Office of Residential and Commuter Life
Commuter Programs CAS Executive Summary and Action Plan 2010-11

Summary of the Self-Assessment Process:
In 2010-2011, a self-study of the Commuter Programs offered by the Office of Residential and Commuter Life was conducted according to the CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) Standards and Guidelines.

Members of the Review Committee:

Mr. Harold (Kramer) Anderson	Commuter Student, Current Junior
Ms. Emily Bacalis	Residential Student, Current Junior
Ms. Jennifer Cox	Area Coordinator for Off-Campus Living
Dr. John Miller	English Faculty
Ms. Abbey Rowe	Residence Education Coordinator, Curry Hall
Ms. Kim Thompson	Property Inspector, Town of Farmville

Part 1: Mission Overview Questions
A. What is the program mission?

There are several operational mission statements that guide commuter programming. These include the mission statement of the Office of Residential and Commuter Life and the statement of Residential and Commuter Programs:

Residential and Commuter Life
To support learning and living environments which foster the development of individuals intellectually, personally and socially.

Residential and Commuter Programs
The Residential and Commuter Programs Team members are professionals with a commitment to innovation and a passion for student development who will empower and collaborate with all students to cultivate a quality college environment for themselves and others.

B. How does the mission embrace student learning and development?

The mission statements include a mix of intentional and indirect student learning and development through conversations, programs, and all forms of student and professional interaction.

C. In what ways does the program mission complement the mission of the institution?

The RCL mission statement mirrors the "citizen leader" portion of the Longwood mission statement and the Division of Student Affairs mission statement.

Part 2: Program Overview Questions
A. What are the primary elements of the program?

The primary elements are annual recurring programs for commuter students that include: Commuter Welcome Wagon, Commuter Thanksgiving Lunch, Housing and Rental Fair, Brown Bag Lunch Series (monthly), and informational bulletin boards targeted at commuter students' needs.

B. What evidence exists to confirm that the program contributes to student learning and development?

While we are certain there is some degree of active and passive learning taking place, we do not currently have the tools in place to measure the programs' specific contribution to student learning and development.

C. What evidence is available to confirm program goals' achievement?

At this time, there are no specific program goals for any of the commuter programs that take place, other than building relationships and providing necessary and helpful information to commuter students.

Part 3: Leadership Overview Questions
A. What leadership practices are used most often by the program director(s)?

The professional staff members who work with commuter students are empowered through interactions with students and individual leadership assignments- each staff member oversees a particular area of responsibility.

Part 4: Human Resources Overview Questions
A. What are the pressing concerns related to staffing the program?

Currently, there is no professional staff member whose sole responsibility is commuter students. Three professional staff members who supervise University managed apartment communities share the repsonsibilties associated with commuter programs.

B. In what ways are training and professional development, supervision, and evaluation of each staff member provided?

Each semester, every staff member receives a comprehensive performance evaluation, which also covers their commuter repsonsibilities. All staff members who currently work with commuters have earned Masters' degrees, and they undergo ongoing training and professional development throughout each academic year.

Part 5: Ethics Overview Questions
A. What ethical principles, standards, statements, or codes guide the program and its staff members?

- ACPA Ethical Principles and Standards
- NASPA Standards of Professional Practice
- ADA, FERPA, and RCL Confidentiality Statement
- Longwood University Information Security Agreement
- ACPA / NASPA Professional Competencies

B. What is the program's strategy for managing student and staff member confidentiality issues?

Documents and student information are stored in appropriate ways to monitor confidentiality and information sharing. All professional staff members attend annual training related to information security.

Part 6: Legal Responsibilities Overview Questions
A. *What are the crucial legal issues faced by the program?*

The program doesn't directly face any legal issues other than following all mandated safety, security and access policies.
Professional staff members working in commuter programs assist commuter students with issues related to the Virginia Residential Landlord Tenant Act.

Part 7: Equity and Access Overview Questions
A. *How does the program insure non-discriminatory, fair and equitable treatment to all constituents?*

All Longwood University faculty and staff members are required to follow the Longwood University non-discrimination policy.

B. *What policies and/or practices are in place to address imbalances in participations among selected categories of students and imbalances in staffing patterns among selected categories of staff members?*

We have not experienced any imbalance in participations among any categories of students.

Part 8: Diversity Overview Questions
A. *In what ways does the program contribute to the nurturing of diversity on campus?*

Professional staff members recognize that there are many commuter students with varying needs and backgrounds. Currently, the programs seem to cater to the general needs of "traditional" commuter students. There is more work to be done to identify additional sub-groups of commuter students whose needs may differ from those we currently serve.

B. *How does the program serve the needs of diverse populations?*

The professional staff members offer several different formats of programs to commuter students covering a wide array of topics and focusing on differing needs.
Additionally, since there are three professional staff members that work directly with commuters, students are able to choose whomever they are most comfortable going to for assistance.

