

***Community College  
Accreditation and  
Accountability  
Committee***

***FINAL REPORT***



Iowa Department of Education  
Division of Community Colleges and  
Workforce Preparation

January 2010

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## I. Purpose of the Study

The 82<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the Iowa legislature mandated the Iowa Department of Education (DE) to convene a working group to study the comprehensive community college accreditation and accountability review process. A process report was given to the legislature on January 15, 2009. This final report will be sent to the legislature on January 15, 2010.

Under House File 2679, the DE was directed to review the community college accreditation process and the compliance requirements contained in the accreditation criteria. The review was required to consider the following measures: (1) ensure consistency in program quality statewide; (2) provide adequate oversight of community college programming by the State Board of Education; (3) consistency in definitions for information and data requirements in consultation with the community college Management Information System (MIS) Advisory Committee; (4) identify barriers to providing quality programming; (5) methods to improve compensation of community college faculty; and (6) system performance measures that adequately respond to identified needs and concerns. The bill also required that community college accreditation processes and system performance measures from other states and regions be examined. In conducting the review, the DE collaborated with community college accreditation and quality faculty plan committees, as well as with the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation's Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee. In addition, the bill required the director of the DE to appoint the advisory committee in consultation with the executive director of the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees (IACCT).

## II. Membership

The Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee was co-chaired by Roger Utman, administrator of the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation within the DE; and Tim Wynes, chancellor of the Iowa Valley Community College District. It was determined by the director of the DE, along with the executive director of the IACCT, that the existing Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee, along with some additional appointed members, would serve to meet the requirements. The Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee consists of 15 members – one from each college representing the various functional units of community colleges such as faculty, human resource administrators, business officers, student services, chief academic officers, and presidents. Membership was balanced between Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) and Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) institutions. These models are utilized by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools in accrediting colleges and universities. The members who served on the committee were as follows:

- Northeast Iowa Area Community College (Area I)  
Ken Vande Berg, Vice President, Economic Development
- North Iowa Area Community College (Area II)  
Mark Johnson, Vice President, Academic Affairs
- Iowa Lakes Community College (Area III)  
Judy Cook, Executive Director, Planning and Development

- Northwest Iowa Community College (Area IV)  
Jan Snyder, Vice President, Institutional Advancement and Enrollment Services
- Iowa Central Community College (Area V)  
Michelle Ramthun, English Faculty
- Iowa Valley Community College District (Area VI)  
Tim Wynes, Chancellor
- Hawkeye Community College (Area VII)  
Linda Allen, Vice President, Academic Affairs
- Eastern Iowa Community College District (Area IX)  
Laurie Hanson, Director, Institutional Effectiveness
- Kirkwood Community College (Area X)  
Kathleen Van Steenhuyse, Dean, Social Services and Career Options Programs  
Al Rowe, Institutional Effectiveness (Representing K-12 Teacher Quality Requirements)
- Des Moines Area Community College (Area XI)  
Margi Boord, Associate Executive Director, Human Resources
- Western Iowa Tech Community College (Area XII)  
Helen Lewis, English-Humanities Faculty
- Iowa Western Community College (Area XIII)  
Bill Barrett, Business-Marketing Faculty
- Southwestern Community College (Area XIV)  
Barb Crittenden, President  
Dave Neas, English Faculty (Representing Iowa State Education Association Membership)
- Indian Hills Community College (Area XV)  
Marlene Sprouse, Vice President, Academic Affairs
- Southeastern Community College (Area XVI)  
Joan Williams, Vice President, Student Services
- DE Representatives  
Roger Utman, Administrator, Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation  
Colleen Hunt, Chief, Bureau of Community College Services  
Jeremy Varner, Consultant, Bureau of Community College Services

### III. Work Teams

In preparing the interim report (2008-09), the Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee utilized four work teams as part of the process in addressing accreditation and accountability issues. The four work teams reported to Roger Utman and Tim Wynes, as well as the larger committee. Each of the following four work teams were staffed by a DE consultant, as follows: (1) Program Quality—Ken Maguire; (2) Data Quality and Reporting—Vladimir Bassis; (3) National Review of State Accreditation Systems and Review Processes—Jeremy Varner; and (4) Faculty Compensation Study and Review—Tom Schenk, Jr. Each team addressed a portion of the mandated study. The teams consisted of Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee members, as well as others from the field identified by the committee as having expertise in the area covered by the team.

