



# WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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## *Annual Accreditation Summary Report* *April 1, 2011-March 31, 2012*

**WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMISSION  
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*Casper College • Central Wyoming College • Eastern Wyoming College • Laramie County Community College  
Northwest College • Northern Wyoming Community College District • Western Wyoming Community College*

# ACCREDITATION BY THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is an independent corporation and one of two commission members of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), which is one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States. The Higher Learning Commission accredits degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions in the North Central Region.

The HLC accredits Wyoming's seven community colleges. Institutional accreditation is a voluntary process that serves the critical purposes of quality assurance and institutional and program improvement. Colleges that are accredited by the HLC continually evaluate their programs and overall institutions in light of the criteria for accreditation set forth by the HLC.

The Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) is one of two avenues for seeking and retaining accreditation. Currently, four Wyoming community colleges utilize the HLC PEAQ program to maintain accreditation status: Casper College, Central Wyoming College, Eastern Wyoming College, and Northwest College. PEAQ employs a five step comprehensive evaluation process to determine accreditation status. The PEAQ process for institutional accreditation is a continuous cycle. For approximately two years the institution conducts a Self-Study, which critically assesses all programs and aspects of the institution. Next, a team of peer evaluators conducts a Comprehensive Visit. The Visiting Team critically evaluates the Self-Study Report and the institution during the visit and subsequently makes a recommendation about reaffirmation of accreditation status. Some institutions are granted continued status with the stipulation that the institutions provide a written report (Progress, Monitoring, or Contingency) within a specified time period or a possible focused visit to examine specific aspects of an institution. The longest time period for which continued institutional accreditation may be reaffirmed by the HLC is ten years.

In September 2012, the HLC begins a three-year transition during which PEAQ will be replaced by two new Pathways: The Standard Pathway and The Open Pathway. AQIP continues as a third pathway. During 2012-2013, all Wyoming PEAQ institutions will begin transitioning to the new HLC Pathways model, a ten-year accreditation cycle which includes assurance and improvement processes.

An alternate method by which colleges can maintain accreditation status is an HLC program called Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). Wyoming colleges have the option of applying to become part of the AQIP if they prefer a different approach to accreditation. AQIP is a program built around quality improvement categories with a focus on goal-setting, networking, and accountability activities.

## **HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION** **CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION**

1. **Mission and Integrity:** the institution "operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students."
2. **Preparing for the Future:** the institution's "allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities."
3. **Student Learning and Effective Teaching:** the institution "provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission."
4. **Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge:** the institution "promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission."
5. **Engagement and Service:** "as called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value."

AQIP consists of nine categories that provide a framework that colleges and universities can use to examine their key processes to make sure they are investing energy and resources that will help achieve their goals.

**The nine categories are:**

- **AQIP Category 1 - Helping Students Learn** - Focuses on the design, deployment, and effectiveness of teaching-learning processes that underlie your organizations credit and non-credit programs and courses, and on the processes required to support them.
- **AQIP Category 2 - Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives** – Addresses the key processes (separate from the instructional programs and internal support services) through which you serve the external stakeholders – processes that contribute to achieving the major objectives, fulfilling the mission, and distinguishing yours from other educational organizations.
- **AQIP Category 3 - Understanding Students’ and Other Stakeholders’ Needs** – Examines how your organization works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs.
- **AQIP Category 4 - Valuing People** – Explores your organization’s commitment to the development of your faculty, staff, and administrators.
- **AQIP Category 5 - Leading and Communicating** – Addresses how your leadership and communication processes, structures, and networks guide your organization in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and communicating decisions and actions to your internal and external stakeholders.
- **AQIP Category 6 - Supporting Institutional Operations** – Addresses the organizational support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive.
- **AQIP Category 7 - Measuring Effectiveness** – Examines how your organization collects, analyzes, distributes, and uses data, information, and knowledge to manage itself and to drive performance improvement.
- **AQIP Category 8 - Planning Continuous Improvement** – Examines your organizations planning processes and how your strategies and action plans help you achieve your mission and vision.
- **AQIP Category 9 – Building Collaborative Relationships** – Examines your organization’s relationships –current and potential – to analyze how they could contribute to the organization’s accomplishing its mission.

The college engages in all AQIP processes (Strategy Forums, Annual Updates, Systems Portfolio Appraisals) and visits during a seven-year period. Currently, three Wyoming community colleges have applied and been accepted into AQIP: Laramie County Community College, Northern Wyoming Community College District, and Western Wyoming Community College.

## **WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACCREDITATION ACTIVITY 2011-2012**

Because continued institutional accreditation is reaffirmed for various periods of time and institutions applied for candidacy at various times in the past, each of the Wyoming community colleges is at a different phase of the on-going institutional accreditation process. This summary report is provided in compliance with W.S. 21-18-202(e) (i), which requires the Community College Commission to “report the findings of institutional and specialized accreditation studies.” An accreditation schedule is also included at the end of the following summary for easy reference.

### **COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACCREDITATION SUMMARIES**

#### **CASPER COLLEGE (PEAQ STATUS)**

Casper College completed the comprehensive evaluation process and was approved for continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission in August 2009. A progress report on general education is required to be submitted by June 30, 2012.

Casper College’s next comprehensive visit is scheduled for 2018-19.

#### **CENTRAL WYOMING COLLEGE (PEAQ STATUS)**

Central Wyoming College (CWC) in Riverton has been selected as a Pioneer Institution by the Higher Learning Commission in the Pathways Construction Project, the new model for continued accreditation. CWC is one of 23 institutions that will conduct the Pathways Assurance Process and the Pathways Improvement Process with the Lumina Degree Qualifications Framework serving as the Quality Initiative for the Pathways Demonstration Project.

