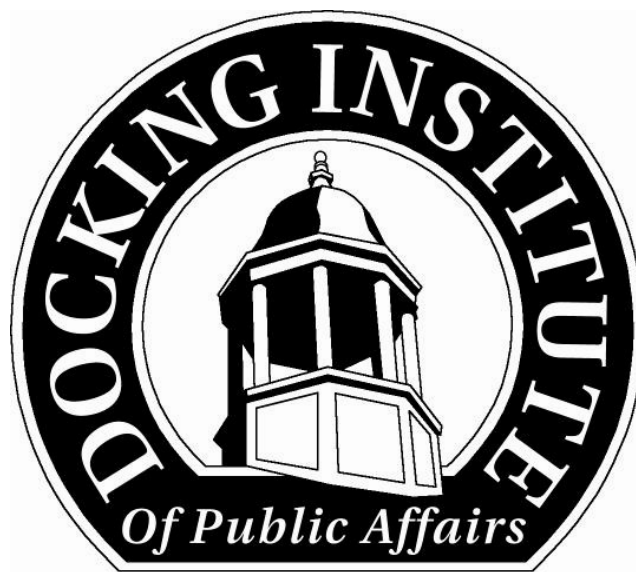


Summary of Highland Community College Planning 2007



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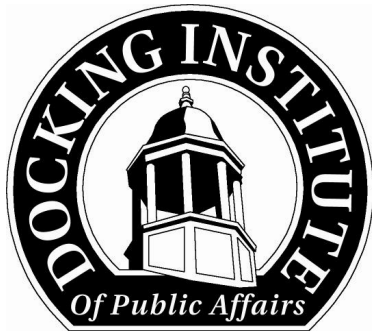
Highland Community College

By

The Docking Institute of Public Affairs

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Mission:

To Facilitate Effective Public Policy Decision-Making Among
Governmental and Non-Profit Entities.

The staff of the Docking Institute of Public Affairs and its
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serving the people of Kansas and surrounding states.

Summary of Highland Community College Planning 2007

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This research is conducted on behalf of Highland
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Highland Community College Planning 2007

Introduction

Highland Community College (HCC) asked the Docking Institute to assist with the development of a new academic plan for the college. The college began as Highland University in 1858 – three years before the State of Kansas was founded. At the present time, the college maintains one campus in Highland and six centers in Atchison, Holton, Marysville, Perry, Sabetha and Wamego. The college's coverage area includes eight counties in northeast Kansas. Plans for Highland to merge with or annex Northeast Kansas Technical College (NKTC) in Atchison are underway.

The college serves approximately 3,000 students annually, including those enrolled on the main campus (about 700), the centers and through online programs. Highland offers approximately 60 associate degree and certification programs.

The Role of the Community College

In most general terms, community colleges are charged with granting associate degrees, offering certificates, and providing *ad hoc* training programs. Four common types of associate degrees are:

- Associate of Arts – This degree is designed for transfer to a bachelor of arts or a bachelor of science degree program. Examples include accounting, English, pre-law, psychology and theatre.
- Associate of Science – This degree provides an applied experience for students. An associate of science degree is generally transferable to a bachelor degree program. Examples include pre-nursing, pre-veterinary science and geology.
- Associate of Applied Science – This degree provides an applied experience for students and is traditionally considered a “terminal” degree. Associate of applied science degrees are generally designed to help students move directly into the work force. Examples include media technology, para-legal, para-professional, office administration and early childhood development.
- Associate of General Studies – This degree is a newer option for students. The associate of general studies is designed to provide general education electives for transfer to a four-year program and to meet the needs of undecided students.

Certificate programs are generally designed to provide the student with a specific skill set. Certificate programs are often “stand alone” credit or non-credit programs, although some are designed to fulfill some of the requirements for an associate's degree. Allied health is an example of a certificate program that often “folds into” an associate of science degree.

Ad hoc training may be for a few hours, a few days, or much longer. Training is generally designed to meet the needs of a specific employer or group of employers. Safety training or CAD training for a local manufacturer is an example of *ad hoc* training.

