

800 **Themes**

801 As we went through the self-study process, we found that the themes of the report were
802 truly the themes of the College. In the following account, we have used a variety of
803 examples to illustrate how the themes are woven into the report. Many of the examples
804 could have been used to illustrate several themes other than the one in which they appear.
805 We find the interrelationship remarkable.

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807 **Institutional Commitments**

808 We at Skyline are committed in our words and our actions to our students and their
809 learning. In the self study, we give ample formal evidence of this in our Mission, Values
810 Statement, goals, work plan, planning documents, curriculum with learning outcomes,
811 use of resources, and much more. This commitment is heartfelt in ways that the formal
812 presentation may not capture. Two examples, mentioned several times in the self study,
813 will show how we go about providing the high-quality, open-access education to which
814 we aspire.

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816 First, Skyline participated in the Change Network to improve access and equity. That led
817 to our participation in the Foundations of Excellence in the First-Year Experience project.
818 Standard IIA and its documentation describe the project in detail, including its emphases
819 on both student success and institutional self-reflection. Those participating in the
820 project—administrators, faculty, staff and students alike—exhibit a wonderful
821 combination of caring, commitment and exuberance. The group even wrote an original
822 song, put it on a CD, and had it put up on the national site for the project. In this project,
823 as in all we do, our love of learning is expressed in a way that that says “this is fun,
824 learning is cool, come join us.”

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826 Second, our commitment to diversity is equally at the core of our mission to educate
827 students. We have many learning communities designed to meet the particular needs of
828 specific cohorts of students, from the ASTEP program for African-American students to
829 the WIT program for re-entry women. We also provide a rich array of activities that are
830 supplemental to the classroom. Many of us have attended training at the Simon
831 Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance (MOT) and have come back profoundly affected. The
832 MOT alumni group sponsors diversity related activities for the College community.
833 Recently the presentations have included plays like *Horizon Line*, which presents a
834 teenager who gets caught up in hate crime and a presentation of the film *Big Enough*
835 about the myriad physical and emotional challenges confronting little people living in a
836 world designed for average-sized people and includes a discussion with the filmmaker,
837 Jan Krawits. Our SEED committee (Stewardship for Equity, Equal Employment and
838 Diversity) has several activities in the works, including having selected a book for all of
839 us to read and discuss, *The Color of Water* by James McBride, a black man’s tribute to
840 his white Jewish mother.

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842 **Evaluation, Planning and Improvement**

843 We have embraced the concept of evaluation, planning and improvement with great
844 interest, enthusiasm and sophistication. There is wide-spread participation in the various
845 evaluation, planning and improvement activities with no shortage of opportunities to

846 participate. The systems for evaluation, planning and improvement (i.e., strategic
847 planning, the Balanced Scorecard, Program Review and the Student Learning Outcomes
848 and Assessment Cycle) have all been developed for the purpose of providing a way in
849 which to improve the College programs, services and functions, as well as a means of
850 continuous learning for staff, faculty and administrators. The College culture has become
851 one of evidence-based decision-making and astute inquiry. The demand for data and the
852 collegial presentation and use of information continues to increase as understanding and
853 acceptance of the improvement process progresses.

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855 Throughout the self study there are references to surveys of students and staff, one of the
856 many ways we collected evidence and invited participation. These surveys contain the
857 usual questions about governance and conditions on campus, but were also customized so
858 that we could target areas, like the smoking policy, that we knew would be part of our
859 planning. We made the surveys as user friendly as we could and took several measures
860 to encourage participation, such as handing out pencils with the Employee Voice survey
861 and hanging a giant “thermometer” outside the President’s office to show the level of
862 participation. Broad participation in evaluation, planning and improvement is also
863 solicited by the frequent use of open forums for the College community. Our
864 Educational/Facilities master planning process has used this technique for everything
865 from the overall plan at its most conceptual level to the plans for re-landscaping the quad.

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867 **Student Learning Outcomes**
868 We have made tremendous headway in developing and implementing student learning
869 outcomes and assessments. In typical Skyline fashion, the college has approached this
870 initiative with great enthusiasm and has viewed it as another opportunity to learn and
871 grow as an institution. With the advent of the SLOAC (student learning outcomes and
872 assessment cycle) Committee there has been enormous energy on campus around student
873 learning outcomes and assessment. The collective focus is shifting from teaching to
874 learning and from learning centered to learner centered.

875
876 The SLOAC process is faculty driven with the highest level of institutional commitment.
877 The Board of Trustees and the District Chancellor approved coordinator positions for
878 each of our three colleges, and the College approved additional funding to provide a
879 small stipend to the faculty participants. With this support, the project took off quickly.
880 Members of the committee have attended conferences and workshops both on and off
881 campus, produced learning outcomes and assessment tools for their own courses, and
882 used those materials to train others. This has spawned other projects, such as a pilot
883 project using electronic feedback devices to do instant classroom assessment. This
884 project is being run by faculty members who are not part of the SLOAC committee, but
885 were inspired by it.