Each work team met up to three times reporting back to the larger committee throughout. The purpose and focus of each work team was as follows:

- **National Review of State Accreditation Systems and Review Processes Work Team**  
Purpose: To review state community college accreditation processes and practices in other states and formulate recommendations.  
Focus: To discuss and determine the scope of the study with regard to the legislative mandate; to look at states that utilize or recently utilized state accreditation processes; and identify and review other state models.
- **Program Quality Work Team**  
Purpose: To review the program development and approval requirements; DE maintenance of the program master; use of technology to simplify the process of program development/revision/dissemination; and to identify strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations.  
Focus: To discuss program development and the approval process; the program master; the AS-28 system; and concurrent credit courses.
- **Faculty Compensation Study and Review Work Team**  
Purpose: To study the compensation of instructors at Iowa's community colleges, including regional and national comparisons and comparisons with other educational sectors.  
Focus: To discuss average and median faculty compensation in Iowa and nationwide, and expenditures on remunerations.
- **Data Quality and Reporting Work Team**  
Purpose: To review the data and accountability reports generated by the community college MIS (Management Information System); to describe Iowa's community colleges for accuracy, completeness, and timeliness; to suggest data elements and other revisions for consideration by the MIS Advisory Team; and to review steps taken to implement the data reporting requirements of House File 2679–Senior Year Plus.  
Focus: To discuss revising the MIS Reporting Manual and MIS Data Dictionary for consistency, redundancy, precision, and clarity issues; revising MIS data elements for the purpose they serve; consistency, redundancy, and technical difficulties to be provided by colleges; and facilitating colleges' efforts for understanding reporting requirements and MIS data definitions uniformly across the state.

Recommendations from the subcommittees have been incorporated into this report.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

The Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee received the information and recommendations from the subcommittees, as well as from a variety of other resources. The recommendations from the committee center around two areas. The first area concerns the structure of the interim and comprehensive accreditation visits to the community colleges, and the second area concerns the format of the written accreditation report.

## **General Comments/Recommendations**

The committee recommends the following:

- The accreditation visits need to be more focused and efficient by reducing duplication of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools process.
- Through a review of HLC documents, determine whether any additional issues need to be addressed.
- Focus on the Iowa Code standards not covered by the HLC.
- Review the progress on any issues noted on the college's last state accreditation visit.

## **V. Structure of Accreditation Visits**

### **Enhanced Pre-Visits**

As part of either an interim accreditation visit or a comprehensive accreditation visit, the recommendation is to have an enhanced pre-visit. The pre-visit would consist of a review by team members of specific materials and documents which are currently reviewed while on campus. These materials and documents would be supplied by electronic means such as through college web site links and emailed documents. Data on student enrollment in campuses, departments, programs, and courses on the basis of racial/ethnic background, gender, and disability and each college's Quality Faculty Plan (QFP) are already on file with the DE and would also be reviewed as part of the enhanced pre-visit.

### **Additional Documents–Equity**

While there is a separate equity visit at each college, there are some components of equity which are reviewed at the time of the accreditation visit. Documents dealing with equity issues would also be reviewed. Colleges currently have the option to have the comprehensive equity visit at the same time as the accreditation visit or keep it as a separate event. The committee recommends that the colleges continue to have this option.

### **Documents Requested After the Visit**

While the HLC's documents and findings will be reviewed before (pre-visit) and during the visit, each college will need to supply a copy of the official letter from the HLC on the college's accreditation status.

### **Interim Visits**

Following the format of the HLC, interim visits to the colleges would be based on the HLC model utilized by the college. Under the PEAQ (Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality) model an interim visit would be at the mid-point (fifth year) of the 10-year approval and with AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) institutions, the interim visit would be at the mid-point (fourth year) of the seven-year approval. The committee is conscious that the interim visit should not be a duplication of the HLC visit. Thus, an interim visit for an AQIP college would be during the same year as the HLC visit, but would occur after the HLC visit.

In this way, it would allow the state accreditation team to concentrate on the progress made on the activities discussed during the HLC's visit and would not duplicate efforts. (For a college utilizing the PEAQ [Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality] model, there is no interim report from the Higher Learning Commission [HLC] of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Therefore, the visit would review code requirements and address any issues from the comprehensive visit report and any issues or concerns identified by the DE.) For the interim visit, on-site interviews would be tailored to specific HLC activities undertaken by the college. This will allow the accreditation process to be more focused, efficient, and a better use of resources. While the length of the on-site visit may vary depending on the college, by collecting and reviewing much of the written documentation in the pre-visit, the interim on-site visit can be reduced from the current three-day schedule.

