BLACK RIVER

TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Introduction

Black River Technical College was founded in 1972 as Black River Vocational-Technical School. In 1991, the school was renamed Black River Technical College.

The history of Black River Technical College is similar to other community colleges' transition from vocational technical schools. From 1991 to 2011, the College experienced exponential growth due to newfound accessibility and affordability and a series of serendipitous external economic factors. Apart from the wise stewardship of financial reserves by the founding president (retired in 2011), the growth shrouded the development of best practices for institutional sustainability (enrollment management, academic management, and outcomes assessment). After 2011, the economic recovery and shrinking demographics highlighted the inadequacy of institutional systems.

Under the leadership of President Turner since 2014, the College implemented a series of new systems, designed for the long-term sustainability of the institution. Actions included transitioning to an enrollment management model, fiscal restraint, and proactive academic management of curriculum, advising, scheduling, and developing a comprehensive outcomes assessment plan.

Probation, although extraordinarily challenging for any institution, provided the sense of urgency to rectify systemic institutional issues, particularly related to academics and outcomes assessment.

The efforts over the past eighteen months to address the concerns of the Higher Learning Commission are Herculean. The faculty, staff, and administration recognize there is much to accomplish, but has demonstrated its resilience and tenacity to overcome the probationary sanction. The following report and evidence indicates the countless hours of the dedicated faculty and staff—committed to a better and stronger Black River Technical College.

Assurance Argument

Black River Technical College - AR

6/28/2018

1 - Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Argument

Black River Technical College's (BRTC) Mission, Vision, and Core Values were developed through a process of shared governance and approved by the Board of Trustees.

Mission Statement:

Black River Technical College transforms lives through quality academic and career education to enhance the community we serve.

Vision Statement:

Black River Technical College will lead our community in learning and economic development.

Core Values:

- Students – Student needs are the foundation of our academic, co-curricular, and financial planning.
- Quality – At Black River, we strive to provide our students with excellent academic programs, encouraging support services, and administrative support to meet students' goals.
- Learning – We provide degree programs, professional training, enrichment experiences, and collaborative opportunities to foster career and personal improvement.
- Community Relationships – The strengths and challenges of our community shape us. We collaborate with our community to share strengths and resources, learn together, and address the needs of our region.

These tenets provide the foundation for the BRTC Strategic Plan 2017-2021, articulating four strategic objectives: Enrollment, Brand Awareness, Regional Leadership, and a Culture of Evidence.

Like most community colleges, BRTC's enrollment patterns have been directly linked to external economic factors, and the College particularly benefited from a series of localized and national economic downturns. Indeed, the localized economic downturns pre-dated any national downturns by more than a decade. The seemingly unrelenting surge of enrollment growth spurred campus construction and growth in full-time faculty and staff; however, effective systems of enrollment management (recruitment, admissions, and retention) were not implemented because there was no perceived need to do so.

As regional economic conditions stabilized for the first time in the institution's history as a community college, the lack of enrollment management systems and a clear articulation of the institutional mission and focus emerged. To address these systemic issues, President Turner led the College in the development of the current strategic plan. The strategic plan reflects a focused and practical approach to improving the institution, with the aim of continuing institutional viability and restoring vibrancy.

In the Spring 2016 semester, the Director of Planning and Research, at the request of the President, formulated a Strategic Planning Team to review and revise the College's mission and value statements. The team developed several drafts for the campus community to review. Based on the surveyed input of faculty and staff, the team revised the mission and value statements to reflect the institution accurately (Mission Statement Survey Result; Values Survey Results). As a result, the new mission statement - "Black River Technical College transforms lives through quality academic and career education to enhance the community we serve"--was adopted (MVVSP Summary).

Based on the revised Mission and Core Value statements, President Turner charged the Strategic Planning Team to develop the vision statement and broad strategic goals, develop action plans to achieve priorities, and identify metrics and benchmarks to measure outcomes and progress. The President assigned each vice president a strategic goal; each vice president developed and chaired sub-committees comprised of cross-sections of faculty and staff. The teams reviewed data from a variety of documents including the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) Master Plan; job outlook data; and college, department, and administrative unit SWOT analyses.

The effort resulted in the following emphases (Mission and Strategic Plan webpage):

- Vision: BRTC will lead our community in learning and economic development.
- Strategic Goals: Enrollment, Brand Awareness, Regional Leadership, and a Culture of Evidence.

The drafts were presented in various venues to faculty, staff, community groups, and Board members. Input received through email communication, focus groups, and surveys informed the

final draft. The Board of Trustees approved the mission, vision statement, values, and strategic goals in February 2017 (Board of Trustees Minutes, February 2017).

In the 2017-2018 academic year, BRTC offered a variety of educational opportunities for the region, including twenty-four transfer and work-ready associate degrees as well as twenty technical certificates and twelve certificates of proficiency. Also, for 2018-2019, two new certificates of proficiency--Welding and Fire Science--will be offered in response to industry need. These have been approved by ADHE (AHECB Approved Degree Programs, 2018). The College's Adult Education centers provide five different programs/services to students: Adult Basic Education, College Preparatory/Pre-Employment Education, ESL, GED, and Workplace Education. Additionally, BRTC's Corporate and Community Education Programs offer non-credit corporate and community education classes (screenshot of Corp Comm webpage; GCITC webpage). Programs leading to a degree or certificate are offered face to face on the Pocahontas campus and the Paragould location; adult education programs are offered at Pocahontas, Paragould, and in communities throughout the service area (Walnut Ridge, Corning, and Rector).

BRTC also has a well-established Distance Education and Instructional Technology Department (DEIT), offering two 100% online degrees (A.A. in General Studies and A.S. in Fire Science Administration). The DEIT department includes a director and one full-time staff member. The department supports students and guides faculty, staff, and administration regarding best practices in online education. In the Fall 2017 semester, 48 percent of BRTC students enrolled in at least one distance education class (DEIT Enrollment Analysis).

BRTC nimbly responds to the workforce and educational needs of the region. The most recent example is the development of Technical Opportunities and Pathways for Secondary Students (TOPSS). TOPSS--essentially a dual enrollment program--collaborates with area K12 schools, enrolling typically non-college-bound high school students and providing them with opportunities to earn academic and industry credentials and degrees in conjunction with high school diplomas. TOPSS-qualifying students are offered five specific tracks in two general pathways: Allied Health or Industrial Technology. These pathways were developed on the basis of the stated needs of business and industry throughout the region (TOPSS Pathways). The Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE) provided a $750,000 block grant to fund the three-year pilot for this Arkansas educational innovation. The 2017-18 school year is the second year of the pilot, and the College anticipates permanent funding to be made in 2019, based on the preliminary success of the program. The initial funding provides a capacity of 100 students; in the launch (2016), the College had a modest enrollment of seventeen students. In the Fall 2017 semester, enrollment grew to forty-six students, and projections for Fall 2018 suggest enrollment will be at or near capacity. In its inaugural year, the College awarded eighty-four academic and industry credentials to TOPSS students and experienced 100% completion and retention rates (TOPSS Credentials).

The new certificates of proficiency in Welding and Fire Science were also developed in response to workforce needs (Paragould Industry Survey). Furthermore, the College is expanding its technical program offerings at the Paragould location. Collaborating with the Paragould Economic Development Corporation, BRTC is currently developing plans for a building that will act as a program incubator in Paragould (Planned Paragould Welding/HVAC Building). Starting

in the Fall 2019 semester, the College will begin offering certificate programs in welding, industrial maintenance, and machine tool and an HVAC apprenticeship program. These programs will start in the incubator building until they can be moved to permanent College facilities.

A Workforce Implementation Grant through Corporate and Community Education is another way BRTC is helping grow the workforce in the area. The grant has funded some of the equipment needed for the program incubator in Paragould. It also provides funds to provide incentives for students to complete testing need to receive a Career Readiness Certificate. Finally, the grant will help pay for the development of an electronic regional industry survey, a tool that should help the College detect and respond to future workforce demands (Workforce Implementation Grant). The College believes that such initiatives help fulfill its mission to "transform lives through quality academic and career education" by creating educational opportunities linked directly to demands in the local job market.

New academic programs and curricular changes are designed and proposed by the academic departments. Proposals move laterally through the Curriculum Committee, Program Review Committee, and/or the Assessment Committee for review and for recommendation to the Academic Affairs Committee for approval, and are forwarded to the Executive Team and the Board of Trustees for notification and, when necessary, for final approval (Curriculum Development Flowchart). After the College has approved the development of new programs, approval is sought from ADHE and, if necessary, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The curriculum proposal and approval process is one way BRTC meets the needs of the local, state, and regional economies. The Randolph County economy, for instance, is predominantly related to agriculture. This situation led to the addition of the Agriculture degree and the Precision Agriculture Technical Certificate. Academic programs such as these engage students from the sciences in applied learning and integrate cross-disciplinary learning designed to benefit students, farming operations, and agriculture-related industries throughout the region. (Agriculture Program Brochure; AS Agriculture Proposal)

BRTC also offers co-curricular activities that "are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experiences of its students." The College defines co-curricular programs as any activities or experiences that align with its mission and the institution's general education outcomes (Policy 7117). Beginning in the Spring 2018 semester, Enrollment Management implemented a monthly schedule of co-curricular events themed around concepts--such as career exploration, personal responsibility, and community service--that reinforce elements of the mission and/or the College's general education outcomes. Expected outcomes and assessment methods have also been developed for the co-curricular programs to assess their effectiveness and allow for data-informed planning of future events (Comprehensive Student Life Plan).

Aligned with the stated mission, the College offers student support services designed to encourage successful matriculation and timely graduation for all students, regardless of the modality or location at which they take their courses. The services are designed to develop students academically, socially, and emotionally (Comprehensive Student Life Plan).

In the Fall 2017 semester, the College restructured the administrative area of Student Services into an Enrollment Management model under new leadership with direct reporting to the President, emphasizing the unit's relevance to the College mission—focused on student recruitment and retention (Enrollment Management Organizational Chart). This re-tooled unit generates cross-campus collaboration between co-curricular and academic units and provides students with vital support inside and outside of the classroom. One important change that was implemented as part of the restructure was the creation of a new Dean of Students position. This position is responsible for planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating a plan to enhance student life and to support students' efforts to succeed in college through relevant services and opportunities (Position Description for Dean of Students). Another element of the restructure was moving the Completion and Retention Specialist position from Academics to Enrollment Management, altering its job description, and giving it a new title--Student Success Coordinator (SSC). The SSC's role is to serve as a liaison for students as they progress through their programs of study and to assist students in completing those programs on time. The SSC is responsible for developing and implementing success plans for at-risk students, educating students on transfer opportunities and processes, assisting with student life events, assisting with online orientation delivery, and establishing and monitoring a new Early Alert System. The SSC is also an instructor for the Student Success course that is required for students who test into two or more developmental courses. Finally, in the Spring 2018 semester, Enrollment Management developed a Student Success Strategic Plan to provide students with support focused on helping them complete courses and degrees and/or to successfully transfer to four-year institutions. The plan consists of nine priorities, including developing a transfer success program, redesigning the early alert system used to identify students who are struggling academically, ensuring the success of co-curricular programs included in the Comprehensive Student Life Plan, and developing a comprehensive advising and career placement program (Student Success Strategic Plan).

BRTC understands that active and effective academic support services can play an important role in helping these students succeed. BRTC seeks to provide such support for all of its students while they are pursuing their academic and career goals. For example, BRTC provides free drop-in tutoring through its Academic Success Center (primarily staffed by full-time instructors) and free online tutoring through Smarthinking, a comprehensive synchronous and asynchronous online tutoring service. These services are especially valuable to students who require remediation, a group that comprised 21 percent of enrolled students in the Fall 2017 semester and 14 percent enrolled in the Spring 2018 semester. The College also seeks to give students who are in need of remediation a jump start on those requirements through the Students Transitioning to Educational Pathways (STEP) program. This dual-enrollment initiative is being piloted at the Paragould location and is available to graduating seniors whose ACT or ACCUPLACER scores in math, reading, or English require them to enroll in developmental courses in any of those areas. These students are given the opportunity to satisfy those developmental requirements prior to beginning their first full-time semester of college (STEP Program Webpage). During the summer of 2017, twenty-seven STEP students were enrolled in developmental courses. At the time of this writing, there are over ninety applicants for the Summer 2018 STEP program.

The BRTC enrollment profile reflects the communities the College serves and its status as an open-enrollment institution. Student headcount for Fall 2017 was 1532. The academic profile for

the Fall 2017 class was a mean ACT score of 19.8, a score that has remained consistent over the past decade. This score is slightly above the Arkansas average composite score of 19.4, but lower than the national average of 21 (Average ACT Scores by State: Graduating Class 2017). On the surface these numbers suggest a student population with academic skills consistent with those of students at any college in the state. However, many BRTC students are returning to college several years after graduating from high school; thus their ACT scores--if they ever took the ACT--are out of date. Also, many BRTC students planned to join the workforce or enter a technical training program immediately after high school and, as a result, never took the ACT. The students in these two groups typically take the ACCUPLACER test as part of the BRTC admissions process. These scores tell another story. For the Fall 2017 semester, entering BRTC students averaged a 76.73 reading score and an 80.25 English score, levels that ACCUPLACER rates as Basic. In math, the average score was 43.85, which ACCUPLACER rates as Minimal (ACCUPLACER Scores Table). These scores are more consistent with the academic struggles many BRTC students face.

The College also serves an under-resourced population. In the 2016-2017 academic year, 77 percent of BRTC's first-time, full-time students qualified for need-based financial aid, and 57 percent fell near or below the 2017 Federal Poverty Level for a household of five (2016-2017 IPEDS Worksheet). For the Fall 2017 semester, 7.9 percent of part-time students and 42.1 percent of full-time students qualified for a Pell Grant award; 58 percent of BRTC's Pell Grant recipients were eligible for the full award amount (Pell Award Amounts, Fall 2017).

BRTC's enrollment profile is also reflective of the demographic makeup of the community it serves, comprising 95 percent white students, a number virtually identical to the average in the College's four-county service area. Also, 65 percent of the student body are twenty-four or younger, suggesting many non-traditional-aged students in the service area have returned to the workforce in recent years, contributing to declining enrollment at BRTC during that same period (NCES College Navigator Statistics).

2016 Race & Ethnicity Data

Data USA®

County	White	Hispanic	Multiracial	Black	Native	Other
Randolph	95.3%	1.8%	1.2%	1.0%	0.6%	0.045%
Clay	96%	1.8%	1%	0.5%	0.4%	0.3%
Lawrence	96%	1.2%	1.3%	0.7%	0.7%	0.1%
Greene	94.2%	2.6%	1.6%	0.9%	0.3%	0.25%

The Mission and Vision statements, along with the Strategic Goals and Objectives, guide planning and budgeting. These items were developed simultaneously to facilitate the alignment of the mission with planning initiatives and budget allocations. Academic budget allocations are primarily the responsibility of the deans and directors, with oversight from the Vice President of Academics. Budget decisions and allocations for administrative units (Enrollment Management, Institutional Advancement, and Finance) are determined by the respective vice presidents.

Black River Technical College demonstrates its commitment to its mission as a teaching institution by making academic instruction a top budget priority. For fiscal year 2017, academic instruction accounted for 36.4 percent of the total expenses at $6,748 per full-time equivalent, 9.5 percent above the next highest spending category (2017-2018 IPEDS Data). A more comprehensive explanation of how the College's mission drives its funding priorities can be found in the argument for Core Component 5.C.1.

Sources

- 2016-2017 IPEDS Worksheet from Financial Aid
- 2017, 2-2 BOT
- ACCUPLACER Score Tables
- ACT_2017-Average_Scores_by_State
- Agriculture Program Brochure
- AHECB Approved Degree Programs-2018
- AS Agri Proposal Final
- BRTC Curriculum Development Flow Chart
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 242)
- Comprehensive Student Life Plan.pdf
- DEIT Enrollment Analysis
- EM organizational chart
- GCITC Weblink
- IPEDS Date Feedback Report 2016
- IPEDS Finance Data 2017-2018
- IPEDS Information
- Mission and Strategic Priorities
- Mission Statement Survey Results
- Paragould Industry Survey
- Paragould Welding - HVAC Building
- Pell Award Amounts, Fall 2017
- Pocahontas Corporate & Community Education
- Position Description for Dean of Students
- PRES_PR_MVVSP_SUMMARY (DRAFT - NOT FINAL)
- PRES_PR_VALUES_SURVEY_RESULTS_FS
- Regional Workforce Implementation Grant Progress Report
- S.T.E.P. - Students Transitioning to Educational Pathways Program
- Student Success Strategic Plan
- TOPSS Credentials
- TOPSS Pathways

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Argument

The BRTC Mission statement expresses the College's reason for existence. The Core Values are widely held principles, guiding and motivating the institution and its members. The Vision statement is aspirational and drives the institution into the future. These documents are displayed on the College website accessible by individual search terms and are in the Policies and Procedures Manual. Strategic goals and objectives chart the direction for the College and help focus resources to accomplish the Strategic Plan for 2017-2021. Collectively, these documents provide purpose and direction for the College.

The College publicly articulates its mission in the current Catalog, on each edition of the River's Edge newsletter (beginning in 2018), on the College's social media pages, on the College website, on every syllabus, and in the Randolph County Development Center, the site on campus most likely to host public functions. The institution's vision statement, values, and strategic plan can be found on the website as well as in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

As described in Core Component 1.A, the mission documents were approved in 2017 in a collaborative process. The mission places primary emphasis on the institution's educational objectives, as BRTC offers a variety of educational opportunities, including transfer degrees, work-ready degrees, technical certificates, and many corporate and community education opportunities. Strategic planning efforts also reflect a commitment to teaching and learning.

Black River Technical College directly and indirectly identifies its intended constituents through the mission, priorities, and strategic planning efforts. The mission statement does not explicitly describe the types of students BRTC enrolls. Rather, it broadly acknowledges the College's commitment to "enhance the community we serve." In other words, the College's constituencies are defined by, and change along with, the demographic shifts in its service area. The College seeks to meet the diverse needs of its students by offering a variety of educational programs (i.e., high school equivalency preparation and testing through Adult Education, community education and enrichment through Corporate and Community Education, career training through Technical Education, and college transfer preparation). In addition, BRTC complies with federal

regulations mandating that institutions report data regarding students who are enrolled in Title IV-eligible programs that lead to gainful employment in a recognized occupation (BRTC Gainful Employment Webpage; Example of Gainful Employment Data on Website).

Four goals drive the College's strategic plan and further articulate the Black River Technical College mission:

1) *Manage enrollment responsibly and ensure student success.* To address this strategic goal, the College restructured the administrative area of Student Services into an Enrollment Management model under new leadership in the Fall 2017 semester. Emphasizing the link and relevance to the College mission, the efforts are focused on student recruitment and retention (Recruitment Plan; Comprehensive Student Life Plan; Enrollment Management Organizational Chart).

For BRTC, enrollment management is considered an institutional responsibility rather than an isolated effort. This re-tooled administrative unit generates cross-campus collaboration between co-curricular, administrative, and academic units and provides students with vital support inside and outside the classroom. To aid students in completing their graduation requirements in a timely manner, staff are specifically assigned duties related to retention and persistence. For example, the Academic Success Center, which is primarily staffed by full-time faculty, has been reinvented to encourage more students to use it and to give faculty an opportunity to take an active part in student retention outside of their normal classroom role. Also, the course scheduling has been revamped to meet the needs of current and future students (KAIT8 Press Release).

2) *Clarify the identity of the College through heightened brand awareness, focused educational programs, and effective communication.* This goal has driven efforts to clarify the BRTC brand, standardize the use of BRTC logos and emblems, and establish procedures for how communication from and about the College is dispersed. Work in this area began in the Office of Institutional Advancement before the Strategic Plan was officially approved. The roles of the departments in Institutional Advancement were redefined and clarified, and this information-- along with ideas about how to market programs and details about a new advertising campaign-- were shared with the entire College during the Fall 2016 semester in-service. In May 2018, the Board approved a comprehensive advertising policy to protect the College's image and reputation when it is involved in advertising, sponsorship, and other promotional activities. The policy also sets forth guidelines for official communications on behalf of the College (Policy 1116). The Office of Institutional Advancement is currently working on a style guide to establish standards for fonts, colors, and the use of the College logo in official publications and is drafting a comprehensive marketing plan to establish goals and strategies for the marketing platforms the College uses.

President Turner often remarks that BRTC helps equip people to go to work. For example, the TOPSS dual enrollment program was developed specifically to meet the needs of an overlooked population of students and to provide them with opportunity to develop the academic and social confidence to engage in meaningful careers. The College also has a longstanding legacy of providing "hard tech" degree programs such as Industrial Electricity, Welding, and Machine Tool Technology. In response to the stated needs of business and industry, and in a collaborative

effort between the respective faculty members of these programs and the non-credit workforce development units, the College has developed additional certificates of proficiency and technical certificates to meet the specific content needs of facilities throughout the region; letters of notification for these programs will be submitted in August for presentation at the October 2018 AHECB meeting. The new credentials are stackable. For instance, to meet a training gap indicated by local industry, by the Fall 2018 semester the College plans to offer a pathway in which AAS in Industrial Maintenance students are awarded a certificate of proficiency after sixteen hours have been completed and a technical certificate after an additional sixteen hours have been completed. These credentials allow a student to sit for external certification exams on the way to achieving their AAS (Industrial Maintenance Pathway). Students can stop in/stop out of these programs as circumstances warrant, and the programs are eligible for Title IV funding. In short, students and industry alike benefit.

The College is also attempting to improve communication about its programs in a number of ways. For instance, new flyers incorporating current branding strategies have been developed to promote academic programs and are updated as necessary (Sample Academic Program Flyers). Also, the College is preparing a Fact Book which will provide easy access to data related to enrollment trends, cost of attendance, faculty/student ratio, financial information, graduation data, time to completion data, student demographics, and other information of interest to future students and other external constituencies. Finally, in the Fall 2017 semester, a Director of Admissions position--whose duties include executing the College's recruitment plan; communicating with high school counselors; and disseminating information about the College and programs to prospective students, businesses, community groups, and other constituencies-- was created to help facilitate the flow of information from the College to its various constituencies (Director of Admissions Position Description).

3) *Exercise regional leadership through strategic partnerships and educational opportunities.* Black River Technical College has a visible presence as a regional leader in economic development. Executive-level administrators regularly meet with regional and state leaders in business and industry by serving on various boards and entities focused on economic development. These boards include the Greene County Industrial Training Consortium (GCITC), the Northeast Arkansas Intermodal Authority, and various Chamber of Commerce boards and committees throughout the service area. In fact, the AAS in Industrial Maintenance pathway described above was a direct response to needs discovered through the College's relationship with the GCITC (Paragould Industry Survey).

4) *Create a sustainable culture of evidence to facilitate continuous improvement.* This goal is a direct response to the noted concerns from HLC. BRTC has traditionally collected data in a number of ways, yet that data was often shelved and never shared or analyzed. The College is committed to improving the way the institution collects and uses data to make decisions. An important first step in this process is to develop information dashboards using the Colleague Reporting and Operating Analytics tools available in Colleague, the College's new enterprise resource planning system. These dashboards will make data easier to access by those staff or faculty members who need it. Another way that the College is improving its use of data is through its enhanced academic assessment process. Prior to the official state of probation, as the College was completing the assurance argument that was submitted in April 2016, it became

apparent the College needed to improve its assessment processes. Beginning in the Spring 2016 semester, the College began working to overhaul its assessment plan. This work has resulted in a comprehensive assessment plan encompassing all programs and general education, the development of assessment reporting tools, and policies and procedures that will sustain and ensure the continuation of assessment on this college campus (supporting documentation for these items are discussed in the relevant sections later in the assurance argument). Finally, the 2018-2019 Comprehensive Student Life Plan and Support Unit Review and accompanying assessments and measures is indicative of BRTC's recognition of the importance of continuous improvement within administrative areas ([Comprehensive Student Life Plan](); [Unit Outcomes Assessment Workshop]()).