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887 **Organization**
888 Our organizational structure and culture, both formally and informally, keeps us
889 informed, reflective, and enthusiastically involved in promoting and improving student
890 learning. Formally, as is shown in the self study, we have the defined mission, values
891 and goals that provide the conceptual framework, the curriculum and services that are

892 carefully and systematically reviewed, the resources and the decision-making process,
893 and the governance and participation processes, all supported by excellent research, that
894 make us and our students successful.

895

896 The informal spirit that makes meeting these commitments a joy is to be found in the way
897 we work together. The flow of information and decision making at Skyline is in all
898 directions, not just top down. We work collaboratively, across disciplines and across
899 work classifications. There are many places to take an idea for a course, an event, a
900 building feature, or any other enhancement to the learning process. Ideas come from all
901 quarters, students and staff as well as faculty and administrators. Students, for example,
902 have requested that specific courses be developed—and we have—and were at the core
903 of the planning of and fund raising for our new Student and Community Center building.
904 We raise money for the President’s Innovation Funds so that we can “dream out loud”
905 and have those dreams come true. Among those dreams have been the Kababayan
906 program--a learning community with a Filipino emphasis--and Common Ground, which
907 organizes and produces events on diversity issues for the College community. There is
908 more we can do with this sort of collaborative innovation. Some projects appear in our
909 planning agenda, others will develop as we progress.

910

911 **Dialogue**

912 All of us have extensive access to information about the College, and the quality of its
913 programs and services. The office of Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness
914 provides information that is both broad and deep on its Web site and in numerous
915 publications. Regular communications from the President’s office, such as the weekly e-
916 newsletter “Skyline Shines,” and from the Public Information Office are also of primary
917 importance. This is supplemented with things like division publications, newsletters
918 from programs and services and the student newspaper. There are many opportunities for
919 formal input into College decisions, as is shown throughout the self study.

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921 And it is effective. A perspicuous example of this resulted in one of our new buildings,
922 the Student and Community Center. The students themselves started working toward this
923 building several years ago and made it clear just how important it is to them by taxing
924 themselves \$10 per student to help make it happen. Our research into our own students’
925 success, confirmed by national research, shows that connection to the College, a feeling
926 of belonging, is important to student success. It is a challenge to build this sense of
927 connection and community in a commuter college where a majority of its students are
928 working 30 or more hours a week and the weather is usually foggy in the bargain. This
929 building goes a long way toward bringing us together. Two features are especially
930 noteworthy, the inscription and the fireplace. The inscription came about through a
931 campus-wide process with all invited to submit suggestions, the librarians checking the
932 possibilities for accuracy, and then a campus-wide vote. The resulting inscription, “You
933 must be the change you wish to see in the world” by Mahatma Gandhi, has been
934 embraced by all and truly reflects Skyline values. The fireplace was similarly an idea
935 that came from the campus community, worked its way through the process, and is now a
936 clear boon to the students and others who flock to it. In sum, the new student and
937 community center invites dialogue and came about as a result of dialogue.

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939 **Institutional Integrity**

940 Skyline’s institutional integrity is an integral part of the College culture and is expressed
941 in myriad ways, including the process of this self study. The self study has been
942 produced with broad input from administrators, faculty and staff and with some
943 participation from students, though less than we had hoped for. The document has been
944 reviewed by the College community both on the Web and in open forums, both of which
945 yielded some frank and lively comments. The final document is inclusive of all of this
946 input. It is a clear and honest reflection on our own strengths and weaknesses.

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948 In the course of doing the self study, we have uncovered some short-comings. The
949 writers of Standard I discovered that we had not had the then-current version of our
950 Mission Statement approved by the Board of Trustees; we remedied that promptly. In
951 other cases we need a longer process for improvement and have documented both the
952 need and the plans in the self study. The writers of Standard II identified a need for more
953 staff development in a variety of areas, such as technology and student learning
954 outcomes. They also identified and documented some of the things we are most proud
955 of, including our many ways of honoring and respecting the diversity of our students, our
956 staff, and our community. Just to take one example, our Kababayan program, which
957 concentrates on Filipino students, includes a rich array of classes and community events,
958 and excellent staff to support them. This program grew out of a combination of clear
959 community need expressed by some members of the President’s Council, enthusiasm of
960 students and staff, and funding by the President’ Innovation Fund. Similar findings are
961 to be found throughout the document.

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963 Skyline has always been committed to honestly representing itself to all—to our students,
964 our staff, our business partners, the agencies we deal with and the public at large. We
965 have recently taken this a step further with our Fresh Look project, which carefully
966 considered the audiences for our communications and made them not just visually
967 appealing but also accessible in language and format to those who do not speak the
968 technical language of education.