Highland offers all four types of associate degrees, as well as certificate programs and *ad hoc* training.

Highland Community College Planning 2007

Highland Community College serves a variety of students in multiple locations. The college serves students that are completing a year or two of general education courses with plans to transfer to four-year institutions, that are pursuing training or certificates to enhance their current employment situations, or that are taking courses in order to change careers. Unique among Kansas community colleges, HCC is spread across seven locations and will be adding an eighth soon (Northeast Kansas Technical College).

As such, HCC is presented with on-going and new challenges in a changing environment. To help HCC develop a new academic plan to address these challenges, the Docking Institute proposed a planning process that involved four major elements. These include a focus group of area business leaders to assess knowledge of/satisfaction with HCC, surveys of local area employers to assess employer needs, a survey of HCC employees to gather opinions regarding the future direction of HCC, and a planning session to establish goals for the college to pursue leading to the establishment of a new academic plan.

This document provides short summaries of the focus group, the employers' survey and the HCC employee survey. The final portion of this document provides detailed information from the planning session and recommendations for HCC to pursue.

Focus Group of Business Leaders

On July 26, 2007, Docking Institute planning facilitators met in a structured setting with seven members of the Doniphan County Chamber of Commerce to discuss their needs with regard to employee skills training and education needs. The topics of the evening included their experience with HCC, awareness of the programs offered by HCC, and programs that they desire HCC to offer.

Some general findings from the focus group include:

- General satisfaction was expressed with the allied health program and on-site training provided by that program.
- Representatives from the food service industry indicated that they were not using HCC but are using the Northeast Kansas Technical College for training. Some discussion followed regarding the merger of the technical college with HCC.
- Representatives from the eldercare industry indicated that they were sending employees to Kansas City for training in heating and air conditioning maintenance.
- There was agreement among participants that HCC should work with local high schools to market HCC as a good alternative to going straight into the workforce.

- A popular idea among participants was for HCC to work with local employers to provide “job shadowing” opportunities for students. Internship and apprenticeships were also discussed as ways to provide Exposure to career and job opportunities in the local region.
- There was strong agreement among participants that most employers do not know what educational and training services HCC offers. Participants suggested that HCC improve the marketing/advertising of the courses and programs offered by the college.
- There was general agreement among participants that community colleges are more likely than universities to meet many of the needs of local employers. It was suggested that community college are more nimble than larger institutions and can react more quickly to evolving opportunities.

Surveys of Employers

The Docking Institute conducted two self-completion surveys of owners/managers of businesses located in the northeast portion of the state. One survey was sent to employers located in eight counties in northeast Kansas: Atchison, Brown, Doniphan, Jackson, Jefferson, Marshall, Nemaha, and Pottawatomie. This study area is referred to as the non-metro area. Another survey was mailed to employers located in Douglas and Shawnee Counties. This area is referred to as the metro study area.

The Institute obtained a list of employers in both study areas. For the non-metro area, the list contained businesses with 5 or more employees. For the metro area, the list contained businesses with 20 or more employees. The Institute mailed two waves of surveys to employers within each study area (the second wave was sent only to employers that had not responded to the first wave). For the non-metro area, questionnaires were mailed to 1,089 employers and 196 were completed and returned (resulting in a cooperation rate of 18%). For the metro area, questionnaires were mailed to 1,129 employers and 102 were completed and returned (resulting in a cooperation rate of 9%).

The two studies show that:

- About 72% of non-metro area employers indicate that hiring full time skilled employees has grown more difficult in the past three years, and 54% expect it to become more difficult over the next three years. About 44% of employers indicate that hiring full time unskilled employees has become more difficult in the past three years, and 43% expect hiring to remain the same over the next three years.
- Metro area employers also have experienced a tightening of the availability of potential employees. About 64% indicate that hiring full time skilled employees has grown more difficult in the past three years, and 48% expect it to become more difficult over the next three years. About 35% of employers indicate that hiring full time unskilled employees has become more difficult in the past three years, and 33% expect hiring to remain the same over the next three years.
- The studies show that finding skilled employees in Northeast Kansas has become difficult. This critical shortage can be address strategically with HCC playing a leadership role in working with

employers on the top end to identify needs and opportunities and with educators and counselors in the K-12 system as well as parents and potential students to align skill development with skilled employment opportunities.

