



WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Annual Accreditation Report

April 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014

**WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMISSION
2020 CAREY AVENUE, 8TH FLOOR
CHEYENNE, WYOMING 82002
(307) 777-7763
www.communitycolleges.wy.edu**

*Casper College • Central Wyoming College • Eastern Wyoming College • Laramie County Community College
Northwest College • Northern Wyoming Community College District • Western Wyoming Community College*

WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACCREDITATION ACTIVITY

APRIL 1, 2013 – JUNE 30, 2014

This summary 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 this summary for easy reference.

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.

ACCREDITATION BY THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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). HLC is one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States. The HLC accredits degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions in the North Central region. 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 overall institutions and programs in light of the criteria for accreditation set forth by the HLC.

THE CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION **(January 1, 2013)**

The Criteria for Accreditation are the standards of quality by which the Commission determines whether an institution merits accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation. They are as follows:

Criterion One: Mission

The institution’s mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution’s operations.

Criterion Two: Integrity (Ethical and Responsible Conduct)

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Criterion Three: Teaching and Learning (Quality, Resources, and Support)

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Criterion Four: Teaching and Learning (Evaluation and Improvement)

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Criterion Five: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

PATHWAYS FOR REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION

The Commission maintains processes for determining eligibility for accreditation, for achieving candidacy status, for achieving initial accreditation, and for maintaining accreditation. The Commission is now replacing PEAQ with two new Pathways, the Standard Pathway and the Open Pathway. The AQIP Pathway will continue largely unchanged.

Standard Pathway

The Standard Pathway seeks to achieve the following goals:

- To reduce the reporting burden on institutions by utilizing as much information and data as possible from existing institutional processes and collecting them in electronic form as they naturally occur over time
- To enhance rigor by checking institutional data annually (Institutional Update) and conducting comprehensive evaluations twice in the ten-year cycle
- To integrate as much as possible all HLC processes and requests for data into the reaffirmation of accreditation cycle

The Standard Pathway is available to all accredited institutions at any time, unless the institution is on Probation or under a Show-Cause order, when it follows a separate process. Some institutions are limited to the Standard Pathway. Two comprehensive evaluations take place in a ten year cycle: one in Year 4 and one in Year 10. Both quality assurance and quality improvement are integrated into these comprehensive evaluations as well as Federal Compliance. In addition, the institution addresses quality assurance and improvement through interim monitoring, as required. In the Standard Pathway, both assurance and improvement are directly related to the Criteria for Accreditation.

The components of the comprehensive evaluation in the Standard Pathway are:

1. An Assurance Review;
2. An Improvement Review;
3. A review of Federal Compliance;
4. An on-site visit; and
5. If applicable, a multi-campus review

Open Pathway

The Open Pathway seeks to achieve the following goals:

- To enhance institutional value by opening the improvement aspect of accreditation so that institutions may choose Quality Initiatives to suit their current circumstances
- To reduce the reporting burden on institutions by utilizing as much information and data as possible from existing institutional processes and collecting them in electronic form as they naturally occur over time
- To enhance rigor by checking institutional data annually (Institutional Update) and conducting Assurance Reviews twice in the ten-year cycle

- To integrate as much as possible all HLC processes and HLC requests for data into the reaffirmation of accreditation cycle.

Two Assurance Reviews take place in the ten-year cycle; one in Year 4 and one in Year 10. The Year 4 review occurs asynchronously via the Commission's online Assurance System and without a visit. The Year 10 review also is conducted with the Assurance System but includes a visit to the campus, as noted below. Between Years 5 and 9 of the ten-year cycle, the institution proposes and completes a Quality Initiative which focuses on institutional innovation and improvement.

The components of the comprehensive evaluation in the Open Pathway are:

1. An Assurance Review;
2. A review of Federal Compliance;
3. An on-site visit; and
4. If applicable, a multi-campus review

Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) Pathway

The Academic Quality Improvement program (AQIP) is one of several pathways leading to accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission. Others include the Open and Standard Pathways. AQIP differs from the other pathways in that it is premised on principles of continuous quality improvement, and its various processes and requirements are designed to assist institutions in achieving quality improvement, along with reaffirming the institution's accredited status with the Commission once every AQIP cycle. Many institutions have reported transforming their quality cultures since embarking on the AQIP Pathway. Federal compliance is reviewed.

WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACCREDITATION **SUMMARIES**

CASPER COLLEGE (OPEN PATHWAY)

Casper College completed the comprehensive evaluation process and was approved for continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission in August 2009. A required progress report on general education was submitted in June 2012. A response was received from the Higher Learning Commission in July 2012 requesting further progress reporting on the plan to focus and assess general education outcomes. Casper College has narrowed outcomes to 8 and conducted initial institutional assessment of outcomes utilizing the AAC&U VALUE rubrics. Casper College is on schedule to submit a progress report to the HLC in June 2014. Casper College's next comprehensive visit is scheduled for 2018-19.

CENTRAL WYOMING COLLEGE (OPEN PATHWAY)

Central Wyoming College (CWC) in Riverton served as a Pioneer Institution for the Higher Learning Commission in the Pathways Construction Project, the new model for continued accreditation. CWC is one of 23 institutions that conducted 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. The Quality Initiative report was accepted by the Higher Learning Commission in August 2013. Central Wyoming College has been accepted and is participating in the first cohort of the four-year Higher Learning Commission Persistence and Completion Academy.