Part 9: Organization and Management Overview Questions
A. *What are the institutional organizational structures that define, enable, or restrain the program?*

The structure of the entire Office of Residential and Commuter Life is very clear and intentional. With so few professional staff members working with commuter students part-time, this could be considered a restraint.

B. *What protocols or processes are in place to insure effective management of the program?*

There are annual reviews of professional staff members and surveys peformed each spring to capture commuter student feedback.

There is a very structured chain of command and organizational chart for the department, and each professional staff member has a clear job description to guide their work.

Part 10: Campus and External Relations Overview Questions

A. *With which relevant individuals, groups, campus offices, and external agencies must the program maintain effective relationships?*

Campus Partners	Community Partners
Parking Services	VA Legal Aid
Campus Police	Steve Lindsey, ABC Agent
Student Union	Town of Farmville Officials
RCL Advisory Board	Local Landlords
Financial Aid	Town of Farmville Police Department
Lancer Productions	
Aramark	

B. *What evidence confirms effective relationships with program constituents?*

Successful programming and communication with campus and community partners.

Part 11: Financial Resources Overview Questions

A. *What are the immediate concerns related to funding?*

There is no funding specifically dedicated to commuter programs. All funding is currently dependent on the RCL Advisory Board budget, with approval from SGA.

B. *What evidence exists to confirm fiscal responsibility and cost-effectiveness?*

The staff and students working with commuter programs look for other offices and/or organizations to co-sponsor programs to help keep costs low.
The RCL Advisory Board demonstrates their fiscal responsibility each spring as they defend their annual budget proposal to the SGA Finance Committee.

Part 12: Technology Overview Questions

A. *What are the pressing concerns related to technology?*

We have no concerns regarding technology at this time.

Part 13: Facilities and Equipment Overview Questions

A. *What are the immediate concerns related to facilities and equipment?*

The only current concern is that the lifespan and utility of equipment and furniture being used by commuter students are not tracked. There is no funding allocated to replace the equipment and furniture as it becomes unusable.

B. What evidence exists to confirm facilities and equipment access, as well as health, safety and security for all who are served by the program?

The Commuter Lounge is located in the Student Union, and it is open and available to all commuter students. Access and the layout of the Commuter Lounge is amenable to students with physical disabilities. Professional staff follow all protocol related to emergency situations. Additionally, the Commuter Lounge is inspected as required by law and University policy when the Union is inspected.

Part 14: Assessment and Evaluation Overview Questions

A. What are the assessment expectations for the program?

There are no current expectations. It has become a tradition to provide a formal assessment in the spring for commuter students to provide feedback and offer suggestions and ideas for future programs and initiatives.

B. What evidence exists to insure that the stated mission, program goals and objectives, and student learning and development outcomes are achieved?

We do not have any formal, tangible evidence in this area.

C. In what ways have assessment and evaluation results been used to revise and improve the quality of programs and services?

We use feedback and suggestions from the spring surveys to update and add to our commuter programs and to make the Commuter Lounge a more desirable and useful space.

Areas of Program Strength

Part 1: Mission (Rating: 3.22)

Part 4: Human Resources (Rating: 3.36)

Part 5: Ethics (Rating: 3.40)
Professional staff members are trained in ways that coincide with or exceed University and national standards. Documents are stored in appropriate ways to monitor confidentiality.

Part 6: Legal Responsibilities (Rating: 3.41)
Raters indicate that the department has the appropriate training, knowledge and protocol in place for staff members to use the chain of command to contact legal counsel in necessary situations.

Part 7: Equity and Access (Rating: 3.19)

Part 9: Organization and Management (Rating: 3.11)

Part 10: Campus and External Relations (Rating: 3.71)
The professional staff members work with campus and community partners to specifically target commuter students and the issues they are facing.
Staff members work well with campus and community partners to proactively provide resources to commuter students and follow-up as necessary.

Part 13: Facilities and Equipment (Rating: 3.10)

Areas with Rating Discrepancy

Part 2: Program (Rating: 2.83)

Overall the "Program" area received a rating of 2.83. There were discrepancies amongst the reviewers (ranging from Not Done, Not Rated, and 1-4) in the areas related to measure 2.3. Measure 2.3 states "COCLP provides evidence of its impact on the achievement of student learning and development outcomes" in the following domains checked:
- Knowledge acquisition, integration, construction, and application
- Intrapersonal development
- Interpersonal development
- Practical competence

We believe this discrepancy comes from the fact that there we do not have data showing progress of commuter students related to learning and development. Assessment of commuter students tends to focus on their needs related to Commuter Lounge resources, practical information that commuter can implement into daily life, and commuter students understanding the resources offered by the university. We recognize that as the area of Commuter Programs continues to strengthen we can focus on assessing learning and development of commuter students throughout the course of each academic year.