- The fact that unskilled employees are more abundant than skilled employees indicates a potential workforce if developed systematically. Program opportunities exist for both students currently in and graduating from high school and also for adults seeking a better standard of living and improved employment opportunities.
- More than 40% of the non-metro area employers surveyed indicate that workers need training in oral communication and listening skills, more than 50% indicate that workers need training in problem solving, decision making, creative thinking, and willingness to learn, and more than 60% indicate a need for training in work attitudes, goal setting, and leadership.
- In excess of 50% of the metro area employers surveyed indicate that workers need training in oral communication and listening skills, more than 60% indicate that workers need training in problem solving and decision making, and more than 70% indicate a need for training in work attitudes, goal-setting and leadership.
- A strong majority (82%) of the non-metro employers consider the public education system to be important for decisions to invest and expand locally. About 51% of employers regard public education in the region as “a strength” while only 15% regard it as “a weakness.”
- Regarding the metro employers, 74% consider the public education system to be important for decisions to invest and expand locally. About 45% of employers regard public education in the region as “a strength” while only 29% regard it as “a weakness.”
- Salaries are lower in the non-metro area than in the metro area. For example, in the non-metro area, engineers earn an average of \$28.00 an hour and designers and draftsmen earn about \$20 an hour. In the metro area, engineers earn about \$30.15 an hour and designers and draftsmen earn about \$22 an hour.
- On the other end of the wage spectrum, non-metro unskilled laborers earn about \$8.00 an hour, while metro unskilled laborers earn about \$9.00 an hour. Customer service and clerical workers earn about \$10.00 in both non-metro and metro areas.

More information is provided in the two reports that have been delivered to the client.

Survey of HCC Employees

The Institute conducted a confidential web survey of HCC employees at the Highland Campus. A list of employee email addresses was provided to the Docking Institute by Highland Community College and an invitation letter was emailed to HCC employees on September 19, 2007. A follow-up letter was mailed approximately 10 days later to those employees that had not responded. Forty-two employees completed the survey by October 16, 2007. This resulted in an overall cooperation rate of 43%.

The survey instrument contained 52 items and addressed three major areas: Student Preparation and Motivation, the Future Direction of HCC, and Job Satisfaction Among Employees of HCC.

The section addressing the *direction of HCC* is presented here.

The survey asked respondents for their opinions about the future direction of Highland Community College. Fourteen issues/action items were offered and respondents were asked to indicate if **more emphasis**, **less emphasis**, or **the same amount of emphasis** should be placed on each one. Figure 1 shows the responses ordered by the “more emphasis” answer option.