Sources

- BRTC Course Catalog 2017-18
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 17)
- Comprehensive Student Life Plan.pdf
- Director of Admissions Position Description
- EM organizational chart
- Gainful Employment Programs
- Gainful Employment Programs - Practical Nursing
- Industrial Maintenance CP-TC-AAS course flow 4.16.18
- KAIT8 Press Release
- Paragould Industry Survey
- Program Descriptions - CJ, RN & Welding
- Recruitment Plan
- Unit Outcomes Assessment Workshop (1)
- Volume 16, Issue 2

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

BRTC policy stipulates that the College will not, in any of its operations, discriminate based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicapped status (Policy 8130, Article I.C). And since the College is located in a predominately white and rural service area, BRTC sees its role to provide an education that includes multicultural experiences to students whose day-to-day lives may not include much diversity. To provide such experiences, BRTC provides programs such as presentations for Black History Month, which is celebrated on campus each February, topics have included a talk given by Celia Anderson, published author and former Arkansas Lady Razorback basketball player, and Dennis Biddle, Arkansas native and former Negro League baseball player. Other programs focusing on black history are held on a regular basis through BRTC's partnership with the local Eddie Mae Herron Center (*River's Edge, volume 15.1;* Dennis Biddle Flyer; Dennis Biddle *Pocahontas Star Herald* Article). Finally, the College hosts an annual lecture series featuring Holocaust survivors who share their stories and experiences (*River's Edge,* volume 15.5; Holocaust Survivor Series Program 2017). Each of these programs is open to BRTC students, faculty, staff, and the community in which the College serves.

BRTC's commitment to promoting cultural awareness is also reinforced by the annual international travel opportunities led by College faculty and staff volunteers and made available to students and community members. Currently enrolled students can earn three hours of humanities credit, which can be used as a transferable elective (Travel Opportunities Webpage).

Finally, the College's commitment to promoting attention to human diversity was made an official part of the academic structure when a modified version of the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Global Learning VALUE Rubric was adopted as one of the College's General Education learning outcomes. In assessing this outcome, evidence is collected in classes across the BRTC curriculum of students being "attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences" and being able to "understand how their actions affect both local and global communities" (Global Learning Rubric).

As part of BRTC's continued dedication to a diverse society, the institution has incorporated the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, which provides educational opportunities and assistance to those who fall below 250% of the federal poverty level. The Pathways services include opportunities for under-resourced students to complete GED/Adult Education classes, certificate

programs, and two-year degrees, along with free access to support services (i.e., assistance for childcare, transportation, tutoring, job placement, and academic counseling).

Under-resourced students and community members are also served through other campus initiatives. For example, the Allied Health faculty and students host an annual community health fair that provides free health screenings to fair attendees. Also, BRTC students have access to two different food pantries on campus. The Bread of Life Mobile Food Pantry is a joint project of the Harrisburg First United Methodist Church and the Arkansas State University Wesley Foundation. This resource is periodically available to students at BRTC and four other college campuses in Northeast Arkansas ([Bread of Life Mobile Food Pantry Webpage](); *[River's Edge, volume 16.1]()*). The BRTC Food Pantry is an onsite resource that is open to students twice weekly. It is a collaborative effort between the Student Government Association and the Nutrition and Dietetics Club ([BRTC Food Pantry Webpage]()). Another way the College seeks to help its students improve their financial status is through the Career Counselor, who provides career guidance, personality and interest inventories, interviewing techniques, resume development, and networking skills for students who are seeking to gain employment or better-paying employment than they currently have. Finally, students who are experiencing problems that prevent them from being able to afford traveling to campus can apply to the Student Success Coordinator for a $20 gas card. These cards are funded by the BRTC Foundation. Students seeking a gas card must fill out an application, have a minimum 2.00 GPA, be facing extenuating circumstances, and be making satisfactory progress toward the completion of a degree ([BRTC Foundation Gas Card Application]()). The Student Success Coordinator has provided gas cards to twenty-one students since July 2017. These services reflect the College's dedication to serving a local population that is largely impoverished or under resourced.

While it is located in an area that is not very diverse culturally or ethnically, BRTC is committed to activities for its constituents that foster an understanding of and respect for the diversity that exists outside of that area. Such activities are part of the College's educational role in its community ([Mission, Vision, & Core Values]()).

Annual programs illustrate the link between academics and diversity:

The Eddie Mae Herron Center and the College collaborate regularly to identify, protect, and preserve the history of and the modern cultural expressions of African American culture in Randolph County. This partnership results in an annual collaboration to present Black History Month for students and community members (*[River's Edge, volume 15.1]()*;[Dennis Biddle Flyer](); [Dennis Biddle *Pocahontas Star Herald* Article]()). BRTC, in conjunction with the Eddie Mae Herron Center, was also set to host the annual conference of Preservation of African American Cemeteries, Incorporated. Unfortunately, extensive flooding in the region required that the campus be closed at that time ([PAAC Annual Memorial)]().

The College's Researching Early Arkansas Cultural Heritage (REACH) project has restored two early nineteenth-century structures in Randolph County. This project, which began in 2003, not only preserves local history, but it continues to aid students and community members to understand the history of slavery, particularly non-plantation slavery, in the early 1800s Trans-

Mississippi West through various programs and summer hours open to the public (Project REACH Webpage; Project Reach Newsletter).

To support an understanding of diversity beyond our community, the also college began hosting the Holocaust Survivor Series in 2005. This annual program brings survivors of the Holocaust to the college and provides multiple sessions, engaging faculty, staff, students, area K12 school groups, and the community at large (*River's Edge*, volume 15.5; Holocaust Survivor Series Program 2017).

All of the above-described programs and opportunities reflect BRTC's attention to human diversity as appropriate to its mission, vision, and values and for the constituencies it serves (Mission, Vision, & Core Values).

Sources

- BRTC Food Pantry
- BRTC Foundation Gas Card Application
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 257)
- BRTC's General Education Outcomes Assessment Rubrics
- BRTC's General Education Outcomes Assessment Rubrics (page number 4)
- Dennis Biddle Flyer
- Dennis Biddle Pocahontas Star Herald Article
- Holocaust Survivor Series Program 2017
- Mission and Strategic Priorities
- PAAC Annual Memorial - May 2017
- Project REACH
- REACH-Newsletter
- The Bread of Life Mobile Food Pantry
- Travel Opportunities
- Volume 15, Issue 1
- Volume 15, Issue 1 (page number 4)
- Volume 15, Issue 5
- Volume 15, Issue 5 (page number 2)
- Volume 16, Issue 1
- Volume 16, Issue 1 (page number 3)

1.D - Core Component 1.D

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

Through its mission (*Black River Technical College transforms lives through quality academic and career education to enhance the community we serve.*), the College seeks to fulfill its public obligation by responding to the needs of the Randolph, Clay, Lawrence, and Greene counties. One way the College fulfills this obligation is by contributing to economic and workforce development in the region. Programs designed to provide a skilled workforce enhance the local economy by supporting businesses and industries in need of such a workforce and help the population at large by opening up employment and economic opportunities that might not otherwise be available. The College also attempts to address its public obligation through cultural enrichment and service activities that broaden the perspectives and experiences of its external constituents.

Black River Technical College is an autonomous, publicly assisted community college in Arkansas without private investors or a parent organization. As a nonprofit entity, any financial returns BRTC generates are invested into initiatives supporting the mission of teaching and public service, as demonstrated by the expenditures for academic support, scholarships, and investment in the area of community and corporate education.

Building upon the mission statement, the BRTC Board of Trustees adopted the revised Strategic Plan, which expresses the institution's role in its community. The College has identified "Community Relationships" as one of the values that shape its mission. This value is most directly addressed by Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan, which states that the College will "Exercise regional leadership through strategic partnerships and educational opportunities." The objectives related to this goal include increased partnerships with local business and industry, increased student internship opportunities, increased involvement in community organizations, and increased fundraising through connecting with community supporters (Policy 1105, Article I).

The following are examples of BRTC external constituencies and how the College has responded to the needs in various ways that are consistent with the mission:

Economic and Workforce Development

In addition to college-transfer courses, BRTC provides degree programs specifically designed to put people in its service area to work. While the Northeastern Arkansas economy is predominantly agrarian, the region's economic base is also comprised of light and heavy manufacturing. To respond accordingly, through the Corporate and Community Education unit, the College collaborates with the Greene County Industrial Training Consortium to work effectively with local and state workforce development agencies and area economic development initiatives to serve the needs of businesses and industries within Clay, Greene, Lawrence, and Randolph counties. The focus of this partnership is to develop workforce programs that benefit both the workforce and employers. The programs provided range from Childcare Provider training, Computers/Information Technology training, Leadership/HR/Operations training, Professional and Career Development, and Real Estate training to plumbing and electrical apprenticeship programs (GCITC Weblink). Furthermore, President Turner serves on the board of directors of the Greene County Industrial Training Council and the Economic Development Committee of the Randolph County Chamber of Commerce, is the Vice Chair of the Northeast Arkansas Intermodal Authority, and constantly engages the state, counties, and cities within the service area. Administrators and faculty serve on governing boards of various entities, providing direction and expertise for curriculum and professional licensure. Also, Jessica Alphin, the Director of Clinical Education in the BRTC Respiratory Care Department, serves as Past President on the Executive Board of Directors for the Arkansas Society for Respiratory Care, the state affiliate of the American Association for Respiratory Care. She also chairs the Society's Education Committee. The Society advocates for respiratory therapists with state lawmakers and keeps members abreast of issues that could affect those therapists. Finally, Ramonda Housh, Dean of Allied Health, was appointed to the Arkansas State Board of Nursing in 2013 and has served three consecutive terms as president. The Board's mission is to protect the public by effectively regulating the more than 50,000 nurses in the state. Through service in professional organizations and service organizations, the College remains abreast of current needs.

While the nature of the local economy remains consistent, the workforce that participates in that economy may change somewhat in the coming years. Recently a number of immigrants have moved into the area from a large Marshallese and Burmese community in Northwest Arkansas. A community leader who works with this group has approached the College, seeking help to provide workshops to make the group aware of local services that are available to them. Since many of these immigrants do not speak English or have a high school diploma, BRTC's Adult Education department would be a good fit to be involved in such a venture. As plans develop, the College hopes that by helping give this group a stable position in the area, it will also be helping develop a new segment of the local workforce.

Enrichment Opportunities and Service Activities

In addition to economic and workforce development initiatives, the Corporate& Community Education unit provides the public with non-credit courses that include programs, short-course seminars, and other activities that serve the community's needs beyond regular college credit courses. These opportunities allow individuals to develop new job skills, enrich personal and family lives, and gain a deeper appreciation of their culture and environment. These programs can range from painting to computer classes for the general public (Corporate and Community Education Website). Beyond coursework, students and community members can also join

Serendipity through the office of Corporate and Community Education. Using focused readings, this book club examines cultural connections that encourage the study of diverse groups. Open to individuals of all ages, the program is currently in its thirteenth year (Serendipity Webpage). Attempting to aid those in the community in furthering their education beyond enrichment, the Adult Education Department at BRTC provides a number of free courses to students in math, English, and English as a Second Language (ESL) to assist students in completing their high school equivalency degree and in sharpening their skills prior to taking the ACCUPLACER exam for BRTC enrollment (Adult Education Webpage).

Other programs also help to connect the campus with the community at large. Since 1994, BRTC has offered students, BRTC employees, and community members the opportunity to travel nationally and internationally. Student travelers can earn three hours of humanities college credit while attending an international trip, and community members and BRTC employees may travel with the local group for personal enrichment (Travel Opportunities Webpage; *The River's Edge, volume 15.3*; and volume 16.2). In addition, the Kimbrough Choir is open to both students and community members. Finally, in the spring of 2017, a Renaissance Fair was hosted at the Paragould location. The Renaissance Fair was open to the public and that included a variety of educational exhibits and activities (*The River's Edge*, volume 15.3).

BRTC students are also encouraged to contribute to the well-being of the community. Various organized clubs and departments of the college require public service as part of membership. For example, students in Allied Health Department assist in the annual BRTC Health Fair (Health Fair Flyer). Also, BRTC provides access to two different food pantries on campus. The Bread of Life Mobile Food Pantry is a joint project of the Harrisburg First United Methodist Church and the Arkansas State University Wesley Foundation. This resource is periodically available to students at BRTC and four other college campuses in Northeast Arkansas (Bread of Life Mobile Food Pantry Webpage; *River's Edge*, volume 16.1). The BRTC Food Pantry is an onsite resource that is open to students twice weekly. It is a collaborative effort between the Student Government Association and the Nutrition and Dietetics Club (BRTC Food Pantry Webpage).

Although these community-focused activities are an important way it accomplishes its mission, the College recognizes that educating students in the classroom as the primary function. This emphasis is demonstrated in the College's Strategic Plan. Three of the four values we have identified as shaping our Strategic Plan--Students, Quality, and Learning--deal directly with this goal. There is a recognition of students' needs and the obligation to provide students with a quality learning experience shapes everything the College aspires to accomplish. To help BRTC meet this obligation, the Strategic Plan includes as part of Goal 1 the College's intention to increase the number of career-ready students it graduates and to increase our overall retention and completion rates. The objectives will be aided by the renewed emphasis on thorough and meaningful assessment processes put in place to achieve Goal 4, which calls for the College to "Create a culture of evidence to facilitate continuous improvement" in both academic and support units across the institution.

The largest external constituency for BRTC is prospective students. To engage them, BRTC has developed a number of different strategies. For example, BRTC and Pocahontas School District (PSD) share a Career Coach (Career Coach Job Description). The goal of this position is to aid

students in planning for career opportunities after high school regardless of their potential institution of choice. Also, through the Technical Opportunities and Pathways for Secondary Students (TOPSS) and concurrent enrollment programs, the College gives students the opportunity to complete technical credentials and/or an associate of arts degree in the same year they graduate from high school.

Furthermore, to improve the degrees, certificates, and programs it offers and to engage external constituencies, the College hosts a number of advisory committees which periodically assemble recognized professionals from designated fields to provide first-hand advice to the corresponding programs (Fall 2017 Advisory Minutes; Spring 2018 Advisory Minutes). Maintaining these open communication links with its external constituencies is vital to BRTC. Consequently, the College is a member of the Chamber of Commerce in Clay, Randolph, Lawrence, and Greene Counties. Several employees have also served as members of local service organizations (such as first responders), on boards of directors/trustees, and with charities in Northeast Arkansas. As an educational leader in the region, BRTC also offers its support to local schools, civic organizations (such as Rotary and Kiwanis), and businesses through sponsorships and donations.

BRTC and its community enjoy a mutually supportive relationship. BRTC employees are active in the community. For example, BRTC's Law Enforcement Training Academy (LETA) instructors have provided active shooter training for local churches, served on volunteer fire departments, trained children in basic martial arts, and held sobriety checkpoint training for local police departments. Also, in May of 2017, members of the College's nursing faculty teamed up to help out in designated shelters after extensive flooding affected the area. One way the community gives back to the College is though the BRTC Foundation. The Foundation is made up of community leaders who actively solicit financial support and direct funds into scholarships and programs to enhance the College. In the 2018-2019 academic year, the Foundation will sponsor sixteen scholarships in various areas (Foundation Scholarships Webpage). To help fund these scholarships, the Foundation will also co-host its 25th annual golf tournament fundraiser; the 2017 tournament raised almost $40,000 for scholarships (Iberia Bank/BRTC Foundation Golf Tournament). The success of such events shows that the community believes in and values BRTC. Despite recent setbacks--decreasing enrollment, two major floods, and probationary status with HLC--the community still supports the College. BRTC is not just an institution that provides services to a community--it is part of that community.

Sources

- Adult Education
- BRTC Food Pantry
- BRTC Foundation Scholarships
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 13)
- Career Coach Job Description
- Fall 2017 Advisory Minutes
- GCITC Weblink
- Health Fair Flyer, 2017

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Summary

BRTC's Mission Statement was developed collaboratively and guides the College in its present and future operations. It is clearly communicated to all the College's constituencies and is appropriate given the students and the area the College serves. The College's budgeting and planning reflect the centrality of teaching and learning to the mission. The strategic goals that grow out of the mission focus on enrollment and student success, the College's image and communication, regional leadership, and creating a culture of evidence. These goals were formally adopted in 2016 and continue to guide the institution along with the mission. However, its objectives and action plans are being revised to reflect recent organizational changes at the College and should be complete by August 2018. Likewise, the mission leads the College to recognize and celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity. Finally, BRTC recognizes its debt and obligation to the community it serves and strives to enrich that community through its activities and programs.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Argument

As a state-funded community college, BRTC abides by state-established policies and procedures to guide its operations and complies with all of the regulations that govern agency action in the State of Arkansas. Many of these policies and procedures are outlined in the *Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board Policies Manual*. BRTC also maintains its own policies and procedures, found in the *Black River Technical College Board of Trustees Policies and Procedures Manual* (referred to as the *Policies and Procedures Manual*). The Policies and Procedures Manual can be accessed by college employees in the Office of the President, in the Office of Human Resources, or via the campus intranet (Policy 2110). When policy changes are approved by the Board, employees are informed through an email, with all relevant documentation of changes attached. The online version of the *Policies and Procedures Manual* is subsequently modified to reflect approved changes. All employment contracts entered into by the College are considered to incorporate the policies detailed in the *Policies and Procedures Manual*, and any employee failing to abide by those policies is subject to disciplinary action, including termination of employment (Policy 2115). The Student Handbook provides additional guidance and regulations for student-related issues and is easily accessible via the myBRTC portal. Furthermore, all BRTC employees are expected to demonstrate ethical behavior, as outlined in the College's "Code of Professional Ethics for Faculty and Staff" and the Faculty Handbook and to discharge their assigned duties in a manner that reflects positively on and promotes the interests of the College (Policy 2105). In social media forums, faculty and staff are expected to maintain conduct consistent with the guidelines in the "Code of Professional Ethics for Faculty and Staff," and, whenever appropriate, make it clear the opinions stated and the positions taken do not communicate on behalf of BRTC (Policy 6235).

The College also treats its students ethically by observing a fair judicial process administered by the Dean of Students. The process allows both the accuser and the accused to present evidence in support of their claims. The Dean of Students' decisions can be appealed to a Judicial Appeals Committee made up of faculty members. Students found to be in violation of the Code of Conduct can face disciplinary sanctions that range from a formal warning to expulsion (Student Handbook).

The financial operations of the College also operate according to institutional policy and state law (Policy 3135). The Arkansas Division of Legislative Audit performs an annual audit (2016 Audit). In July of 2015, the finance office experienced transition in key positions related to financial reporting. While the Board of Trustees and the President of the College had the utmost confidence in the new leadership, they recognized there would be a learning process. Several findings related primarily to misclassifications were reported in the audit for the year that ended 30 June 2015 (Fiscal Year 2015 Audit). No findings were reported for 2016 (Fiscal Year 2016 Audit). As part of the State of Arkansas's Single Audit in conformity with the Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133, BRTC was chosen for testing for fiscal year 2015. No findings were reported. Furthermore, in the last review performed in 2014 by Student Loan Guarantee Foundation of Arkansas, the team found BRTC to be in compliance with state and federal regulations, with a couple of noted exceptions which were satisfactorily resolved (SLGFA School Compliance Program Review Report; BRTC School Review Closure Letter). Also, it is College policy that no employees shall have financial interest in any contract the College enters into, aside from the financial interests arising from their regular employment (Policy 6120) and that they shall not accept personal gifts, gratuities, or rewards from an entity in a business relationship with the College (Policy 6125). Furthermore, all of the grant operations at BRTC are in compliance with federal regulations. Purchasing complies with State Purchasing regulations outlined in the Purchasing Policy and Procedure Manual, and employees are annually trained or updated in proper purchasing procedures. In addition, the contract bid process is disclosed on the College's website (BRTC Purchasing Information Summary). BRTC is in compliance with Arkansas's "Open Checkbook" law, which requires posting of all payments made by BRTC on the institution's website. Auxiliary operations at the College are limited to the bookstore and to food service; the integrity of their operations are ensured by oversight from the Office of Finance. Finally, BRTC's Foundation operates with the highest level of integrity and is governed by the Foundation Bylaws (BRTC Foundation Bylaws).

BRTC's academic operations are conducted with integrity and conform to state policy as described in the *Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board Policies Manual*. BRTC policies guide faculty in textbook selection, course development, syllabi content, and supplementary class activities (Policies 4340, 4345, 4350, and 4355), and an entire section of the *Policies and Procedures Manual* deals with issues related to academic instruction. More specific procedures are detailed in the Faculty Handbook. Also, faculty (Faculty Handbook) and all other College employees (Policy 8130, Article VIII, Section L) are charged to handle student information in accordance with FERPA guidelines. Since the last HLC team visit, the College has instituted changes to improve its academic operations. For example, policies have been adopted and procedures have been established to standardize the syllabi given to students (Policy 4350) and the student learning outcomes used in different sections of the same course (Policy 7113). Also, course quality standards for online classes have been revised to ensure consistency of rigor between online and traditional courses (Course Quality Rubric). Furthermore, many instructors use *turnitin.com*, an online service that compares written student work to Internet content and to its database of previously submitted student work. This tool improves academic integrity at the College by not only detecting plagiarism, but also by acting as a deterrent to students who may be tempted to submit plagiarized work. Finally, the College's new academic committee structure and process ensures the integrity of the academic programs by giving faculty control over the curriculum. The new committees--Curriculum, Assessment, and Program

Review--include faculty from different disciplines whose terms are staggered so that the committees will have continuity in their operations (2017-2018 Academic Committee Appointments).

The personnel functions of the institution also operate according to institutional policy, the regulations of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and other relevant state and federal law. Official notices are posted on the Human Resources bulletin board in Pocahontas, as well as a designated bulletin board at the Paragould location. Hiring conforms to Arkansas Department of Higher Education and BRTC policy (Policy 2141). Especially important due to the relatively small size of Pocahontas, BRTC policy requires that no one be hired for a position in which he or she would supervise or be supervised by a relative (Policy 2118). Furthermore, all vacancies are posted for public view, at least ten working days for administration, faculty, or professional positions and at least five working days for classified staff positions (Policy 6105). To ensure each position is filled by someone with the proper credentials, each member of the faculty and administration must keep his or her credentials current and documentation of those credentials, including an official transcript, on file in the Office of Human Resources (Policy 2142). Salary pay schedules for classified personnel are set according to state regulations (Policy 5115), and pay changes based on promotion, demotion, or position reclassification follow College policy (Policies 5130 and 5135). As an example of BRTC's dedication to ethical use of financial resources, in the fiscal year beginning July 1, the College will be shifting from a long-time practice of current payroll scheduling to arrears payroll scheduling to ensure that employees are not being paid for time that they have not yet worked. If employees leave the College, either through resignation or termination, they complete an exit procedure to explain administrative details regarding benefits, leave, and final pay and to ensure all College assets in their possession have been returned (Policy 6110).

Disciplinary action against any employee must follow the process described in BRTC policy (Policy 2175), and, in an effort to make sure all perspectives are evaluated and all possibilities for resolution are exhausted, the College has instituted thorough policies that must be followed to terminate a classified (Policy 5110) or non-classified (Policy 2176) employee for cause. A grievance policy is available to employees (Policy 2180). Employees are further protected by a sexual harassment policy (Policy 2117). Employees who have grievances that they want to report are protected under College policy against a hostile work environment (Policy 2121) and the OPM's Whistleblower Act, which is posted at both BRTC locations for all employees to easily view (Policy 2122). Also, BRTC policy ensures that the College will abide by all Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines to the extent to which it has access to protected health information (Policy 2119). As state employees, all full-time faculty and staff are required to complete annual child abuse training for mandated reporters. In addition, an online sexual assault prevention program has been implemented for all full-time employees as of Fall 2016 and all newly hired employees from that time forward. Finally, the College provides employment, compensation levels, and advancement opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status (Policy 2116).

The College also strives for transparency in its operations. The President is obligated to inform the Board in a timely manner of any significant reports received from such agencies as accreditors, the auditor, the fire department, the police department, or the health department and

to report any action taken in response to such reports. Furthermore, the President, adhering to all state laws, will determine the proper method of dealing with any Freedom of Information requests and inform the Board Chair of the nature of the requests and the action taken (Policy 2135). Also, in accordance with State law and College policy, BRTC discloses information regarding registered sex offenders who may be employed by or attending the College (Policy 2190). Finally, faculty members must disclose any potential conflicts of interest or royalties they will receive from a textbook or other course materials they want to adopt for their courses (Policy 4340).

Sources

- Academic Committee Appointments 2017-2018
- BRTC Basic Financial Statements and Other Reports, FY2016
- BRTC Foundation Bylaws
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 25)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 30)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 64)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 65)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 66)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 67)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 68)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 69)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 71)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 72)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 82)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 84)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 86)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 104)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 105)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 107)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 110)
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- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 180)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 186)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 187)

- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 230)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 239)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 257)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 265)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 267)
- BRTC Purchasing Information
- BRTC School review closure letter and report from SLGFA 2014
- BRTC's General Education Outcomes Assessment Rubrics
- Course Quality Rubric Approved May 2018
- Faculty Handbook 2018-2019.pdf
- Faculty Handbook 2018-2019.pdf (page number 22)
- Fiscal Year 2015 Audit (1)
- Fiscal Year 2016 Audit (1)
- Professional Code of Ethics for Faculty and Staff
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019 (page number 34)
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019 (page number 35)
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019 (page number 36)
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019 (page number 37)
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019 (page number 38)

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Argument

Black River Technical College's main communication channels are the College Catalog, the College website (accessed through the myBRTC Portal), and the Student Handbook.

