

PREFACE – ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

Organizational Description

Crowder College (CC) employees refer to each other as the “Crowder Family.” It is not an expression that is taken lightly. Employees relate to each other, work together, and support the community as a family. In doing so, we enhance the effectiveness with which we accomplish our mission as a comprehensive public community college located in Neosho, Missouri. We came together as an educational family in 1963, and have since served this region with low-cost, high quality education and training opportunities for all citizens who can benefit. Over the last 40 years, the college has become an “extended family,” with the main campus in **Neosho**, the CC Watley Center in **Cassville (344 students)**, the CC Moss Higher Education Center in **Nevada (337 students)**, and the CC Hickey Building in **Webb City (334 students)**. Collectively, last year, the four sites served **3,148 students** for an annual full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) of **2,836**.

Responsibilities to each other are taken seriously—responsibilities to the employees, the students, and the community. The term family is fitting because it’s essential that employees are valued and treated fairly and that students are academically, socially, emotionally, and culturally prepared. The college family insists that their community is healthy, that business and industry thrive, and that community members share in the cultural and social opportunities available to students.

As one might expect in a successful family, the CC approach to leadership is one of service. Each person is seen as more important than the process—demanding that it shouldn’t take six weeks for a student to get a refund or an employee to get a reimbursement when it can be done in two days. All employees (regardless of status) and their family members are eligible for tuition waivers. Graduates of CC are issued “Lifetime Learning” cards which entitles them to enroll in 3 credit hours per semester free of charge.

CC wants its community to be healthy and progressive, and views it as part of its mission to assist local schools, provide training and expertise to area businesses, and special learning opportunities to minorities and the disadvantaged. Extra help is given to those members who need it most and it is viewed as an institutional imperative that CC finds, helps pick up, and restores those members who have fallen through the cracks.

Central to the heart of CC is the connection with the community. Perhaps because of the rural nature of the area and the small town attitudes, CC is truly viewed as belonging to the citizens of southwest Missouri. People are proud of and feel a connection with the college. Graduation at CC is a large, family-focused event with more than 1,000 in attendance—nearly seven guests for every participating graduate.

The CC gymnasium is the largest community facility in the two-county district with a capacity of 2,000. It is used not only for the CC basketball games and physical education classes, but all sorts of community events including dance recitals, concerts, and other large gatherings.

The focus on “service” is reflected in the college’s organizational environment. CC is an open admissions institution serving a full range of students: approximately **1,250** each year in need of a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (**GED**) through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Program (**AEL**), and Even Start; **115** migrant students from migrant families through the College Assistance Migrant Program (**CAMP**) and the High School Equivalency Program (**HEP**); **304** high school students through one of the largest and most successful Upward Bound (**UB**) and Upward Bound Math/Science (**UBMS**) projects in the nation; high school students through the vocational programs; 3,100 students through academic for-credit classes; an average of **4,800** individuals through the Alliance for Business Consulting and Development (**ABCD**); and **450-500** through the Environmental Resource Center (**ERC**).

In a rapidly expanding global economy, it is critical that the well-educated individual feels comfortable interacting and working in diverse and international markets. Accordingly, the college offers cross-cultural experiences and opportunities as part of every learner’s experience. Last year, **26** full time students from Russia, Japan, Vietnam, Mongolia, Brazil, Cameroon, Gambia, Kenya, Ukraine, China, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela lived on campus and a dozen local students studied abroad.

CC is fully accredited by North Central Association of Schools and Colleges (NCA) and offers credit programs of study that includes the Associate of Arts (AA) Degree, the Associate of Science (AS) Degree, the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degree, and the certificate and diploma programs.

CC offers educational programs to students through a variety of means. First, classes are offered through the traditional methods in traditional classrooms, but with a schedule designed to accommodate student needs and interests. Classes run from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. and on weekends. Courses have been updated through the use of multi-media and other technological advances including PowerPoint, Smart Boards, and on-line teaching aids. A complete Associate of Arts degree is now available online. Traditional classes are offered both on campus and at various off campus sites including high schools and other appropriate locations.

