

WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Annual Accreditation Report

April 1, 2003-March 31, 2004



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

ACCREDITATION BY THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), a commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), accredits Wyoming's seven community colleges. Institutional accreditation is a voluntary process that serves the 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 guidelines set forth by the HLC.

Currently, the Wyoming community colleges follow the HLC Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) to maintain 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. This Self-Study helps both the college and the HLC prepare for a Comprehensive Visit by a team of peer evaluators. The Comprehensive Visit Team critically evaluates the Self-Study Report and the institution during the visit and then subsequently makes a recommendation about continued 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 continued institutional accreditation is reaffirmed by the HLC is for ten years. An alternate method by which colleges can maintain accreditation status is an HLC program called Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), which colleges have the option of choosing in the future.

The Higher Learning Commission uses five 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.”¹
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.”¹
3. **Student Learning and Effective Teaching:** the institution “provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.”¹
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.”¹
5. **Engagement and Service:** “as called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.”¹

WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACCREDITATION ACTIVITY 2003-2004

Because continued institutional accreditation is granted 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. During the time period of April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004 three of the seven Wyoming community colleges had institutional accreditation activity. This summary is provided in compliance with W.S. 21-

¹ Higher Learning Commission, *Institutional Accreditation: An Overview*, 2003

18-202(e)(i), which requires the Community College Commission to “report the findings of institutional and specialized accreditation studies.”

EASTERN WYOMING COLLEGE

After their most recent Comprehensive Visit in February 2001 to Eastern Wyoming College (EWC) in Torrington, the Evaluation Team recommended to continue accreditation for ten years. EWC was required to submit a Progress Report by February 1, 2004 focused on (1) a strategic plan, (2) use of assessment data to improve student-learning, (3) credentials of faculty teaching general education, and (4) the general education component of Associate of Applied Science (AAS) and certificate programs. The report was accepted by the HLC and no other institutional accreditation activity is required. Eastern Wyoming College’s next Comprehensive Visit is scheduled for 2010-2011.

NORTHWEST COLLEGE

The result of Northwest College’s (NWC) latest Comprehensive Visit in March 2001 was continued institutional accreditation for ten years. NWC in Powell was required to submit a Monitoring Report to the HLC by June 30, 2003 that was focused on the institutional assessment plan and evidence of implementation. Northwest College submitted the required report and it was accepted by the HLC. The HLC is further requiring NWC to prepare a Follow-up Monitoring Report to expand on the initial Monitoring Report and the college’s activities related to its institutional assessment plan and the implementation of that plan. This report is due by June 30, 2005. Northwest College’s next Comprehensive Visit is scheduled for 2010-2011.

WESTERN WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In February 2004, a HLC Comprehensive Evaluation Team visited Western Wyoming Community College’s (WWCC) Rock Spring’s campus, the Green River Center, plus three Outreach sites. In the report issued by the Comprehensive Visit Team, the Team determined that WWCC had sufficiently demonstrated the five criteria that are required for accreditation (previously mentioned) and the Team recommended continued institutional accreditation for ten years. No progress reports or focused visits were recommended. Western Wyoming Community College’s next Comprehensive Visit is scheduled for 2013-2014.

In addition to the Comprehensive Visit, WWCC submitted a Request for Institutional Change to deliver degrees asynchronously. Asynchronous courses are courses that do not have specific meeting times, such as Internet and video courses. The request was approved and WWCC can begin to offer entire degree programs online. The HLC is requiring a Progress Report by January 31, 2007 to update the HLC on the college’s progress in meeting the challenges of offering asynchronous degrees.

FUTURE ACTIVITY

During the next year, two colleges will have HLC accreditation activity. Central Wyoming College in Riverton is currently undertaking their Self-Study in preparation for their next Comprehensive Visit scheduled for 2005-2006. Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne will host a Focused Visit Team during 2004-2005.

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