The Catalog provides full descriptions of academic programs, including degree and certificate requirements. Information regarding tuition and fees, all accreditation relationships, and the names and credentials of administrators, faculty, and staff are also provided in the *Catalog*. The *Catalog* is available electronically on the website, and it is revised annually for accuracy by the Academic Affairs Committee.

The BRTC website is designed to provide easy accessibility to College information for all constituents, including prospective and current students, faculty and staff, and the general public. Students and external constituencies can access costs to students on the College website (Cost to Students Webpage). Students can also use online resources provided through the library's webpage. Likewise, the Distance Education and Instructional Technology (DEIT) department has its own webpage (Distance Education Webpage), including information such as staff contact information, distance education courses and programs, online student orientation, and information on Moodle, BRTC's learning management system. Furthermore, the College's accreditation status is communicated through the HLC badge displayed on the website's homepage and through webpages addressing the College's probationary status. Also, BRTC's financial information is clearly disclosed to the public. Finally, as of this writing (spring 2018), the College is in the process of transitioning its enterprise resource planning (ERP) system to Colleague. Colleague Reporting and Operating Analytics (CROA) is a feature within the new system that will allow BRTC to add dashboards to its website to publicly demonstrate trends in certain data sets, such as enrollment, cost of attendance, and retention and completion rates. These features will be in place by the Fall 2018 semester. The campus website is hosted internally, and any changes to the website are officially approved by the Office for Institutional Advancement.

The *Student Handbook*--which details information, processes, and guidelines associated with student-related issues--is available to students through the myBRTC portal. In addition to the general *Student Handbook*, some programs have handbooks specifically designed for students in those programs (e.g., *BRTC Paramedic Student Handbook,* BRTC Respiratory Care Handbook, PN Handbook). These program-specific handbooks are provided to students electronically and as a hard copy during program orientations. Likewise, as a member of the Arkansas Rural Nursing Education Consortium (ARNEC), all BRTC nursing students are provided with a copy of

[ARNEC's Program Guide](#) and the [ARNEC Student Guide](#), which include student expectations and responsibilities.

In addition to these main communication channels, BRTC strives to maintain a strong social media presence. The Office of Institutional Advancement is charged with establishing and maintaining the College's social media accounts--including Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram--and ensure that all social media accounts that represent BRTC adhere to College's social media policy. Official student clubs and organizations are encouraged to use social media to publicize their activities, but such accounts must be approved by the organization's advisor, and the sites must have the approval of and be subject to the oversight of the Vice President for Institutional Advancement ([Policy 6235](#)).

Finally, the College has taken steps to more clearly communicate its image and brand to external constituencies. In May 2018, the Board approved a comprehensive advertising policy to ensure the consistency of the College's image and reputation when it is involved in advertising, sponsorship, and other promotional activities. The policy also sets forth guidelines for official communications on behalf of the College ([Policy 1116](#)). The Office of Institutional Advancement is currently working on a style guide to establish standards for fonts, colors, and the use of the College logo in official publications and is drafting a comprehensive marketing plan to establish goals and strategies for the marketing platforms the College uses.

Sources

- 2018 Respiratory Care Student Handbook
- ARNEC 2018 Program Guide
- ARNEC 2018 Student Guide (1)
- BRTC Course Catalog 2017-18
- BRTC Course Catalog 2017-18 (page number 50)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 17)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 230)
- BRTC Webstie Homepage
- Cost to Students
- Distance Education
- HLC Accreditation Webpages
- Open Checkbook site
- Paramedic Student HANDBOOK
- Practical Nursing Handbook Spring 2018
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

Black River Technical College is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees (the Board). Board members are appointed by the Governor of Arkansas and subject to Senate confirmation for a seven-year term. Terms are staggered so that only one member will be replaced each year. Board membership, qualifications, terms of office, and vacancy are subject to the bylaws of the BRTC Board of Trustees detailed in the Policies and Procedures Manual. Members of the Board are electors from the college service area and are citizens with knowledge and experience in industry and business in the communities the College serves. The members of the Board may also be appointed by the chair to serve on one of three committees--Academic Affairs, Finance, and Personnel/Compensation--that meet when necessary. For example, in the past year, the Academic Affairs committee has met with the Vice President of Academics to keep the Board apprised of the progress being made to address the deficiencies noted in the 2016 HLC team response (Board of Trustees Committees). The Board is guided by the College's mission statement and Strategic Plan (Policy 8130). The Board's guidance and framework reflect the College's values and strategic goals, and it recognizes that the College's role is to provide courses and programs specific to the needs of the community and student population and that communication with the public is pivotal to performing this role (Policy 1115).

The Board meets quarterly, at a minimum, with public notice as required by the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act. Meetings, with the exception of executive sections during which personnel matters are discussed, are open to the public. Meetings are conducted in a manner consistent with the Board's bylaws to ensure transparency to the public (Policy 8130). Minutes of the meetings are posted on the BRTC website (Board of Trustees Webpage), an archive of past minutes is maintained in the College vault, and a reading copy of the minutes can be found in the library, consistent with BRTC policy (Policy 1155). An examination of the Board meeting minutes is evidence of the Board's commitment to preserving and enhancing the institution. For example, the Board has recently approved outsourcing textbook sales to provide less-expensive textbook options for the students. Comparing financial aid book charges from the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years shows charges decreased by 30.7%, saving students almost $200,000

([Textbook Task Force Report](#)). These decreases occurred despite a slight 1% increase in student semester credit hours (SSCH) during the same period. The College hopes that the savings the students experience will return to it in the form of an increase in hours the students take. Early signs are positive. For both semesters, although the head count decreased from the previous year, SSCH increased. Also, the Board approved the outsourcing of custodial services, a voluntary separation program, and a streamlining of the College's administrative structure and has been supportive of these administrative actions intended to ensure the College's long-term fiscal health ([Special Email April 2017 Board of Trustees Meeting](#)). The Board also considers the interests of the College's employees by serving as the final authority in the College's grievance procedure ([Policy 2180](#)).

The Board retains its independence from the various constituencies as a result of the Board appointments being made by the Governor. Also, neither a Board member nor a Board member's spouse may be a candidate for or holder of public office or an employee or board member of a public school district or another higher learning institution ([Policy 8130](#)). Employees of the College are required to disclose any financial interest in any business transaction related to the College and may not accept any personal gift, gratuity, or reward from any entity maintaining a business relationship with the College ([Policy 2120](#)).

The Board delegates power to the President to administer College's policies ([Policy 2100](#)). The President is responsible for the execution of the duties germane to operating the College, instructional program development, budget preparation, personnel administration, and community relations. The President sets the Board meeting agenda, maintains meeting minutes and related documents, attends Board meetings, informs the Board of trends and important actions, and acts as the College's signatory. The President is also authorized to interview, hire, and/or make payment to part-time employees without verification by the Board, although payment made to such employees must be taken from budgeted funds and must be properly reported ([Policy 2137](#)).The College's organizational chart and job descriptions for every major administrative, faculty, and classified personnel position is maintained to reflect the authority the Board delegates to the President and to serve as an outline of the College's authority structure in each of its units ([Policy 2160](#)). In the President's absence, authority over day-to-day operations falls to the appropriate administrative offices, and the ranking vice president would be responsible in the case of an emergency ([Policy 2125](#)). It is also the administration's responsibility to recruit and hire fully qualified candidates to fill vacant positions according to the selection guidelines detailed in the *Policies and Procedures Manual* ([Policy 2141](#)). Academic operations are, by policy, assigned to the faculty (Policies [4106](#)and [4345](#)).

Sources

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- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 107)
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- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 160)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 257)
- Textbook Task Force Report

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Argument

Black River Technical College demonstrates its commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning through its policies and practices.

BRTC encourages and protects its students' and employees' freedom of expression. In the institution's "Code of Professional Ethics," faculty are charged to encourage the free exchange of ideas between themselves and students (see section A.2). This philosophy extends to political speech as well. BRTC policy discourages employees from open advocacy of political causes during class time or via a "College forum" but does not limit their right to identify with a political cause. Neither does the policy limit open discussion of political issues during classes or other College activities when such discussions are intended to have educational value (Policy 2159). In fact, College policy encourages employees who select forum speakers to engage authorities who will present diverse viewpoints and points out that no topics are off limits as long as "reasonable standards of decency" are observed (Policy 1125). Similarly, BRTC abides by the Arkansas Whistle-Blower Act, which provides protection for employees who in good faith report potentially illegal activities at the College (Policy 2122).

This commitment to freedom of expression fosters academic freedom, which is essential to the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. The "Code of Professional Ethics," which makes clear the College's ethical philosophy, is not intended to hinder the exercise of academic freedom (see page 1). The "Code" further states that in the interest of academic freedom, faculty should demonstrate intellectual honesty and integrity in all their scholarly endeavors (D.3). BRTC also protects its faculty's academic freedom by making every possible effort to allow instructors to adopt the textbooks and other course materials of their choosing (Policy 4340).

Beyond a philosophical commitment to academic freedom, the College has explicitly implemented this idea in a policy based on a statement on academic freedom expressed by the American Association of University Professors. This policy gives faculty full academic freedom in research and in the publication of results and does not limit their right to integrate any relevant topics into their courses (Policy 4115). The College extends this same emphasis on free academic pursuit to students by encouraging them to participate in field trips and professional functions when it is determined that worthy educational value may be gained (Policy 4355).

Finally, the College has adopted general education student learning outcomes based on modified versions of five of the Association of American Colleges & Universities' VALUE rubrics, which encourage curiosity, discovery, and critical engagement with ideas (General Education Outcomes Assessment Rubrics). The College also seeks to protect intellectual property and cultivate academic integrity among students through a comprehensive Academic Integrity Policy that

defines academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism and that educates students on the importance of academic integrity to an open and ethical pursuit of knowledge. The importance of these principles is emphasized in the College's Code of Conduct, which prohibits students from committing any form of academic dishonesty, furnishing false information to any agent of the College, or misusing any College document or instrument (Student Handbook, pages 30-31).

Sources

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- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 94)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 138)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 159)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 163)
- BRTC's General Education Outcomes Assessment Rubrics
- Professional Code of Ethics for Faculty and Staff
- Professional Code of Ethics for Faculty and Staff (page number 2)
- Professional Code of Ethics for Faculty and Staff (page number 6)
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019 (page number 31)
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019 (page number 32)

2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

Black River Technical College is not a research institution. However, in 2017, the College was awarded a Precision Agriculture Technicians: Improving Arkansas Farming grant through the National Science Foundation. One stipulation of the grant is that the recipient be in compliance with the National Research Act. To comply with the Act, the College formed an Institutional Review Board (IRB) to provide oversight of any research conducted by faculty. The IRB's role is to protect the rights and safety of any human subjects involved in surveys or research. It is composed of no fewer than five members of varied disciplinary backgrounds, must exclude individuals who have a conflicting interest with the research being reviewed, and may seek input from non-voting experts to assist in deliberations. The IRB examines research proposals to determine that the projects follow ethical criteria by minimizing risks to subjects, selecting subjects in an equitable manner, gaining informed consent from subjects, making adequate provision for subjects' safety, protecting subjects' privacy, and ensuring that vulnerable population members' participation is not coerced (Policy 7121; 12 January 2017 IRB Agenda; 12 January 2017 IRB Minutes; 14 November 2017 Minutes; IRB Decision Template).

The *Catalog* and the Student Handbook include an explanation of expected student conduct, including conduct regarding academic integrity and academic dishonesty. Furthermore, faculty are required to include in the syllabus for each course a reference to the College's Academic Integrity Policy. Instructions for this requirement are provided in the syllabus template that all faculty are expected to follow when creating syllabi (Syllabus Template). Program-specific student handbooks used in some technical programs also contain academic integrity policies (e.g., PN Handbook; Paramedic Handbook). Also, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) requires any student who obtains an associate degree to complete either Freshman English II or Technical Writing. At BRTC, these courses introduce students to common documentation styles for referencing resources and avoiding plagiarism. Students also receive explicit instruction on recognizing and avoiding plagiarism. The English Department at BRTC has emphasized the importance of ethically using research by adopting a course learning outcome for Freshman English II and Technical Writing that states that students should be able to "accurately document source material in accordance with the appropriate documentation style" upon completing either of those courses (General Studies Learning Outcomes). Being able to accurately document sources allows students to use information resources ethically by avoiding one of the ways such resources can be plagiarized.

All faculty are encouraged to promote a culture of academic integrity and ethical conduct in both traditional and online classes. For example, BRTC subscribes to Turnitin, which is a cloud-based service that provides students and instructors with comprehensive feedback on the percentage of student writing that is similar to or directly matches other sources. All English and social science instructors, and some other instructors who require writing assignments, use Turnitin to verify written assignments and discussion forum posts submitted by students are not plagiarized. Also, there are technologies required for instructors who use online assessments. Respondus Monitor and Lockdown Browser are used by several faculty. Respondus Monitor provides remote quiz and exam proctoring to ensure students enrolled in a course are indeed the students completing the quizzes and exams for that course. Students are required to record themselves completing an exam via webcam and microphone. Lockdown Browser prevents students from opening any other web browser during a quiz or exam. Finally, VoiceThread is used by some online instructors to verify that the student completing an assignment is the student enrolled in the course. In VoiceThread assignments, students are required to video- and/or audio-record themselves discussing an assigned topic. All online classes are required to include at least one assessment students complete using either Respondus Monitor and Lockdown Browser or VoiceThread (Faculty Handbook). Faculty must also model academic integrity and ethical conduct by observing fair use and copyright laws, according to BRTC policy. The President appoints a Copyright Officer who implements the copyright policy and provides guidance to faculty in the appropriate use of protected materials (Policy 2181).

Although much instruction on academic integrity occurs within the classroom, additional instruction to promote academic integrity is offered by staff in the library and the Academic Success Center. The librarian provides formal workshops in conjunction with faculty members to teach students about the appropriate use and citation of information obtained from library holdings and databases (Library Orientation). Professional tutors in the Academic Success Center--including instructors from the BRTC English department--provide individual instruction to students who seek help with avoiding plagiarism.

The process for handling academic integrity policy infractions is outlined in the Student Handbook**. The basic fundamentals of procedural due process are followed in adjudicating student violations of the Code of Conduct. Suspected violations are reported to the Dean of Students, who administers the judicial policy and directs all steps in the process. Students are permitted to appeal rulings made by the Dean of Students to the Judicial Appeals Committee, which is made up of faculty appointed at the beginning of each academic year. Students found to be in violation of the Code of Conduct can face disciplinary sanctions that range from a formal warning to expulsion (Student Handbook).**

Sources

- 2017 01 12 -- IRB Meeting Agenda
- 2017 01 12 -- IRB Minutes
- 2017 11 14 -- IRB Minutes
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Academic Success Center

- Black River Technical College Library Orientation
- BRTC Course Catalog 2017-18
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 109)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 248)
- BRTC's General Education Outcomes Assessment Rubrics
- Faculty Handbook 2018-2019.pdf
- Faculty Handbook 2018-2019.pdf (page number 31)
- IRB Decision Letter template
- Master General Studies Learning Outcomes List
- Paramedic Student HANDBOOK
- Paramedic Student HANDBOOK (page number 15)
- Practical Nursing Handbook Spring 2018
- Practical Nursing Handbook Spring 2018 (page number 18)
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019 (page number 33)
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019 (page number 34)
- Syllabus Template

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Summary

BRTC has policies and procedures in place to ensure that it operates with integrity in all its functions. The College is ethical in its treatment of both employees and students and grants due process to prevent the arbitrary imposition of sanctions. The financial operations of the College are transparent and in compliance with all state and federal regulations. Through its website and publications, the College clearly and thoroughly communicates information regarding its programs, policies, services, procedures, personnel, and affiliations. The Board of Trustees carries out its duties with integrity and transparency and makes decisions based on the best interest of the College and its constituencies, not based on bias or personal interest. Academically, BRTC is committed to, and protective of, free speech and academic freedom; it directs faculty, staff, and students to protect intellectual property and to use such property fairly and with integrity. Finally, the College enacts policies and procedures to ensure academic integrity in its students.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Argument

Appropriate to its role as a public two-year college, and consistent with its official policy, Black River Technical College offers Certificates of Proficiency, Technical Certificates, Associate of Applied Science degrees, Associate of Arts degrees, and Associate of Science degrees intended to meet the specific needs of its student population and the communities it serves (Policy 1110). These programs address the needs of students whose goal is to enter the workforce, as well as those who wish to transfer to four-year institutions. These credentials are offered in various programs which are documented in the Catalog.

The Curriculum Committee at BRTC, which is made up of faculty members from different disciplines, ensures programs and courses are current and provide the rigor and skills appropriate to the program and degree. This committee, with input from the Assessment Committee and the Program Review Committee (both of which are made up solely of faculty members), is responsible for reviewing any curricular changes made to courses or programs (Committee Appointments). All new programs and courses and those undergoing significant changes in curriculum must undergo thorough review by and gain approval from the Curriculum Committee. Small changes to curriculum, such as new assessments or minor changes in curriculum order and structure, are at the discretion of individual faculty. The Curriculum Committee's recommendations are sent to the Academic Affairs Committee, which consists of the academic deans, all program directors, and the Vice President of Academics. Academic Affairs will either refer the proposal to a lower committee for clarification or revision, or it will approve and forward the proposal to the Executive Team. The Executive Team can either send

the proposal to a lower committee for clarification or revision; approve the proposal outright; or, when required due to the nature of the proposal, forward it to the BRTC Board, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and/or Higher Learning Commission for approval (Curriculum Development Flowchart).

In addition, many of BRTC's programs undergo review by advisory boards to ensure the curriculum meets industry standards (Spring 2018 Advisory Board Minutes). These boards are made up of local industry and business leaders who have extensive experience in their fields and who have shown a particular interest in BRTC's graduates or in the programs themselves. Advisory board members complete annual surveys measuring workforce readiness of BRTC graduates. Based on recommendations in the 2016 HLC team report, in the Fall 2016 semester, the College began efforts to improve and expand the advisory boards' roles in its assessment plan and program review process. Advisory board members were surveyed over the student learning outcomes for their respective programs. They were asked to review the programs' existing learning outcomes and to propose revisions based on the knowledge and skills they expect of students who complete those programs (Fall 2016 Outcomes Survey). Also, in an effort to improve the nature and quality of the feedback gained during advisory board meetings, the general survey given to advisory board members was reviewed and modified to include questions that require more analysis of the programs. In addition to standard questions about the quality and attributes of BRTC graduates, a number of subjective, program-specific questions were added to the surveys for the Spring 2018 semester advisory board meetings. The questions were intentionally broad and open-ended to give the advisory board members the opportunity to raise issues they found important rather than forcing them to rate items that they may or may not have found germane to their roles on the boards. The nature of these short-answer-type questions does not lend itself to easy data gathering. However, the information gained from these questions should enable the Vice President of Academics, academic deans, and program directors to frame more traditional ratings-type questions on future surveys that will produce data that can be analyzed and acted on to improve programs (Spring 2018 Advisory Board Surveys).

Furthermore, the curriculum of some programs is evaluated by specialized accreditors. Eight of the College's programs are also accredited by state, regional, or national bodies. As evidenced by various articulation agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between BRTC and four-year institutions, many programs meet the standards for transferability (Direct Transfer Degrees; UCA Transfer Degrees).

As a two-year college, BRTC offers only undergraduate programs at the associate level, and the College has developed levels of learning outcomes consistent with its assessment framework. In other words, outcomes have been articulated across courses, programs, and general education. The general education outcomes also serve as the College's institutional learning outcomes. In addition to having articulated learning outcomes across these three levels, outcomes assessment is taking place according to BRTC's Assessment Plan (Assessment Plan; Policy 7113).

Program quality and learning outcomes are consistent across all modes of delivery and locations at BRTC. Courses are delivered at Pocahontas and Paragould; concurrently through regional high schools; and through distance delivery (online, hybrid, and compressed video). Also, classes offered during summer terms are subject to the same standards and policies as those

offered during the fall and spring semesters (Policy 7100). The Concurrent Enrollment program is operated through MOUs between local high schools and the College and is approved by ADHE. As a member of the Arkansas Rural Nursing Education Consortium (ARNEC), the College's LPN/LPTN/LVN transition to RN program is conducted through compressed video and online examinations, with instructional components approved by the consortium's Governing Board (ARNEC MOU's). BRTC policy prescribes that learning outcomes for every section of every course, regardless of delivery modality or location, be identical and that all faculty - including adjunct and concurrent enrollment instructors - participate in collecting assessment data, analyzing it, and using it for curricular and/or instructional improvement (Policy 7113). Documentation of this process is provided through the Course-Level Assessment Data Reports (CLADRs) completed by all faculty each semester (CLADR Template; Example CLADR).To ensure consistent quality, College policy requires new programs, new courses, any changes to student learning outcomes, and any major curricular changes to be developed according to the procedures outlined in the Faculty Handbook and in the official committee roles and responsibilities documents (Policies 4345 and 7118; Curriculum Committee; Program Review Committee; Assessment Committee).This process requires such changes or additions to be evaluated and approved by the Curriculum Committee, which, if necessary, will seek input from the Program Review Committee and/or the Assessment Committee before being referred to the Academic Affairs Committee, President, Board, and, if necessary, Arkansas Department of Higher Education and/or Higher Learning Commission for final approval (Curriculum Development Flowchart).

All online courses at BRTC are delivered via Moodle, the College's learning management system (LMS). The Distance Education and Instructional Technology (DEIT) department provides faculty support in online course development and instructional technology training. For example, the DEIT department hosts several "Best Practices for Teaching Online" workshops in which faculty can participate. Faculty who wish to create an online course must successfully complete Online Course Quality Improvement Training (OCQIT), and all new online courses are evaluated with the OCQIT rubric, ensuring the course meets or exceeds the instructional content and rigor of a traditional, face-to-face course (OCQIT Rubric). Likewise, all existing online courses are periodically reviewed by DEIT staff and in accordance with the Online Course Review Schedule.

Finally, the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS) ensures transferability of applicable courses among public higher education institutions in the state. So that BRTC courses are approved as part of ACTS, BRTC participates in periodic syllabi review to ensure that course content and learning outcomes align with standards approved by ADHE (Arkansas Course Transfer System).

Sources

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- Academic Committee Appointments 2017-2018
- Academic Program Advisory Committee Survey, 2018
- ADixon_CLADR_MTH1213_Fall17

- Arkansas Course Transfer System
- ARNEC MOU Agreements
- Articulation with Other Colleges
- Assessment Committee Policies and Procedures
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- Best Practices for Teaching Online Workshops
- BRTC Course Catalog 2017-18
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- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 160)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 234)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 239)
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- Concurrent Education-Instructor and Counselor Information
- Course Quality Rubric Approved May 2018
- Course-level Assessment Data Report - Rev. Sept 12, 2017.pdf
- Curriculum Committee Policies and Procedures.pdf
- Curriculum Development Flow Chart
- Direct Transfer Degrees
- Faculty Handbook 2018-2019.pdf
- Online Course Review Schedule Approved May 2018 (1)
- Program Review Committee Policies and Procedures
- Spring 2018 Advisory Minutes
- UCA Degree Plans Direct Credit

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Argument

Students enrolled at Black River Technical College can choose one of two paths: 1) college transfer/general studies or 2) career/technical education. Both pathways demonstrate a commitment to general education. BRTC exposes students to general education concepts in all degree and technical certificate programs, including an Associate of Arts degree in general studies, three Associate of Science degrees, and twenty Associate of Applied Science degrees. Each of BRTC's programs require a set of core general education courses, depending on the degree or certificate type. For example, the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees require courses in the following areas: English/communication, mathematics, sciences, fine arts, social sciences, and physical education. The Associate of Applied Science degrees require general studies courses in English, mathematics, computer concepts, and social sciences. Even the technical certificate programs include general education components in the areas of English/communications and mathematics, and many require education in computer concepts (Example Degree Plans). All of these requirements are consistent with the general education frameworks of other two-year institutions in Arkansas and are part of the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS).

