February 23, 2022

President Joe Schaffer
Laramie County Community College
1400 E. College Dr.
Cheyenne, WY 82007

Dear President Schaffer:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission staff received the report on timeline and process used to ensure the quality of distance (online) courses (3A).

The institution's next assurance review is scheduled for 6/3/2024.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2029– 2030.

For more information on the interim report process contact interimreports@hlcommission.org. Your HLC staff liaison is Jeffery Rosen (jrosen@hlcommission.org).

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT
DATE: 2/23/2022
STAFF LIAISON: Jeffrey Rosen
REVIEWED BY: Steven Kapelke

INSTITUTION: Laramie County Community College, Cheyenne, WY

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dr. Joe Schaffer, President

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES: An interim report is required by 12/31/2021 on timeline and process used to ensure the quality of distance (online) courses (3A).

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The Laramie County Community College (LCCC) interim report is presented in a clearly outlined narrative supported with a range of documents pertaining to specific aspects of the College's online learning delivery. These supplementary materials (arranged in Appendices A through F) include the "LCCC Online Course Checklist," the "Draft LCCC Rubic," and the "Student Course Questionnaire Feedback" survey, among other items. Evidence presented in the report indicates that the document is candid and thorough.

REPORT SUMMARY: As noted in the Report Presentation section above, the LCCC interim report is structured as a timeline, beginning in the Spring 2020 Semester and citing specific progress in each subsequent semester through Fall 2021 with regard to the quality of the institution's online learning delivery. In an introductory list of "Areas of Focus," the report enumerates the following:

1. The rubric template or other means by which courses are evaluated.
2. The timeline for evaluation of all distance courses.
3. The findings and recommendations for each course.
4. The improvements planned for each course as a result of the implementation of this process.
5. Training provided to faculty in order to implement improvements.

Spring Semester 2020: Here the report makes reference to the Team Report of the institution's 2019 AQIP Comprehensive Quality Review (CQR), in which the team recommended an interim report pertaining to improving quality of the College's distance education courses.

The College subsequently—in March 2020—responded to the circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic by moving most of its instruction to virtual learning, which "*forced a rapid upscaling of faculty development focused on online course design, technology skills, and the pedagogy needed to teach via distance.*" Among the activities cited are training initiatives conducted by the Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET); the purchase of "*visual simulation software to support students in the allied health programs when their clinical experiences were suspended*:" and increased capacity for remote exam proctoring.

Fall Semester 2020: Due to limitations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, about 60% of Fall 2020 courses were offered online, with the CET creating a repository for instructional materials—which was then centralized in the institution's learning management system. The repository, titled "The Exchange," maintains professional development materials. According to the report, faculty volunteers offered training in distance delivery for instructional personnel in most disciplines.

Spring Semester 2021: In this section of the report, the document provides an overview of the institution's efforts at developing an effective mechanism for evaluating online teaching, beginning with support for eleven faculty, staff and administrative members ("Cohort") to participate in "Evaluating Online Teaching." This course, chosen for its consistency with HLC expectations, offered guidance in a range of factors affecting quality instruction in online delivery. Subsequent to completion of the course, the Cohort began reviewing and evaluating online course evaluation rubrics for possible use at LCCC.

Using materials taken from three different existing instruments, the Cohort crafted the Draft LCCC Rubric ("Rubric") to be implemented for all the College's online courses. To include student feedback of online instruction, the LCCC Office of Institutional Research developed seven questions that are now included in the Student Course Questionnaire (SCQ), which was piloted in March 2021.

Summer Semester 2021: The SCQ is now administered every semester, offering feedback to individual faculty members and to Academic Affairs in identifying instructional trends. The seven questions cited above are presented only to students in the College's online classes. The seven are as follows:

1. *The expectations of the course were clearly outlined at the beginning of the course.*
2. *The instructions for accessing resource materials were easy to follow.*
3. *The instructor was active and engaged with the students.*
4. *There was adequate opportunity to interact online with the instructor.*
5. *The online materials and activities for this class helped me to learn.*
6. *The instructor provided opportunities for students to learn from each other.*
7. *The instructor used the technology effectively to engage the students.*

According to the report, preparation for evaluation of online delivery was a collaboration between the Center for Excellence in Teaching and the Academic leadership—ultimately aligning the terminology presented on the Rubric with that employed by the Canvas LMS.