Note: The HLC is currently reviewing the PEAQ accreditation model and changes to that model may require changes to the state accreditation process for PEAQ institutions.

### **Comprehensive Visit**

Again, in following the format of the HLC, comprehensive visits to the colleges would follow the HLC model utilized by the college. As with the interim visit, a comprehensive site visit would occur after the HLC visit, but during the same year as the HLC accreditation visit. By utilizing this format, it would allow the college to talk about the HLC process and any issues and receive input. In this way, it would allow the accreditation team to concentrate on the progress made on the activities discussed during the HLC visit and would not duplicate efforts. The length of the on-site visit may vary depending on the college, but by collecting and reviewing much of the written documentation in the pre-visit, the comprehensive on-site visit can be reduced from the current three-day schedule.

### **Written Report Format**

In reviewing the formats for the both the interim and comprehensive visit reports, the committee has recommended the following:

- The comprehensive report contains a brief history of the college at the beginning of the report.
- Both reports would address whether a college was in compliance with HLC.
- Both reports address any issues from the most recent state accreditation visit.
- Both reports contain a separate section which deals with compliance of Iowa Code: *for accreditation by the state board of education, an Iowa community college shall also meet additional standards pertaining to minimum or quality assurance standards for faculty (Iowa Code section 260C.48(1)); faculty load (Iowa Code section 260C.48(2)); special needs (Iowa Code section 260C.48(3)); career and technical education program evaluation (Iowa Code section 258.4(7)); quality faculty plan (Iowa Code section 260C.36); and senior year plus programs (Iowa Code chapter 261E).*
- Both reports contain sections which deal with strengths and areas where the college can maximize resources.
- At the end of each report, it would be clearly stated if there are any issues which need to be addressed before the next DE visit. If there are any issues which need immediate attention, the report would clearly state how the college needs to respond before a given deadline.

## **Faculty Compensation Study and Review**

In the review of faculty compensation, the subcommittee found that Iowa consistently ranked fifth among its surrounding neighbors in faculty compensation during the last five years.

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Illinois</b>	\$55,401.54	\$56,934.21	\$58,128.25	\$59,024.00	\$60,642.42
<b>Iowa</b>	\$42,335.63	\$43,527.69	\$44,945.31	\$47,287.00	\$49,464.13
<b>Minnesota</b>	\$55,035.93	\$56,824.70	\$57,327.20	\$58,643.57	\$60,953.73
<b>Missouri</b>	\$45,308.05	\$46,173.15	\$47,387.00	\$48,749.30	\$50,555.90
<b>Nebraska</b>	\$38,275.50	\$42,694.63	\$43,719.00	\$44,803.38	\$45,787.50
<b>South Dakota</b>	\$37,733.20	\$40,333.50	\$39,485.40	\$42,105.25	\$43,136.00
<b>Wisconsin</b>	\$58,100.28	\$59,402.72	\$61,978.39	\$66,455.47	\$67,094.06
<b>Grand Total</b>	\$51,272.81	\$52,983.53	\$54,066.39	\$55,808.59	\$57,459.76

*Note: The grand total refers to the average salary of the combined seven states. This is a weighted average to account for the varying number of community colleges within each state.  
Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)*

## **Additional Recommendations**

- The colleges seek and maintain National Association of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) accreditation to ensure quality of concurrent enrollment programs. This would assist with Iowa Code requirements under Senior Year Plus (Iowa Code, Chapter 261E).
- As assistance to the accreditation process, explore additional ways for the Management Information System (MIS) to collect college data through careful selection of data elements, reduce redundancies, improve clarity, timeliness and consistency of reported data, and improved external and internal communication on data.
- Continue to work on a web-based system for colleges to submit career and technical education programs of study for approval to the DE.
- The Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee will continue to work for the rest of this academic year (through June 2010) on all of the details for the restructured visits to begin with the 2010-2011 academic year.
- The Program Quality Work Team recommended changes to the program development and approval process to improve clarity and understanding. The DE has already acted upon that recommendation.
- The Data Quality and Reporting Work Team recommended changes to the Data Dictionary and the MIS Reporting Manual. The DE has already acted upon those recommended changes.

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