Use of Data for Program Improvement
MEd in Continuing and College Education

The principles of adult education, and in particular, the use of andragogy, include evaluation in every step of the program planning model. Kempfer (1995) says,

The basic purpose of evaluation is to stimulate growth and improvement. Whatever other worthy purposes exist are only facets of the all-inclusive effort to assess present conditions as a basis for achieving better ones. Evaluation that does not lead to improved practice is sterile.

Caffarella (2002, p. 225) acknowledges the importance of both a systematic and informal evaluation process, and says it should be a continuous process for the life of a program. Evaluation conducted with the purpose of changing a program while it is in progress is called formative evaluation.

The CCE faculty conducted a formative evaluation with the help of the CCE Student Advisory Committee and members of the EDU 501 Educational Research winter quarter class. Students in the EDU 501 Educational Research class prepared and tested an instrument. Students in the program completed the survey instrument and the results were analyzed to provide an overall view of how students viewed the program.

We also had trained facilitators from the Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education program conduct four focus groups with CCE students who were randomly selected to participate. The four groups focused on the classes and whether or not they met the Student Learning Outcomes set out for each of the classes. For convenience and information about the classes delivered in both Bellingham and Everett, the focus groups were held in Bellingham and in Everett. In each site, one focus group concentrated on the Instructional Technology classes and another focus group concentrated on the CCE classes.

The summary of the written surveys indicates CCE students are happy with the overall CCE program and had very little suggestions for improvement. They approved of the faculty, their advising, the program administration, the program mission and goals and student learning outcomes. They had suggestions for making the student learning outcomes more visible to students. They also had suggestions for expanding the New Student Orientation program. They were particularly appreciative of the faculty efforts to provide all of the professional development activities.

The summaries of the focus groups revealed a satisfaction with the CCE core classes. Students had very little criticism of the classes and had suggestions for several more elective classes that they wanted. They had suggestions about changing the two Instructional Technology (IT) courses.

As a result of the student survey and the focus groups, we are making some adjustments to our program. We have lengthened the New Student Orientation program and incorporated the changes beginning this academic year. We have reviewed the student learning outcomes, made some adjustments in fall quarter, and will make an effort to remind students of the outcomes in each of our classes. We have had several meetings with the IT faculty to discuss the two IT classes and are having on-going discussions about the curriculum and teaching methods for both classes.

We will continue to evaluate the program course by course this next year and develop a 5-Year Strategic Plan for the CCE program.