

Administrative Response to Program Review

Fire Protection Technology

Prepared by Scott Huff

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The Fire Protection Technology Program Review was presented in the Fall of 2010. We thank you for your efforts to create, maintain, improve, and expand this high quality program. Those efforts serve the public and fire agencies well and we thank you for your continued efforts to make this program something about which the college in general and you in particular can take great pride.

You are complimented on your report and presentation, which not only addressed issues required in a Program Review but also provided background and history on the profession and the program. Those not involved in the day-to-day operations of fire service agencies or educational programs are left with a much more complete picture of what is involved.

You are encouraged to apply for Certificate Assembly and Degree Assembly accreditation from the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) as soon as possible. Having IFSAC accreditation would denote the program's compliance with recognized external standards for fire service educational programs.

Administrative Response to the SAC's Recommendations

Administrative responses to the FP SAC's recommendations are found in *italics* below.

1. Recommendations Related to Teaching and Learning

It should be noted that summer terms have consistently had the widest discrepancy between credits taught by FT and PT faculty. The most likely explanation for this is the fact both full-time faculty are on 9 month contracts, thus the load they have carried in the summer has varied. This variance could be solved if one of the FT worked fall, winter, and spring, and the other worked winter, spring, and summer (or other 3-term combination).

Agreed, and this was suggested after the most recent full-time instructor hire. Beginning with Fall 2011, please schedule one full-time instructor to teach fall, winter, and spring and the other full-time instructor to teach winter, spring, and summer.

In addition, the following issues related to teaching and learning should be addressed:

- Create more opportunities for critical thinking.
- Reduce substitutions in the degree.
- Refine the Degree Outcomes
- Update and revise course Content and Outcome Guides
- Change the 9000 numbered courses to 3 digit and update the Course Content and Outcomes
- Change and update the PCC catalog description to match the changes

Agreed in all cases and your efforts in having these come to fruition will be appreciated.

Other Recommendations

2. Current Curriculum

In 2010, it was identified that there were some unintended consequences which developed as a result of the 2008 FPT AAS Degree revision. The 2008 revision created problems for the college's Student Records office, including graduation assessment. As a result, the FPT program has proposed a revision to the 2008 AAS Degree. The proposed revision incorporates new program degree outcomes, adds new courses recommended by the Fire Advisory committee, and establishes alternative courses for students that are currently working in the fire service. These alternative courses provide for a distinction between career fire fighters seeking a degree for advancement and students seeking entry level employment. These proposed revisions will be a short term fix to the unintended consequences and will give the FPT staff flexibility to work with the two identifiable types of students mentioned previously, seeking the AAS Degree. The adoption of the new revisions will also give program stakeholders the opportunity to take a fresh look at the Degree and to determine if the Degree itself needs to be

re-developed from the ground up, and if a second Degree will be required to meet the needs of the two distinct types of students in the FPT program.

The suggested revisions to the AAS degree are worthy of continued conversation and action. It is recognized and appreciated that a proposed revision has already been submitted to the Curriculum Office and that proposed changes will soon be seen by the Curriculum and Degrees & Certificates Committee. We will be glad to participate in discussions about these changes, especially as they relate to serving those already in the fire services.

As you think about revising the program, please keep two things in mind. First, keeping total credits to as close to the 90-credit minimum as possible allows students to reach their goal sooner, and at less cost and likely with less student loan debt. Second, consider an Option to the existing Degree (rather than a completely new Degree) as you think about how to serve those already working in the fire service. Something like "Fire Protection Technology – Fire Service Administration Option" could be a good route for those already in the business and could feed EOU's BS in Fire Service Administration program.

3. Professional Development

PCC can support and enhance part-time faculty professional development by taking advantage of the NFA resident (on-campus) courses. The NFA provides courses for free to all qualified fire service personnel. This would only require the College to cover the cost of transportation and food. The cost of the class and lodging is included as a part of the NFA's continuing effort to enhance fire training and education. It should be utilized by PCC when a part-time faculty member has the ability to attend. This could be done in collaboration with the individual's fire department.

This is a sound suggestion and Jan Wetzel-Volinski would be a great resource. Presently, we are required to spend much of our Perkins funding on faculty professional development. We might be able to provide support for NFA coursework. Please contact her, since she knows all the rules around what we can and cannot fund. Keep in mind that the Carl Perkins focus changes year from year, so this option may not be available in the future.