At BRTC, general education means more than just the Associate of Arts degree. It encompasses a broad range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that BRTC believes every college graduate should possess and which should thus be woven into every program it offers. In the fall of 2016, a team from the original Assessment Committee attended a workshop on the Association of American Colleges & Universities' VALUE rubrics. The Committee was beginning to design a general education assessment plan for the College, and the team members believed the VALUE

rubrics would be a good way to assess broad general education concepts. BRTC faculty were subsequently surveyed and, of the sixteen rubrics, six were chosen by the faculty that best represent the general education concepts that are the most essential for BRTC students. In the spring of 2017, a team was sent to the HLC Strategic Assessment Workshop in Arizona. The team took the VALUE rubrics that had been selected by BRTC faculty and worked with HLC scholars to develop an assessment strategy tailored to BRTC. The Senior Scholar assigned to the team at the workshop, Susan Hatfield, pointed out that the rubrics were initially written with four-year institutions in mind and that the students at a two-year college might not reasonably be expected to achieve the skill level described in the highest level of the rubrics. In response, the team decided to modify the rubrics to remove the highest level and simplify the language in some criteria. Likewise, the team worked to combine Written Communication and Oral Communication into a single Communication rubric. These modifications were approved by the Assessment Committee and the faculty at large, and the following general education learning outcomes were formally adopted: Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, Global Learning, Quantitative Literacy, and Communication (General Education Outcomes Survey; Assessment Committee Minutes; Policy 7113). These outcomes also serve as the College's institutional learning outcomes. The rubrics for these outcomes are used to assess general education in all of the College's programs (General Education Learning Outcomes Rubrics). The College believes that by building its general education program around these outcomes, it is instilling in its students the analytical and communication skills, as well as the acknowledgement of and respect for diverse cultures and viewpoints, that any college-educated person should have.

BRTC strives to ensure all degree programs, regardless of modality, effectively promote the concepts called for in this core component. One way the College promotes these concepts is through its approach to general education, which guarantees students in all programs opportunities to collect, analyze, and communicate information; participate in creative work; and develop adaptable skills. These concepts are implicit in the College's general education learning outcomes. For instance, the Information Literacy outcome calls for students to be able to "identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share" information to accomplish a goal (Information Literacy Rubric). Also, the Communication outcome calls for students to develop adaptive communication skills by working in various genres and through different mediums across the curriculum (Communication Rubric). Although in its infancy, the College's general education assessment process will ensure students are truly being given learning experiences that promote these concepts by formally assessing the general education learning outcomes across all programs. Likewise, each program's course-level outcomes are mapped not only to its programmatic outcomes, but also to the general education outcomes. These curriculum maps are used to identify where in the College's curriculum there are opportunities to capture evidence of student learning for each general education outcome (General Education Curriculum Map). The 2017-2018 Assessment Progress Report describes progress made on general education outcomes assessment up to this point.

To assist students in acquiring these skills and this knowledge, the BRTC library has holdings of over 25,000 onsite books and references and provides access to information in a variety of other formats to strengthen students' information literacy skills. The physical holdings are small in comparison to the online subscription databases (e.g., EBSCOhost, LexisNexis, and Health Reference Center) to which the College subscribes. BRTC is also a member of the ARKlink

consortium, which allows BRTC students to retrieve materials from fifty-two participating libraries across the state (Library Brochure). These two resources are particularly important to online students who are unable to be on campus. In addition, the librarian hosts several library orientations each semester to acquaint students with library and database use, and has recently added an online library orientation for students in online classes (Online Library Orientation).

Also, many programs require students to complete courses that require hands-on learning experiences outside of the classroom as part of the core curriculum. For example, Human Anatomy and Physiology students take an annual trip to the Arkansas State University cadaver lab. Also, Allied Health students participate in clinical training in hospitals, clinics, and laboratories (Allied Health Clinical Sites). Auto Collision and Auto Service students take annual trips to factories in Tennessee and Kentucky to see first-hand the construction of automobiles. Finally, future program expansions at the Paragould location, such as the HVAC program set to start in Fall 2019, will offer apprenticeship opportunities to students in some technical areas.

Creative endeavors are similarly emphasized within each degree plan, most explicitly through fine arts credit requirements. BRTC's art students have created mural paintings in the community, including murals for the local police department, BRTC library, and local nursing homes. In addition, student artwork is displayed every semester on campus and at local banks, and student work is published each year in the *Currents* journal, which is bound and archived in the library each spring semester (*Currents* Webpage). In the past three years, students have also donated their artwork to the Randolph Home (a local nursing home) and the Dalton Street Housing Authority, where the paintings have been added to these institutions' permanent collections. Finally, music and choir students are equally engaged in creative work. For example, in March 2017, the BRTC choir collaborated with the Arkansas State Choral Department on a trip to Ireland for a series of performances (*The River's Edge*, volume 15:2).

Although its service area is not very ethnically diverse, BRTC recognizes human and cultural diversity and acknowledges the importance of diversity education. One of the five general education student learning outcomes the College has adopted is Global Learning. In addressing this outcome, the College seeks to make students who are "attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences" and who "understand how their actions affect both local and global communities (Global Learning). Diversity education occurs not only at the course-level and institutional level, but also at the community-level. For example, during Black History Month, which is celebrated on campus each February, topics have included a Living History Tribute of Maya Angelou; a presentation about the Hoxie 21; and *Ain't I a Woman!*, a theatrical production based on the famous speech by Sojourner Truth. Other programs focusing on black history are held on a regular basis through BRTC's partnership with the local Eddie Mae Herron Center (*The River's Edge*, volume 15:1). Also, BRTC hosts an annual lecture series that features Holocaust survivors who are invited to share their stories and experiences (*The River's Edge*, volume 15:5)

BRTC faculty, staff, and students contribute to the scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate for a two-year college. As in most two-year colleges, BRTC faculty are not required to participate in formal research and publication endeavors. However, for faculty who may be inclined to undertake such endeavors, research and

publications may be considered as professional improvement in the annual faculty evaluations (Policy 4290). And even though formal research and publication are not required, many BRTC faculty have undertaken such tasks. Also, the faculty, as indicated in their annual Self-Evaluations, participate in informal research aimed at exploring ways to improve student learning and staying current in their disciplines.

BRTC faculty, staff, and students contribute to the scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge in other ways as well. The administration encourages, within budgetary limits, all employees to participate in professional activities that will enhance the programs and services offered by the College (Policy 2157). Also, salary increments are offered to faculty who continue their education beyond minimum credentialing requirements (Policy 4320). The Distance Education and Instructional Technology department also offers several on-campus professional development opportunities each semester for faculty (Distance Education Professional Development; DEIT Best Practices Workshops).

Sources

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- Volume 15, Issue 2 (page number 5)
- Volume 15, Issue 5
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3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Argument

Black River Technical College has, and is policy-bound to maintain, the faculty and staff needed to carry out its mission ([Policy 4140](#)). College policy gives the administration authority to determine appropriate staffing levels and reduce staff in response to factors such as funding reductions or enrollment changes ([Policy 6111](#)). BRTC's official enrollment was 1,532 for Fall 2017 and 1,395 for Spring 2018. While the number of full-faculty remains fairly constant, the number of adjunct instructors employed by BRTC is contingent upon student enrollment and is monitored by the academic deans and Vice President of Academics. The average student-to-instructor ratio is 13:1. For the Fall 2017 semester, BRTC employed sixty-seven full-time faculty and thirty-nine part-time faculty for credit courses. Many faculty members, whether employed part-time or full-time, have been employed for several years, bringing continuity to the departments and programs.

BRTC has three academic units--General Studies, Business and Technology, and Nursing and Allied Health. Each of these units can be further divided by departments and programs ([Academic Units & Departments Chart](#)). Units are overseen by academic deans who have twelve-month contracts that include both instructional and administrative duties. The deans typically teach one class per semester. Most departments have a department head who is an instructor with a one-course release for administrative duties. The majority of instructors work under nine-month contracts, with the exception of the nursing faculty, who have nine-and-a-half-month contracts. The Clinical Site Coordinator and Director of Nursing have twelve-month contracts. In addition to these positions, the Academic Coordinator at the Paragould location

provides on-site academic support to faculty and students. This position is a twelve-month contract, and the Coordinator must typically teach at least one course per semester.

A normal teaching load for faculty members is thirty hours per week–typically fifteen teaching hours and fifteen office hours (Policy 4135). Online instructors are permitted to have online office hours during weekends and evenings in addition to face-to-face office time to support students who may have taken distance education courses because they are not available to attend classes or confer with instructors during typical business hours.

With sixty-seven full-time instructors, there are ample faculty members to perform the non-classroom roles required of faculty. Faculty members serve on academic committees, and some volunteer to serve as student organization advisors (Academic Committee Appointments). Faculty may also be requested to serve on hiring and other ad hoc committees or task forces. Student advising is an additional component of every faculty member's job description. Each faculty member is assigned students by the registrar to advise each semester. Further, faculty assist with advising sessions coordinated by Enrollment Management for first-time-entering and newly-transferred students as well as early advising sessions coordinated by the academic departments for all continuing students.

Faculty are responsible for curriculum oversight through the Curriculum Committee, which is responsible for reviewing any curricular changes made to courses or programs. If the proposed changes involve new student learning outcomes or revisions to existing student learning outcomes, those changes are referred to the Assessment Committee for approval or recommended revisions. Once the Assessment Committee has approved any new or revised learning outcomes, the Curriculum Committee reviews all of the materials submitted for approval or recommended changes. Once the Curriculum Committee has approved the proposal, it then refers matters to the Academic Affairs Committee for approval (Curriculum Development Flowchart). The attached minutes exemplify how a proposal moves through the committee structure (Example of Proposal Progression). The Vice President of Academics gives the Board of Trustees a quarterly report of all curricular changes. If new programs are proposed, these require Board of Trustee approval, followed by approval from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

Expectations for student performance are addressed in program documents such as the general Student Handbook, program-specific student handbooks (Practical Nursing Handbook; Paramedic Handbook; Respiratory Care Handbook), and course syllabi (Syllabus Template). Student learning is assessed at the course level by faculty members and at the program level by program faculty and directors/advisors. The Dean of Assessment and Accreditation provides assistance as needed to faculty in developing course- and program-level student learning outcomes. As described above, the Assessment Committee evaluates and approves, or suggests revisions to, proposed learning outcomes recommended by the Curriculum Committee for any new course or program. Assessment Committee approval must be obtained before a course or program is considered for approval by the Curriculum Committee and/or the Program Review Committee. The Assessment Committee also must approve any changes made to the learning outcomes of any existing course or program (Policy 4345).

Academic credentials for instructional staff - including full-time, adjunct, and concurrent instructors who teach in any modality - adhere to HLC requirements, program-specific accrediting agencies, and ADHE (Policy 4140). Faculty are required to keep their credentials current and to keep documentation of their credentials, including official transcripts, on file in the Office of Human Resources (Policy 2142). Distance education, adjunct, and concurrent enrollment instructors are held to the same credentialing standards as traditional faculty (Policies 4145 and 7116; Faculty Handbook). Instructors in the general studies unit are typically required to have a minimum of a master's degree with at least eighteen graduate-level hours in the discipline in which they teach. For some technical/certificate programs, only an associate's degree is required (i.e., machine tool technology). However, business instructors are held to the same credentialing standard as general studies instructors, meaning that they must hold at least a master's degree with eighteen-plus graduate hours in the sub-fields in which they teach.

The Vice President of Academics and the academic deans, in accordance with BRTC policy, conduct a faculty review process designed to support faculty in their professional development, reinforce the importance of effective teaching, and assist faculty in providing the best possible learning opportunities for students (Policy 4325; Faculty Handbook). The review process includes an administrative evaluation, a classroom observation, student evaluations, a peer observation, and a self-evaluation. During an annual conference with either their respective dean or the Vice President of Academics, faculty discuss ways to improve course delivery and/or student satisfaction based on the results of the evaluations. The faculty member's achievement of course- and program-level student learning outcomes is also discussed during the annual conference, and the results of this evaluation process are documented in the Faculty Performance Review Rubric. If a faculty member has unsatisfactory review results, he or she works with his or respective dean and/or Vice President of Academics to develop a specific improvement plan, which are attached to the evaluation documents. Follow-up sessions are scheduled to monitor the faculty member's progress toward achieving the goals set forth in the improvement plan. Based on review results, the Vice President of Academics recommends to the President a contract status for each faculty member (i.e. renewal of contract, issuance of probationary contract, or non-renewal of contract). The evaluation form completed by the Vice President of Academics is kept on file in the Office of Human Resources (Policy 4325).

Each semester, students evaluate instructors and the courses in which they are enrolled through an online evaluation form (Student Evaluation Form). Online students take a slightly different evaluation that has been modified to address issues particular to online instruction (Online Student Evaluation Form). At the end of each semester, evaluations are shared with instructors, their respective deans, and the Vice President of Academics. Full-time instructors must also include copies of these evaluations in their annual professional teaching portfolio. The results of faculty evaluations are shared with the Board, which will use the evaluations in determining whether a faculty member will be offered a new contract for the following academic year (Policy 2151).

It is incumbent on all faculty members to be current in their respective disciplines (Policy 4106). Each faculty member is required to maintain the proper credentials for the position he or she holds or to be working toward those credentials in a timely fashion. The administration

encourages faculty members to stay current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles by taking part in appropriate professional development activities, as the budget allows (Policy 2157). Educational increments in the pay schedule also provide a financial incentive of up to $2,000 for faculty to complete higher degrees or to complete hours toward higher degrees (Policy 4320). Instructors who attend conferences, workshops, and other professional development off-campus complete a Conference Recap Form to document their attendance and the benefits they gained from the event. To alleviate the financial burden of attending these activities, the College, in accordance with State guidelines, reimburses authorized personal expenses incurred during travel (Policy 6126). Further, faculty are expected to attend professional development offered by the College at the beginning of each semester (Fall 2017 Inservice Agenda; Spring 2018 Inservice Agenda). The Distance Education and Instructional Technology (DEIT) department also offers professional development and faculty support opportunities pertaining to the use of Moodle and instructional technologies each semester. In addition, the DEIT department conducts Online Course Quality Improvement Training (OCQIT) each semester. Instructors are required to complete this training before a new online course will be reviewed. All new online courses must be reviewed according to the OCQIT Rubric and subsequently approved prior to being offered to students. Furthermore, professional development is specifically addressed in the annual Self-Evaluation that faculty submit as part of their Professional Teaching Portfolios (Faculty Self-Evaluation Form). By formally reflecting on their professional development activities at least once a year, faculty are able to gauge the extent to which more professional development might be useful and to identify areas in which they could benefit from further professional development. Faculty are also encouraged to foster their own professional growth, and aid in the improvement of higher education, by attending worthwhile educational and professional meetings and to actively serve on professional committees within their disciplines (Policy 2156).

Instructors are required to be available to students through office hours, advising, and other institutional activities (Policy 4106). All full-time instructors have personal offices to use for student conferences and are required to have class time, office hours, and contact information on a posted schedule outside their offices (Policy 4150). This information is also required on each instructor's syllabi (Syllabus Template; Syllabus Review Form); therefore, all students are provided with this information, regardless of their method of enrollment (i.e., traditional, online, hybrid, CVN, etc.). The deans and the Office of the Vice President of Academics maintain copies of syllabi and office hours for all instructors. Finally, some instructors make themselves available to students by offering time in the Academic Success Center to support students who need additional assistance or tutoring. In the Fall 2017 semester, nine instructors from four subject areas spent 384 hours working in the ASC (Fall 2017 Academic Success Center Records). Likewise, some math instructors assist in the modular math classrooms outside their scheduled classroom time.

Student support services are provided by qualified staff members. Academic credentials for all current personnel are located on the Faculty and Staff Directory on the BRTC website and in the Catalog (Policy 2142). It is preferable that directors and coordinators hold a master's degree. Because the job description for the position includes counseling, the Dean of Students is also a Licensed Professional Counselor. Staff training occurs through conference attendance, webinars, specialty trainings (for example, on the use of new software), and in-house trainings. For

example, the Academic Success Center Coordinator - whose credentials are in developmental education, specifically reading - provides tutor training for on-campus tutors (Tutor Handbook). Also, staff members are encouraged to attend appropriate sessions at the annual Arkansas Community Colleges Conference, have been sent for training at Title IX conferences, and have been given training on Colleague, the College's new enterprise resource planning system. Continuing education for employees is encouraged by offering full-time employees tuition waivers at the institution (Policy 6200) and through pay incentives for educational increments for non-classified employees who complete higher education (Policy 5500). The BRTC policies that encourage faculty to attend professional meetings and/or serve on professional committees (Policy 2156) and to attend appropriate professional development activities (Policy 2157) also apply to staff members, and the same provisions for reimbursing personal expenses incurred during travel for these activities are applied to staff as well (Policy 6126).

Sources

- 2017 Fall Inservice Agenda
- 2018 Respiratory Care Student Handbook
- 2018 Spring Inservice Agenda
- Academic Committee Appointments 2017-2018
- Academic Success Center Tutor Handbook
- Academic Success Center Tutoring Records Fall 2017
- Academic Units and Departments Chart
- Annual Faculty Self-Evaluation
- Assessment Committee Policies and Procedures
- BRTC Course Catalog 2017-18
- BRTC Course Catalog 2017-18 (page number 259)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 86)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 89)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 91)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 92)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 136)
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- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 175)
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- Course Quality Rubric Approved May 2018
- Curriculum Committee Policies and Procedures.pdf
- Curriculum Development Flow Chart
- Example of Proposal Progression through Academic Committees
- Faculty Handbook 2018-2019.pdf
- Faculty Handbook 2018-2019.pdf (page number 19)
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- Faculty Performance Review
- Meeting Conference Recap form
- Online Course Student Evaluation Form
- Paramedic Student HANDBOOK
- Practical Nursing Handbook Spring 2018
- Program Review Committee Policies and Procedures
- Student Evaluation of Instruction
- Student Handbook - 2018-2019
- Syllabus Review Form
- Syllabus Template

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Argument

Many BRTC students are identified as at-risk for non-completion due to a number of variables. For example, many are first-generation college students, many are under-resourced, and many are required to take developmental courses to promote college-readiness. In the 2015-2016 academic year, 90% of BRTC's first-time, full-time students qualified for need-based financial aid (IPEDS Data). Also, for the Fall 2017 semester, 58.3% of BRTC's Pell Grant recipients reported income low enough to qualify them to received the full award allowable (2016-2017 IPEDS Worksheet). Furthermore, for the Fall 2017 semester, 21% of the students were required to enroll in at least one developmental education course. In an effort to overcome these barriers and consistent with the mission, BRTC provides students with a wide range of services designed to enhance students' learning and academic success.

Through the Academic Success Center (ASC), academic support in general studies courses is offered free of charge to enrolled students to give them the tools to complete coursework independently and successfully (ASC Brochure).Tutoring is offered in two formats: walk-in tutoring and online tutoring (ASC Webpage). Walk-in tutoring sessions feature traditional one-on-one tutoring with a professional or student tutor. Tutors can also work with small groups of students. During the 2017-2018 academic year, the ASC was staffed exclusively by BRTC faculty. Tutors are available for English, writing, math, science, and business at both locations. Resources available to students who visit the ASC include study handouts, webcams, headphones, calculators, and adding machines. Computer programs, such as Job Access with Speech (JAWS) for the visually impaired and programs necessary for the business classes, are installed on the computers in the lab. Around-the-clock online tutoring, especially important to students in distance education classes who are not able to physically come to campus, is offered through Smarthinking (Online Tutoring Webpage). Smarthinking allows traditional, hybrid, or online students to connect to live educators from any computer that has Internet access, with no

special software installation or equipment required. To advertise the ASC, the Coordinator visits classrooms and organizes class visits to the ASC at the beginning of each semester. Flyers are posted on campus, Moodle, and media boards to inform students of the ASC's operating hours, tutor availability and times, and information about Smarthinking. The ASC Coordinator composes an annual report on the number of students served and the resources they accessed (Fall 2017 ASC Tutoring Records). Finally, the coordinator submits a self-study as part of the Administrative and Support Unit Review process that details the ASC's current status and future plans (2018 ASC Administrative and Support Unit Review). Beginning in the Fall 2018 semester, the ASC will house an advising center where students can go for academic counseling, schedule planning, and help with registration. The advising center will also be the contact point for the exit advising sessions that will be required for students to complete their Intent to Graduate forms beginning in the Fall 2018 semester as well.

The College also supports its students through its library. The BRTC library has holdings of over 25,000 onsite books and references and provides access to information in a variety of other formats to strengthen students' information literacy skills. The physical holdings are small in comparison to the online subscription databases (e.g., EBSCOhost, LexisNexis, and Health Reference Center) to which the College subscribes. BRTC is also a member of the ARKlink consortium, allowing BRTC students to retrieve materials from fifty-two participating libraries across the state (Library Brochure). These two resources are particularly important to online students who are unable to be on campus. In addition, the librarian hosts several library orientations each semester to acquaint students with library and database use (Library Orientation), and has recently added an online library orientation for students in online classes (Online Library Orientation).

The computing resources at BRTC support the College's educational, instructional, research, and administrative activities. BRTC has many computer labs (12 at Pocahontas and 6 at Paragould), and LCD projectors are available in labs and classrooms for hands-on instruction. All registered students are given a computer services account and are able to access the Internet and e-mail through lab computers or via Wi-Fi from a personal device.

Another group of student support services at BRTC is offered through the Career Pathways Initiative. Career Pathways is supported by ADHE, Arkansas Community Colleges, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education, and the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services. Career Pathways assists students who have dependent children under the age of 21 in the home, and who have a household income below the 250% federal poverty guidelines. This program provides students with the opportunity to complete GED/adult education classes, employability certificates, career readiness certificates signed by the Governor of Arkansas, short-term career certificate programs, and two-year degree programs. To help qualifying students achieve these goals, eligible Career Pathways students may also receive the following:

- Transportation cost assistance
- Childcare cost assistance
- Tuition and fee assistance
- Tutoring Services
- Career and academic counseling

- Job search support

In the Career Pathways program, a completer is defined as a student who exits the program and has completed at least one attainment (e.g., GED, credential, or degree) during his or her participation in the program. Data reported by the State of Arkansas shows that, of the BRTC Career Pathways completers in fiscal year 2014, 66% (goal 55%) had entered employment within the first quarter after exiting and had earned at least $1000.00. Of those who had entered employment during the first quarter, 88% (goal 80%) were still employed after 6 months, and 94% (goal 80%) of those were still employed after 12 months. Data for fiscal year 2015 shows 71% (goal 55%) of completers entered employment after exiting, and 93% (goal 80%) of those were still employed after 6 months. Data for fiscal year 2016 shows 86% (goal 55%) of completers entered employment after exiting the Career Pathways program. No further state data has been received; however, internal data maintained by BRTC Career Pathways staff show that, for fiscal year 2017, 86% of completers entered employment within their field. For fiscal year 2018 thus far, 87% of completers have entered employment within their field (Career Pathways Initiative Data). Additional documentation of the success of Career Pathways can be viewed in the linked Research Results from College Counts.

Career Pathways has been a very successful program at BRTC. However, not all students meet eligibility criteria. BRTC recognized this gap and created a position to provide similar services to non-qualifying students. This position was originally called the Completion and Retention Specialist (CRS), and it fell under the authority of the Vice President of Technical Education. When the College's administrative structure was revised during the 2017-2018 academic year, the Vice President of Technical Education and Vice President of General Education positions were combined into the Vice President of Academics, and the Completion and Retention Specialist was put under that position's authority. As the opportunities for using the CRS became more clear, the position was put under the authority of the Vice President of Enrollment Management during the Spring 2018 semester, assigned a revised set of duties, and given a new title--Student Success Coordinator (SSC). The SSC's role is to serve as a liaison for students as they progress through their programs of study and to assist students in completing those programs. The SSC is responsible for developing and implementing success plans for at-risk students, educating students on transfer opportunities and processes, assisting with student life events, assisting with online orientation delivery, and establishing and monitoring a new Early Alert System (Student Success Strategic Plan). The SSC is also an instructor for the Student Success course that is required for students who test into two or more developmental courses (SSC Position Description). The SSC either visits or provides a promotional video to be shown to all classes at the beginning of each semester to make students aware of his or her role and the services available. Online students receive the information through a video placed in each online class.

