

**Reaffirmation of Accreditation Recommendation  
for  
Laramie County Community College  
Cheyenne, Wyoming**

**The Higher Learning Commission  
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools**

**September 24, 2012**

**2012-13 Academic Quality improvement Program Review Panel on Reaffirmation  
(lead reviewers starred)**

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## I. Context and Nature of the Review

### A. Review Purpose, Process, and Materials

AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation reviews are scheduled seven years in advance, when an institution joins the Academic Quality Improvement Program or when an institution already participating in AQIP is reaffirmed via the AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation process.

In conducting these reviews, the AQIP Reaffirmation review panel examines the following materials for each institution, and may use abbreviated references to these documents in its recommendations or rationales.

AP	Action Projects and Annual Updates (from the Action Project Directory)
CM	Federal Compliance Materials (provided by institution just before a Quality Checkup visit))
FP	Financial Panel (report from institution responding to concerns)
IH	Current Commission History File of institutional actions
IR	Institutional Responses (to reports from the Commission)
IW	Institution's website
MR	Monitoring Report (from institution)
OP	Current Commission Organizational Profile, which incorporates last Institutional Update
PI	Systems Portfolio Index to compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation
QC	Quality Checkup Report
QS	Quality Highlights summary (provided by institution immediately before reaffirmation review begins)
SAS	Current Commission Statement of Affiliation Status
SP	Systems Portfolio
SR	Systems Appraisal Feedback Report

The panel also reviews any other major reports or documents that are part of the institution's permanent Commission files; references to such materials will not be abbreviated.

Two lead panelists from the AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation drafted a recommendation that was reviewed and approved by the entire panel before it was forwarded to the Institutional Actions Council.

### B. Organizational Context, Scope, and Structure (including extended physical or distance education operations)

Laramie County Community College (LCCC) was first accredited by the Commission in 1975 having been admitted to Candidacy for Accreditation in 1970. The institution was admitted to AQIP on December 15, 2006. It participated in Strategy Forums October 2 – 5, 2007 and April 25 – 27, 2012. The institution provided its first Systems Portfolio for review on November 1, 2010 and received a Systems Appraisal Feedback Report on February 18, 2011. AQIP conducted a Quality Checkup visit to the institution on July 18 – 20, 2012 and provided a report of the findings of the visiting team on August 16, 2012.



Since admission to AQIP, the institution has officially declared eleven individual Action Projects, and has provided AQIP with annual updates of ongoing projects and received annual update feedback reports on these. LCCC has completed eight projects.

Laramie County Community College is located in Cheyenne, Wyoming with a second campus in Laramie (Albany County Campus). Outreach centers are in Pine Bluffs, Wyoming as well as Warren Air Force Base. The institution offers 53 programs leading to a two-year Associate Degree and 25 programs leading to a Certificate. The institution has been approved under Commission policy to offer up to 100% of its total degree programs through distance education.

The institution enrolls 2,201 full-time and 2,976 part-time students. Headcount in dual enrollment (high school) programs totals 319 students.

### **C. Compliance With Federal Requirements (including Notification of Quality Checkup Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment)**

A Quality Checkup site visit to Laramie County Community College was conducted July 18 – 20, 2012. In keeping with Commission requirements, the institution notified its constituencies and the public of this visit and solicited third-party comments to be sent directly to the Commission. This included a news release soliciting student, staff and community comments, an announcement on its web site, and an advertisement in the local newspaper concerning the visit. The Commission shared all comments received with the institution and the Quality Checkup team. The team evaluated any comments received, completed any necessary follow-up on issues noted in these comments, and reviewed evidence of the institution's compliance with the Commission's notification and third-party comment requirements.

The Quality Checkup team examined evidence provided by LCCC of its compliance with the Commission's federal compliance program. The team reported that the institution met all Federal and Commission requirements.

### **D. Evidence of the Organization's Responsiveness to Previous Commission Concerns Regarding Fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation**

Laramie County Community College presents evidence that it complies with each of the Five Criteria for Accreditation and each of their Core Components; there are no accreditation concerns.