To accommodate the diverse schedules and interest of its learning community, CC has developed flexible means of delivering quality programming that meets the needs and desires of learners in the service region—and beyond. On-line courses have opened CC to a wider audience by crossing both time and geographic barriers.

ITV classes originate from all of the college sites, and can be taken by students at any of the other locations. On-line courses permit students to work on class work any time, any day, with strong call-in technical support when needed.

Services are provided without cost to any student who needs academic assistance, and to any employee who wishes to upgrade employment-related skills. The organizational environment is designed to keep “the family” as strong, innovative, and motivated as possible.

The organizational culture of CC is one of broad-based participation and collaboration. The leadership believes strongly in a decision-making approach based upon a philosophy of “power with” rather than “power over.” It is understood that if every position within the organization is important to its effectiveness, each person working in those positions should have access to performance data, should have input on decisions affecting organizational direction, and should share in the rewards. Over the past twenty years, pay increases awarded to the President have not differed in percentage from those awarded to the building maintenance staff, and the newest cars in the college fleet are made available to general use – not to the chief administrators. The culture is characterized by open doors, open attitudes, and open information.

VISION/MISSION STATEMENT

The college has a vision of building a civil, serving, literate, learning community of responsible citizens.

To facilitate this, the college will provide “learner centered” education and training on a continuous 24 hour, seven-day-a-week basis through conveniently located centers. Students will grow in nine identified abilities, and faculty, staff and students will feel valued and encouraged to be innovative, responsible and caring. The college will develop a financial independence and an organizational climate that supports continuous innovation and improvement.

Crowder College provides quality life-long learning opportunities to all who can reasonably benefit through accessible, flexible, affordable programs designed to foster personal growth and contribute to the abilities of citizens to live productive and satisfying lives of service in a diverse global society.

VALUES

As a college family, Crowder is continuously engaged in:

- **CARING:** in honoring the inherent worth of each individual.
- **THE PURSUIT OF LEARNING:** in putting into practice the best that is known about how people learn.
- **FOSTERING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION:** in exploring new ideas, trying new approaches, encouraging calculated risks when the potential result merit risk.
- **ETHICAL BEHAVIOR:** in demonstrating through personal action that people should relate to each other ethically.
- **COLLABORATION:** in ensuring that every person in the organization shares in shaping the college’s future.
- **SERVING OTHERS:** in helping each person become freer, wiser, and better able to serve.

PHILOSOPHY

It is the belief of CC that access and quality are not mutually exclusive, but that both can be fully realized through a proactive organizational culture based upon open access, on-going assessment, mandatory placement, structured support, and continuous evaluation and improvement of processes.

This institution believes in strong ties and relationships between the college and other educational institutions, both secondary and post-

secondary, the community, and the businesses and organizations that support our community. The college accepts an active role in economic and social development through continuing education and customized training, directed toward improving work skills and productivity, creating a more desirable work and social environment, and adding to the general quality of life within the region.

As of fall 2004, Crowder College had 185 full-time employees and 189 part-time employees, plus an ever-changing number of work-study and other student workers (usually from 125 to 150). Of these, 64 were full-time faculty and 150 adjunct faculty, 57 were professional staff, 51 were classified, or hourly staff, and 13 were administrators. Faculty are divided almost equally between male and female, while professional and classified staff are more heavily female (67% and 78% respectively). Of the administrative staff, six of the thirteen are female.

The average age of a full-time Crowder employee is 45, with 15 falling below age 30 and 12 above age 60. The vast majority fall into the 31-59 age range.

Crowder is located in an area of the country that is fairly homogeneous in race/ethnicity make-up and its staff reflects the regional mix. Of the 185 full-time employees, only fourteen are not in the white/non-Hispanic category. Of these fourteen, four are Hispanic, five are American Indian, three African-American, and two are Asian.

The full-time faculty and staff educational levels as of Fall 2004 are as follows.