BRTC provides support services to qualifying disabled students through the ADA Compliance Coordinator. This coordinator can arrange for academic adjustments, workplace accommodations, and auxiliary aids for qualified students (ADA Transitions Guide; ADA Handbook). Students requesting disability services and/or accommodations must complete the BRTC Disability Services Intake and Assessment Form and provide documentation of the disability from a qualified professional (ADA Physician Form; ADA Intake Form). BRTC will

then provide appropriate auxiliary aids, without cost, to those students with verified disabilities/handicaps. For example, BRTC students may borrow headphones, recorders, and/or a Spellex with appropriate disability documentation and a completed loan agreement (ADA Loan Agreements). If necessary, BRTC will also provide appropriately trained service providers. For students with a documented seizure disorder, a Student Seizure Disorder Agreement may be completed to ensure appropriate procedures are in place in the event the student experiences a seizure while on campus. The ADA Coordinator maintains detailed records of students with approved disability documentation, including their documented disability and their qualifying documentation (2017-2018 ADA Services). At the beginning of each semester, the ADA Compliance Coordinator sends Accommodation Letters to all instructors of students with documented disabilities. These letters provide faculty with information on the students who require accommodations, along with a list of their approved accommodations.

Assistance to veterans is another resource available to qualifying students at BRTC. These services are provided through the VA Representative. VA-qualified students include service men and women who fall within the following categories: Chapter 33 Post 9/11 GI Bill, Chapter 30 Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty, Chapter 1606 Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve, Chapter 1607 REAP (Reserve Educational Assistance Program), Chapter 35 Dependents' Educational Assistance, and Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation. The VA Representative provides academic advising to VA students and ensures that all students receiving VA educational benefits maintain compliance with the laws and regulations set forth by the VA (Veterans Affairs Webpage).

BRTC also promotes student success through the development of articulation agreements with several area institutions. These agreements promote a smooth transition between BRTC and other colleges so that students who transfer do not have to be concerned about losing credits or having to repeat courses. These articulation agreements are shared on the College's website (Articulation Agreement Webpage).

As an institution that trains students for careers, BRTC sees career placement as an important service. Thus another support service offered to students is BRTC's Career Services, provided through the office of the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students is also the career counselor (Career Counseling Webpage). The career counselor offers the following services:

- Administration of personality and interest inventories to help students decide on a career path or major
- Résumé development
- Career advising
- Access to job searches and resources
- Assistance in developing job skills, including interviewing techniques and networking

BRTC also provides students with free access to the Online Career Management Database. This resource allows students and alumni to build professional résumés and cover letters. Students can also view local job postings and apply online for positions. Potential employers also have access to this database so that they can post job opportunities and view students' or alumni's resumes. Students and alumni can also visit the Career Planning webpage from the BRTC website to

explore career options, take interest and aptitude assessments, find programs of interests, search for jobs both locally and nationally, explore salary and benefit information, create and post résumés, and get interview tips. Users may also create a Career Action Plan that will help them choose the best major and career. By offering both face-to-face and online services, BRTC's Career Services effectively targets both traditional and distance-education students.

To place students into appropriate math, English, and reading courses according to Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) requirements, BRTC currently uses the ACCUPLACER test; however, ACT, and/or SAT scores are accepted as well. See the Freshman Assessment and Placement document for BRTC's current placement scores for each of these tests. For students considering an online class for the first time, the Distance Education and Instructional Technology department offers an online questionnaire to help the students gauge how comfortable they would be with an online class (Online Delivery Choice Guide).

For students seeking to perform their best on the ACCUPLACER, Adult Education offers free pretesting and retesting preparation, and is currently developing a distance learning course that will help students prepare for the ACCUPLACER at home. ACCUPLACER preparation is an important element of a new admission status recently instituted by Enrollment Management. First-time freshmen who have a composite ACT score below 15 and whose reading score is below 35 upon retesting with the ACCUPLACER will be encouraged to enroll in BRTC's Adult Education program to improve the skills necessary not only to perform better on future ACCUPLACER attempts, but also to complete developmental and credit classes successfully. The Adult Education program also offers a variety of classes available to all adults age eighteen or older. People wishing to enroll who are sixteen or seventeen years of age must meet academic qualifications, have parental approval, and obtain a release from the last school they attended. Students enrolled in Adult Education classes are enriched through a wide range of available studies and have the opportunity to review or learn new skills necessary for career or educational improvement (Adult Education Webpage). Adult Education develops a learning plan, based on an individual's preferred learning style, allowing the student to begin at an appropriate educational level and to progress at his or her own pace. BRTC also has a process for comprehensive transcript review during the admissions process. Admissions staff recognize that multiple placement indicators should be reviewed for accurate assessment of a student's placement needs.

BRTC also offers a Student Success course (COLL 1001 Student Success) to assist students in developing strategies that will aid them in meeting the demands of college life. The course's focus is on the development of practical knowledge and skills--including time management, test taking strategies, communication skills, memory skills, study techniques, critical thinking skills, community and campus resources, and managing relationships--that will help students identify and reach academic goals (Example COLL 1001 Syllabus). Students testing into two or more developmental education courses are required to take the Student Success class.

Finally, BRTC has recently undertaken a change in its math requirements that should benefit students who need preparatory instruction in that subject. In recent years, a statewide Math Pathways Task Force has been working to introduce an alternative to College Algebra for students whose degree choices do not necessarily call for abstract algebraic computations. The

task force included representatives from all two- and four-year colleges in the state. The deliberations resulted in an effort to offer Quantitative Literacy--a course focusing on the practical application of mathematical principles--as an alternative to College Algebra for many degrees. This changes also led BRTC to revisit its developmental math offerings to shorten the length of time students need to complete those requirements. This process resulted in one stand-alone developmental math course - Foundations of College Algebra - which is intended for students whose degrees still require College Algebra but whose placement scores do not allow them to enter that course directly. Students who test into developmental math classes but whose degrees require Quantitative Literacy (which will be called Mathematical Reasoning at BRTC) will fulfill those requirements during mandatory lab hours (Quantitative Literacy Information). The BRTC Math department elected to start these new courses and to adjust placement scores to be more consistent with other colleges in the area in the Fall 2018 semester. The Math department submitted a proposal that was approved by the Curriculum and Assessment Committees. The College anticipates that these changes will have a positive impact on retention and completion.

Another support service offered to students is BRTC's academic advising procedure. First-time freshmen, transfer students, and re-admits (returning students who have not attended BRTC for at least one academic year) meet one-on-one with admissions advisors to finalize their degree choice and plan their schedules. Advisors also provide helpful information and guidance for accessing the student portal, academic calendar, bookstore, etc. If necessary, students are directed to the financial aid staff to determine if any action needs to be taken or documents need to be submitted (Advising Webpage). These students also complete an online orientation after the advising and registration appointment. Orientation modules consist of topics such as the *Course Catalog*, the *Student Handbook*, Title IX, the Academic Success Center, clubs, disability services, FACTS payments, accessing student information through portal, etc.

After initial advisement, students are assigned a faculty advisor within their program. Faculty advisors are required to attempt to contact their advisees early each semester to begin establishing an effective working relationship (Policy 4275). Prior to registering for classes each semester, students are encouraged to meet with their advisor. During this meeting, the advisor performs the following duties:

- Guides students in choosing the best courses for their schedules
- Helps students plan their graduation and career path
- Counsels students regarding the program(s) that best meet their goals

Online students are advised in the same manner; however, advising for online students is conducted via Moodle, by phone, or by email (Advising Webpage).

BRTC believes effective and timely advising is an important component in improving retention and completion. The College also believes that Colleague, its new enterprise resource planning system, has features that will help advisors with this task:

- Status bars that show progress toward degree completion
- The ability to plan a student's schedule from the first day of enrollment to graduation

- Permanent advisor notes that are visible to anyone who advises a student
- A calendar view course plan to help students with time management
- Easily accessible degree plans to help students stay on track to finish their degrees

BRTC has the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning through technological infrastructure, science laboratories, computer and industrial technology, and clinical practice sites. BRTC's technological infrastructure comprises over one thousand computers (desktops and laptops), one hundred AV-integrated classrooms, four compressed video installations, two hundred phones interconnected via copper/fiber optic cable and wireless connectivity to twelve in-house physical servers, numerous virtual servers, and multiple Internet connections spread across both physical locations. The one thousand computers include faculty and staff machines as well as computers in academic labs. All machines on campus are networked within their building with either gig-capable network switches or Wi-Fi. Currently, less than 20% of personal computers on campus are laptops or tablets, but clearly the trend is for this percentage to grow over the next few years.

The College has three compressed video-equipped classrooms: two in Pocahontas and one in Paragould. One of the Pocahontas units is dedicated almost exclusively to the Nursing department's use. One of the Pocahontas units and the Paragould unit are connected to each other through a dedicated line. The compressed video classrooms provide more scheduling options to students by allowing the College to run simultaneous sections of a class at each location, even if one or both of those sections has enrollment low enough that it would not be feasible to offer it as a standalone section.

Almost all classrooms are now equipped with multimedia projectors and AV equipment. Wi-Fi access is available across all campus buildings. BRTC provides daily access to hundreds of wireless devices brought to campus by students, faculty, staff, and guests.

The College is a designated Pearson VUE testing center, offering GED and industry certification exams. The College also offers ACCUPLACER and industrial training testing. BRTC has recently reactivated the Certiport testing to allow students to test for Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certifications. The Business department is planning to add the MOS certification into the specialized Microsoft classes (i.e., Introduction to Word Processing, Spreadsheets for Managerial Decisions, and Business Professional Presentations) that focus on a specific Microsoft application. Students who pass the exam earn professional certifications that can be listed on their resumes and assist with future employment opportunities.

BRTC uses Moodle as its learning management system (LMS). BRTC's Moodle site is hosted in the cloud by a third-party vendor so that it will be available to online students even if utilities on campus are disrupted, as they have been due to flooding twice in the past six years. Hosting Moodle off-site has other advantages, such as the ability to administer Moodle from anywhere there is an internet connection without someone remoting into BRTC's network, no hardware failures, and no hardware maintenance. Students, faculty, staff, and administration have access to the site, and faculty are encouraged to use Moodle for their courses regardless of the modality in which those courses are taught. The Distance Education and Instructional Technology (DEIT) department serves as the administrator of Moodle (DEIT Webpage). The department offers

trainings on Moodle and provides Moodle user manuals for instructors and students (Moodle Student Guide; Moodle Instructor Guide). The department also provides trainings on other instructional technology tools each semester as well as on best practices in distance education teaching and learning. An Instructional Media Studio is housed in the DEIT department to provide instructors a way of creating quality video/audio to support their online classrooms (Instructional Media Studio Webpage).

BRTC has sufficient laboratory space to support programs in business, science, allied health, industrial technology, and agriculture. Science laboratories are located in the Health Science Complex, which houses the Science department for the General Studies unit at Pocahontas. Four combination lecture/laboratory classrooms and two lecture-only hall house chemistry, physics, physical science, biology, microbiology, and anatomy and physiology. Each space is designed to accommodate twenty-four students in multiple arrangements for group or individual study. The combination lecture/laboratory classroom promotes integration of theory and practice, as the instructors can transition seamlessly from lecture to hands-on instruction. The mobile and modular design gives instructors and students the freedom to arrange the workspace to fit the task. The goal is to provide an environment similar to what students might encounter in their future workplaces. A wet and dry lab is also located at the Paragould instructional location and provides similar experiences. Finally, a greenhouse on the Pocahontas campus gives students a hands-on laboratory setting for Soils and Introduction to Plant Science.

The Respiratory and Paramedic departments have classrooms and clinical site practice areas in the Joe Martin building on the Pocahontas campus. The Respiratory site includes areas with hospital settings such as headwall systems, oxygen, suction, SimMom and infant, neonatal, and Nursing Annes that are computer-compatible for scenario-based training. Likewise, the Paramedic department has a clinical practice site with an ambulance simulator, a computer-interactive Meti-man, other manikins for practice with intubation and IV insertion capabilities, and areas simulating in-home patient retrieval.

The Health Science Complex nursing lab comprises 11,000 square feet of clinical space. This sixteen-bed facility allows students to experience hospital-like simulations. It also contains four simulation rooms and two control rooms featuring high-fidelity manikins for patient-care scenarios. The clinical space also includes a state-of-the-art birthing suite with a birthing simulator, birthing bed, newborn warmer, and LDRP set-up. Of the sixteen beds in the facility, there are eight semi-private rooms and eight private rooms. The lab includes a ceiling-mount lift; traditional lifts; high-fidelity, low-fidelity, and static manikins; IV arms; IV pumps and poles; wound modules; and training modules for various skills. There is also a medication room and a Pyxis system for students to simulate administering medication. A handicap-accessible shower and bathroom is also part of the lab, allowing students to practice bathing a patient on a shower chair. Along with the simulation rooms, there are two large rooms for debriefing after the scenarios. Large projection televisions allow the students to watch the scenario and learn from the simulation in a more relaxed atmosphere. Along with the on-campus setting, Allied Health students attend many off-campus clinical sites as well (Allied Health Clinical Sites).

BRTC has open computer labs at both locations. These classrooms are equipped with computers, printers, and projectors. The Law Enforcement Training Academy (LETA), Phlebotomy,

Dietetics, Auto Body, Auto Technology, Welding, Machine Shop, and Electricity programs have designated areas on campus that are supported with technology in lab settings and separate or shared classroom areas. In addition, LETA has a VirTra 300 law enforcement field training simulator to provide interactive training scenarios for cadets.

The library has holdings of over 25,000 books, references, and periodicals, as well as adequate staff to support the College's programs (Library Webpage). The library is open fifty hours per week with reference services available continuously to provide users with assistance in locating information and resources. An online catalog provides access to the in-house collection. Reserve items are available at the circulation desk. The library's Internet and CD-ROM databases give full-text accessibility to thousands of magazines and journals and provide abstracts for many more (Library Databases Webpage; Library Web Links Webpage). Books and journal articles that the library does not own can usually be obtained through an interlibrary loan process. Further, BRTC is one of a fifty-two member ARKLink consortium. ARKLink member libraries participate in a statewide reciprocal borrowing program using the ARKLink Card, allowing students to borrow books from other participating members. Distance learners enrolled at the College are provided detailed information for accessing the online catalog and the Internet databases through the library's homepage. Orientation sessions are offered for classes each semester, and printed guides are available which explain library policies and guide patrons in using the library (Library Brochure). The library is open to the public, faculty, staff, and students (Policy 6210).

Guidance in the effective use of research and information resources is provided to students through classroom instruction and through library orientation sessions. Research is used in many classes: Freshman English II, history and other social science classes, human anatomy and physiology, and some of the technical programs (Sample Syllabi). Many instructors post information about how to conduct research in their Moodle classroom or through handouts (Examples of Research in Courses). In addition, tutors in the ASC, who are members of the BRTC faculty, have expertise in proper research and documentation skills and can guide students in the proper use and documentation of source material. Finally, the English department has included accurate and effective source use and documentation as one of the course-level learning outcomes that it assesses each semester in Freshman English II and Technical Writing. One or the other of these courses is required for all associate degrees offered by the College.

Also, during the Spring 2017 semester, the faculty were surveyed over the sixteen Association of American Colleges & Universities' VALUE rubrics in order to chose learning outcomes for assessing general education at the College. The faculty's inclusion of Information Literacy as one of the six outcomes it selected reflects its belief that locating, evaluating, and using information are important skills for all students to have.

Sources

- 2016-2017 IPEDS Worksheet from Financial Aid
- 2017-2018 ADA Services
- 2017-2018 Moodle Student User Guide

- 2018 ASC Administrative Unit Review
- Academic Success Center
- Academic Success Center Brochure
- Academic Success Center Tutoring Records Fall 2017
- ACCUPLACER Testing
- ADA HANDBOOK (3)
- ADA Loan Agreements
- ADA-PhysicianForm
- ADA-Transitions-Guide
- Adult Education
- Advising
- Allied Health Clinical Sites List Fall 2017
- Black River Technical College Library Orientation
- BRTC Career Connections flyer
- BRTC Library Brochure
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 151)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 224)
- BRTC's General Education Outcomes Assessment Rubrics
- BRTC's General Education Outcomes Assessment Rubrics (page number 5)
- Career Center
- Career Counseling
- Career Pathways
- Career Pathways Initiative Data
- College Counts
- Databases
- Direct Transfer Degrees
- Distance Education
- Examples of Research in Courses
- Freshman Assessment and Placement
- Instructional Media Studio webpage
- Intake and Assessment Form
- IPEDS Information
- Job Description for Student Success Coordinator
- Library
- Library Links
- Moodle 3.0 Instructor Manual
- Online Delivery Choice Guide
- Online Library Orientation
- Online Tutoring
- Quantitative Literacy Information
- Sample Syllabi with Research Assignments
- Student Success Course Syllabus
- Student Success Strategic Plan
- Veteran Affairs

3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Argument

Black River Technical College policy defines as co-curricular "any activities or learning experiences that complement and align with BRTC's mission and the institution's general education outcomes" ([Policy 7117](#)). In response to declining enrollment and as part of a significant realignment of the College's administrative structure, the College began a shift from an admissions-based philosophy to an enrollment management philosophy. Changes that were part of this shift included the hiring of a new Vice President of Enrollment Management and the creation of a new Dean of Students position. Another change was the adoption of a new BRTC policy regarding co-curricular assessment. According to this policy, the College will implement a comprehensive plan to assess the achievement of learning outcomes set for co-curricular programs ([Policy 7117](#)). To fulfill the requirements of this policy, in the Spring 2018 semester, the Enrollment Management unit took official ownership of the College's co-curricular program and developed the [2018-2019 Comprehensive Student Life Plan](#). The plan is a monthly schedule of co-curricular events centered on specific values that point to the mission of BRTC. These themes include career exploration, personal responsibility, perseverance, and others. Each month includes a series of events based on its theme and an assessment tool that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of one of the items on that month's schedule. These tools include focus groups, student surveys, and participation logs. The Director of Student Affairs is charged with collecting and evaluating the results from the assessment tools and reporting those results to the appropriate BRTC administration and staff twice a year to inform the development of future co-curricular events.

The theme and activities for September 2018 give a good example of the Comprehensive Student Life Plan's scope. The theme for that month is "Campus and Community Service." Activities that are currently planned for that month include community service days for faculty, staff, and students; volunteer opportunities for students on campus; and a yet-to-be-determined SGA-sponsored community service project on campus. To assess the value participants find in the service days, Enrollment Management will survey all faculty, staff, and students about the effectiveness of the service days and about potential ways to improve such events in the future ([Comprehensive Student Life Plan](#)). The College believes that these service activities are a very direct way to achieve our mission by enhancing the community it serves.

The College's mission states that it "transforms lives" through the education experiences it offers. Since the College is located in a rural, low-socioeconomic-status region, many students do not have an opportunity to visit other states or countries. Therefore, some of the money given to clubs each year is used to fund or partially fund student trips outside the region. Each year the Auto Collision Club requests funds to assist in paying for the Auto Body and Auto Tech students to tour the Corvette plant and museum in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and the Nissan manufacturing plant in Canton, Mississippi. Each year faculty and staff at the College organize short trips abroad, with options for payment and financial support for students. Past trips to Italy, Washington, D.C., and London and Paris (London, Paris, and Normandy Trip) have been partially funded by SGA as well. These events broaden students' global awareness, and students may earn up to three transferable credit hours in humanities for participating (Travel Opportunities Webpage).

While the College's mission focuses on education, it also reflects the institution's commitment to its community. The College seeks to fulfill that commitment by offering programs that are open to the public and by hosting community organizations' events on campus (Policy 1135). Students, faculty, and staff are provided opportunities to contribute to and to be involved in community projects. Events from Spring 2018-Fall 2019 have included or will include a Child Abuse Awareness Walk; a 5K Run/Walk; Community Service Day for faculty, staff, and students; Tree Planting Day; Highway Cleanup Day; and toy and canned food drives (Comprehensive Student Life Plan). Other BRTC programs promote community engagement and education as well. For example, the Holocaust Survivor series provides students, faculty, and community members an opportunity to learn about Holocaust history from the first-hand perspective of a survivor (*The River's Edge*, volume 15.5). Many of the area schools bring junior high and high school students to the presentation, which is held annually on the Pocahontas campus in the Randolph County Development Center. This event is partially funded through the Special Event and Activity Support (SEAS) program. Likewise, Corporate and Community Education offers numerous non-credit courses and learning opportunities for community members (Pocahontas Corporate and Community Education Webpage; Paragould Corporate and Community Education Webpage). For example, in April of 2017, this unit offered Spanish for Medical Personnel. This class helps the community by giving the medical industry in the region the ability to serve a growing segment of the population and by helping Hispanic immigrants to the area access appropriate medical care (Spanish for Medical Personnel Webpage). Many community members belong to Serendipity, a program that promotes lifelong learning and includes books and activities that introduce members to different cultures and experiences. Finally, in the past three years, students have also donated their artwork to the Randolph Home (a local nursing home) and the Dalton Street Housing Authority, where the paintings have been added to these institutions' permanent collections.

The College has also paved the way for real-world work experience for students enrolled in its technical programs by instituting an instructional program project work policy. This policy allows programs to accept projects from students, state employees, advisory board members, Board members, and government agencies, or, in the absence of projects from these sources, from the public. A work order that includes the total cost of materials and supplies must be submitted for each project, and the Board reviews these work orders quarterly. Projects with a

cost of $1,000 or more must be approved by the program instructor, the Vice President of Academics, and an advisory board member (Policy 7120).

BRTC has an economic impact on the regional economy through employment opportunities, increased earnings for graduates, and return to stakeholders for their support of the College. In addition, the College's advisory boards assist in adjusting curriculum and creating programs to meet the economic needs of the community (Advisory Board Survey Results; Spring 2018 Advisory Board Minutes).

Sources

- 2018 London, Paris & Normandy
- Academic Program Advisory Committee Survey, 2018
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 24)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 242)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 245)
- Comprehensive Student Life Plan.pdf
- Comprehensive Student Life Plan.pdf (page number 4)
- Paragould Community Education Courses & Seminars
- Paragould Corporate Education Courses & Seminars
- Pocahontas Corporate & Community Education
- Spanish for Medical Personnel
- Spring 2018 Advisory Minutes
- Travel Opportunities
- Volume 15, Issue 5
- Volume 15, Issue 5 (page number 2)

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Summary

BRTC develops and maintains degree programs appropriate to its mission and to the students it serves. It ensures the quality and rigor of its courses are consistent regardless of whether the class is taken in Pocahontas, in Paragould, online, or concurrently in an area high school. Also, it has developed general education learning outcomes based on the Association of American Colleges & Universities VALUE rubrics. These outcomes represent the general education concepts the College believes are important to college students in any program of study. Programs engage students in a variety of educational activities, including traditional lecture classes, laboratories, creative endeavors, hands-on technical training, and clinical experiences.

The College ensures programs and courses are offered by properly credentialed and qualified instructors, including classes offered concurrently to high school students. Instructors' performance is evaluated annually, and those instructors who are on a credentialing plan must provide evidence of continued coursework in their field of study.

Students are further supported by a number of services and resources, such as the Academic Success Center, the library, computer services, Career Pathways, the Student Success Coordinator, ADA services, and Veterans Affairs. The College uses standardized testing to identify students in need of preparatory instruction and guides students into the appropriate courses. The College has sufficient physical facilities, technological capabilities, specialized equipment, and information resources to support its academic programs. Instructors also contribute to student success by being available for conferences and student advising.

Finally, the College offers co-curricular activities appropriate to its mission and to the support of its academic programs.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Argument

One way BRTC demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs is through its program review processes. Program evaluation is one of the duties explicitly assigned to the President and staff (Policy 2165). Programs are reviewed internally every three years and, in accordance with Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) policy, by external reviewers every seven to ten years. These reports are compiled and shared with the Board at its quarterly meeting (Policy 7112). Because of the disruptions caused by the campus being flooded at the end of the 2016-2017 academic year, the President and the Vice President of Academics postponed the program reviews due on September 1, 2017 until September 1, 2018. At the August 2018 Board of Trustees meeting, an addendum to policy will be submitted for approval, revising the program review timetables. Reviews that are scheduled for 2018 will now be reviewed in 2019 and May 15 will be the due date for annual program reports.