## **II. Fulfillment of The Criteria for Accreditation**

**A. CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY. The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.**

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

LCCC's new mission and vision statements are clearly stated and published to internal and external stakeholders in numerous institutional documents and on the college's website. (SP 3, AP)



The college recently approved a shared governance policy along with the reestablishment of the Quality Council to promote shared governance. (QC 7, QS)

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In fulfillment of mission, LCCC strives to develop learning-centered curricula and services to build skills and improve productivity of Wyoming's diverse workforce, and to provide customized training to fit individual learning needs and to enrich the lives of people of all ages through a variety of programs. (SP 1)

The LCCC strategic plan substantiates the mission of the college by adopting a process of performance-based objectives taking into account the needs of their stakeholders and financial resources. (SP 6-10)

The college president, who is responsible for implementing board policy, communicates frequently with the Board of Trustees; the board participates in an annual retreat with the president's cabinet and annually reviews the mission, vision and purpose statements. (SP 10, 58)

LCCC values integrity in all aspects of the college's efforts; hiring, development and evaluation processes are structured to find, develop and retain faculty and staff who conduct themselves with integrity. (SP 1, 8, 52, 54)

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.**

None.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and Commission monitoring (e.g., Action Project, Systems Portfolio, required report).**

None.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and Commission adverse action or sanction (i.e., probation, withdrawal of accreditation) may be warranted.**

None.

**5. Recommendation of the Panel:**

Criterion One is met and no Commission follow-up is recommended.

**B. CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. The organization'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. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning provides a wide range of demographic, economic, and social data that enables college leadership to plan for the future needs of students and other stakeholders. (SP 11, 12, 70, 71)

The college's strategic planning framework and strategic goal alignment processes ensure the cascading alignment of unit goals and budgeting in support of the college mission. Data are used to project future needs by aligning operational goals and support with the strategic plan. (SP 56, 58, 72-73, 79)

LCCC programs are reviewed on a five-year cycle to determine viability and industry stakeholder needs. (SP 15, 22,72)

LCCC monitors and annually reviews the effectiveness of its fiscal management and allocation of resources. (SP 75)

The Systems Portfolio evidences effective evaluation and assessment practices associated with quality improvement and planning at the college. (SP)

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.**

None.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and Commission monitoring (e.g., Action Project, Systems Portfolio, required report).**

None.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and Commission adverse action or sanction (i.e., probation, withdrawal of accreditation) may be warranted.**

None.

**5. Recommendation of the Panel:**

Criterion Two is met and no Commission follow-up is recommended.

**C. CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.**

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

LCCC identifies four general education outcomes for all students pursuing degrees. In addition, student learning objectives for all programs are articulated at the course, program and department levels. (SP 14-15, 24-30)

The Student Learning Assessment Committee has developed rubrics to assess student learning, courses and programs, and to encourage continuous improvement assessment processes. (SP 14-15)

The college's dual and concurrent enrollment program is seeking National Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnership accreditation. This accreditation would provide standards of excellence for faculty, students and the curriculum thus supporting student learning, and teaching effectiveness in alignment with the educational mission. (QC 5)

The Student Success Center helps students develop the skills necessary for successful learning; additionally, a new system for student advising, improves services for academic advising. (SP 4, 17, 23; AP)

Internal and external stakeholders and industry advisory committees provide input to faculty, qualified within their respective disciplines, to determine and revise course and program learning objectives. (SP 15)

LCCC supports faculty through orientation programs, mentoring and training opportunities. These activities provide encouragement and tools for both full-time and part-time faculty in effective teaching practices. (SP 20, 53)

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.**

None.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and Commission monitoring (e.g., Action Project, Systems Portfolio, required report).**

None.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and Commission adverse action or sanction (i.e., probation, withdrawal of accreditation) may be warranted.**

None.

**5. Recommendation of the Panel:**

Criterion Three is met and no Commission follow-up is recommended.