FACULTY and STAFF EDUCATIONAL LEVELS						
	HS	A	B	M	D	Total
Faculty	2	11	9	35	7	64
Staff	23	22	6			51
Professional	1	4	27	25		57
Admin			1	6	6	13

Crowder is a comprehensive community college, offering a wide variety of programs and services. Our workforce reflects that same diversity, from the custodian who sweeps the floor; teachers who instruct in everything from adult basic education and auto mechanics to fine arts, and trainers who work with local industries to provide leadership training, skills updates, or quality assurance techniques; to high school students through senior citizens; to the administrators who coordinate it all. Support services

include clerical staff, computer technicians, counselors, and accounting/financial staff.

The college is unique in that it has no organized bargaining units, no tenure, no faculty rank (professor, assistant professor, etc), and almost all administrators, have teaching responsibility. All employees (full time or part time, professional or classified) and their families are entitled to free classes. Employee associations (faculty, professional, classified) represent group interests to the administration, but decision-making at all levels is an informal "meet and confer." Few contract employees are used, except for the occasional remodeling job or short-term projects. A wellness program for employees and a committee charged with scanning the campus environment for any health/safety problems ensures a commitment to personal and institutional fitness.

For a college of its size, Crowder is exceptionally well equipped technologically with an award-winning web site, "Smart Board" technology in many classrooms, desktop computer access to for all employees to institutional and national educational resources, and a student/computer ratio of 2:1.

Students have plug-in access to the same computer resources from the residence halls. A Blackboard-based on-line platform provides 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week access to on-line courses from anywhere in the world, and a well-trained IT staff provides 12-hour-a-day support.

CC has been able to take advantage of state enhancement grants and several other grant-based resources to keep instructional and technical equipment current with the demands of employers, student interests, and employee needs. Through wonderful community support in Crowder's satellite communities, CC has obtained excellent facilities at minimal cost to the college. In Nevada, the community donated a former three-story hospital administration building which is now the Moss Higher Education Center. In Cassville, a businessman donated a manufacturing building he was replacing to the college and committed \$200,000 to remodeling it as the Watley Education Center. In Webb City, CC purchased the old Armory for \$40,000 and with a sizable donation from an area citizen, developed the Hickey Regional Technical Center. These examples show that the sense of family and community extends well beyond the college walls.

CC's educational programs and quality control issues are regulated by both state and regional accreditation

bodies that impose guidelines and provide periodic site visits to evaluate mission success. Crowder is accredited by the North Central Association of College and Schools (NCA) and received its last full accreditation review in 1992. At that point, CC entered a newly established voluntary accreditation process established by NCA, based on the Baldrige Criteria called AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Project.) Crowder is one of the few public higher education institutions in Missouri accepted into the AQIP program for accreditation.

Teacher credentialing and certification are regulated by the state. Other areas unique to education such as student financial aid, students with disabilities, and vocational rehabilitation have their own sets of regulations and accompanying audits.

CC is subject to all of the standard employment and personnel law, and regulations governing handling of hazardous materials in laboratories and shops, personal health information restrictions, student privacy laws, and laws governing issues such as student participation in athletics. A fully staffed Human Resources (HR) Department carefully monitors personnel operations and current standards.

CC is also regulated geographically by state statutes and agreements describing its taxing base, and its responsibilities for providing service to a broader "service region," which in the college's case covers nine counties in southwest Missouri. Because Missouri's system of higher education is administered by a "coordinating board" rather than a "governing board," a locally elected board of trustees has broad discretion concerning tuition, fees, program, and course offerings.

This locally elected Board of Trustees serves as the principal policy-making body for the college. The two-county district is divided into two sub-districts that closely follow county lines, with one electing four members, and the other electing two members for staggered six-year terms. The Board must, by law, approve all hiring and dismissal of personnel, the budget (including tuition and fee rates), contracts with outside vendors, and all expenditures. The Board also serves as a final review panel for both disciplinary and academic appeals at the college.

The Board hires the college President to administer the college, using a governance system through which the Board outlines the broad policy parameters within which the President can operate, then evaluates his performance and that of the rest of the administrative team based upon how successfully

they achieve mission goals within those parameters. Direct evaluation of second level administrative staff is left to the President.