A concern in the 2016 team report was a lack of evidence that program review information was being used internally to inform the College's efforts to improve programs. The College has begun to implement improved processes for reviewing programs and ensuring that the information gained from the reviews is used to improve programs. Going forward, beginning Spring 2019, programs will submit an annual program report on May 15 that requires reflection on assessment data; compilation of retention, completion, and persistence data, and discussion of a plan for improving results, if needed. Programs will also discuss program revisions implemented during the previous year and the re-evaluation/impact of these changes (Annual Program Report). In addition, every three years, programs will submit a self-study requiring a detailed description of the program (e.g., curriculum, students, faculty, resources), a compilation of the data included in the annual reports, and an analysis of the program's overall effectiveness (Program Self-Study). The self-studies will be submitted to the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation, the Vice President of Academics, and the chair of the Program Review Committee by May 30th of the academic year they are due. The Program Review Committee is responsible for formal review of all internal and external program reviews, including the College's three-year Program Self-Studies and the seven-year external program reviews. As a component of this review, the Program Review Committee will meet with the respective dean and the program director/advisor of the program under evaluation to discuss the review and seek clarification, if needed. The Committee will then document the results of its review and forward its report to the Vice President of Academics, the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation, the dean for the program being reviewed, the program director/advisor, and all program faculty. A summary of the Program Review Committee's report and any planned improvements will be included in Part IV of the program's subsequent Annual Program Report as well as the Program Effectiveness section of the subsequent Program Self-Study. This process ensures that all relevant constituents are informed of program review results and recommendations; it also informs the College in its future planning endeavors.

Another way program review has been enhanced is by improving the advisory board component of the review process. As described in more detail in 3.A, during their Spring 2018 semester meetings, the advisory boards were asked to evaluate their respective programs' student learning outcomes and offer suggestions. Furthermore, the advisory board surveys were revised to encourage more analysis of the boards' actual programs rather than to focus on more general questions about BRTC graduates. The College expects these changes to yield more meaningful data that will inform the program review process. However, the College recognizes that while collecting good information is important, the process cannot stop at that point. Nor can it stop once that data has been reported to the ADHE. To create a place where data can be easily accessed for analysis by multiple parties, the College is exploring data dashboard features in Colleague, BRTC's new enterprise resource planning system. Creating dashboards that are helpful will require determining what data will be useful and should be collected and assigning responsibility for collecting and analyzing that data. Perhaps the most important step, based on the College's deficiencies in using program review data that has been collected in the past, is building into the program review procedures for establishing goals that align with the academic programming aspects of the College's Strategic Plan, using the data collected to determine if those goals are being met, and developing plans when the goals are not being met.

BRTC's programs have been approved by the ADHE (AHECB Approved Degree Programs). BRTC is likewise accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Also, it is BRTC policy that the College will maintain specialized accreditation for programs as appropriate to those programs' educational purposes and student needs (Policy 7119). Programs accredited by these agencies are included in the College's program review schedule, but the reviews will be completed according to the accrediting agencies' requirements (Policy 7112). Eight of the College's programs are additionally accredited by external agencies (see details below).

BRTC's Registrar's Office issues transfer credit to students who have successfully completed courses at other regionally-accredited institutions in accordance with BRTC policy (Policy 7130). This process involves individual evaluation of all incoming transcripts and course descriptions from the institutions at which credit was originally awarded. If the college from which a student is transferring is located in Arkansas, BRTC is mandated by Arkansas ACT 472 of 2007 to grant transfer credit based on the courses approved for transfer by ADHE. These classes are listed on the ADHE website as a part of the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS). A student must complete at least twelve credit hours in his or her degree at BRTC to earn a credential from the College (Policy 7135).

Policy 7130 also addresses granting credit based on prior learning. Students who have certificates, military credit, and/or other forms of proof of training can be evaluated for prior learning credit. Consistent with BRTC's prior learning credit policy, these students must "furnish evidence, request evaluation, and may be required to take proficiency examinations in order to receive this credit" (Catalog). Some of the most common prior learning credits granted at BRTC are in the Law Enforcement program. Students may present certificates from the University of Arkansas' Criminal Justice Institute or other educational or government agencies verifying completion of a program or certificate. The Registrar's Office provides those documents to BRTC's Director of Law Enforcement Training Academy (LETA), to determine equivalency credit within the LETA program. In addition, many students with documented military experience are able to earn prior learning credit in the place of physical education courses.

The institution has total authority over its courses, including course prerequisites and rigor of course expectations. Any changes to course prerequisites must be submitted to the faculty-comprised Curriculum Committee for consideration and approval. If approved, the changes are then presented to the Executive Team and Board of Trustees for notification and/or approval, if necessary (Curriculum Development Flowchart). In addition, the Curriculum Committee is responsible for approving all new courses and changes to course outcomes or the course description. To fulfill BRTC's commitment to appropriate course content and rigor, new courses must be developed according to the guidelines in the Faculty Handbook (Policy 4345). Furthermore, it is BRTC policy that content and rigor be consistent across all modes of delivery and at all locations (Policy 7118), including courses offered for dual credit (Policy 7125). In addition to being consistent in content and rigor, courses offered through BRTC's Concurrent Education Program must be taught by instructors subject to the same credentialing criteria as full-time faculty, and the courses must include and be used to assess the same student learning outcomes as their counterparts on the College's campus (Policy 7116).

One learning resource BRTC provides access to is the Academic Success Center (ASC). The ASC is a welcoming, friendly environment where students can receive free tutoring, use the computer lab, and/or find a quiet place to study. During the 2017-2018 academic year, ASC tutors were full-time BRTC faculty. Initially the decision to staff the ASC with faculty was made to provide full loads to a handful of faculty who, due to low enrollment, were a course or two short of a full teaching load. However, using fully-credentialed instructors in the ASC also guarantees a high quality tutoring staff that is fully capable of addressing students' tutoring needs. To better accommodate students who are unable to visit the Academic Success Center, BRTC also provides students with free access to Smarthinking, which provides online academic tutoring services. Students who use Smarthinking receive on-demand, individual instruction and support from professional tutors across an array of disciplines (ASC Brochure).

The BRTC Library is another important learning resource for the College's students. The mission of the BRTC Library is "to enhance learning by providing access to information that complements and supplements the college's educational programs and courses. The library seeks to provide ready access to information in a variety of formats so that students may successfully meet their academic, vocational, and personal development goals." The library contains over 25,000 volumes of in-house materials and provides access to thousands of periodicals via subscriptions to Internet databases. Student Identification Cards serve as library cards. The librarian works with each instructor to determine respective departmental and/or course needs and allocates money from the budget to support those needs. In addition, formal library orientation classes are provided to the students to demonstrate how to use the library and the online databases and to familiarize them with the library procedures (i.e., inter-library loan and ARKLink requirements). An online version of this orientation has recently been developed for students in distance-delivery courses (Online Library Orientation), and students in these courses are also provided access to learning resources through the Distance Education and Instructional Technology department's web page and the Student Lounge in Moodle, the College's learning management system (Distance Education Webpage; Moodle Student Lounge).

BRTC instructors possess the education necessary to be considered experts in their fields of study and to adhere to Higher Learning Commission credential guidelines. Instructors in the General Studies unit are required to have at least a master's degree in the discipline in which they teach; if they hold a master's degree in a discipline other than the one in which they teach, they must have at least eighteen graduate-level hours in the discipline. Based on BRTC policy, instructors teaching developmental courses must hold at least a baccalaureate degree in the field being taught (Policy 4140). In some circumstances, faculty may have documented experience to meet some of the educational qualifications. The sufficiency of such experience is determined by the Vice President of Academics, and evidence of such experience is placed in the instructor's file. Instructors in the Technical Education unit teaching in associate-level degree programs are preferred to hold a baccalaureate degree in their field. However, instructors in these programs may have sixty semester hours in an appropriate bachelor's program, national certification in the discipline, and three years of directly related work experience. For programs leading to a career or technical certificate, instructors are preferred to have either a baccalaureate degree or an associate degree and two years of directly relevant work experience supporting their expertise in the area in which they teach. However, instructors in these programs may have eighteen postsecondary semester hours of credit or national certification in the appropriate field.

Concurrent enrollment and part-time faculty must meet the same qualifications as full-time faculty, although exceptions may be made in case of extraordinary experience or training. Such exceptions must be approved and documented by the Vice President of Academics. Currently employed full-time faculty are responsible for maintaining their credentials and expertise in their field. Any new degrees, certificates, graduate hours, or licensure information must be reported annually. When recruiting new faculty members, the College will make every attempt to hire candidates with the optimum qualifications for the positions. Annually, the academic deans will use the Faculty Roster Form to review their respective faculty members' credentials and report the results of the review to the Vice President of Academics (Policy 4140; Fall 2017 Faculty Credentials; Spring 2018 Faculty Credentials).

BRTC offers dual credit enrollment for qualifying high school students within the State of Arkansas, and the College's Concurrent Enrollment Program is approved by ADHE. Any high school students who have completed the eighth grade; are enrolled in an Arkansas public or private school; and are recommended by their high school principal, superintendent, or school counselor may enroll in college courses taking place in their high schools when the combined enrollments do not exceed a normal academic load. In addition, each concurrently enrolled student must meet the following criteria adopted by the State Board of Higher Education as follows:

- The course offered "must be listed in the Arkansas Course Transfer System." This list can be found at http://acts.adhe.edu.
- Instructors will use syllabi and textbooks as approved by the College and adopt the same learning outcomes as those developed for the course on the campus. Syllabi and textbooks are approved annually by discipline-specific BRTC faculty.
- All students must meet specified minimum testing requirements as defined by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education.
- To be considered under this program, a student must submit the required paperwork/documentation as outlined in the Catalog.

It is BRTC policy that all concurrent courses are equivalent to the College's traditionally delivered courses in learning outcomes and outcomes achievement (Policy 7116). Therefore, in addition to obtaining transcripts for verifying credentials of dual-credit instructors, BRTC's Coordinator of Concurrent Enrollment requires all concurrent course syllabi to adhere to the BRTC syllabus template and to be reviewed and approved by full-time faculty members in the same or a similar discipline prior to the courses' being offered. Workshops with BRTC Concurrent Instructor Faculty Liaisons and high school instructors planning to teach concurrent courses are arranged prior to the beginning of each semester. The instructors work to create syllabi for the concurrent courses that are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of expectation and achievement to the higher education curriculum. Finally, the Coordinator of Concurrent Enrollment periodically collects survey information from concurrent instructors, the principals and counselors of the high schools in which concurrent students are enrolled, and alumni of the concurrent program (NACEP Instructor Survey; NACEP Guidance Counselor Survey; NACEP Principal Survey; NACEP One-Year Alumni Survey; NACEP Four-Year Alumni Survey). The information gathered from these surveys informs future professional development and concurrent program improvement.

It is BRTC policy that the College will maintain specialized accreditation for programs as appropriate to those programs' educational purposes and student needs (Policy 7119; Allied Health Accreditation List). Programs accredited by these agencies are included in the College's program review schedule, but the reviews will be completed according to the accrediting agencies' requirements (Policy 7112). Eight of the College's programs are additionally accredited by external agencies (Catalog). These eight programs and accrediting agencies are as follows:

- Auto Service Technician - National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation, Inc.
- Nutrition & Food Service Management – Association of Nutrition and Food Service Professionals
- Nutrition & Dietetics – Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics *(probationary status)*
- Paramedic - Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the EMS Professions
- Practical Nursing - Arkansas State Board of Nursing
- Nursing Assistant - Department of Human Services, Office of Long Term Care
- Registered Nursing - Arkansas State Board of Nursing
- Respiratory Care - Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care

In addition to these external accrediting agencies, BRTC students enrolled in any programs which use Carl Perkins funds must submit to external examinations for skill proficiency and/or certification. BRTC students have a reputation of performing well on these exams (2016-2017 Third Party Assessment).

BRTC has traditionally had difficulty tracking its graduates, as have other institutions in Arkansas. However, the College recognizes it is important to gauge the success of its graduates in order to assess the success of its programs, so attempts have been made in the past to capture relevant data. Much of this data is derived from BRTC's Graduate Follow-Up Survey, which is a resource for collecting information regarding continuing education and employment. This survey is administered to graduates two times: six months after graduation and one year after graduation (December 2016 Graduate Survey; May 2017 Graduate Survey; May 2017 6 Month Graduate Survey). BRTC also attempts to track the employment status of graduates who participated in the Career Pathways Initiative through surveys carried out by the State (Career Pathways Initiative Data). In addition to this survey data, BRTC program directors and administrators monitor pass rates on students' licensure and third-party exams. Finally, BRTC's advisory committees complete an annual survey evaluating members' opinions and ratings of recent graduates (2018 Advisory Committee Survey Results).

Finally, performance-funding data computed by the State of Arkansas is an indirect method of assessing graduate success. Arkansas has adopted a new productivity funding formula that will go into effect in the fall of 2018. Of particular note are measures related to effectiveness and affordability. Data regarding earned credentials, academic progression, transfer success, gateway course success, time to degree, and credits at completion are directly linked to the funding recommendations to the legislature.

The College recognizes the insufficiency of these methods and is poised to institute a new process for tracking graduates' success. Beginning in the fall of 2018, the Academic Success Center will serve not only as a tutoring center for students, but also as an advising center. Students will have a permanent place where they will have consistent access to quality academic advising. One of the responsibilities given to the advising center staff will be to conduct a new exit advising session with graduates. A new section of the Intent to Graduate form - which is used to make sure the student has cleared all academic and financial requirements to be granted a credential - will require potential graduates to see an advisor in the advising center and answer some questions about their plans after graduating from BRTC. Will the student be transferring to another institution? If so, where? If not, why not? Will the student be employed in the field in which he or she has received a credential? Is so, where? If not, why not? The exit advising results will be shared with advisory committees for input and will be used internally as a component of program reviews and will be evaluated by the Program Review Committee, deans, and program directors to make recommendations to the faculty. The College believes this process will yield meaningful data that can be used to improve the effectiveness of its programs.

Sources

- 2016 Program Review of AA
- 2016-2017 Third Party Assessment for Carl Perkins Funded Programs
- Academic Program Advisory Committee Survey, 2018
- Academic Success Center Brochure
- AHECB Approved Degree Programs-2018
- Allied Health Accreditation List
- Annual Program Report
- BRTC Course Catalog 2017-18
- BRTC Course Catalog 2017-18 (page number 17)
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- Moodle Login
- Moodle Student Lounge.pdf
- NACEP 1 Year Alumni Survey Results Fall 2017
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- Online Library Orientation
- Program Review Committee Policies and Procedures
- Program Self-Study

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Argument

Black River Technical College acknowledges its historical deficiencies in assessing student learning and is committed to improving its assessment measures and methodologies. BRTC faculty have long recognized the importance of implementing changes to instruction and curriculum based upon student performance. In the absence of a formal assessment framework, instructors have reflected upon their students' performance and subsequently adjusted their teaching with the goal of improving student learning. However, the College has been admittedly sluggish in adopting a formal outcomes assessment protocol. The recommendations from the Fall 2016 HLC team report served as the catalyst needed for the College to undertake a complete overhaul of its assessment framework and to make participation in assessment activities part of the faculty's official duties as detailed in BRTC policy (Policy 4106).

In the 2016-2017 academic year, the original faculty-led Assessment Committee focused on professional development in assessment to prepare the faculty to assist in the development of a comprehensive assessment plan. Teams from the Committee attended assessment workshops held by the Arkansas Association for the Assessment of Collegiate Learning and attended the HLC Winter 2017 Assessment Workshop in Arizona. At the same time, the Committee worked extensively with faculty members to develop student learning outcomes at the course and program levels, including general education outcomes that would also serve as the College's institutional learning outcomes, and to develop a comprehensive curriculum map based on those outcomes (Original Assessment Committee Minutes; Faculty Friday Agendas: 3 February, 3 March, 31 March). Furthermore, in compliance with the recommendations in the 2016 HLC team report, faculty from each program worked on curriculum mapping for their respective programs. As a result, all programs now have complete course-to-program curriculum maps maintained by the program advisors/directors (Examples of Course-to-Program Curriculum Maps).

This work was continued during the 2017-2018 academic year. To address HLC's concerns regarding the responsibility of the academic leadership and issues leading up to the probationary

sanction, President Turner restructured the Academic Unit under new leadership beginning July 1, 2017. This restructuring consolidated two academic vice presidential roles into one Vice President of Academics and re-titled the division chairs as deans of their respective units. The chair of the Assessment Committee, a full-time faculty member, was appointed to a newly created position: Dean of Assessment and Accreditation. The Dean took over primary responsibility for faculty assessment training. The Assessment Committee was reformed, this time entirely of faculty members, and took up the role of evaluating new learning outcomes or proposed changes to formerly approved learning outcomes. This role is one component of an overhauled curriculum oversight process that also includes the Curriculum and Program Review Committees, which are also comprised entirely of faculty (Curriculum Committee Description, Assessment Committee Description, Program Review Committee Description).

General education learning outcomes, because they serve as the College's institutional outcomes, can be found in the Catalog. Course and program outcomes are listed on the syllabi the students receive. Furthermore, instructors provide on each syllabus information regarding how the learning outcomes for that course align with the content in the course schedule and a statement explaining the students' role in outcomes assessment (Syllabus Template; Sample Syllabi). It is BRTC policy that the course-level outcomes for each course be identical regardless of instructor (full-time, adjunct, or concurrent enrollment), modality, or location and that all instructors - including adjunct and concurrent - participate in collecting and reviewing assessment data (Policy 7113; Faculty Handbook).

Now that the College has made significant progress in developing student learning outcomes, it is able to assess the achievement of those outcomes. The new assessment plan on campus, guided by newly instituted policy (Policy 7113), is outlined in the Faculty Handbook. Assessment at BRTC occurs at three levels: the course level, the program level, and the general education level. The following provides a brief description of each of the levels:

- **Course Outcomes Assessment.** All BRTC courses have specific and measurable outcomes, each tied to at least one assessment. Course outcomes represent the knowledge and skills students should attain as a result of successfully completing a course. The same course outcomes are consistently measured across all course sections, including sections taught by concurrent and adjunct instructors.
- **Program Outcomes Assessment.** Program outcomes represent the major skills and competencies that program graduates should develop by the time they complete a program of study. Each program offered at BRTC has adopted a set of program learning outcomes that are assessed in accordance with procedures described in the section below entitled "BRTC's Assessment Process." Program outcomes can be assessed in a variety of ways, including course assignments given in core programmatic courses, third-party assessments, portfolio reviews, pre/post-tests, capstone projects, rubrics, etc.
- **General Education Outcomes Assessment.** General education outcomes represent the common thread of competencies attained by students in all programs at BRTC. In other words, they exemplify the knowledge and skills that all BRTC students earning an associate degree or technical certificate are expected to achieve, regardless of their fields of study. BRTC's general education outcomes and their definitions are as follows:

- o Critical Thinking. A habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.
- o Global Learning. A critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability. Through global learning, students should 1) become informed, open-minded, and responsible people who are attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences, 2) seek to understand how their actions affect both local and global communities, and 3) address the world's most pressing and enduring issues collaboratively and equitably.
- o Information Literacy. The ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand.
- o Communication. A prepared, purposeful written or oral presentation designated to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the audience's attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors. Communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.
- o Quantitative Literacy. Also known as Numeracy or Quantitative Reasoning--is a "habit of mind," competency, and comfort in working with numerical data. Individuals with strong QL skills possess the ability to reason and solve quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts and everyday life situations. They understand and can create sophisticated arguments supported by quantitative evidence, and they can clearly communicate those arguments in a variety of formats (using words, tables, graphs, mathematical equations, etc., as appropriate).

The definitions for the five above-listed outcomes are derived from the Association of American Colleges & Universities' (AAC&U's) VALUE rubrics. In the fall of 2016, a team from the original Assessment Committee attended a presentation on the VALUE rubrics. The Committee was beginning to design a general education assessment plan for the College, and the team members concluded that the VALUE rubrics would be appropriate to assess broad general education concepts. The faculty were surveyed and, of the sixteen rubrics, chose the six they believed best represented the general education concepts most essential for BRTC students. In the spring of 2017, a smaller team was sent to the HLC Strategic Assessment Workshop in Arizona. The team took the VALUE rubrics that had been selected by the faculty. The Senior Scholar assigned to the team at the workshop, Susan Hatfield, noted that the rubrics were initially written with four-year institutions in mind and that the students at a two-year college might not reasonably be expected to achieve the skill level described in the highest level of the rubrics. The team modified the rubrics to remove the highest level and simplify the language in some criteria. They also combined Written Communication and Oral Communication into a single Communication rubric. These modifications were approved by the Assessment Committee and the faculty at large, and the following general education learning outcomes were adopted: Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, Global Learning, Quantitative Literacy, and Communication (General Education Outcomes Survey; Assessment Committee Minutes; Policy

[7113](#)). These rubrics represent the primary tools used for the assessment of BRTC's general education outcomes. However, instructors are also encouraged to use the VALUE rubrics at the course and program level, as appropriate.

BRTC's Assessment Process

- **Course-Level Assessment**

Course-level outcomes are assessed each semester, with assessment results documented in the Course-Level Assessment Data Report ([CLADR Template](#)). Each instructor - regardless of full-time, part-time, or concurrent instructor status and regardless of the modality in which he or she teaches - is responsible for maintaining a CLADR for each course being taught in a given semester, and all CLADRs for a given academic year are placed in all full-time instructors' Professional Teaching Portfolios. CLADRs are also submitted to respective academic deans at the end of each semester, including summer terms, and archived in Google Drive. The following links provide examples of CLADRS submitted during the 2017-2018 academic year: [MTH 1213](#); [HIST 2763](#); [CRIM 2043](#); and [ENG 0023](#).

Respective deans audit courses each semester to ensure instructors are participating in assessment processes and are accurately maintaining assessment records. In addition, programs and departments must hold at least one formal faculty meeting each academic year. (NOTE: For programs composed of only one full-time faculty member, that faculty member and his or her respective dean will determine the individuals who should participate in this required meeting. For example, they may determine that adjunct faculty members should be included in the meeting.) One purpose for this meeting is to provide faculty with the opportunity to discuss their assessment data/results and their proposed course revisions with faculty in the same or similar disciplines. Faculty may also use this opportunity for assistance in determining which course revisions to implement. Faculty must document their self-reflection, group reflection, and revisions in their CLADRs, as appropriate.

- **Program-Level Assessment**

Each BRTC program has adopted program-level learning outcomes. Program directors or program advisors are responsible for overseeing the program-level assessment process. Program directors are college employees who oversee a program and whose formal title includes the term "director." For programs that do not have a formal director, program advisors have been assigned. Program directors and advisors document program learning outcomes assessment using the Program-Level Assessment Data Report ([PLADR Template](#)). The PLADR is also used to communicate a program's assessment schedule, which occurs in a three-year cycle. Program directors/advisors determine when they will assess each outcome during an assessment cycle, in accordance with the following guidelines:

- At least one outcome should be assessed each semester.
- All outcomes for an associate-level degree program must be assessed at least once during each three-year cycle.

- Certificate programs (both technical certificates and certificates of proficiency) must assess each outcome at least twice during each three-year cycle.
- PLADRs should be kept current, reflecting all assessment data collected to date.

The following links provide examples of PLADRs that are either in the process of being completed or are already complete: [Phlebotomy](); [Agriculture](); [Admin Services](); and [Practical Nursing]().

In addition to maintaining current PLADRs, each program director/advisor is responsible for completing an Annual Program Report, which includes a summary of program faculty reflection on assessment data collected during an academic year as well as plans for continuous improvement ([Program Report Template]()). These reports must be submitted to the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation by May 15th of each year.

Finally, every three years, program directors/advisors are responsible for the submission of a Program Self-Study ([Self-Study Template]()). The Self-Study represents a more comprehensive internal program review process. As with the Annual Program Report, a template for the Self-Study will be provided to guide the review process. The self-studies are placed on a rotating three-year schedule maintained by the Vice President of Academics. The schedule is devised in such a way that a self-study will be due one year prior to a program's ADHE program review. Such a schedule will allow each program to complete two self-studies prior to the completion of the ADHE program review. The self-studies should be submitted to both the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation, the Vice President of Academics, and the chair of the Program Review Committee by May 30th of the academic year they are due.

The [Program Review Committee]() is responsible for formal review of all internal and external program reviews, including the College's 3-year Program Self-Studies and the 7-year program reviews. As a component of this review, the Program Review Committee will meet with the respective dean and the program director/advisor of the program under evaluation to discuss the review and seek clarification, if needed. The Committee will then document the results of their review and forward their report to the Vice President of Academics; the Dean of Assessment & Accreditation; the respective dean for the program being reviewed; the program director/advisor; and all program faculty. A summary of the Program Review Committee's report and any planned improvements should be included in Part IV of the program's subsequent Annual Program Report as well as the Program Effectiveness section of the subsequent Program Self-Study.

- **General Education Assessment**

The third level of assessment is of general education outcomes. BRTC's general education outcomes are assessed on a three-year rotation. Two outcomes are assessed each academic year (one each semester) during the first two years, and the fifth outcome is assessed during the fall semester of the third year. The subsequent spring semester is used to recommend changes based upon data analysis and interpretation. A new assessment cycle begins the fall semester following the end of the previous cycle ([General Education Assessment Cycle Chart]()).

