and knowledge of issues confronting the College.
- e. An administration familiar and experienced with the College, which contributes to the College's sense of stability and purpose.
- f. A strong relationship with, and support from, the P.E.O Sisterhood, again providing the sense of stability within which the College can accomplish its purposes.
- g. A strong and stable financial base coupled with sound financial management.
- h. A physical plant in excellent condition and with no deferred maintenance.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention

- a. The inconsistency between the process for faculty evaluation set forth in the Faculty Handbook and the actual practice of faculty evaluation suggests that the faculty evaluation system is not operating as effectively as it might.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended.

C. CRITERION THREE

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:

- a. The success with which Cottey students transfer to, and then succeed at, four-year institutions.
- b. A student-life program that provides a range of areas in which students can be involved.
- c. An assessment program which enjoys wide-spread understanding and support and which involves a variety of constituencies, including students, in defining and monitoring the process and which thus clearly demonstrates the College's commitment to assessment.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention

- a. The assessment program, while strong, is perceived by the College itself and by the team not yet to complete the feedback loop, thereby not allowing the College to use the results of assessment in the most effective way possible.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended.

D.**CRITERION FOUR**

The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion**1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met**

- a. Existing and effective planning processes which have served the College well in the past and which should continue to provide the College the processes for developing and implementing effective plans.
- b. Cottey College demonstrates a consistent pattern over the past ten years of developing and implementing programs, including an assessment program, that ensure the College meets its purposes and strengthens its educational effectiveness.
- c. A strong and continuing relationship with the P.E.O Sisterhood which bodes well for the College's future stability.
- d. A shared and realistic sense among the College's constituencies of the central challenges facing the College and a shared and long-standing history of shared governance which suggests that the College is capable of developing plans for meeting those challenges.
- e. The College's especially strong processes of facilities and financial planning, together with the absence of deferred maintenance, which should ensure that the College can avoid "crisis" planning and provide a stable base that allows the College to focus on developing a plan which brings together marketing, student recruitment, and academic and co-curricular programs in order to meet the College's future enrollment needs.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention

- a. Achieving its own goal of 350 students is critical to Cottey College achieving the financial base necessary for its future health.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended.

E. CRITERION FIVE

The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:

- a. Catalogs, handbooks, websites, and other public documents which accurately portray the College to its various constituencies.
- b. The success with which Cottey students transfer to other institutions, which demonstrates integrity both in Cottey’s relationship with its students and in the commitments (implied or otherwise) it makes to institutions of higher education to which Cottey students transfer.
- c. An honor code for students which students understand and which appears to operate within the College.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention

In some instances practices, especially in terms of policies set forth in the Faculty Handbook (e.g., faculty evaluation and observation procedures), need to be made consistent with the policies.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended.

VI. ACCREDITATION RELATIONSHIP

ACCREDITATION RELATIONSHIP:

A. CONTINUED ACCREDITATION

Next Comprehensive Visit: 2012-2013

Rationale:

Cottey College satisfies the General Institutional Requirements and the five Criteria. It has a strong mission, a continuing and strong relationship with the P.E.O. Sisterhood, outstanding human, physical, and financial resources, and the ability to plan for its future. In short, it is a strong institution that gives every indication that it will continue to meet the GIRs and the Criteria. As a result, the College's current strengths, together with its ability to plan for its future, warrant another ten-year accreditation cycle.

B. DEFINERS OF RELATIONSHIP

1. Degree Level: Associate's

Retain original wording.

2. Ownership: Cottey College is a private, not-for-profit institution. It is owned by the P.E.O. Sisterhood.

Retain original wording.

3. Stipulations: None

Retain original wording.

4. New Degree Sites: Prior Commission approval required.

Retain original wording.

5. Progress Reports Required: None

Retain original wording.

6. Monitoring Reports Required: None

Retain original wording.

7. Contingency Reports Required: None

Retain original wording.

8. Other visits Required: None

Retain original wording.