We also recognize that our yearly assessments can focus on understanding "the characteristics, needs, and experiences of commuter and off-campus students" as the commuter student population consists of various subsets of students with unique needs. Over the next few years we believe we can continue to learn more about our commuter population as a whole and the smaller contingencies to address the discrepancies in 2.11 measure.

Part 14: Assessment and Evaluation (Rating: 2.84)

Overall the "Assessment and Evaluation" area received a rating of 2.84. There were discrepancies amongst the reviewers (ranging from Not Done, Not Rated, and 1-4) in the areas related to measures 14.1, 14.3.2, 14.4, 14.5, and 14.6.3.

We believe this discrepancy in this area is directly related to the Program area. Once again, we would like to state that we have identified that our current assessment of commuter students tends to focus on their needs related to resources, practical information, and understanding university resources. We recognize that as the area of Commuter Programs continues to strengthen we can focus on assessing learning and development of commuter students throughout the course of each academic year (which would address 14.1 and 14.3.2).

As we work towards a more comprehensive assessment tool we can focus on ensuring that we collect data from students and relevant constituencies (14.4) and that we evaluate how our Commuter Programs complement and enhance the university's mission (14.5). We also plan to include information in our yearly survey to capture commuter student feedback related to interactions with professional staff members (14.6.3) so that professional staff performance can be recognized beyond the anecdotal information currently used to assess professional staff performance in this area.

Areas of Program Weakness

Part 3: Leadership (Rating: 2.91)

Overall the "Leadership" area received a rating of 2.91. We have developed the following action plan for the area:
1. Increase Visibility
    a. Increase visibility of Professional staff
        i. Continue Professional staff office hours in Commuter Lounge
        ii. Increase staff and student interactions through face to face conversations, email, and social media as appropriate.
    b. Increase visibility of the commuter programs offered
        i. Advertise programs in additional ways
        ii. Encourage more collaboration with faculty, staff, and students
        iii. Continue to advocate for commuter programs
2. Assessment & Research
    a. Encourage professional staff to contribute to scholarly work on commuter students through research and presentations
    b. Create more comprehensive assessment of the commuter student population to respond to the changing needs of commuter students

Part 8: Diversity (Rating: 2.77)

Overall the "Diversity" area received a rating of 2.77. We have developed the following action plan for the area:

1. Develop a deeper understanding of the commuter student population
    a. Implement a comprehensive assessment so that the professional staff can identify subsets of the commuter student population.
    b. Identify each subset and identify needs that each group may have. Subsets may include non-traditional age students, Veterans, Students with children, etc.
2. Promote Diversity
    a. Continue to nurture "environments that are welcoming and bring together persons of diverse backgrounds" (8.1.1).
    b. Address the needs of the commuter student populations and how best to address the needs.
    c. Share information about the diverse background of the commuter students through educational means (Commuter Lounge bulletin board, Wednesday Wire newsletter, conversations with students)

Part 11: Financial Resources (Rating: 2.45)

Overall the "Financial Resources" area received a rating of 2.45. This rating was the lowest of all areas. We acknowledge that for the immediate future this area is likely to be rated the lowest due to the way commuter programs receives money. Currently, money for commuter programming comes through the RCL Advisory Board budget. A budget is submitted from RCL Advisory Board to the Student Government Association for approval each year. We acknowledge that this system leaves us at the mercy of the Student Government Association as to whether funding will be provided for programming and educational initiatives. Financial resources are stretched across the country, with Longwood University being no exception however we have developed the following action plan for the area:

1. Fiscal Responsibility
   a. Continue to demonstrate fiscally responsibility and cost-effectiveness with the funding received.
   b. Analyze current funding to ensure funding is matching current priorities.
2. Steady, consistent funding
   a. Work with Residential & Commuter Life to look into ways to provide funding that is independent of the Student Government Association and RCL Advisory Board.
   b. Work to develop a lifecycle list of needs (Funding Priorities list) to budget for future needs such as replacement of commuter lounge furniture and large scale programs.

Part 12: Technology (Rating: 2.83)

Overall the "Technology" area received a rating of 2.83. We believe that the Technology ratings are closely tied to the Financial Resource rating. We have developed the following action plan for the area:

1. Promote use of social media and other technology as ways to contact and connect with commuter students
2. Utilize technology that promotes student learning and development (can gain specific ideas from comprehensive assessment)
3. Encourage students to learn more about the legal and ethical implications of technology (such as intellectual property, privacy, etc) through collaborating with campus partners such as IITS staff and the Greenwood Library staff.
4. Research current best practices related to technology and implementation with the commuter student population

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Appendices

- Collective results from CAS Self-Assessment
- Summary of comments from CAS Self-Assessment