Figure 1: Direction of HCC

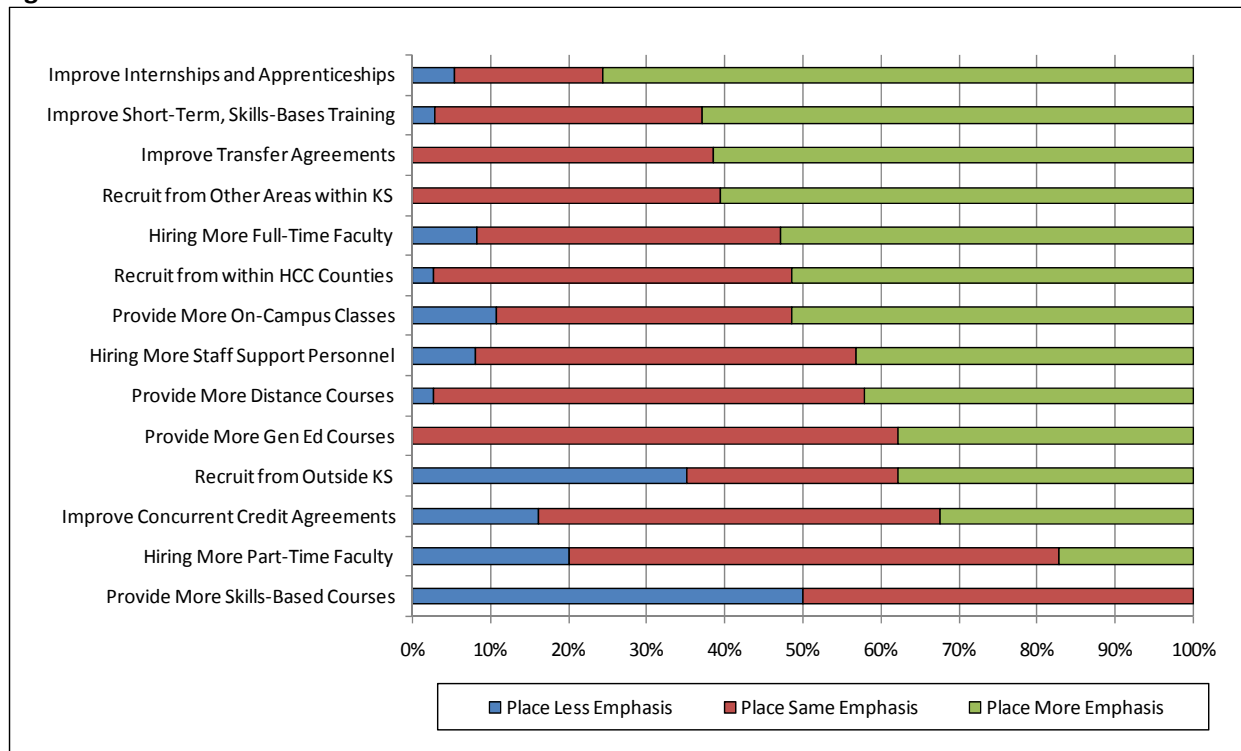


Figure 1 shows that more than 50% of the respondents suggest placing more emphasis on improving internships and apprenticeships, improving short-term and skills-based courses, improving transfer agreements with four year institutions, recruiting from other areas of Kansas, hiring more full-time faculty, recruiting from within HCC counties and providing more on-campus classes. However, 10% of the respondents also suggest placing less emphasis on providing more on-campus classes.

It is important to note that both North East Kansas employers and HCC employees identify improving internships and apprenticeships and short-term, skills-based training as areas of need/opportunity. Expansion of internships and apprenticeships is an international educational trend as both employers and students seek relevance and student job experience. The State of Kansas is strongly encouraging community colleges and technical colleges to address short-term skills based training.

Other areas in which large percentages suggest providing *less emphasis* are: improving concurrent credit agreements (15%), hiring more part-time faculty (20%), recruiting students from outside of Kansas (35%) and providing more skills-based courses (50%).

Respondents were also asked to provide “open-ended” comments with regard to the future of HCC. Some of the comments provided by respondents are offered here:

- “HCC has many resources, excellent technology, qualified instruction, and educational offering/opportunities but fails to convey those great possibilities both to community and student outreach. HCC main campus consistently fails at communicating programs, PR, events and encouraging diversity possibilities with the surrounding communities and counties. Regional Sites have much better PR perception, but from a marketing/PR standpoint, HCC main campus fails miserably.”
- “Provide support staff/secretarial designated especially for faculty.”
- “Hire at least a part-time mental health counselor for campus.”
- “I think our college needs to start to work more closely with area high schools and grade schools in regards to curricula that better prepare students for college.”
- “It appears that the vice-presidents have some tunnel vision. Information on how decisions affect other areas is not always passed on or areas notified that it could be affected.”
- “Some class limits are set beyond the capacity of the classroom.”
- “If we are going to add more classes on the main campus then we need to provide more state-of-the-art classrooms. To increase the regional offerings, we need more faculty and support from the main campus.”
- “Increase salaries for support staff as some of the workstudy students make almost as much as some of the staff who have been here many years. Give some kind of fair incentives for all employees.”
- “We need to hire the part-time faculty members who have worked here for years for full-time positions. If we can hire them as part-time workers and are satisfied with their work, then they deserve to be hired full-time.”
- “Put more emphasis on strong academic students -- more organizations, recognition, opportunities, etc.”
- “Offer opportunities in ‘study abroad’ and in international business.”
- “The direction of HCC needs to include upgrading the facilities and spirit of regional site students and staff. Regional sites, especially the largest ones provide a large amount of funds from student enrollment. However, these regional sites see very little benefits from this growth in students and the growth in acquired funds. ... This affects the regional students’ ‘college spirit’ as well as their learning environment. ... In essence, more students might attend (and stay) at a regional site if the atmosphere was more modern and collegiate -- in appearance and teaching aids. We want our students to feel proud of their institution. The teaching is very good, as well as class offerings. But, the less-than-par atmosphere does not help students’ pride in attending HCC.”
- “HCC needs to stick with the pre-requisite requirements that they set and not allow students to take classes who haven't met the requirements. HCC also needs to stick with what it says in the catalog and not allow the printed rules to be changed by someone just because they want to do something different. Example: the catalog says students can repeat a class twice when they fail