C. COMMISSION FOLLOW-UP

None recommended.

D. SANCTION

None recommended

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

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ADVANCEMENT SECTION

I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

Cottey College has had a long history of providing a unique opportunity for women. The relationship with the P.E.O. Sisterhood has been, and remains strong. The campus and physical plant are outstanding and well-kept. Cottey is perhaps the only college which can justifiably claim that it has no deferred maintenance, since the substantial annual contribution from the Sisterhood earmarked for the physical plant ensures that the College can plan for, and meet, maintenance needs before they become a significant issue.

Cottey's uniqueness presents it with its greatest challenge in the current environment of higher education. Given the many opportunities women have in higher education, the College must continue to sharpen its enrollment strategies in order to make a two-year experience attractive to enough women to provide the necessary enrollment (approximately 350) which the College feels is necessary. The College's current enrollment of 296 means that the College has a challenge in recruitment.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

Institution's Requests

Cottey College requested that the team pay particular attention to the following issues: enrollment issues, especially the effect of enrollment issues on program review; and the strategic plan for the Cottey Library, now that the Library is part of MOBIUS (Missouri's on-line library system). During the visit, the team found that Cottey has undertaken a solid planning process for the library, and the team felt it had little to add to what Cottey is already doing. The remaining issues are discussed in this section, as are the team's consultation in the areas of Cottey's "first-year experience" course, the College's system of governance, faculty evaluation, and assessment.

First-Year Experience

The team had some concerns with the First-Year Experience course and was happy to see that in response to concerns expressed by some faculty and many students, the College placed a two-year moratorium on the course beginning in fall 2002 and formed a study group to consider the course's future. The charge to the study group seems to be a reasonable and effective way to address the problem. Two key aspects of the charge are (1) the consideration of the curricular and co-curricular needs of Cottey first-

year students; and (2) the review of a variety of national models, especially with respect to Cottey's mission and goals. Since there are clear disagreements on the First-Year Experience and many people feel that procedures prior to the moratorium were flawed, the study process needs to be very clear and open. All campus constituencies should have opportunities for input, and there should be regular reports to the community on the study group's work.

Enrollment

Cottey has the blessing of serving students in a small, rural environment. At the same time, this setting does not afford the college much advantage in attracting a culturally or racially diverse student body. In addition, the institution has carved out a very distinctive niche in recruiting and retaining students. On the other hand, this distinctiveness comes at a price. Finding students nearby, where fewer dollars need to be spent in marketing and recruiting, is more difficult. Along with these advantages and disadvantages is the role that the P.E.O. sisterhood plays in the recruiting and marketing effort. While this cooperative effort has served Cottey well for three-quarters of a century, it also comes at a price, and is increasingly more difficult to maintain with shrinking funds available.

Having said all this, it is incumbent on the college to launch new, cost effective, efficient, and streamlined tools to market itself and recruit new students in the 21st Century. Among suggestions that may prove effective are using electronic tools, including CDs and a website presence. In addition, the need for the college to afford and keep consistent contact with the P.E.O. sisterhood is vital. Members of P.E.O. do "regional, outside" marketing and recruiting. Without them, the college would be devastated. They maintain the sort of "brand identity" that is the hallmark of the Cottey tradition.

According to the director of enrollment management, the new regional representative in California is working well, although this appointment requires on-campus recruiters to work even harder and smarter. Efforts are underway and need time to materialize in marketing the financial aid opportunities students have at Cottey and establishing even greater ties with the PEO sisterhood through the use of electronic mail. With more funding available in the future, it may be worthwhile to consider the use of billboards in prime locations along Missouri Route 71 on the way south from Kansas City to better

In recent years, Cottey's enrollment has risen from 297 in 2000-2001 to 312 in 2001-2002 and then declined to 296 in 2002-2003. Coupled with the impact on Cottey's endowment due to declines in the stock market, this decline in enrollment is a concern. Further, to be "healthy," the College itself establishes 350 as its enrollment goal.