The President communicates with the Board informally on an on-going basis and with a formal, written report monthly prior to each Board meeting. Annual goals and objectives, based upon the strategic plan, are submitted to the Board at the beginning of each year, with a mid-year and end-of-the-year report. At each meeting, the Board receives a report on one or more of the college's quality indicators, keeping the Board fully informed of college performance and progress.

The Board and the administration of CC focus on the requirements of students and other key stakeholder and consumer groups. Key student classifications, stakeholder groups and market segments are viewed as: perspective students, current students, alumni, employees, area employers, business and industrial clients, sending schools, receiving schools, state and federal agencies, and local taxpayers and community members.

Students are considered to be CC's principal stakeholders, and a joint commitment exists between the two. Students are obligated to assume ownership of their education by mastering the curricular and co-curricular experiences provided and exhibiting respect and responsibility within the living /learning environments. In turn, CC is obligated to anticipate the competencies students will need to succeed in the emerging global community and marketplace, and forward these in curricular requirements.

Based upon regular needs and attitude surveys directed to these stakeholder groups, CC formulates educational, training, cultural and service opportunities that address identified needs not being met by other regional providers.

For some, this means high school completion programs. For others, it requires degree programs that will transfer to other public and private postsecondary institutions for baccalaureate degree completion. One group of stakeholders seeks specific training for job acquisition or upgrade, and another educational opportunity for personal life improvement. To meet the demands of a very competitive educational marketplace, these opportunities must be delivered at a cost that consumers view as appropriate to the quality and nature of the service, and at times and locations that meet stakeholder needs.

The college depends on the secondary school system for much of its student supply and must constantly exchange information with these institutions on student performance, areas of weakness, and entrance expectations. Many older students are referred by social agencies, which require the same performance feedback, but must also be reassured that the students they send will have the support systems needed to achieve success. Since the college serves as a supplier to the state's four year sector and area employers, these partners require evidence of quality preparation and job-readiness. They also need regular assurance that the college is taking their own entrance expectations into account when developing programs and courses.

To ensure that this communication occurs, the college assisted in the creation of the Southwest Center for Educational Excellence, which until May of this year, was housed in its Webb City Campus. This consortium of 42 school districts meets monthly with college personnel to share information, provide cooperative staff development training, and review performance.

The President also meets monthly with all area superintendents, and other staff members hold regular sessions with representatives of area social services agencies. Every technical program on campus has an advisory committee of associated business and industrial representatives who meet semi-annually, review curriculum, and provide input to faculty.

Organizational Challenges

CC has had a major change in leadership this past year. Dr. Kent Farnsworth recently retired after 19 years of service at the college. Dr. Steven Gates was named the new president in June of 2004. While he will build on Crowder's strong tradition and commitment to quality, he brings with him leadership skills and a perspective shaped by serving in three Iowa community colleges.

CC does not presently utilize strategic planning as a means for identifying major initiatives during a 3-5 year period. The term "strategic plan" is frequently used in this report in the context of quality improvement planning. Recently, the AQIP Steering Committee and the new president have discussed the fundamental differences between using strategic planning for the college's quality initiatives versus developing a strategic plan for the college's future. The transition to a new president and Crowder's first completion of the annual AQIP cycle will present an important opportunity for making sharper distinctions

between quality improvement plans and long-term strategic planning. The formal development of such a plan could further advance CC toward its mission and impact the entire organization.

CC is not presently in a competitive situation with other public community colleges in the state. CC does feel competitive pressure from the four-year sector in the immediate area. Locally, CC's principal competitor is Missouri Southern State University (MSSU), a public 6,000 student baccalaureate degree-granting institution located 30 miles north. MSSU began as a two-year college and continues to offer a variety of associate degree programs. It was recently granted university status by the state legislature. Three out-of-state community college are actually closer to Crowder than are its in-state sister schools; Northeast Oklahoma A&M (NEO), Northwest Arkansas Community College, and Fort Scott Community College in Kansas. Only one proprietary college, Vatterott in Joplin, competes in any significant way for our students.