it but they are allowed to repeat the class as many times as they want as long as they pay and I think that sends a very bad message about HCC.”

Planning Session

On September 26, 2007, Docking Institute planning facilitators met with approximately 30 members of the administration, staff, faculty, and the board of trustees for a planning session. The first portion of the planning session was led by Mike Walker, Assistant Director of the Institute. He described the purpose of the planning session and presented the data from the focus group, employers’ surveys and HCC employee survey. These data represented the “environmental scan” portion of planning project. The purpose of the environmental scan was to help place the following activities (SWOC analysis and goal-setting) within current and local context. Mark Bannister, JD, Senior Policy Fellow with the Institute and Chair of the Information Networking and Telecommunications Department at FHSU, conducted the SWOC analysis and goal-setting portion of the planning session. Cindy Whitney (PhD candidate in sociology from Kansas State University) and Jennifer Sanderson (Docking Institute student intern) assisted with the planning effort.

Results of SWOC Analysis

Upon completion of the Institute’s environmental scan (including the information provided above and data available in the reports) the participants were guided through a SWOC analysis. The SWOC analysis is an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges that can be capitalized upon (in the case of strengths and opportunities) and/or guarded against (in the case of weaknesses and challenges). Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors while opportunities and challenges are external factors.

Findings from the SWOC analysis follow:

Strengths

- HCC is recognized as the first college in Kansas
- HCC is thought of first in the service area (i.e., on the minds of locals)
 - School of choice for skill improvement
 - First place that many students look at when shopping for an affordable and quality education
 - HCC has a presence in the community
- HCC is accessible (affordable, easy to get into, ADA accessible, next door, summer program for pre-requisites)
- Gives students who don’t qualify academically for four year institutions or for financial reasons chance to get an education.
- HCC is “transfer oriented”
- HCC has a beautiful campus
- HCC has cost advantages - tuition is low the cost of living is low
 - Housing is provided - gives students option/opportunity to live on campus (strengthens connections and social skills)
- HCC’s student to teacher ratio is low and it has small class sizes
- Friendly, small-town environment
- Provides way for students from smaller towns to transition more easily to larger environment

- Safety (parents might be more comfortable about sending their children here than a large university or to colleges in metro areas)
- Advising is done by both faculty and staff
- Quality of faculty/staff, people who have been here a long time and feel like they have a sense of ownership. Proud to work here.
- Helping students who haven't received help at other institutions, math for example. Students who have failed elsewhere. Provide remediation.
- Quiet study environment, good location with few distractions
- Good athletics program
- Using AQIP assessment protocol
- HCC provides academic and athletic scholarships
- More students on academic scholarships rather than athletic scholarships this year (2006) than last year

Weaknesses

- Hard to get students to come here
- Lack a brand recognition
- Not enough money to go around to do everything
- Some facilities are not very collegiate
- Tutoring/support is limited at outreach locations
- Course scheduling is a problem, some sections are only offered at one time of day
- More sections are needed throughout the day
- Not attracting/getting international students: most international students who have attended HCC have been on athletic scholarships
- Athletic program contributes to weakness in academics
- HCC awards too many non-regional scholarships