Fall Semester 2021: Here the report provides an overview of the most recent LCCC activities/initiatives concerning the quality of its online programming, citing, for example the Fall 2021 College In-Service, during which 20 faculty members participated in a project designed to assess online instruction using the Rubric.

Following orientation to the Rubric in September 2021, each faculty member identified the online class in which they would employ the Rubric; the CET was available to assist the faculty in evaluating the course or offering "*support for course corrections that were needed as a result of the evaluation.*" Having completed their class evaluations, participants were asked to identify opportunities for improvement based on their review of the Rubric findings. Summarizing the findings, the interim report notes that 62% of the findings related to "*Rubric traits categorized as Design and Layout, 13% with traits in Content and Activities, 16% with Interaction, and 9%...in the Assessment and Feedback Column.*" LCCC requested that faculty participants identify three steps they would take to improve areas cited in the evaluations prior to teaching the class in Spring 2022. The Rubric scores are set forth specifically in the table below.

Rubric Score, Draft LCCC Rubric Fall 2021

	Design and Layout 60 points	Content and Activities 42 points	Interaction 30 points	Assessment and Feedback 36 points	Total 168 points	
ACCT 2450	27	15	16	21	79	47%
BADM 3210	28	14	19	22	83	49%
BIOL 1003	15	13	13	14	55	33%
CHEM 1000	26	17	13	15	71	42%
COMM 2010a	34	30	19	33	116	69%
COMM 2010b	28.5	27	24	36	116	69%
ECON 1200	18	12	9	11	50	30%
EDEX 2484	14	9	10	15	48	29%
ENTR 1520	22	14	10	10	56	33%
GEOG 1000	36	26	15	26	103	61%
HCA 3040	18	13	8	14	53	32%
HLTK 1200	20.5	11	15	10	56.5	34%

HMDV 1510	27	8	14	15	64	38%
HOEC 1140	19	10	11.5	13	53.5	32%
MATH 1400	16.5	11	12	10	49.5	29%
MATH 2350	34	13	21	14	82	49%
MEDC 1970	35	30	29	36	130	77%
PSYC 1000	27	21	18	28	94	56%
PSYC 2000	14	19	8	15	56	33%

Planning for the Spring 2022 In-Service includes the following items:

- The institution plans to present the current Rubric and the supporting Course Checklist during the Academic Affairs portion of the meeting and encourage additional participants to join the initiative.
- The In-Service will offer additional training on the dynamic Canvas Syllabus Tool and the Canvas Accessibility Checker and will address the findings from the pilot project.
- Participants will continue this work during the Spring 2022 Semester, implementing the improvements they've identified for the classes used in the pilot. The Rubric will be administered by the school deans, who will again request findings and recommendations for improvement from participants.

The report notes that Fall 2021 SCQ student feedback was incomplete at the time the interim report was submitted, which imposes some limitations concerning comparisons of instructional quality. Nonetheless, as the report states, the volume of the feedback that has been received provides a basis for establishing "*benchmark characteristics of online instruction…*"

REPORT ANALYSIS: Evidence presented in the Laramie County Community College interim report demonstrates that the institution has made substantive progress with regard to ensuring the quality of its online instructional programming.

The report describes a series of activities designed for that purpose, ranging from the creation ("*redesign*") of a faculty resource repository for online instruction, to In-Service opportunities for training in online instruction, to the revision of the SCQ, with an additional feature that specifically addresses online teaching.

Materials provided in the report's appendices confirm the information presented in the report's narrative. These include initial responses to the seven-question SCQ addition, shown below, which was administered in the Summer and Fall terms of 2021.