Although Cottey has a strong faculty, facilities, and programs, the pressures on enrollment stem from several factors. First, women have many opportunities in higher education today, and a two-year college for women must compete against the full-range of programs offered by four-year women's colleges, as well, of course, against the

range of offerings available at comprehensive universities. Second, Cottey's location in a small, rural community presents a challenge.

Further, as Cottey itself is aware, if the P.E.O. Sisterhood recruited one additional student from each of the fifty states, the enrollment problem would disappear. Whether that is likely or not, the team cannot say. Further, the team believes that the relationship with the P.E.O. Sisterhood is certainly a strong one, with a genuine commitment to Cottey on the part of the Sisterhood and an equally strong commitment on the part of the College to the Sisterhood. Sustaining that relationship will be critical to Cottey's future.

At the same time, however, the College should develop a recruitment plan that is driven in part by the numbers of students needed for programmatic activities. In other words, while 350 is an important number from a financial point of view, the number should also be looked at in terms of how the College sees those 350 students distributed among its programs. Which programs will be most important for the College? What distinctive elements of those programs will attract students? And what level of activities will 350 students support in terms of student activities, athletics, and academic programs? A system of program review (see below) should focus not simply on answering the question of how to strengthen particular programs, but also on the question of which programs are essential to attracting 350 students. Such a review must look seriously at student demand and result in a sophisticated recruitment plan that intersects the institution's strengths with that demand.

Governance

The College may want to consider a comprehensive review and re-design of the governance structure. A new, more coherent faculty governance design could result in better communication among faculty, better communication between faculty and administration, as well as increased faculty knowledge and ownership of the curriculum and the entire academic program. Further, it could help the faculty as a group to see ways that parts of curriculum affect other parts. Depending on the design of the governance structure, faculty could take more responsibility for those matters that affect the academic program, ensuring that the governance structure would bring academic issues of primary importance to the attention of the persons who have the authority to do something about them.

Governance structures at the College are problematic in several different ways. The combination of a limited number of standing committees with a large number of *ad hoc* committees makes it difficult for persons to determine where accountability rests. In addition, committees lack explicit lines of accountability and an explicit direction about who should receive their recommendations and minutes.

Over the past several years, standing committee minutes and records have not been consistent in detail nor have they been complete. In fact, some recent minutes do not

include specific course descriptions for courses which were approved, and others are so sketchy as to make it difficult for people who were not in attendance to know what specifically was acted on. Although it is clear that the faculty has authority for the curriculum, approval of courses and curricular changes by the academic committee are given to the administrative units for implementation in a somewhat general form. The faculty senate, an important faculty advocacy group on most campuses, meets infrequently and also has limited minutes. It appears to handle more administrative reporting, rather than focusing on agenda items that directly affect the academic program and the faculty.

The campus might consider a governance structure which moves to a clearer decision making process by which the faculty meets as a whole rather than using the current senate structure. The advantage of such a model is self-evident: better faculty understanding and increased ownership of those issues that affect them and the academic program. Faculty, meeting as a whole, would have responsibility to act on recommendations from the standing committees, *ad hoc* committees, and, when fitting, from the president or chief academic officer.

In addition, the governance structure might add an overarching faculty committee (possibly the division chairs) to set the faculty meeting agenda, appoint faculty to committees, serve as a clearinghouse for faculty issues, and advocate for faculty needs.

The College may want to consider redesigning the governance structure with increased specificity about:

- specific responsibilities and authority of the committees
- type of committee (e.g., standing, *ad hoc*, administrative)
- membership and terms of service (with clarity about how all appointments are made)
- reporting lines
- to whom the minutes are distributed

In the process of a review of governance, the planning group might also want to consider the role of the Dean's Council (four division chairs, vice president for academic affairs, and the assistant dean) and clarify the responsibilities of the Division Chairs.