Challenges

- HCC might be viewed as a place for sub-par students
- Location and size
- No fast food chains in area – there is only restaurant in town outside of campus food services
- Few outside activities are available in town for students
- Have a very diverse group of students at each outreach campus only.
- Students seem to want to move too fast, want to avoid pre-requisites, or are frustrated if they cannot take a course when they desire to do so. They want to skip ahead with inadequate training. Students want to 'get it over with.'
- Study skills and expectations. Library orientation, "Why should they listen to a presentation about study skills?" Students want to be 'taught,' they don't want to 'learn.' They seem to feel that information should be given to them.
- Basic skill levels of incoming students are lacking
- Education not stressed by families
- Upcoming integration with technical college
- Recruitment and retention of students

Opportunities

- The session ended before opportunities could be formally listed

Upon completion of the SWOC analysis, participants were asked to use information provided by the employers' surveys, the survey of HCC employees, the focus group, and the SWOC analysis to develop goals for the college to pursue to develop a new academic plan.

Goals and Strategic Actions

The goals (and strategic actions to meet those goals) developed during the planning session are presented below:

1) Additional or enhanced academic programs

- Explore options to use land/money to enhance agriculture program using newly donated resources.
- Create/enhance nursing program. Enhance LPN program. Involve three institutions in this strategy.
- To address the shortage of pharmacists, start a pre-pharmacy program or pharmacy tech program.
- Pursue GIS (Geographic Information System) program.
- Expand NKTC's welding program to HCC.
- Pursue viticulture program, maybe in Wamego.
- Expand paralegal program that is currently at Atchison center.
- There are few wet photography programs. This program can be promoted and it can be tied into criminal justice program.
- Create mid-level management program (such as a two year AS degree).
- Create emergency management program, focusing on homeland security and TSA-related issues. Focus on technology or technician level since UCCS already focuses on the 'high' end.
- Create/enhance basic library science, information management, research skills
- Pursue air traffic control certification. Emory Riddle's program may be an example.
- Create/expand gerontology program and tie it into nursing program. Use the gerontology program as a community education forum.

1a) Evaluate existing programs (Include certificate programs)

- Determine the programs that are not needed anymore.
- Keep decisions transparent.

1b) Expansion of on-line course offerings

- Create/expand online CNA and allied health courses.

2) Enhanced recruitment strategies

- Provide resources for theatre students to tour HCC service area.
- Bring craftspeople together to share Art, display art on campus, and provide resources for a traveling exhibition.
- Enhance HCC website and customer service. "Emporia has a great website but the personal service offered by FHSU helped in terms of decision making."

- Collect names of students taking placement tests and/or contact test administrators and offer HCC as an option upon graduation.
- Work with high school students to get more of them to take the placement test.
- Create two brochures - one regional and one for the campus.
- Assess how many seniors from local area high schools attend HCC.
- Attend more career fairs.
- Establish rewards if students enroll in HCC after being concurrently enrolled in HCC and going to high school (Hutchison Community College is an example).
- Continue on-going upgrades of HCC centers.
- Attend 4-H workshops, invite students to visit HCC while in middle-school. Present positive aspects of the local environment. Coordinate efforts through county extension agents.
- Attend regional 4-H days and events. HCC has judges at many of these events already.
- Develop a plan to reach people interested in changing skill sets for career change, (i.e. maybe not just focus on typical 18 year old student).
- Focus on what the strengths are by group and create different strategies for each - will probably have to focus on one first and then the other.
- Look at marketing strategies in New Haven and Kenyon College. These are examples of rural campuses that have been highly effective at student recruitment.
- Pursue military veteran recruitment: quietness might be an attraction.
- Actions already being taken by HCC with regard to recruitment:
 - HCC has contracted with company that performs automated personal emails: academic or athletic. Emails are sent immediately upon inquiry. If the inquiry is from Kansas or within a 150 radius, a paper brochure is mailed.
 - HCC is targeting high school visits, limiting to tier one and tier two areas.
 - HCC is trying to recruit students that will fit within HCC culture.
 - HCC is examining placement tests offered in region high school.

