Pellissippi State Community College
Associate of Applied Science Degree in General Technology
Academic Audit Report
April 11, 2014

Introduction:

The Academic Audit Team responsible for the review of the AAS in General Technology consisted of two faculty members, one from Nashville State Community College and the other from Columbia State Community College and one administrator from Volunteer State Community College. The onsite visit was held at the Pellissippi State Community College main campus on April 11, 2014. During the site visit, the team met with the Dean, faculty (full and part-time), students, and alumni.

The General Technology program, effective fall 2013, consists of three concentrations. These concentrations include the Interdisciplinary concentration, the Industrial Technology Concentration, and the Business Concentration. The self-study; however, did not address these concentrations. The self-study focused on the variations of the program during the years for which the audit was prepared (fall2008 to spring 2013).

Overall Performance:

The College identified major goals of the program which included a strong foundation in general education and providing students the opportunity to select courses that most closely aligned to personal career goals. These courses comprise thirty (30) hours of the degree and exist within other career technical programs of the college. Credit is awarded for Prior Learning Assessment, Credit for Life Experience, and articulation with Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology and with various industry training programs. Faculty members advising and teaching courses within the program demonstrated a great commitment to the program and acknowledged challenges with defining student learning outcomes and assessments of learning.

Advisors of the General Technology Program are committed to student's pursuing the AAS in General Technology. Advisors work individually with each student in developing a curriculum path focusing on the student's area of interest. The program provides the flexibility which permits students the opportunity for students to reach individual academic and career goals.

College employees participating in the discussion during the site visit acknowledge that a more concise procedure for acceptance of transfer of courses from the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology should be developed and implemented.

The College should develop and implement program and student learning outcomes for the AAS in General Technology. In addition, an assessment plan that specifically defines responsibility for implementation of the plan and a timeline for all assessments should be developed. . Assessment measures tied directly to each student learning outcome should be developed, implemented, results reviewed, and improvements made as a result of assessments.

Performance in the Focal Areas:

Learning Objectives:
Program-level learning objectives have not been formalized through any collaborative effort including the faculty, advisory boards, and the Deans. Clear and measurable outcomes have been defined for each individual course and are listed on all course syllabi. The program states outcomes in the 2012 Courses and Programs Booklet on the College website as being, "to provide a strong foundation in general education, including problem-solving skills, computer use and functioning as a productive member of society. " The academic catalog defines the goals as, "a strong foundation in general education, including problem-solving skills and computer use." However, there is a lack of formalized measures to determine student achievement of the outcomes. The audit team strongly recommends that the General Technology Program develop these as soon as feasibly possible and use these measures annually to effectively evaluate mastery of program learning outcomes.

Although the General Technology Program underwent the Academic Audit Process in 2007, they have made very little progress in developing learning outcomes and assessments to measure these outcomes. Although program learning objectives have been created since the 2007 audit, they have not been formally recognized nor measured. It is unclear whether the Program has developed appropriate measures for this crucial task. The audit team suggests that the faculty develop appropriate learning outcome measures and implement a methodology to ensure learning outcomes are assessed on a routine basis.

Curriculum and Co-Curriculum:
The department boasts strong offerings in both the curricular and co-curricular areas. The program curriculum is designed to allow a student to meet his or her personal academic and career goals. The requirement that each student complete at least one business course, a second English composition or business and technical writing course, and a computer course ensures students have at least a minimum exposure to skills and knowledge much needed in the employment arena.

Faculty, deans, advisors, and students agreed that advising is the key to student success and in discussions with each group examples of excellent advising were provided. In addition, working with local business and industry to develop sequences of courses which meet their needs is to be applauded. The program curriculum allows for development or piloting of new training opportunities and partnerships.

In the report and in the conversation with the faculty, deans, and advisors, it was noted that the curriculum had been changed for fall 2014. Three tracks were created where the previous program only consisted of one track. While the audit team understands that we were there to review the program as it existed during the study year, it would have been beneficial to have had information concerning program changes and why the course composition of the degree was being modified. This would have assisted the audit team in having a more thorough understanding of the program review process, in addition to having a better understanding of the current curriculum.

Teaching and Learning Methods:
The General Technology A.A.S. program uses a mixture of course offerings from other technical and business departments at the college. The other departments provided evidence of accreditation, which demonstrates a commitment to maintaining and improving teaching and learning. In addition, the college has policies and procedures in place to encourage faculty development in regards to teaching and learning.

Student Learning Assessment:
A few components from the current self-study predate the previous Academic Audit of the program, which occurred more than five years ago. The self-study indicated that the primary assessment of student learning occurs at the course level within other academic degree programs rather than within the AAS in General Technology. The few assessments that were indicated included "documentation of placement (placement rates), employer surveys and graduation/alumni survey." Yet, the program's individual assessments such as placement is not analyzed or broken out for this program specifically. The Program's goals and learning objectives have evolved in an informal fashion with no data derived as of yet. The previous academic audit also indicated that student learning outcomes and assessment should be developed and implemented to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program. Specific results of student learning assessment and activities planned and or implemented as a result of using the assessments were not provided.

During the audit visit, the program described an enrollment pattern in which each individual student utilized the program to satisfy their personal goals and objectives. Many of these individualized career paths seemed quite creative on the part of both advisors and students. However, the College should develop specific student learning outcomes for the AAS General Technology Program and specific assessments to measure student accomplishment of the outcomes.

The students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the efforts of the faculty given to academic advising and made comments that the program advisors helped students find their way in identifying and accomplishing their academic goals.

The audit team commended the program's attempts to serve students with differing degree and workforce needs. Current and former students, as well as faculty, described how students are able to bring workforce-related questions and ideas into the program.

Evidence cited in the self-study and employee interviews confirms the audit team recommendation that the program define student learning outcomes and appropriate assessment measures to ascertain student learning on an annual cycle. The self-study and personal interviews also indicated a lack of data-driven assessments.

Quality Assurance:

The self-study indicated that the overall assessment of the General Technology Program is measured within the context of the mission of the College. The program, as indicated in the self-study, is intended to provide an avenue for students to meld skills from various career technical areas into a degree. The program does not have assigned faculty. The faculty of other programs provides the instruction within the General Technology program and they work collaboratively on course content. These faculty members work closely with industry in determining the appropriate skills required for work.

The self-study indicated that faculty do not see weaknesses in the program and find it has served a purpose to provide students who would most likely be unsuccessful to complete a specific career technical program. However, the faculty did not document or propose a continuous improvement plan that incorporates multiple measures to assess student learning and program effectiveness.