The Chairs describe themselves as, "perhaps, first among equals," but they do not want to be perceived as the "boss" for colleagues in their divisions. They shared a perception that their roles had become more important and effective with leadership from the new academic dean. She has given them a "new sense of confidence" about the channels through which they work. They appreciate her responsiveness in getting answers to them about issues that they raise in Dean's Council meetings. They believe that the structure of divisional chairs is working better than before.

Yet, Division Chairs also do not have a common understanding of their specific responsibilities, including their roles in the important task of evaluation of untenured

faculty. There is, in fact, no consistent procedure for systematic evaluation of untenured faculty members. Division chairs also suggest that the lines of accountability and authority between faculty and higher levels of administration are not always clear.

The Division Chairs are not consistently the persons to whom student complaints about faculty members are directed, although some are comfortable with that role. Others are not because it suggests they are the "boss" for the division. Students, in fact, report that if they have complaints about faculty members, they need to see the academic dean. This further suggests the need to clarify the responsibilities of the Division Chairs. Faculty may want to consider whether the dean is the best person to be receiving the bulk of these complaints, since on most campuses initial complaints are received by the department or division chair.

A carefully considered governance structure can enhance faculty participation in the life of the campus and revitalize faculty voice in academic matters.

Program Review

Cottey College faculty and administrators have, over the past decade, tried to develop a system of program review to strengthen the academic departments and divisions. Progress of these reviews has, however, been mixed. It will benefit the College greatly to adopt a more regular program review system.

The advantages of regular program reviews are many, and some of these advantages will be particularly helpful to the College. Effective program reviews can

- increase accountability
- bring intentionality to decisions made by divisions and departments
- keep campus programs in step with national trends and patterns
- bring outside ideas and perspectives to a geographically isolated campus
- allow faculty to become more proactive about ways to strengthen their academic programs and adapt them pedagogically to today's learners
- link reviews of academic programs with the campus assessment program at the point of the "feedback loop," allocation of resources, and other programmatic and facilities/equipment decisions

We encourage Cottey College to consider implementing a regular cycle of external reviews of academic programs. The College may also want to consider regular program reviews for other campus programs such as athletics and residential life that support campus priorities such as enrollment.

Many different models of program review designs are available for consideration. The Illinois state system of community colleges, for instance, has a standardized template by which two-year colleges assess their own programs. This model focuses on five core questions which guide departments through their own self-assessment process.

Other models from liberal arts colleges include those in which the academic units prepare brief annual reports of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and resource needs and then engage in an expanded self-study every five years. The campuses invite an outside expert, preferably a disciplinary colleague who is familiar with the type of program s/he will be evaluating. The reports from these outside reviewers, combined with the department's self-assessment, can be used as a basis for an extended conversation with the chief academic officer who, along with the unit head, can determine how the campus can best support the unit as it moves toward its goals. Program reviews can be used in conjunction with the campus assessment program to ensure that resources are allocated for those programs where the assessment analysis suggests they are most needed. This will help the College extend its follow up (feedback loop) in the assessment program, also.

It will be much more helpful to design a simple and concise program review structure that people use than a complex and nuanced system that they do not use.

Additionally, Cottey College might incorporate a faculty-development activity into this process. Currently, Cottey supports faculty development in many and varied ways. Many faculty use College funds to participate in academic conferences and other professional meetings. This active engagement in conferences and workshops enhances their teaching and scholarship, particularly in ways that are difficult to achieve on a small campus where most faculty are the only disciplinary experts in their specific fields.

An additional way that the College could significantly enhance professional development for faculty and, at the same time, strengthen the sense of community among faculty, is to develop an annual all-faculty workshop, possibly just before the start of each academic year. Many liberal arts campuses use these annual workshops to give faculty an opportunity to look at the "horizon" of higher education issues rather than at their "feet" where the demands of daily work occur.

Since Cottey is, by the words of one faculty member, a "general education college," an annual workshop for faculty could increase the likelihood that a larger number of them understand a) issues in the higher education environment, and b) broader implications of curricular and pedagogical issues on campus. The current structure of committees and divisions does not make it easy for faculty as a group to engage in the larger conversation about academic matters. An annual fall workshop could provide a rich resource that the College has not regularly enjoyed in the past.