4. Access and Success for Students

The continued development and support for Contract Credit (see 3.7 Contract Credit) is a positive way to give students increased access and improve student success. Although there are no data to support the following assumption, it is thought that fifty percent of FPT students are currently employed fire fighter working 24-hour shifts. By working with fire agencies to insure the integrity of off-site education programs, the College improves the program's ability to help student attain a degree.

We recognize the importance of helping those employed in the fire service and opportunity to earn college credit and, eventually, an AAS degree, and we are committed to working with you to find an appropriate means for doing so. That said, as we've discussed in the past, we have concerns about "contract credit" classes. Concerns include compliance with college standards related to instructor qualifications, assessment of instructors, and assessment of course outcomes.

As you're aware, additional concerns arose over Fall 2010, including a student registered for more than double the credits normally allowed, along with the number of credits granted for the Metro Fire Officers Academy being in excess of what could be earned in the time available. Additionally, and possibly of greater concern, are that students are being registered in these classes to provide:

- 1. credit that can be used to meet PCC's residency requirements*
- 2. credit that can be transferred, e.g., to EOU's Fire Service Administration program*
- 3. students' eligibility for or receipt of financial aid*
- 4. students' eligibility for or receipt of veterans benefits*

Our concerns for each of these are as follows.

- 1. Students should meet PCC's 30-credit residency requirement on the basis of classes taken at PCC and delivered by PCC instructors following PCC CCOGs and assessing course and degree outcomes in accordance with PCC standards. We currently have no*

control over fire agency personnel in terms of qualifications, assessment of instructional ability, or compliance with our outcomes.

- 2. We should not act as a clearinghouse for credits intended to be transferred to other institutions. Other institutions can establish their own procedures for granting credit for fire agency training academies if they chose to do so.*
- 3. We have concern that we have students becoming eligible for financial aid on the basis of training done elsewhere or completed before the term of registration. Federal financial aid is granted on the basis of credit hours and credit hours are based on a long-established rule of 30 hours of effort inside and outside the classroom, i.e., 30 hours of lecture, laboratory, and homework time is needed for every credit earned. If students aren't putting in the time expected for each credit, we have a problem.*
- 4. We also have concern that we have students becoming eligible for veterans benefits on the basis of training done elsewhere. Veterans benefits are granted on the basis of contact hours, rather than credits. The contact hours are those specified for our courses, but we don't control the number of hours in fire agency training academies.*

At the Program Review presentation, we heard from the program's Perkins Advisor that fire service employees were being enrolled in current "contract credit" classes as a means of providing credit for past fire agency training. This is a practice that cannot continue.

That practice is related to a student enrolled Fall term in more than double the number of credits normally allowed; that student enrolled for credits three different ways. First, he registered for three classes in the conventional manner, which is fine. Second, he enrolled in classes totaling 14 credits for his involvement in the Metro Fire Officers Academy, which exceeds what can be earned in the time allotted. Third, he enrolled in current classes on the basis of having earned certificates for attending fire agency training in the past.

Given these concerns and potential liability connected to possible violation of financial aid, veterans benefits, state rules, and accreditation criteria, FP's "contract credit" classes may not be offered winter term and will be on hiatus in future terms until we come to acceptable means for handling the following.

1. *We develop, in concert with the various fire agencies means for assuring that those*
 1. *teaching FP classes at fire agencies meet our instructor qualifications*
 2. *teaching FP classes at fire agencies are assessed in compliance with PCC's assessment practices for all PCC instructors*
 3. *taking FP classes at fire agencies attain the same course outcomes as in on-campus offerings*
2. *We develop guidelines for how many credits may be granted for various training classes done by fire agencies, making sure the credits granted are in compliance with applicable state and accreditation rules.*
3. *We institute practices that assure that students are in control of their registration processes, including adding and dropping of classes.*

During the hiatus, we will use the college's standard Non-Traditional Credit approach for awarding credit for education and training done elsewhere, whether in the past or present. This is available to any person having established a transcript at PCC (which takes as little as a one-credit course) and pays a one-time \$10 fee for as many credits as the student may bring to the college over time, up to maximum of 45 credits. We will award this credit when students complete qualified training at a fire agency and get an appropriate certificate for doing so through the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) or a similar agency in another state. To do this, we will need to establish what number of credits may be associated with each DPSST-issued certificate. For example, an individual might earn all or some portion of the 10 and 7 credits associated with FP 111 and 112, respectively, depending on the content, rigor, hours, and outcomes assessment associated with Fire Fighter I and Fire Fighter II training conducted by a fire agency.