State data indicate that the community college sector in Missouri has grown by 60% over the past two decades. The public four-year sector has grown by less than one percent during that same time period, and the private four-year sector by almost 80%. Crowder has been the fastest growing two-year college in the state during the past two years (32%), and expects significant growth again for this coming year. During the same two year period, its primary competition, MSSU, has remained relatively stable.

Three factors have significantly influenced CC's growth. The first is a growing reputation in the area for academic quality, leading potential students to see CC as a quality provider of first tier education. The second factor has been a rapid rise in tuition in the four-year sector that has outpaced tuition increases at Crowder by both dollar amount and percentage. This makes CC the "better buy." The third factor is the introduction of a program called "A+" at the state level that provides tuition assistance for students who attend community colleges, if they graduate from an "A+" certified high school. Approximately 300 students now attend Crowder as A+ students.

It remains to be seen what effect the new university status will have on enrollment trends at MSSU. Crowder's assessment is that if other factors remain the same, it will be minimal. The new legislation does, however, require that MSSU abandon its associate degree programs within five years, and this could affect CC positively if the college can assume responsibility for the more productive programs.

The state budget crisis threatens the A+ program, and if it is reduced or discontinued, CC could expect to lose a portion of those now attending under this program. The state has a rich data bank of educational statistics that is improving in organization and access, and can be used for determining changes in the competitive climate.

The college uses some analogous data from outside of the academic community to assess pay scales, benefit packages, turnover, operational costs for buildings, etc. This data is generally readily available through local personnel and building associations.

The next five years present five specific strategic challenges for the college.

- 1) The fiscal climate in the state is highly unpredictable and programs such as A+, mentioned above, could be dramatically affected depending on how the state's fortunes turn.
- 2) Community colleges, including Crowder, are reaching a point of maturity in their organizational lives that will lead to retirement numbers that will completely reshape leadership, faculty composition, and institutional culture.
- 3) As MSSU re-evaluates its mission and is forced by statute to modify its offerings, the efficacy of the CC response will dramatically affect the educational landscape in southwest Missouri.
- 4) Crowder has succeeded in recent years partly because it has remained on the cutting edge of the application of technology to educational delivery. How effectively it is able to continue to do that over the next half-decade will significantly shape its future.
- 5) Board turnover. Though transitions in Board composition have gone smoothly in the past, CC administrators and continuing Board members will have to make orientation of new members and focused retreats a main priority to continue the established tradition of effective Board leadership.

The overall approach used to maintain organizational focus on performance improvement and to guide systematic evaluation and improvement has the beginnings in the Mission, Vision, and Values of the college. From those, the Strategic Goals for the College have been derived and for each of those, there are three Key Outcomes that the college considers vital to fulfilling its purpose. Each Key Outcome area has specific Key Outcome Measures (KOMs) that are carefully monitored. Planning and continuous improvement are ensured through the organizational Seven Step Planning Process (7-SPP, Figure 8-1).

The approach to organizational learning and sharing knowledge is multi-faceted. Improving the individual is taken seriously at CC, and it provides one of the most comprehensive and effective staff development programs available among community colleges. Each year, over 95% of all full-time employees are engaged in formal professional learning. At the beginning of the fall and spring semesters, all employees participate in a day of staff development that includes seminars, workshops, and symposiums, supplemented by an annually planned schedule of workshops that are offered during second Friday afternoons.

To support employee learning and effectiveness, institutional data is universally shared. The college utilizes a Dashboard system that displays performance on the KOMs for all employees to review. Drill-down menus allow anyone who wishes to examine the data sets being used to generate the information, and review trend lines.

Returning briefly to the "family" metaphor, each person in the family takes pride not only in personal growth, but in the growth of others. Over time, that attitude encourages each to be as interested in how well others in the organization are doing, as well as how well he or she is doing. At Crowder, the greatest "quality improvement" asset is this desire by all for every member of the Crowder family to succeed.