Central Wyoming College’s next comprehensive visit is scheduled for 2015-2016.

#### **EASTERN WYOMING COLLEGE (PEAQ STATUS)**

Eastern Wyoming College (EWC) in Torrington was recommended for a ten-year reaccreditation following the HLC team visit in 2010. EWC has notified The Higher Learning Commission that it would enter the Open Pathway track for accreditation. A focus visit and report emphasizing improving ethnic diversity among students and staff will be submitted for a 2014 visit. The College has been working on Diversity Initiatives and has formed a campus-wide Diversity Committee, a student Multicultural Diversity Club, and has focused on ways to engage the Hispanic community and improve multi-cultural awareness. The report will be submitted in the fall semester of 2013.

Eastern Wyoming College’s next comprehensive visit is scheduled for 2020-2021

#### **LARAMIE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE (AQIP STATUS)**

Laramie County Community College (LCCC) worked on several action projects between April 1, 2011, and March 31, 2012. These projects fell into the categories of Helping Students Learn, Measuring Effectiveness, Leading and Communicating, and Valuing People and are outlined in the table below.

Category	Project	Project Dates
Helping Students Learn	Defining Quality Programs	March 2011 – November 2011
Helping Students Learn	Develop and Implement First Year Experience Program	October 2011 – December 2012
Leading and Communicating	Defining Organizational Structures and Processes	May 2010 – Fall 2012
Measuring Effectiveness	Identifying Key Performance Indicators	August 2010 – June 2011
Measuring Effectiveness	Defining Key Indicators of Effectiveness	August 2011 – June 2012
Valuing People	New Employee Orientation	May 2010 – Fall 2012

LCCC is scheduled for an AQIP quality checkup and a site visit in 2012-2013.

### **NORTHWEST COLLEGE (PEAQ STATUS)**

Northwest College (NWC) in Powell had a visit from an HLC PEAQ visiting team on November 15-17, 2010. The visiting team reported that the College had met the criteria for continued accreditation and that the next comprehensive visit would be in 2017-18. A focused visit is scheduled for Spring 2013 regarding assessment, planning, and shared governance.

### **NORTHERN WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT (AQIP STATUS)**

Northern Wyoming Community College District (NWCCD), serving Sheridan, Campbell, and Johnson counties, has participated in the Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) accreditation pathway since 2005. The College's first Systems Portfolio, analyzing nine categories related to the institution, was published in Fall 2007 and received a favorable report from the Systems Appraisal Team. College representatives attended the Strategy Forum in Fall 2008 and then continued to update the Portfolio and prepare for the College's first Quality Checkup Visit. The visit took place in November 2010 and feedback from the visiting team was very positive. NWCCD received reaffirmation of accreditation in December 2011, and its 2011 Systems Portfolio was reviewed positively. The Portfolio is a dynamic document that is updated regularly and receives a formal appraisal every four years.

NWCCD is scheduled for an AQIP quality checkup and a site visit in 2017-2018.

### **WESTERN WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE (AQIP STATUS)**

Western Wyoming Community College (WWCC) in Rock Springs serves Sweetwater, Carbon, Lincoln, Uinta, and Sublette counties. Since 2008, WWCC has been an active participant in the AQIP process. As an element of the process, WWCC has engaged in multiple action projects geared toward continuous quality improvement and tied to the institution's strategic plan. Currently, WWCC has active action projects focused on: Active and Engaged Student Learning, Internal Communications, Course Scheduling, and Student Engagement and Success. During the 2011-2012 academic year, WWCC used a cross-institutional approach to develop the first WWCC AQIP Systems Portfolio. The document is due for Board of Trustees approval in May 2012 with submission to HLC no later than June 1, 2012. Feedback on the Systems Portfolio is expected in Fall 2012. Following the Systems Portfolio process, an AQIP Quality Checkup Site Visit will occur in Fall 2013 with anticipated reaffirmation in 2014-2015. WWCC has a unique situation in that three people on staff are AQIP Peer Reviewers for either Action Projects or Systems Portfolios.

## Accreditation Schedule Wyoming Community Colleges

Last updated: July 2012

(Non-Shaded rows indicate PEAQ Status; Shaded rows indicate AQIP Status)

### Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Reference: W.S. 21-18-202(e) (i) and (iii)	Last Comprehensive Visit	Focused Visit	Required Progress Report	Required Monitoring Report	Required Contingency Report	Next PEAQ Comprehensive Visit or AQIP Quality Checkup/ Site Visit
<b>Casper College</b>	March 2009	None Scheduled	June 2012	None Due	None Due	2018-2019
<b>Central Wyoming College</b>	October 2005	None Scheduled	None Due	None Due	None Due	2015-2016
<b>Eastern Wyoming College</b>	October 2010	2014	2014	None Due	None Due	2020-2021
<b>Laramie County Community College</b>	October 1999	None Scheduled	None Due	None Due	None Due	2012-2013
<b>Northwest College</b>	November 2010	Spring 2013	None Due	None Due	None Due	2017-2018
<b>Northern Wyoming Community College District</b>	November 1997	None Scheduled	None Due	None Due	None Due	2017-2018
<b>Western Wyoming Community College</b>	February 2004	None Scheduled	None Due	None Due	None Due	Quality Checkup Site Visit-Fall 2013  Reaffirmation 2014-2015

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