3) Expanded education, not necessarily credit, degree seeking, or semester length - more for personal development (CEU's)

- Create regulatory compliance certificate program.
- Create non-credit fine arts courses geared towards interested individuals.
- Create agriculture finance or finance for agricultural management short courses.
- Create certificate programs in computer networking, computer repair, C++ and other languages, and/or an AS Degree in these areas. Determine if these ideas overlap with NKTC offerings.
- Create law enforcement certificate program.
- Create sign-language courses tied to law enforcement, legal, or health care professions.
- Provide short/specialty courses on Word, Excel, basic Microsoft applications. Work with local high schools to create partnerships for this.
- Determine certificates required by Homeland Security for local fire departments and police departments. Create applicable certificate programs.
- Create short courses to improve job seeking skills, resume writing, interview skills, cover letters, filling out scholarships applications and applications for four year colleges.
- Create grant/proposal writing workshop or course (non-credit) focused towards small businesses or non-profits.

- Create a genealogy or regional history course or short-course.

4) Develop bigger role in workforce development: community colleges around state are being asked to step up

- Conduct more focus groups and outreach - find out about local businesses and provide information about HCC.
- Contact local high schools and help identify career paths for students.
- Create partnerships with businesses who want students with specific knowledge
- Create internships, apprenticeships, and scholarships with those businesses.
- Create partnerships with local casinos for training and employee recruitment.
- Partnership with local Native American reservations.
- Market to cottage industry.
- Partnering with challenge courses and team building exercises among businesses.

Integration of technical college (NKTC) with the community college

- Major steps are already underway.

Upon conclusion of the planning session, Docking Institute researchers analyzed results from the SWOC analysis and goal-setting exercise, focus group, employers' surveys, and HCC employee survey. On October 17th, Mike Walker and Cindy Whitney returned to Highland to present recommendations for HCC to take to develop its new academic plan.

Recommendations

The Institute recommends that HCC set up task forces to address four areas:

Task Force 1: Bench Marking and Best Practices Task Force.

The task force will examine and assess other community colleges that have successfully developed innovative programs. Highland Community College must develop a unique branding to compete with other similar academic institutions. Examples of unique programs include:

- Barton County Community College's natural gas transmission & distribution technician and forestry programs
- Coffeyville Community College's horticulture technician program
- Cloud County Community College's wind farm technician program
- Dodge City Community College's water quality and wastewater treatment management and recycling technology program
- Fort Scott Community College's environmental technology service technician
- Northwest Kansas Technical College's telecommunication technician program
- Johnson County Community College's railroad engineer and culinary programs
- Pratt Community College's lineman/utility service and oil & gas processing programs

It is recommended that HCC examine other community college in Kansas and elsewhere to see what unique programs are successful and where niches might lie of which HCC can exploit. For example, HCC might pursue a viticulture program at its Wamego center, a "wet-photography" program linked with a new criminal justice training program, develop a casino and hospitality and customer service training

program, and/or pursue occupational and sports medicine.

In short, it is our impression that HCC has the opportunity to develop one or more unique programs and market itself around those programs.

Task Force 2: General Education Assessment Task Force.

The task force will determine the “pipelines of students” from HCC to four year institutions – find out where students are going after attending HCC. Then assess the current general education curriculum at HCC to best match the needs of university-bound students.

Task Force 3: Technical Skills Training Assessment Task Force.

The task force will determine the “pipelines of students” from HCC to workplace. The task force will seek to assess the current skills-training course to best match the needs of student and business. This task force will also develop contacts with businesses for the development of short-term, location-based courses.

Task Force 4: Highland Campus, NKTC, and Center Integration.

This task force will address issues of integrating HCC and NKTC as well as the main HCC campus and the six regional centers. Some of the work of this task force may be underway with regard to HCC and NKTC. Information from the HCC employee survey and the planning session suggest that integration of the campus and the centers should be addressed as well.