



WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Annual Accreditation Report

April 1, 2007-March 31, 2008

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

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 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.

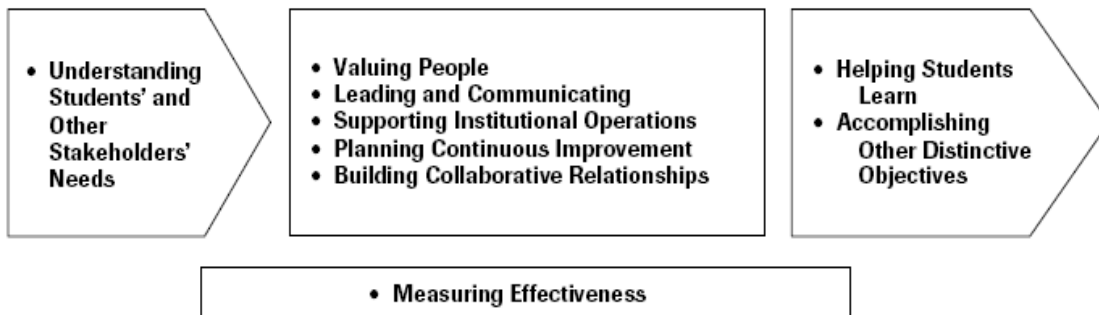
Currently, most of the Wyoming community colleges follow the HLC Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) to maintain accreditation status. The PEAQ process for institutional accreditation is a continuous cycle. For approximately two years the institution conducts a Self-Study, which critically assesses all programs and aspects of the institution. Next, a team of peer evaluators conducts a Comprehensive Visit. The 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 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). Wyoming colleges have the option of applying to become part of the Academic Quality Improvement Program 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 (see categories below). 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 and Northern Wyoming Community College District and Western Wyoming Community College.

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."

The Academic Quality Improvement Program Categories



WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACCREDITATION ACTIVITY 2007-2008

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. During the time period of April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008 five of the seven Wyoming community colleges had institutional accreditation activity. 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.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACCREDITATION SUMMARIES

CASPER COLLEGE (PEAQ STATUS)

After a two year process involving the entire campus community, Casper College (CC) in Casper is finalizing its self-study and preparing for a visit from a peer review team. The visit will take place March 23 – 25, 2009.

The self study document was put together by five committees with representation from all employee groups on campus. The five committees each focused on one of the five criteria set forth by the Higher Learning Commission. The committees met monthly or bi-monthly for the better part of two years, successfully showing evidence to establish that Casper College is satisfying all the criteria.

Once the committees had compiled all the evidence, the self-study document was written to narrate the college’s qualification for re-accreditation. A full year of writing, rewriting, proofing, and editing has taken place and the final form of the document was sent to the Higher Learning Commission in Chicago and to each of the four members of the peer review team.

Currently Casper College is preparing for the visit. An agenda for the team’s time on campus is being prepared using the input of the team chair. All documentation that they may require is being prepared for the team to access while they are here. The final results of all of this will be determined after the team visit.

CENTRAL WYOMING COLLEGE (PEAQ STATUS)

Central Wyoming College (CWC) in Riverton did not have any official accreditation activity during the reporting period. Central Wyoming College will submit an Assessment Progress report to the Higher Learning Commission by December 1, 2008. Central Wyoming College’s next comprehensive visit is scheduled for 2015-2016.

EASTERN WYOMING COLLEGE (PEAQ STATUS)

Eastern Wyoming College (EWC) in Torrington did not have any official accreditation activity during the reporting period. EWC is participating in the Foundations of Excellence—The First Year of College ® which will be part of a “special emphasis” self-study over the next year. The self-study team is being organized and the next HLC visit will take place in 2010-2011.

LARAMIE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE (AQIP STATUS)

In December 2006, Laramie County Community College was accepted into the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). AQIP is an alternative approach to accreditation by which an institution demonstrates that it meets accreditation criteria “through sequences of events that align with those ongoing activities that characterize organizations striving to improve their

performance.” (<http://www.aqip.org>) Participation in AQIP focuses attention on institutional processes and measures of effectiveness to continually improve programs and services.

During the fall 2007 semester, LCCC identified its first three action projects, which focus on the areas of academic advising, electronic communication, and professional development. Details about the projects, which were submitted to the HLC in December 2007, can be found at LCCC’s AQIP website: <http://www.lccc.wy.edu/Index.aspx?page=768>. Action project teams were established and work began on these projects in January 2008. An update on the progress of each project will be submitted to the HLC by September 14, 2008.

In the next year, LCCC will create its Systems Portfolio, a public document that describes the college’s fundamental systems in nine categories. In addition, the Quality Council, which oversees the college’s continuous improvement efforts as well as its AQIP action projects, will identify and implement new action projects as the current ones are retired.

NORTHWEST COLLEGE (PEAQ STATUS)

Northwest College (NWC) in Powell did not have any official accreditation activity during the reporting period. Currently, there are no accreditation activities scheduled for NWC until a formal campus visit takes place in 2010-2011.

NORTHERN WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT (AQIP STATUS)

Northern Wyoming Community College District (NWCCD) in Sheridan and Gillette is in its fourth year of participating in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) form of accreditation. The Systems Portfolio, which analyzes nine different categories of the institutional environment, was submitted in fall 2007 and a very favorable response was received in spring 2008. In fact, the review team commented in its report that our Portfolio was “among the better ones” members had reviewed. The Portfolio is a dynamic document that is updated regularly and available to the public via the College webpage. As a follow-up activity, a team from the College will go to Chicago in October 2008 for its strategy forum. The College has completed four action projects and will soon retire its fifth. Current action projects include Employee Orientation and Academic Assessment, and a new project, Early Alert, will begin soon. NWCCD is scheduled for an accreditation visit in 2010-2011.

WESTERN WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE (AQIP STATUS)

Western Wyoming Community College (WWCC) in Rock Springs formally applied to the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) in April 2008 and was accepted as a participant on July 15, 2008. In accepting WWCC into AQIP, HLC noted that its rationale for its decision included the following: WWCC has been preparing for AQIP since its last comprehensive PEAQ evaluation in 2004; Structures are in place for providing the necessary administrative and governance processes, and the College has internal buy-in from its Board of Trustees, its president, and various internal committees and councils.

WWCC’s next Reaffirmation of Accreditation is now scheduled for 2015-16. Staff from WWCC will attend the Strategy Forum in February, 2008.

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Accreditation Schedule Wyoming Community Colleges

Last updated: February 2009

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

References: 1. W.S. 21-18-202(e) (i) and (iii) 2. MIS Handbook, pages: Admin-10 and Accred-1	Last Comprehensive Visit	Focused Visit	Required Progress Report	Required Monitoring Report	Required Contingency Report	Next PEAQ Comprehensive Visit or AQIP Quality Checkup/ Site Visit
Casper College	January 1999	None Scheduled	None Due	None Due	None Due	2008-2009
Central Wyoming College	October 2005	None Scheduled	Dec 1, 2008	None Due	None Due	2015-2016
Eastern Wyoming College	February 2001	None Scheduled	None Due	None Due	None Due	2010-2011
Laramie County Community College	October 1999	None Scheduled	None Due	None Due	None Due	2010-2011
Northwest College	March 2001	None Scheduled	None Due	None Due	None Due	2010-2011
Northern Wyoming Community College District	November 1997	None Scheduled	None Due	None Due	None Due	2010-2011
Western Wyoming Community College	February 2004	None Scheduled	Jan 31, 2007	None Due	None Due	2015-2016