



# WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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## *Annual Accreditation Report*

*April 1, 2008-March 31, 2009*

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.

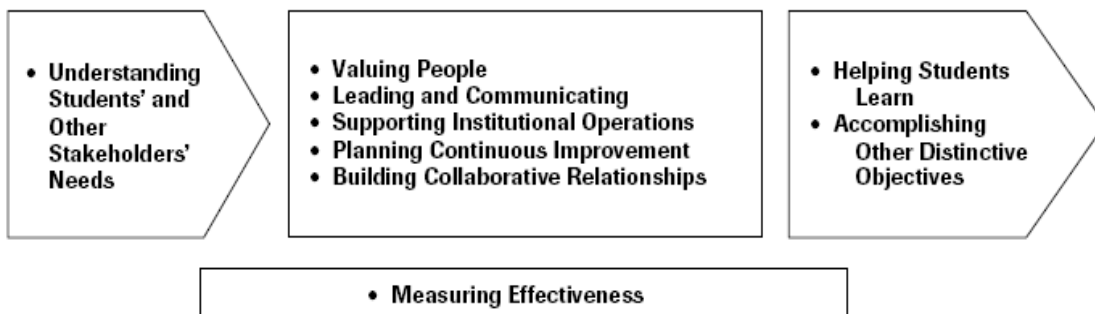
Currently, most of the Wyoming community colleges follow the HLC Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) to maintain accreditation status. The PEAQ process for institutional accreditation is a continuous cycle. For approximately two years the institution conducts a Self-Study, which critically 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 2008-2009**

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, 2008 to March 31, 2009 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)**

The final written self-study document was sent to the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools approximately six weeks before the March 23-25, 2009 visit from the peer review team. This report is housed in electronic format at the URL below as are many other electronic resources related to accreditation.

<http://www.caspercollege.edu/accreditation/index.html>

Casper College hosted a four-member team of peer evaluators of the Higher Learning Commission for a comprehensive evaluation March 23-25, 2009. This was the culmination of an extensive three-year self-study process. The preliminary report of the visiting team recommends the continued accreditation of Casper College by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools with the next comprehensive evaluation scheduled for 2018-2019. The College expects to receive the Commission’s official written report in the summer of 2009. The first draft of the visiting team’s “Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit” was received in mid May, 2009 and is still under review by Casper College as of this writing.

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

Central Wyoming College (CWC) in Riverton submitted an Assessment Progress report to the Higher Learning Commission in December 2008. This report was accepted by the Higher Learning Commission in January 2009, and no further reports are required. 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 starting its self-study for its next PEAQ evaluation visit which is scheduled for October 25-27, 2010. EWC filed an agreement with the Higher Learning Commission to complete a Special Emphasis on The First Year of College for self study based on the Foundations of Excellence ®. The FoE activities started with a team attending the launch meeting held in August, 2008 in North Carolina. Activities continued throughout the year and in ending with a compilation of a comprehensive report on the first year of college. Our plans for the upcoming year will be to continue and expand the self-study activities as we address the

criteria components. The report will be mailed to the Higher Learning Commission in the summer of 2010.

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

Laramie County Community College, a participant in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), worked on three action projects between April 1, 2008 and March 30, 2009. These were related to improving advising, communication, and professional development systems at the college.

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

Northwest College (NWC) is fully accredited through 2011. There are no reports currently due to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The visiting team will be on campus in November 2010, to assess the extent to which the College meets the HLC accreditation requirements. At this point, NWC has a full draft of the College's self study report, and the Accreditation Executive Committee will be finalizing a revised copy in the next academic year in order to meet the HLC self-study submission deadline before the HLC visiting team's arrival on campus.

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

Northern Wyoming Community College District (NWCCD) in Sheridan and Gillette is in its fifth 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, received a very favorable response in spring 2008. The Portfolio is a dynamic document that is updated regularly and available to the public via the College webpage. A team from the College attended its strategy forum in Chicago in October 2008 and continues to make progress on updating Portfolio information. The College is nearing completion of its sixth action project and currently has four other action projects underway. 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. A team from the College attended the strategy forum in February 2009 and has submitted their first three action plans to the Higher Learning Commission. The College is incorporating strategic planning priorities with the AQIP action plans to move the institution forward in a systematic way. WWCC's next Reaffirmation of Accreditation is now scheduled for 2015-16.

## Accreditation Schedule Wyoming Community Colleges

Last updated: May 2009

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

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

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

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