Faculty Evaluation

Faculty at Cottey College are generally pleased with their salaries, benefits, and working conditions. The evaluation team, however, is concerned that performance appraisals do not conform to the specifications in the Faculty Handbook. Though the

Handbook indicates that non-tenured faculty will be reviewed annually, it appears that the only regular feedback non-tenured faculty receive may be information from the Instruction and Course Evaluation System (ICES). Non-tenured faculty need to have more information about their performance, and the Faculty Handbook promises a review.

The review process needs to be regularized. This year, class observations seem to have occurred for non-tenured faculty members. The nature of the observations, however, varied considerably, especially in regard to the kinds of feedback the non-tenured faculty member received. Cottey College should consider moving toward more formalized yearly reviews for non-tenured faculty. These reviews could include written performance evaluations and counseling sessions. Other components, such as peer evaluations, might also be added to the review/ (The Activities Summary submitted by all faculty by September 1 of each academic year could be useful information for peer evaluations. Currently some faculty wonder if anyone ever reads them.)

The Faculty Handbook also indicates that tenured faculty will be reviewed at least once every five years. And again, the only regular feedback is the Instruction and Course Evaluation System. The five-year review is a good idea, but Cottey College needs to establish a standard procedure for tenured faculty and then implement it on a regular basis.

Assessment

The college should be commended on recent development, growth, and success in its assessment program. A wide cross segment of the campus community serves on the assessment committee, including three students. This is quite meritorious. The recent change in leadership at the academic dean's level has been viewed by nearly all concerned as healthy, action-oriented, and significant.

At the same time, there seems to be much concern expressed by the committee about "completing the feedback loop" and addressing all 16 college goals with assessment measures. In an interview conducted during the team visit, the committee was asked to respond to the statement contained in the Self-Study (p. 115) about the fact that the assessment program "does not furnish comprehensive evaluation of what students learn." In addition, the interviewer asked the committee about the statement found on the same page that suggests that the college finds it "difficult to collect information that will inform curricular decisions."

Although within the context of the Self-Study Report these statements refer specifically to Cottey's classroom assessment, committee members responded to both of these questions in much the same way and extended their comments to the entire assessment program. They feel that there are too many goals, that ownership of these is not clearly established, that some members of the college community are not as familiar with the goals as they could be, and that to assess each goal is a difficult thing

to do. As the college wrestles with these challenges, it may be well for it to recall that not all goals need to be assessed at the same time, and that continued "reminders" about the goals need to be in place on a timely basis to keep them fresh.

According to members of the committee, the level of implementation of assessment at Cottey is at "2," according to Higher Learning Commission standards. In fact, in some cases, the institution may be grading itself a bit too severely. There are examples of Level 3 emerging. Among these are the commitment to the assessment program by the college community and Board of Trustees, the student involvement (especially on "Assessment Day"), and the funding available for the effort in the program. As the assessment program at the college matures even further, it may be time for the assessment committee to work very closely with the academic committee to channel efforts in a consistent and purposeful manner. In addition, classroom standards appear to be quite "division driven." The assessment committee may wish to take a more proactive leadership role in initiating more consistency and involvement in-kind from all components of the academic program. Finally, the feedback loop needs to be completed in all phases of the program -- in goals assessment, academic assessment, on "Assessment Day," and in any and all assessment measures that the college administers.

Miscellaneous

Cottey's location plays a significant role—both in positive and negative ways—in a number of its issues. One of these is the issue of diversity. The team had a sense that some minority groups encounter varying levels of acceptance within the community. The College can play a leadership role in this area, perhaps even by beginning with programs which enable to the College to undertake an examination of its own climate and then working with the larger community to ensure the College's success as it becomes increasingly diverse.

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

Cottey College has many accomplishments and strengths of which it can be justifiably proud. The team was impressed by this College, but did not identify particular accomplishments and/or practices for inclusion in this section of the Report.