In addition, the FPT program intends on pursuing an effort to increase the "non-traditional workforce" student population. This will be done as follows:

- start a cadet program in conjunction with Jefferson High School and Self Enhancement, Inc.
- create a support/ focus group for students of the non-traditional workforce.
- utilize student and faculty from the non-traditional workforce to promote the program.

The FPT program would also like to create more opportunities for students to interact and serve the community. This could be done through cooperative. education, volunteering, Service Learning and the SFFA.

We support these all ideas. In particular, it would be great to re-start the cadet program, and we suggest that this not be limited to Jefferson High School.

5. Needed Resources

The following have been identified by FPT faculty and staff as needed resources:

- Improved drill ground facilities to better serve the fire Fighter Skills academies, Rescue class, and Driver/Pumper Operator classes.
- Better utilization of new age technology for the classroom to keep the new generation of students engaged in the learning process.
- Install a chemistry type "lab bench" in the classroom with a ventilation system that would facilitate conducting classroom demonstrations.
- Schedule maintenance and testing of equipment used on the drill ground and live evolutions.
- Investigate the possibility of an alternative facility such as leasing or partnering with a local fire department for the Fire Fighter Skills Academies and other courses that require equipment usage.

All of these ideas are worthy of consideration, and we would be glad to discussion specifics of each.

6. Being Responsive to Community Needs

In the FPT program, we feel we serve to communities: the citizens of PCC's District and the fire service. Given those two communities, the following are ways we are being responsive to them:

The FPT is going to pursue IFSAC accreditation for both the degree program and for awarding international certifications to fire service personnel.

- The FPT is striving to meet a unique challenge faced by career fire service personnel. That challenge is the pursuit of a college degree while working 24-hour shifts. Also, recognition of the training and education they receive as a member of a fire department. One possible approach is OSOT.
- Clackamas County Fire District #1 has requested the program identify students who fluent in a second language to assist the organization with fire prevention and public education activities involving citizens who are not fluent in English.
- The FPT program has been receptive to the needs of the community primarily through the SFFA. However, the students need more direct involvement from the faculty advisor. At present, the work load for the faculty advisor is such that it is prohibiting.
- Integrating Service Learning in classes would assist the local community in meeting some of its needs and add value to the student educational experience. Involvement in organizations, such as Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism, Habitat for Humanity, Salvation Army, Portland Fire Department's Historic Belmont Station museum, and neighborhood associations, help achieve PCC Core Outcomes such as *Community and Environmental Responsibility*, also *Cultural Awareness*.

All of these ideas are worthy of consideration, and we would be glad to discuss specifics of each. As already stated, we support obtaining both Certificate Assembly and Degree Assembly accreditation through IFSAC. With regarding to Service Learning, please contact Sara Tillery, the college's Service Learning Coordinator, and also our connection to the federal VISTA program.

7. Additional Funding Needs

The following have been identified by the FPT program as areas requiring additional funding:

- Add an Instructional Support Technician (IST) or make one IST position full-time as opposed to $\frac{3}{4}$ time. This is needed to support the logistical needs of the program, including the skills academy classes, rescue class, and driver operator class.
 - *We will be glad to discuss this, along with other ideas for redefining how to improve IST support. It is possible that the two existing $\frac{3}{4}$ IST positions might be repurposed to provide better support.*

- Add a media technician to create and/or upgrade audiovisual materials for classroom presentations.
 - *With all the demands for additional instructor, academic professional, and classified positions, it is very unlikely such a position could be funded. We need to consider other means for doing this, such as working with Clayton Hanson, Cascade's Instructional Support Technician, who is a good resource for a variety of instructional materials projects. Also, consider our internal grant program aimed at professional and organizational developments for such projects; contact Linda Blanchett for details.*
- Replace the three older fire engines with new "state-of-the-art" fire engines.
 - *We need to create a long-term plan for doing this, and consider grant and/or future bond funding to do this.*
- Replace self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) air cylinders. Federal regulations require SCBA air cylinders to be replaced after 15 years. The FPT programs cylinders are 10 to 12 years old.
 - *We started doing this last year. Give us an estimate for the costs for what is still needed and we'll see what can be done this year.*
- Replace fire fighter protective ensembles ("turn-out" gear) utilized by students. Federal regulations and OR-OSHA require students to wear turn-outs when performing fire training. As a result, students must wear turn-outs to complete all course competencies.
 - *We've been addressing this for several years. Give us an estimate for the costs for what is still needed and we'll see what can be done this year.*

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