Student Course Questionnaire Feedback, Questions Developed for Online Classes

	21 Summer n = 213		*21 Fall n = 976	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
The expectations of this course were clearly outlined at the beginning of this course.	92.0%	8.0%	92.1%	7.9%
The instructions for accessing resource materials were easy to follow.	87.3%	12.7%	90.4%	9.6%
The instructor was active and engaged with the students.	77.5%	22.5%	83.4%	16.6%
There was adequate opportunity to interact online with the instructor.	75.1%	24.9%	84.9%	15.1%
The online materials and activities for this class helped me learn.	83.6%	16.4%	85.5%	14.5%
The instructor provided opportunities for students to learn from each other.	68.5%	31.5%	73.1%	26.9%
The instructor used the technology effectively to engage the students.	81.2%	18.8%	84.8%	15.2%

* SCQ Responses for 21 Fall were gathered prior to the close of the survey. This dataset is incomplete.

The development of the Draft LCCC Rubric, an excerpt of which is provided below, is a key step in the ongoing efforts of the institution to ascertain that LCCC has made a commitment to continuous improvement in its online educational delivery, as further demonstrated in the continued review and revision of the Rubric. The Rubric is organized around specific instructional areas/criteria, such as "Design and Layout," as shown in the excerpt. Ultimately, the institution took steps to assure that the terminology employed in the Rubric is consistent with that used in the Canvas LMS

Draft LCCC Rubric

CRITERIA	Exemplary, 6 points	Best Practice, 4 points	Foundational, 1 point
DESIGN AND LAYOUT			
Course Overview and Information	Course includes a standing Q&A discussion board available to all students for the duration of the class	A "welcome" or "lets get acquainted" discussion is included and designed to build a sense of community; task due dates are clear in the course overview	Course includes welcome, getting started content, and orientation to navigating the course, navigation is clear and unused items are hidden

Course Syllabus	Video explanation accompanies current syllabi	Current syllabi format is used, Canvas syllabus tool is used with working links to assignments, course information that deconstructs the syllabus in a clear and navigable way, a printable syllabus is available (pdf.); course modality is clear	Current syllabi format is used and available in a printable format (pdf.)
Course Resources	All course resources are OER	Low cost materials are used; Course materials copyright and licensing status are clearly stated; Links to campus academic policies and learner success resources (technical help, tutoring, writing lab, Advising, DSS, and counseling) are included	Course materials, supplemental textbooks, and reading lists are easy to find; links to institutional resources (library, school website, DSS, Counseling, Dean of Students, etc.)
Course Outcomes and Objectives	Assignment outcomes are linked to courses outcomes transparently via scoring rubrics	Defined outcomes align with learning activities and assessments	Course objectives are clearly defined and match the MCOR
Contact Information	Virtual office hours are available and clearly stated; instructor utilizes software for students to easily book appointments	Contact information for faculty and program are included with clear response time communicated	Includes availability information, communication preferences, response time, and a photo
Course Technology Expectations	*No assessment available at this level*	Requisite skills for using technology tools (website, software and hardware) are clearly stated and supported with resources	*No assessment available at this level*

The evidence further indicates that the institution has implemented the pilot project, with 21 faculty participants having volunteered to initiate course self-assessment using the Rubric and making recommendations for change ("actions") based on the results. Following the first round of the self-assessment, LCCC has asked for additional faculty participation at faculty In-Service training where the updated rubric and Course Checklist were to have been presented.

ANALYSIS CONCLUDING STATEMENT: Laramie County Community College has complied with the interim report requirements that emerged from the institution's 2019 AQIP Comprehensive Quality Review. The Higher Learning Commission acknowledges the institution's efforts to date and will not require additional reporting on this matter.

However, as described in the report, the College's efforts are still very much in early-to-mid stage and will need continued attention on the part of the institution, as noted in the

Staff Finding section below. LCCC should assume that the HLC Peer Review Team conducting the institution's 2024 Assurance Review will examine closely its continued progress in this area and seek specific data pertaining to this progress.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s): <u>Core Component 3.A concerning educational quality in online learning.</u>

Statements of Analysis (check one below)
_ Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
X Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
_ Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
_ Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report on timeline and process used to ensure the quality of distance (online) courses (3A).

The institution's next assurance review is scheduled for 6/3/2024.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2029– 2030.