Assessment of BRTC's general education outcomes is based upon the [Master General Education Curriculum Map](). The Master General Education Curriculum Map was created using curriculum maps from all program directors and advisors who mapped their core programmatic courses to the general education outcomes. Instructors teaching general studies courses also mapped their courses to the general education outcomes. Assessment for each of the general education outcomes may occur in any course for which mastery is indicated on the Master General Education Curriculum Map. To facilitate the assessment process, faculty must have an assignment embedded in their courses through which students have the opportunity to sufficiently demonstrate an outcome (i.e., a major project or paper). When these assignments are used for the assessment of general education outcomes, they are called assessment artifacts. The Dean of Assessment and Accreditation coordinates this process and ensures the timely submission of assignments that will serve as assessment artifacts. Faculty teaching courses identified for inclusion in general education outcomes assessment have until the last day of class in a respective semester to submit assessment artifacts to the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation. Submission of artifacts occurs within the General Education Outcomes (GEO) Assessment course in Moodle.

The following semester, the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation assembles Assessment Teams composed of BRTC faculty to serve as raters for submitted artifacts. Assessment Teams must successfully complete formal rater training to ensure they are appropriately trained on how to use the general education rubrics and to maximize inter-rater reliability between team members. After training completion, Assessment Teams score all submitted artifacts from the previous semester using the general education rubrics. Each artifact is rated by two team members, with an assignment's overall score being the average of the two raters' scores. Raters will be blind to both the student name and the course from which the artifact was derived. The Dean of Assessment and Accreditation will oversee the database for recording assessment ratings/scores and other relevant data.

- **Reporting on Assessment**

The processes of academic assessment are valuable only to the extent that resulting data is collected effectively and subsequently utilized appropriately. Thus, the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation will be responsible for preparing annual assessment progress reports that include the following:

- Percent of faculty members participating in course-level assessment
- Percent of programs participating in program-level assessment
- Percent of faculty participating in general education assessment
- Summary of faculty feedback on assessment processes
- Planned changes based on faculty feedback
- Summary of the most common recommendations made to faculty during CLADR and PLADR reviews
- Plans to address the most common recommendations made
- Updates on the general education assessment process, including any data available at the time of report submission

Annual progress reports are to be submitted to the Vice President of Academics by June 30th of each year. After review by the Vice President of Academics, progress reports will be shared with faculty via the BRTC Assessment Resource Center. All planned changes should be implemented in the subsequent academic year. The first Assessment Progress Report for academic year 2017-2018 was submitted to the Vice President of Academics just prior to submission of this report (2017-2018 Assessment Progress Report).

In addition to annual progress reports, the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation will compose a report at the end of each three-year general education assessment cycle. During the spring semester of the third year of the general education assessment cycle, the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation will prepare a report summarizing the results from the assessment of each of the five general education outcomes. This report will be distributed to all faculty no later than mid-semester. Prior to the end of the semester, faculty and academic administration must convene to discuss assessment results and to recommend changes. For all changes that require formal approval, the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation will prepare a proposal on behalf of faculty to be presented to the Curriculum Committee. Any changes that do not require formal approval are to be implemented the following semester.

- **Associate of Arts Degree Assessment**

Assessment of the Associate of Arts (A.A.) degree does not follow the College's standard protocol for program-level assessment. The A.A. is designed to allow students to complete their general education courses prior to transferring to another institution of higher education. As such, the A.A. has no discipline-specific core upon which students focus; rather, its curriculum is intentionally broad with the goal of providing the framework for a liberal arts education. Because the goal of the A.A. is to provide students with this strong general education foundation, the learning outcomes and the assessment process for the A.A. mirror the College's general education assessment plan. Assessment data for the A.A. is gathered in the same way and at the same time that data for the general education outcomes is collected. Data is collected and will be stored in a way that assessment data from A.A. courses can be disaggregated and analyzed separately. In accordance with the general education assessment cycle, the first round of data collection will be complete at the end of the 2019-2020 academic year. The Dean of General Studies will disseminate the results to faculty in the Associate of Arts program.

- **Co-Curricular Assessment**

Based on input from the 2016 HLC team report, academic assessment was made a priority, but the College is also committed to improving its assessment of co-curricular activities and made changes to improve co-curricular assessment as well. In response to declining enrollment and as part of a significant realignment of the College's administrative structure, the College began a shift from an mission-based model to an enrollment management model. Changes that were part of this shift included the hiring of a new Vice President of Enrollment Management and the creation of a new Dean of Students position. Another change was the adoption of a new BRTC policy regarding co-curricular assessment. According to this policy, the College will implement a comprehensive plan to assess the achievement of learning outcomes set for co-curricular programs. These programs are defined at BRTC as activity of learning experience that

complements and aligns with BRTC's mission and general education learning outcomes (Policy 7117). To fulfill the requirements of this policy, in the Spring 2018 semester, the Enrollment Management unit developed the 2018-2019 Comprehensive Student Life Plan. The plan is a monthly schedule of co-curricular events centered on specific values that point to the mission of BRTC. These themes include career exploration, personal responsibility, perseverance, and others. Each month includes a series of events based on its theme and an assessment tool that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of one of the items on that month's schedule. These tools include focus groups, student surveys, and participation logs. The Director of Student Affairs is charged with collecting and evaluating the results from the assessment tools and reporting those results to the appropriate BRTC administration and staff twice a year to inform the development of future co-curricular events (Comprehensive Student Life Plan).

The framework and procedures described above have been designed to assess student learning in a way that is consistent with BRTC's mission and organizational structure. However, as assessment continues to occur, the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation will survey faculty annually. Faculty feedback will allow the assessment process to undergo annual evaluation to determine changes needed for improvement of its effectiveness and efficiency.

BRTC recognizes that collecting and documenting assessment data is not the purpose of outcomes assessment and that the institution has in the past failed to demonstrate widespread analysis of assessment date or use of data to inform curricular and/or program revisions. Thus the College has put a renewed emphasis and vision on using data to improve student learning. As outlined above, completion of the CLADR and PLADR forms encourage a recursive process in which assessment data prompts course and/or program revisions that produce new assessment data. Although formal assessment is a relatively new concept at BRTC, early signs that it is making an impact are encouraging, as can be determined by a review of the sample CLADRs and PLADRs presented above.

BRTC believes that the processes and methodologies it has developed to assess and improve student learning reflect good practice. From the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic year, faculty have been encouraged to play a significant role in assessment. The members of the original Assessment Committee, which was made up largely of faculty members and was chaired by a faculty member, attended several assessment workshops. They subsequently began developing the new assessment plan for the College. During the 2016-2017 academic year, while the new assessment framework was in the planning stage, faculty members from the Assessment Committee provided professional development to their peers regarding developing learning outcomes, designing assessment activities and rubrics, and curriculum mapping, primarily during monthly meetings of the entire faculty (Example Faculty Friday Agendas: 3 February, 3 March, 31 March; see also Example Faculty Friday Presentation). Also, the selection of the five general education outcomes currently in place started with a survey of all faculty in which they identified which outcomes they found to be the most important (General Education Learning Outcomes Survey Results). In the Fall 2017 semester, Academic Affairs adopted the CLADRs and PLADRs and formalized the College's first comprehensive assessment plan.

According to policy, participation in the assessment process includes not only full-time instructors, but also adjunct instructors who may teach only online classes and concurrent

enrollment instructors whose classes are located at local high schools. Thus the assessment process also includes classes from all modalities (Policy 7113). And beginning in Fall 2018, co-curricular activities will be formally assessed each month (Comprehensive Student Life Plan). Furthermore, the course- and program-level learning outcomes that the entire assessment framework is built on were developed by and continue to be revised by the faculty themselves, with the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation, the Assessment Committee, and the Vice President of Academics providing guidance and professional development when necessary. In fact, all new courses or programs and all significant curricular changes--including those involving learning outcomes--are evaluated by the Curriculum Committee, with input from the Program Review and/or Assessment Committee as appropriate. These committees are made up entirely of faculty.

Also, at this time, a CLADR is required for every course, in every modality, every semester. Constant participation in the process is especially important at this early stage in the College's new assessment processes so that faculty not only become familiar and comfortable with the processes, but also so that consecutive semesters of collecting and using assessment data to make course improvements can help faculty see the inherent value of assessment to effective teaching. While most all full-time faculty can articulate the value of assessment, BRTC's concurrent and adjunct faculty are even beginning to appreciate the process. Recently, one of BRTC's adjunct faculty was awarded the University of Arkansas' Adjunct Teaching Award. In an email correspondence with the Dean of General Studies, she credited BRTC's assessment processes for helping her become a better instructor.

Finally, the former lack of assessment processes has allowed BRTC to create an entire framework from the ground up in a relatively short period of time (BRTC Assessment Plan). The assessment processes are systematic, deliberate, and well documented, rather than a leftover collection of haphazard approaches that are a product of attrition from numerous past assessment campaigns and that are subject to being neglected when changes in staff occur. Thus the College is optimistic that the current process will remain self-sustaining despite future changes in curriculum and/or personnel experienced in the ongoing life cycle of the institution.

Sources

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Argument

Black River Technical College has been very focused on student retention and persistence, especially as enrollment has decreased significantly in recent years. One of the four goals adopted as part of the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan is to "Manage enrollment responsibly and ensure student success." Two components of this goal address BRTC's retention and completion targets: to increase the full-time retention rate to 60% and to increase the completion rate by an average of 0.25% per year.

To support its efforts to attain these goals, the College has developed positions and services focusing on supporting students. For example, in the Spring 2018 semester, the Completion and Retention Specialist position was moved to the Enrollment Management unit, given a new title - Student Success Coordinator (SSC) - and assigned a revised set of duties. The SSC's role functions as a liaison for students as they progress through their programs of study and to assist students in completing those programs. The SSC is responsible for developing and implementing success plans for at-risk students, educating students on transfer opportunities and processes, assisting with student life events, assisting with online orientation delivery, and establishing and monitoring a new Early Alert System in Fall 2018. The SSC is also an instructor for the Student Success course that is required for students who test into two or more developmental courses (SSC Job Description). Finally, the SSC serves as the repository of retention, completion, and persistence data (see details below). As the duties and oversight of this position has been in flux since its creation, there is currently no data regarding the achievement of goals set to measure the position's effectiveness. However, this position will be part of the cycle established with the adoption of the new Student Success Strategic Plan formulated by Enrollment Management in Spring 2018 (Student Success Strategic Plan). Once complete, the Student Success Strategic Plan

will include clear goals for retention, completion, and persistence, but at the time of this writing, those goals are still being drafted and will be completed by the end of Fall 2018.

Even in the absence of clearly defined retention, completion, and persistence goals, BRTC has implemented a number of services to support students both academically and with their non-academic obstacles to academic success. Fort instance, the Academic Success Center (ASC), formerly known as the Academic Learning Center, is another way the College has sought to increase retention and completion rates. The ASC was created in 2012, when space was renovated to provide a computer lab, small study rooms, and a large space for group tutoring and workshops (see ASC Brochure). Tutoring services--both in person and online through Smarthinking--along with a new building housing a Math Lab for the Paragould location, have greatly increased academic support for the College as a whole. Math and English tutoring and tutoring in selected courses has increased steadily since the Success Center was established. In the 2017-2018 academic year, the ASC has been staffed exclusively by BRTC full-time faculty, giving students direct access to the very people who teach courses in the areas in which the students require support. The ASC submitted a self-study as part of the first round of administrative and support unit reviews collected during the 2017-2018 academic year (ASC Self-Study). As indicated in that report, the ASC surveyed students to collect data on four outcomes aimed at assessing students' perceptions of the quality and usefulness of the center. The ASC met or exceeded its benchmarks for all four outcomes.

Likewise, two Career Coaches (one in conjunction with Pocahontas High School and one in conjunction with Corning and Piggott High Schools) were hired to identify students in need of career planning (especially targeting individuals who are members of low-income families who are TANF or TANF-eligible) and then encourage them to aspire to post-secondary education, workforce training, and/or apprenticeships as a means to promote future economic self-sufficiency (see Career Coach Position Descriptions).

BRTC's student population is largely first-generation and low-income. The College acknowledges that this is a population that deals with personal and socio-economic stressors that can have a major impact on students' persistence and success in college. In 2014, the College hired a Career Counselor, who was initially supported by a grant but was later moved to permanent college funding, with a recognition that career and personal support is essential for our students to be successful. The Career Counselor was housed in Pocahontas and visited the Paragould location on a regular basis. In the Fall 2017 semester, due to the College's move to an enrollment management model, the duties of the Career Counselor were combined with supervisory duties over the Career Coaches, and the position's title was changed to Dean of Students. Since 2016, fifty-one students have been seen individually by the Career Counselor/Dean of Students, who provided career and personal support and made appropriate referrals to community resources, as necessary. The Career Counselor/Dean of Students also provides services to small groups and has been invited by faculty to give presentations during classes.

The College's Disability Services Coordinator (DSC) works with another group of vulnerable students to improve its retention and completion rates. Use of Disability Services has remained fairly consistent for the past few years, but these numbers are probably very low compared to the

number of students who have a need for learning support and could receive accommodations if they were able to access appropriate diagnostic testing and were willing to self-disclose the need for services. The Disabilities Coordinator and the Financial Aid Director have a successful functional relationship with the State of Arkansas's Vocational Rehabilitation Office, which is able to provide additional financial and counseling services to students who provide appropriate documentation. On campus, the DSC meets with students who receive accommodations each semester and updates their accommodations plan, which students take to their instructors so that the instructors can arrange to make the appropriate accommodations. The College also has an updated Learning Disability Handbook and intake forms for students who wish to receive accommodations (for example, see ADA Intake/Assessment Form).

BRTC also has an Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative program whose mission is to support low-income students with children or dependents to help those students to be academically successful and achieve employment in their field of study. The program provides intensive academic and career advising and financial support to eligible and participating students (i.e., gas cards and childcare assistance). Career Pathways has been recognized nationally as a program that makes significant positive contributions to students, families, and communities. BRTC's program has been consistently successful, despite receiving decreased state support in the past few years. The last numbers reported by the State of Arkansas show that 66% of the students who completed a credential in fiscal year 2015 were employed six months after exiting the program. Based on numbers collected by BRTC's Pathways staff, 85% of the students who earned a credential and exited the program in fiscal year 2018 were employed in their field of study at the time of this writing (Career Pathways Initiative Data). Evidence of the success of this program can be found in the linked documentation on Phase 1 of the College Counts Study.

Two other resources designed to aid with student retention and completion are the Emergency Fund, established in 2000 by the BRTC Foundation, and the Pocahontas Rotary Nontraditional Student Emergency Fund, established in 2011. These programs are meant to assist students who experience unforeseen disasters or emergencies (for example, loss of a home due to fire or flooding or expenses incurred because of a serious vehicle accident), with the goal of allowing those students to remain enrolled and successfully complete their courses. Students may apply for financial assistance from these funds through the Director of Financial Aid (Emergency Fund) or the BRTC Foundation Board (Pocahontas Rotary Nontraditional Student Emergency Fund).

Another way the College seeks to promote student success, completion, and retention is by evaluating and improving advising and registration procedures. First-time freshmen, transfer students, and readmits (i.e., returning students who have not attended BRTC for at least one academic year) meet one-on-one with admissions advisors to finalize their major/degree choice and plan their first semester schedules. Advisors also provide helpful information and guidance for accessing the student portal, academic calendar, bookstore, etc. When necessary, students are directed to the financial aid staff to determine if any action needs to be taken or if any documents are needed. Furthermore, new and transfer students complete an online orientation after their advising and registration appointments. Orientation modules consist of topics such as the course catalog, the student handbook, the Title IX policy, the Academic Success Center, clubs, disability services, FACTS payments, and accessing information through the student portal.

As in other operational areas, data analysis as related to retention, completion, and persistence has been inconsistent and isolated at BRTC. The College believes that an important step in addressing that problem will come through its new program review process. As discussed previously in this report, the overall program review cycle is made up of three parts: annual program reports, three-year self-studies, and seven-year external reviews. With this cycle, a program will complete two annual reports before every self-study and two self-studies before every external review. Each self-study and external review will be evaluated by the Program Review Committee. The results of its evaluation will be shared with program faculty, the program director/advisor, the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation, and the Vice President of Academics. These findings must also be included in the next annual report and self-study. The annual program report form includes "Part III: Program Retention, Completion, and Persistence." In this section, program directors/advisors are asked to reflect on grade distributions; explanations for why students dropped out of the program; students who were referred to the Early Alert system; faculty participation in retention, completion, and persistence or recruitment activities; fall-to-spring and spring-to-fall retention rates; and graduated information. Data to complete some of these items will come from some of the sources of retention, completion, and persistence data that the College has collected for some time:

- Retention and Grade Report
- Graduate Surveys
- Career Pathways Graduate Information (see above)
- IPEDS Information
- Faculty Self-Evaluations (individual retention rate)

In addition to these sources, recent and upcoming changes at the College will also produce retention, completion, and persistence data. Starting in the Fall 2018 semester, all graduates will be required to see an advisor for exit advising as part of the Intent to Graduate form. During these advising sessions, advisors will collect information about whether or not the students are transferring and whether or not they are employed in their degree field. Also, Colleague Reporting and Operating Analytics (CROA) is a feature of the College's new enterprise resource planning system. This tool will allow the College to pull retention and completion data directly from student records and express the aggregated data in dashboards made available to the College's constituencies. At the time of this writing, College personnel are going through CROA training to learn the extent of the tool's capabilities.

Part of the problem with BRTC's retention, completion, and persistence data collection in the past is that the efforts have been isolated from one another. To address this issue, part of the Student Success Coordinator's (see above) duties will be to serve as a repository for this data. When program directors/advisors are completing their annual program reports, the information they need for Part III will be available from CROA and the Student Success Coordinator

Again, evidence that BRTC has used retention, persistence, and completion data to make improvements has been sparse. The program review process will help in this area as well. The three-year program self-study form includes a compilation of the retention, persistence, and completion data from the annual program reports and asks the director/advisor to reflect on whether the program is meeting it retention, persistence, and completions goals set as part of the

self-study and asks for an explanation of planned improvements. The design of the program review process is being finalized as of this writing; thus it has not produced any data yet. The first round of annual reports will be submitted on May 15, 2019.

BRTC believes that the plan for collecting retention, persistence, and completion data; analyzing it; and using it to make improvements reflects good practice and ensures the College is continuing to fulfill its mission of transforming lives. First of all, a system of annual reports and periodic more comprehensive self-studies reflect current best practices for program reviews. Furthermore, the College feels that this process adequately addresses the factors that have complicated this issue in the past. Finally, this process is sustainable. With oversight from the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation and the Program Review Committee, there is built-in accountability for program directors/advisors to track and make good use of retention, persistence, and completion data.

Sources

- 2018 ASC Administrative Unit Review
- Academic Success Center Brochure
- Academic Success Center Tutoring Records Fall 2017
- ADA HANDBOOK (3)
- Annual Faculty Self-Evaluation
- Career Coach Job Description
- Career Pathways Initiative Data
- College Counts
- Emergency Fund Foundation Policy
- Intake and Assessment Form
- IPEDS Information
- Job Description for Student Success Coordinator
- May 2017 Graduate Survey
- Program Review Committee Policies and Procedures
- Retention and Grade Report Fall 2017
- Student Success Strategic Plan

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Summary

BRTC acknowledges program review procedures, academic assessment, and analysis and use of retention, persistence, and completion data are areas in which it has needed improvement. Improvement is still needed in some of these areas. Further, the College recognizes that assessment is ongoing and never stagnant. However, much has been accomplished since the 2016 HLC team report. For instance, program review procedures have been updated and enhanced to encourage meaningful analysis and to institute processes by which conclusions gleaned from that analysis are fed back into the program review cycle in the form of revisions, deletions, additions or other changes to the programs' curriculum.

Academic assessment has undergone a complete overhaul at the College. Faculty have been actively engaged with developing course- and program-level learning outcomes, curriculum mapping, developing assessment tools and rubrics, and gathering, analyzing, and reporting assessment data. Furthermore, through the College's assessment reporting forms—CLADRs and PLADRs—faculty are becoming familiar with, comfortable with, and committed to the process of using assessment data to make targeted changes to curriculum that are designed to improve students' achievement of a course's or program's learning outcomes.

Finally, the College is changing its approach to retention, persistence, and completion data. Such data will be funneled to program directors/advisors through the Student Success Coordinator, rather than being collected and kept in discreet departments where the information never reaches the people who could actually use it to improve the College's performance. Also, retention, persistence, and completion data analysis and improvement plan features in the new program review reporting tools—and the fact that there is oversight and accountability built into the program review process—should create the kind of feedback loop that will encourage program directors to use the conclusions drawn from the data to improve retention, persistence, and completion in their programs.

The College is committed to these sound processes and plans; however, it will take time for results that can be attributed to them to become apparent. It is important—and a priority at BRTC—that the plans and processes are maintained, improved, and most importantly, followed through. The College has been remiss in not assessing effectively. Through these new assessment processes, the College can better ensure it is continuing to achieve its mission of transforming lives by offering quality academic and career education.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Argument

BRTC's fiscal resources are primarily based on these funding sources: state appropriations; grants; and tuition and fees, much of which is supported by federal Title IV funds. The linked chart shows BRTC's Workforce Grant funding for 2017, 2018, and 2019. The College has implemented modest tuition and/or fee increases in recent years; however, it remains committed to providing affordable education (Tuition Increases). While these funding sources have not been sufficient to support operations due to flat state funding and declining enrollment in recent years, the College is fortunate to have had reserve funds to cover the operating shortfalls. It is clear relying on reserve funds is not a sustainable situation. Based on the College's budget forecast, continued moderate enrollment growth as indicated by current trends should allow the College to eliminate reliance on reserve funds by 2022. Use of reserve funds has already begun to decrease significantly (FY 18 19 Budget; Budget Forecast).

BRTC has sufficient human resources to carry out its operations. In the Fall 2018, the College projects to employ 59 full-time faculty members. The number of adjunct faculty employed is contingent upon student enrollment and is monitored by the academic deans and Vice President of Academics to ensure a sufficient number to cover all courses offered regardless of location or modality. The average student-to-instructor ratio is 13:1. Staff in Human Resources, Maintenance, Enrollment Management, Finance, Institutional Advancement and other

departments are sufficient to carry out the College's non-instructional operations (Employee Chart).

BRTC also has the infrastructure needed to support its operations. The College's original 46,775 square footage, situated on forty-four acres, has grown to 308,578 square feet and a total of twenty-three buildings on one hundred acres. Many of the buildings in Pocahontas have undergone unplanned refurbishment and improvements due to extensive flooding in 2011 and 2017. For example, a new, centralized computer lab was created in the Business Technology building, and the RCDC auditorium was given new seating and an updated color scheme. Additionally, the College will be expanding its physical resources in Paragould. Collaborating with the Paragould Economic Development Corporation, BRTC is currently developing plans for a building that will act as a program incubator in Paragould (Planned Paragould Welding/HVAC Building).

The College continues its commitment to providing students with relevant technology to complement educational experiences. For example, BRTC uses the Google suite of products and applications. In addition, high-speed internet is provided on campus for students, faculty, and staff via fiber-optic and Wi-Fi. The networking infrastructure is secured by redundant firewalls and anti-virus software. Likewise, all classrooms are equipped with appropriate instructional technology. The technological capabilities will be enhanced with a planned expansion of the Arkansas Research and Education Optical Network--an organization formed to promote advanced application and communication technologies--to the Paragould location. The College is also in the process of implementing Colleague, new enterprise resource planning (ERP) software that will give students access to a wide range of services and information through the myBRTC portal.

BRTC's educational purposes are not adversely affected by the way it allocates its resources. For FY2016, 57.6% of operating expenditures were used for educational or student support (FY2016 Audit). The remainder was used for non-instructional operations. As a public institution, the College is not affiliated with any superordinate entity.

BRTC's mission statement is "Black River Technical College transforms lives through quality academic and career education to enhance the community we serve." The goals implied in this statement are realistic because every program offered by the College gives students the opportunity to either transfer to a four-year institution or to enter the workforce in their field. Both opportunities transform the lives of those students. The College's technical programs and Corporate and Community Education offerings enhance the community by responding to the demands and needs of the local workforce. Furthermore, the College communicates with the community to develop programming to address its needs. For instance, to meet a training gap indicated by local industry, by the Fall 2018 semester the College plans to offer a pathway in which AAS in Industrial Maintenance students are awarded a certificate of proficiency after sixteen hours have been completed and a technical certificate after an additional sixteen hours have been completed. These credentials allow a student to sit for external certification exams on the way to achieving their AAS (Paragould Industry Survey).