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

EASTERN WYOMING COLLEGE (OPEN PATHWAY)

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 summer of 2014 in preparation for the focus visit scheduled for October 5-6, 2014. The next comprehensive visit will be scheduled for 2020-2021

LARAMIE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE (AQIP PATHWAY)

On October 22, 2013, the Institutional Actions Council of the Higher Learning Commission reaffirmed the accreditation of Laramie County Community College (LCCC) through 2019-2020. LCCC participates in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) to maintain its accreditation and, as an AQIP institution, worked on several action projects during the reporting period (April 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014). Three of these projects are highlighted below.

The first project, Holistic Advising Model, consisted of designing and implementing an advising system to improve both students' educational experiences at LCCC and, ultimately, student completion rates. This project will be completed in the fall 2014 semester.

The second project, Finalizing Our KPI System, focused on developing a methodology to establish goals for the identified measures as well as strategies to institutionalize the new KPI system by aligning program level measures and planning to the institutional measures. While substantial progress was made, not all of the project goals have been accomplished at the time of this writing. Consequently, the work will continue through spring 2015.

The main goal of the third project, Developmental English Program Revision, is to build sequenced, accelerated developmental English courses and co-requisite sections that combine reading and writing so that students may more quickly enroll in, and be successful at, college-level courses. Because of the complexity of the issues being addressed by the project, work will continue through the fall 2015 semester. During 2013-14, team members made several site visits and reviewed leading models. By the end of 2014, the redesigned curriculum will be developed and the internal approval process will be complete; the new courses will be taught for

the first time during the fall 2015 semester. Other activities for next year include information sharing and training for faculty and advisors regarding the new model.

In addition to the action projects described above, LCCC staff began work on the College's next systems portfolio, which will be published in the fall of 2014. LCCC's next Comprehensive Quality Review is scheduled for the fall of 2018.

NORTHERN WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT (AQIP PATHWAY)

Northern Wyoming Community College District (NWCCD), serving Sheridan, Campbell, and Johnson counties, participates in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) form of accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission. The District's Systems Portfolio, analyzing nine categories related to the institution, received a very favorable response in spring 2012, and the report stated that: "The Systems Appraisal team concluded that Northern Wyoming Community College District has presented evidence that it complies with each of the Five *Criteria for Accreditation* and each of their Core Components."

The Portfolio is a dynamic document that will be submitted again in fall 2015 with a report due spring 2016, and an official process of reaffirmation of accreditation will occur in 2018-2019. A team from NWCCD attended a Strategy Forum in fall 2012. The College has three active Action Projects and has retired 17.

NORTHWEST COLLEGE (STANDARD PATHWAY)

Northwest College (NWC) is fully accredited through 2018. The comprehensive PEAQ evaluation on November 15-17, 2010 resulted in recommendations in regard to assessment of student learning, governance, and planning. A focused visit in March 2013 resulted in a recommendation for no further reporting until the next scheduled comprehensive evaluation. The Higher Learning Commission has placed NWC into the Standard Pathway for reaffirmation.

WESTERN WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE (AQIP PATHWAY)

Western Wyoming Community College (WWCC) in Rock Springs was accepted as a participant in the AQIP accreditation pathway in July, 2008. Reaffirmation of Accreditation through the AQIP Pathway is on an eight year cycle. A comprehensive Systems Portfolio is due twice in the cycle. Western submitted its first Systems Portfolio in May 2012; no accreditation issues were identified in the appraisal. A team from the College attends a Strategy Forum every four years, most recently in February 2013. In accordance with AQIP requirements, and in a quest for continuous quality improvement, Western maintains a minimum of three active action projects during each academic year, with annual updates submitted to AQIP. The College incorporates strategic planning priorities with the AQIP Action Projects to move the institution forward in a proactive and systematic way. The College hosted a Quality Checkup site visit in October, 2013, in which the visiting team found no systematic non-compliance. An AQIP Review Panel on Reaffirmation recommended full reaffirmation for Western Wyoming Community College in their April, 2014 report. The report praised the College for its

- "attention to the students and stakeholders it serves"
- "inclusive decision-making process that encourages planning from the departmental level up to management."
- "demonstrat[ion] that it takes peer review...seriously and applies itself to...constructive feedback"

Wyoming Community Colleges Accreditation Schedule

Last updated: August 2014

References: 1. W.S. 21-18-202(e) (i) and (iii)	Last Comprehensive Visit	Concerns to be Addressed at next Assurance Filing	Reports	Focused Visit	Sanctions	Next Standard, Open, or AQIP Pathway Site Visit
	March 2009		Progress Reports June 2012 and June 2014			2018-2019
	October 2005					2015-2016
	October 2010			2014		2020-2021
	July 2012					2018-2019
	November 2010			2013		2017-2018
	November 2010					2016-2017
	October 2013					2021-2022

WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMISSION

2020 Carey Ave, 8th Floor, Cheyenne, Wyoming
307-777-6290

<http://www.communitycolleges.wy.edu>