Academic credentials for all current personnel are located on the Faculty and Staff Directory on the BRTC website and in the *Catalog* (Policy 2142; Faculty and Staff Directory). All credentials and certifications are on file in human resources. Directors and coordinators preferably hold a master's degree. Staff training occurs through conference attendance, webinars, specialty trainings, and in-house trainings. Also, staff members are encouraged to join professional organizations relevant to their positions. Staff have also been sent for training at Title IX conferences and have been given training on Colleague, the College's new ERP software. Continuing education for employees is encouraged by offering full-time employees tuition waivers at the institution (Policy 6200) and through pay incentives for educational increments for non-classified employees who complete higher education (Policy 5500). The BRTC policies that encourage faculty to attend professional meetings and/or serve on professional committees (Policy 2156) and to attend appropriate professional development activities (Policy 2157) also apply to staff members, and the same provisions for reimbursing personal expenses incurred during travel for these activities are applied to staff as well (Policy 6126).

BRTC's budgeting process is guided by Policy 3120. Tuition and fee revenue is budgeted based on enrollment projections. For example, forecasted Student Semester Credit Hours (SSCHs) for the 2018-2019 academic year were approved by the Board in November of 2017 as a starting point for building the FY2019 budget (November 2017 Board Minutes). Any recommendations for tuition and/or fee increases are presented to the Board in February meetings (February 2017 Board Minutes; February 2018 Board Minutes). Revenue from state appropriations is budgeted based on ADHE recommendations to the state legislature.

For expenditure budgeting, the vice presidents consult with deans and/or directors to assess the needs in their respective areas. Deans consult with the faculty before these meetings to ensure that instructional needs in their areas are considered. The vice presidents collect the requests from their areas and submit them to the Vice President of Finance, who may recommend adjustments. Requests for significant changes to a budget may also need to be accompanied by a written justification. If significant adjustments are required, the vice presidents may need to seek input from deans, directors, and/or faculty. Once any necessary adjustments have been made, the Vice President of Finance submits the budget draft to the President, who must either approve the draft or request changes before submitting it to the Board for final approval (Policy 2100; May 2017 Board Minutes; August 2017 Board Minutes; May 2018 Board Minutes).

To monitor expenditures, the Finance Office provided monthly budget-to-actual comparison reports to budget managers. Since March 2018, real-time budget-to-actual data is available at all times to the budget managers via the Financial Management module of the myBRTC portal. Managers can use this module to review detailed expenditure data. This feature of Colleague will make all aspects of the budget development process more decentralized and transparent.

Sources

- 2017, 11-2 BOT
- 2017, 2-2 BOT
- 2017, 5-16 BOT Electronic

- 2017, 8-3 BOT
- 2018, 2-1 BOT
- 2018, 2-1 BOT (page number 3)
- 2018, 5-3 BOT
- BRTC Course Catalog 2017-18
- BRTC Course Catalog 2017-18 (page number 258)
- BRTC Employee Numbers Spring 2018
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 57)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 86)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 91)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 92)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 116)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 175)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 188)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 222)
- BRTC Workforce Grants
- Budget Analysis
- Current BRTC Grants
- Fiscal Year 2016 Audit (1)
- Forecast Budget 2019-2023
- Paragould Industry Survey
- Paragould Welding - HVAC Building

5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Argument

The governance and administrative structures allow BRTC to operate effectively. The seven-member Board of Trustees is appointed by the Governor of Arkansas and confirmed by the State Senate. Board members must be qualified electors within the College's service area and may not be candidates for, nor holders of, public office in the state. To avoid conflicts of interest, neither they, nor their spouses can be employees of public school districts, community colleges, or vocational-technical schools (Policy 8130, Article VIII, Section II). Current members of the Board of Trustees include business owners, industry leaders, and medical professionals. Three board members reside in Randolph County, two in Greene County, one in Lawrence County, and one in Clay County, which represents our service area.

Most board members are involved in community service, including Rotary, area Chambers of Commerce, and other community organizations. The ADHE periodically hosts training seminars for college governing board members, and BRTC Board members are encouraged to attend.

The Board collaborates as necessary with the administration, faculty, and staff. Board meetings are open to the public, except for executive sessions, during which personnel matters are discussed. The Board meets at least quarterly, as stipulated by Policy 1155. The Board is organized into three committees: Academic Affairs, Finance, and Personnel/Compensation. The full Board often refers items to these respective committees; the committees report and recommend to the Board at regularly scheduled meetings. Each vice president submits an Executive Summary Report for inclusion in each meeting's Board Meeting Packet and is ready to expand on or answer questions about it during the meeting.

The lines of organization are quite clear at BRTC. The Board hires and evaluates the President and delegates the administrative duties accordingly. The Board focuses on overall institutional development, policy adoption, financial trends, facility needs, compliance issues, and statistical data concerning institutional performance. In response to the 2016 HLC team report, the Board

has put a particular focus on academic operations, forming a new Academic Affairs committee that meets regularly with the Vice President of Academics. Board members are provided with quarterly financial reports at each board meeting, and they have adopted an Executive Limitations Policy, which sets thresholds for elective budget expenditures and outlines the Board's expectations for the President.

Through Board-approved policies, the tone of collaboration for BRTC permeates the College. For example, the Executive Team is comprised of the President four vice presidents whose oversight responsibilities are Academics, Institutional Advancement, Enrollment Management, and Finance. This team meets regularly to monitor current trends and to confer regarding immediate and long-term operational issues. Also, the vice presidents meet informally on Thursday mornings to discuss day-to-day operations and keep one another apprised of developments that could affect the others' units.

Faculty are responsible for curriculum oversight through the Curriculum Committee, which is responsible for reviewing any curricular changes made to courses or programs. If the proposed changes involve new student learning outcomes or revisions to existing student learning outcomes, those changes are referred to the Assessment Committee for approval or recommended revisions. Once the Assessment Committee has approved any new or revised learning outcomes, the Curriculum Committee reviews all of the materials submitted for approval or recommended changes. Once the Curriculum Committee has approved the proposal, it then refers matters to the Academic Affairs Committee for approval (Curriculum Development Flowchart). The attached minutes exemplify how a proposal moves through the committee structure (Example Proposal Progression). The Vice President of Academics gives the Board of Trustees a quarterly report of all curricular changes. If new programs are proposed, these require Board of Trustee approval, followed by approval from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) and Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Through this systematic process of curriculum review and approval, the College is more effective in its ability to fulfill its mission of offering quality academic and career education.

Finally, students are involved in and contribute to academic and institutional processes through the Student Government Association, which was formed in the 2012-2013 academic year. The student body elects SGA officers each spring semester. Should an officer graduate in May, a special election is held in the subsequent fall to fill the vacated position. Moodle is used as a platform for communicating with SGA members. Because BRTC is a two-year commuter school with a significant non-traditional student population, many of whom hold down full-time jobs and raise children in addition to attending college, BRTC's SGA isn't as involved in campus governance as student government groups at four-year schools tend to be. However, it does advocate for students at the College. SGA is responsible for dispersing 70 percent of the student activities funds. In the past year, these funds have been directed toward student travel, helping to fund the Auto Tech's trip to tour an automotive plant and a Phi Theta Kappa student's trip to New Zealand to attend the International Scholar Laureate Program (SGA Minutes). SGA has also helped sponsor philanthropic events such as a Christmas Toy Drive (SGA Minutes). SGA can also make recommendations on behalf of the student body to the Executive Team for changes on campus.

Sources

- Board of Trustees meeting packet
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 27)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 257)
- Curriculum Development Flow Chart
- Example of Proposal Progression through Academic Committees
- SGA Minutes

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Argument

BRTC's Strategic Plan aligns with its mission and is supported by four priorities, and the College allocates its resources in a manner that aligns with them.

1) Manage enrollment responsibly and ensure student success.

To support this goal, in the fall of 2017, the College transformed its Student Affairs unit to align with an enrollment management philosophy. At the time of this writing, the Vice President of Enrollment Management, who was hired during the Fall 2017 semester, is working to reallocate the unit's budget to better support the enrollment management model. Some of the initiatives taken to date are a comprehensive Recruitment Plan aimed at increasing the College's enrollment, a Comprehensive Student Life Plan to strategically offer a variety of co-curricular experiences and assess their effectiveness, and a Student Success Strategic Plan to improve retention, completion, and persistence rates.

Also, changes in the Academic Success Center (ASC) will better use facilities and personnel to ensure student success. Since the fall of 2017, the ASC has been staffed by full-time faculty, either as part of their teaching load or in place of their regular office hours. Thus students have access to professional academic tutors without the College having to hire additional staff. Also, beginning in the fall of 2018, space in the ASC will house an advising center that will give students a place to go for academic advising on demand. Quality academic support and advising are important factors that can contribute to student success.

2) Clarify the identity of the College through heightened brand awareness, focused educational programs, and effective communication.

The College seeks to improve its branding, advertising strategies, and communication through a new advertising policy that clarifies and standardizes procedures for using the College's logo and

associated images and for disseminating information on behalf of the College. The Office of Institutional Advancement has adopted a more cost-effective advertising strategy, using survey data to choose advertising platforms for maximum exposure ([Advertising Survey Results Fall 2017](); [Spring 2017](); [Spring 2018 F & S](); [Spring 2018](); [Sum I & II 2017)]().

The College also uses its resources efficiently by providing focused, in-demand academic programs. For example, new certificates of proficiency in Welding and Fire Science were also developed in response to workforce needs ([Paragould Industry Survey)]().

3) Exercise regional leadership through strategic partnerships and educational opportunities.

Partnerships with other entities allow the College to expand its programs without committing as many resources as it would on its own. For instance, the College is expanding its technical program offerings at the Paragould location by collaborating with the Paragould Economic Development Corporation. This partnership is currently developing plans for a building that will act as a program incubator in Paragould ([Paragould Welding/HVAC Building]()). Starting in the Fall 2019 semester, the College will begin offering certificate programs in welding, industrial maintenance, and machine tool and an HVAC apprenticeship program. The programs will be housed in the incubator until their viability warrants a move to permanent College facilities.

Another partnership that has provided opportunities for students while helping the College shoulder the financial burden is the Technical Opportunities and Pathways for Secondary Students (TOPSS) program. TOPSS is essentially a dual enrollment program in collaboration with area K12 schools, enrolling typically non-college-bound high school students and providing them with opportunities to earn academic and industry credentials and degrees in conjunction with high school diplomas. By spearheading this program, BRTC was the recipient of a $750,000 grant from the Arkansas Department of Career Education to fund a three-year pilot program.

4) Create a culture of evidence to facilitate continuous improvement.

As issues related to this goal accounted for many of the findings from the last HLC site visit, many resources have been directed at achieving it. BRTC recognizes that a culture of evidence cannot exist without effective ways of capturing and communicating important data. Thus, the College is investing financial resources in Colleague Reporting and Operating Analytics (CROA), a web intelligence reporting tool using data from the College's new ERP system. CROA will allow BRTC to add to its website information dashboards to publicly demonstrate trends in certain data sets, such as enrollment, cost of attendance, and retention and completion rates. This data can be used in a variety ways to make evidence-informed decisions. These features will be in place by the Fall 2018 semester.

The most widespread use of resources aimed at creating a culture of evidence has come in developing and implementing the College's new academic assessment plan, including creating a new position - Dean of Assessment and Accreditation - to oversee the process. Starting in the Spring 2017 semester and continuing up until the present, countless work hours have been expended by faculty, staff, and administration in becoming conversant with the elements of

assessment generally and learning to apply those elements to BRTC's own assessment process specifically. The College believes that continued engagement with data collecting, analyzing, and reporting will result in a campus community for which informed decisions for college improvements become commonplace.

BRTC engages both internal and external constituents in its planning process. For instance, Faculty Forum and Staff Forum give these constituents a venue to raise and discuss issues, to disseminate pertinent information to their members, and to draft proposals to present to the Executive Team and/or Board to influence the College's governance and planning. BRTC strives to engage students through SGA, but this area remains a struggle for the College. The College's student body is primarily composed of commuting students who have significant commitments outside of college life. With the recent addition of the Dean of Students position, the College hopes to better address this area of concern. Students also have the opportunity to provide feedback on the College's operations through the Community College Survey of Student Engagement.

External constituents also have a voice in planning. For example, the College hosts a number of academic advisory committees comprised of recognized professionals from designated fields to provide first-hand advice for adapting, expanding, or otherwise improving programs through surveys and annual meetings with program directors/advisors. Similar planning input for the nursing program and the Law Enforcement Training Academy come through the College's affiliation with the Arkansas Rural Nursing Education Consortium (ARNEC) and Arkansas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards & Training (CLEST), respectively.

BRTC's funding sources have not been sufficient to support operations due to flat state funding and declining enrollment in recent years. The College is fortunate to have had reserve funds to cover the operating shortfalls. It is clear relying on reserve funds is not sustainable. The College has implemented modest tuition and/or fee increases in recent years; however, it remains committed to providing affordable education (BRTC Tuition and Fee History). Based on the linked budget forecast, continued moderate enrollment growth as indicated by current trends should allow the College to eliminate reliance on reserve funds by 2022. Use of reserve funds has already begun to decrease appreciably (Budget Forecast). Low enrollment has also led to efforts aimed at efficient use of financial resources. For instance, the College outsourced custodial and insourced groundskeeping services starting with the 2017-2018 academic year in order to save money on these operations.

To be fiscally responsible, BRTC takes potential revenue decreases into account as it plans. For example, as mentioned above, the College is expanding its technical program offerings at the Paragould location by collaborating with the Paragould Economic Development Corporation. This partnership is currently developing plans for a building that will act as a program incubator in Paragould (Paragould Welding/HVAC Building). Starting in the Fall 2019 semester, the College will begin offering certificate programs in welding, industrial maintenance, and machine tool and an HVAC apprenticeship program. The programs will be housed in this building until their viability warrants a move to permanent College facilities. In light of the College's mission, this project makes sense because Greene County is the part of its service area in which industry and population growth is the most robust. However, the College's facilities in Paragould are not

extensive. Therefore, this collaboration will allow the College to respond to the industry growth without over-committing itself financially to new infrastructure. On the other hand, in Pocahontas, where industry growth is more modest and BRTC facilities are more ample, the focus has been on restructuring and repurposing space the College already has. Adding an advising center to the Academic Success Center; creating a new, centralized open computer lab during the remodel of the Business Technology building after the May 2017 flood; and expanding the Pearson VUE testing center are examples of how the College strives to get the most benefit for students out of its facilities. After trending downward for a few years, BRTC's enrollment is growing; SSCHs increased in Fall 2017 and Spring 2018, compared to the same terms in the previous academic year (BRTC Enrollment Analysis). Likewise, comparison of 11th-day enrollment numbers from the Summer I 2017 term to Summer 1 2018 show a 13% increase in both Student Semester Credit Hours (SSCHs) and Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs) (Enrollment Report 173S). However, enrollment continues to be low relative to the previous decade's numbers. Because of low enrollment, along with the implementation of a new performance funding formula in the fall of 2018 and increased competition for workforce training funds from the state, caution and attention to efficient use of resources is more important than ever.

During institutional planning, BRTC takes into account changes that are occurring locally and globally to position itself to respond to emerging demands from industry and to provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the modern workplace. Technology is, of course, a constantly changing factor in the College's planning efforts. BRTC's computer services department maintains over one thousand desktop computers, keeping software up to date to support faculty, staff, and student work. Technological advancements also factor into academic program development. The College received a National Science Foundation grant to develop a technical certificate program in Precision Agriculture to respond to the increasingly sophisticated use of technology in agricultural operations. Finally, program directors and faculty are exploring ways to incorporate drones into the curriculum in agriculture, fire science, and the Law Enforcement Training Academy.

Also, the upcoming collaborative welding, industrial maintenance, machine tool and HVAC programs in Paragould are a direct response to emerging industries in Greene County and the workforce needs those industries need (Paragould Industry Survey). Furthermore, the College recognized that although overall enrollment was decreasing in recent years, distance education enrollment was increasing relative to overall enrollment (DE Enrollment). To respond to this demand for distance education courses, the College has expanded its online offerings, including a wholly online technical certificate in Nutrition and Food Service Management and an Associate of Science in Fire Service Administration.

BRTC has also responded to demographic shifts in its service areas. For instance, a number immigrants have moved into the area from a large Marshallese and Burmese community in Northwest Arkansas. A community leader who works with this group has approached the College, seeking help to provide workshops to make the group aware of local services that are available to them. Since many of these immigrants do not speak English or have a high school diploma, BRTC's Adult Education department would be a good fit to be involved in such a

venture. As plans develop, the College hopes that by helping give this group a stable position in the area, it will also be helping develop a new segment of the local workforce.

Sources

- BRTC Enrollment Analysis
- BRTC Tuition and Fee History
- DEIT Enrollment Analysis
- Enrollment Report for 173S1
- Faculty Forum bylaws
- Fall 2017 Student Survey
- Forecast Budget 2019-2023
- Paragould Industry Survey
- Paragould Welding - HVAC Building
- Spring 2017 Student Survey
- Spring 2018 Faculty and Staff Survey
- Spring 2018 Student Survey
- Staff Forum Bylaws
- Summer I and II 2017 Student Survey

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Argument

To document evidence of performance in its operations, BRTC has instituted policies providing for annual evaluation of both faculty (Policy 4325) and staff (Policy 2151). Faculty evaluations include a self-evaluation, a dean or department head classroom observation, a peer classroom observation, student evaluations, and an administrative evaluation. The ratings and any accompanying comments from the forms completed for each of these components are compiled into the comprehensive Faculty Performance Review. Staff are evaluated by their respective supervisors using either the Employee Performance Evaluation Form or the Senior Management Performance Evaluation Form, depending on the nature of the staff member's position (Evaluation Templates). Copies of these forms are kept on file in the Office of Human Resources and are the basis for determining whether an employee will be retained at the conclusion of his or her contract. Employees, whose performance is not judged to be satisfactory, will be placed on an improvement plan to address the deficiencies noted in the evaluation process. Such a plan should include a timeline for satisfactory progress toward addressing the deficiencies. These evaluation processes provide information regarding the quality of the College's operations at the individual level.

Evaluation of operations at the unit level is conducted in two ways. Academic assessment, as discussed earlier in this report, provides data for faculty and program directors/advisors to determine how effectively the student learning outcomes for their courses and programs are being achieved. For non-academic units, the College has instituted an administrative and support unit review process (Policy 2102). For this process, unit supervisors set performance goals for their respective areas. These goals - along with a detailed description of the unit, the services it provides, and ideas for improvement and planning - are described in a comprehensive self-study submitted every three years. Each year between the three-year self-studies, unit supervisors submit a report of progress toward the performance goals they have set. These documents are submitted to the unit supervisor's division supervisor (i.e., respective vice president or College President) and the Director of Planning and Research. This process was designed and implemented - and professional development on the process was offered - during the 2016-2017 academic year, and the policy governing the process was adopted in May 2017 (Unit Outcomes Assessment Workshop; Worksheet A; Worksheet B; Worksheet C). The first round of self-studies were submitted on July 1, 2017 (e.g., ASC Self-Study; DEIT Self-Study). However, in the fall of 2017, the Director of Planning and Research office was vacated. The position will be filled as soon as possible, but in the meantime, the due date for the annual reports has been pushed back to December 2018. The College believes that this administrative and support unit

review process is - along with improved academic assessment processes - an important part of its strategic commitment to promoting a culture of evidence and data-informed decision making.

BRTC uses what it learns from its operational experience to improve the way the institution functions. The most dramatic experience for the College in recent years has been the 32 percent decrease in SSCHs from the high of 24,927 in Fall 2009 to the low of 16,827 in Fall 2016 (Enrollment Analysis). A key factor in this decline seems to be an improvement in the local economy. In other words, many of BRTC's potential students have gone to work rather than come to college. Responding to this experience, the College has taken steps to recapture some of those potential students. One major response has been restructuring the College's Student Affairs unit into an Office of Enrollment Management, with a new vice president in charge, bringing a philosophy based in active strategies for increasing enrollment and on the retention of the students who are already enrolled. On the enrollment side of the equation, a new Director of Admissions and a new Admissions Counselor positions were created to pursue potential students aggressively. On the retention and completion side, a new Dean of Students position and a reorganized Student Success Coordinator position (formerly the Retention and Completion Specialist) were created to offer varied forms of interventional support to ensure the College retains the students it already has until they have accomplished their educational goals.

In Fall 2017, the College realized it had not adapted to the needs of its student body, whose demographics had shifted. As reported earlier, the economy had improved within the service area, and many students had returned to work; however, course offerings still catered to a daytime schedule. Starting with the Spring 2018 semester, more Friday, Saturday, and online classes have been scheduled to accommodate students who are working full-time but would like to take classes (cite KAIT press release). Conversely, fewer electives have been scheduled, focusing on offering those courses that support programs of study and that were determined to be of high-demand. This short-term belt-tightening effort called for a reduction in courses for three reasons. First of all, fewer electives means the need for adjunct instructors decreases. Furthermore, fewer electives taking up prime slots on the schedule make it easier for students with very specific windows of time in which to take classes to find classes that are required for their degrees. Finally, a more limited schedule does not spread the student body out too thinly among the courses offered, reducing the need to cancel classes at the last minute before the term starts and risking losing the students who were enrolled in those classes. The College will continue to schedule strategically, even as enrollment--and thus revenue--increases.

The College recognizes efforts to save students money can have an impact on enrollment and identified textbook costs as a problem to tackle. In the fall of 2016, the President appointed a task force to explore switching from the College's in-house bookstore to a third-party, online bookstore. After its deliberations, the task force proposed that the College outsource its bookstore to the Akademos online bookstore. Comparing financial aid book charges from the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years shows charges decreased by 30.7%, saving students almost $200,000, a very significant amount considering the economic profile of BRTC's student population (Akademos email). These decreases occurred despite a slight 1% increase in SSCHs during the same period. Late in the Spring 2018 semester, the College arranged for students to access Cengage's online textbook offerings through Akademos. Cengage allows students to access books for multiple classes for one set price, rather than paying for each book individually.

Finally, BRTC's former student information system (POISE) became outdated and did not possess the capability to expand and move forward to meet operational needs, which led the College to make a change to a new system, Colleague, an enterprise resource planning system. The College is in the process of converting to Colleague, but full implementation is expected by Fall 2018. This change should improve the College's operations in a numbers of areas. Through the myBRTC portal, Colleague will give students easy one-stop access to information about their degree plans and financial aid. In addition to their personal information from Human Resources and access to resources such as Moodle and the library, faculty will have a number of advising tools available, such as the ability to plan a student's schedule from the first day of enrollment to graduation and permanent advisor notes that are visible to anyone who advises a student. Effective academic advising and easy access to degree program requirements should contribute to higher retention, completion, and persistence rates. Additionally, the CROA reporting feature of Colleague will afford greater analysis of data, which will inform decision-making.

Sources

- 2017 DEIT Support Unit Review.pdf
- 2018 ASC Administrative Unit Review
- Akademos Email.pdf
- BRTC Enrollment Analysis
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 62)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 89)
- BRTC Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 157)
- Director of Admissions Position Description
- Job Description for Student Success Coordinator
- KAIT8 Press Release
- Performance Evaluation Templates
- Position Description for Admissions Counselor
- Position Description for Dean of Students
- Textbook Task Force Report
- Unit Outcomes Assessment Workshop (1)
- Worksheet A - Identifying Unit Outcomes
- Worksheet B - Prioritizing Outcomes
- Worksheet C - Identifying Themes

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Summary

In recent years, the College has undergone a period of uncertainty based on many factors: low enrollment, a new state funding formula, increased competition for state workforce funds, being placed on probation by HLC—even two catastrophic floods. However, the College remains devoted to its mission and is thereby working to address the issues that are within its ability to influence and to endure those that are beyond its control. Responding to such challenges requires careful strategic planning. The College has the physical and human resources necessary to carry out its operations. The current financial situation requiring the College to draw from its reserves is not sustainable in the long term, but there is reason to be hopeful that the enrollment trend has begun to reverse. Enrollment as measured by SSCHs increased in the Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Summer I 2018 by 1%, 1% and 13%, respectively. If these trends continue, the financial outlook for the College is optimistic. However, because revenues are uncertain, the College is deliberate in its resource allocation. The College also continues to seek input from its internal and external constituencies in the planning process. Finally, the College is committed to improving all aspects of its operations by carefully evaluating its functions and formulating data-informed plans to improve them.

Sources

There are no sources.