**D. CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE. The organization 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. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

LCCC offers a wide variety of non-traditional delivery methods for instruction, including internet, internet-hybrid, and internet enhanced courses. All traditional classrooms are wired for internet and computer use, and a majority of classrooms are SMART. A help desk is open 88 hours per week to provide technology assistance for students, faculty, and staff. (SP 4, 20)

The college encourages and supports lifelong learning for faculty with ongoing professional development opportunities, faculty sabbaticals, tuition reimbursement, funding for off-campus conferences and workshops, and extended orientation and mentoring for new full-time faculty. (SP 4, 20, 22, 53)

The mission statement, core values and strategic priorities affirm the college's commitment to prepare students for living in a global, multicultural community. (SP 1, 3, 4, 14)

The Board of Trustees demonstrates commitment to a life of learning for students, faculty, staff, and stakeholders by approving the college mission, vision and values, and by providing faculty and staff with resources necessary to carry out the strategic priorities and goals. (SP 1, 3, 4, 10, 12)

The college seeks to determine the needs of diverse student populations through a variety of tools, including media and environmental scans, advisory committees, graduate and employer surveys, focus groups, and student surveys. (SP 43)

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.**

None.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and Commission monitoring (e.g., Action Project, Systems Portfolio, required report).**

None.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and Commission adverse action or sanction (i.e., probation, withdrawal of accreditation) may be warranted.**

None.

**5. Recommendation of the Panel:**

Criterion Four is met and no Commission follow-up is recommended.

**E. CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.**



**1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

The college seeks input from representatives of the community who are directly involved in the success of students in transfer programs, employment, and clinical and intern settings. The career program advisory groups provide valuable input regarding industry needs, trends, and skills for graduates to be successful in the workforce. (SP 15, 16, 22, 35, 36, 83)

LCCC works collaboratively with the Workforce and Community Development program to provide customized trainings and business services for the surrounding community businesses. (SP 35, 83)

The college maintains a wide range of collaborative relationships with transfer institutions, district feeder high schools, business and industry, governmental agencies, and community organizations; LCCC also holds an articulation agreement with the State University to provide students with effective transfer of credits. (SP 45, 83, 84)

LCCC fosters relationships with surrounding school districts, businesses, agencies and community organizations to build collaborative relationships to improve opportunities for students and community members. (SP 83)

All ballot issues, including bond issues and mill levies, put before Laramie County voters have passed; most recently, the community approved a major bond issue for the construction of a new Health Sciences Building, indicating a high level of community support. Community support is further exhibited through donations to the LCCC Foundation. (SP 1)

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.**

None.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and Commission monitoring (e.g., Action Project, Systems Portfolio, required report).**

None.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and Commission adverse action or sanction (i.e., probation, withdrawal of accreditation) may be warranted.**

None.

**5. Recommendation of the Panel:**

Criterion five is met and no Commission follow-up is recommended.

**F. Summary of panel recommendations regarding fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation:**

The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, Quality Checkup Report, and the Quality Highlights indicate that the institution provided evidence that it complies with each of the Five Criteria for Accreditation and their Core Components. The Reaffirmation Panel agrees that the Criteria for Accreditation are all met. The Reaffirmation Panel's rationale for this conclusion is spelled out above for each of the five Criteria for Accreditation.

### III. Participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP)

#### A. Comments and counsel on AQIP Action Projects

Laramie County Community College has officially declared eleven Action Projects during its AQIP tenure. (QS 5-7) Eight Action Projects have been completed. Three completed projects directly addressed Helping Students Learn (*Develop recommendations for a new system for advising; Prerequisite review and modification; and Develop an operational definition of quality programs*). Other completed projects studied processes within multiple AQIP Categories: *Electronic communication: create a process to standardize email as the official tool for communicating institutional information* – Supporting Institutional Operations; *Analyze existing processes of professional development related to job performance* – Valuing People; *Performance management system* – Valuing People; *Recommendations to improve leadership, communication and decision-making* – Leading and Communicating; and *Review and revise College's Mission, Vision and Values Statements* – Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs. Completed projects reflect that the institution has approached continuous quality improvement from the perspective of its organizational role and processes, its human resources, as well as its students and stakeholders.

Active Action Projects include: *Define organizational structures and processes to enhance communication, accountability, and transparency* – Leading and Communicating; *Identify performance indicators for measuring institutional effectiveness* – Measuring Effectiveness; and *First year experience (FYE)/First Year Seminar Integration pilot study*. These reflect organizational efforts to address and improve viable processes inherent in moving the institution forward on its continuous improvement journey.

LCCC provided a frank assessment of its Action Project history and noted that challenges with institutional leadership between 2008 and 2011 limited progress on implementing recommendations from completed Action Projects. As new leadership initiates the institution's renewed focus on continuous improvement and allied AQIP processes, the organization may want to consider strategies to review and implement recommendations from completed projects as well as conduct evaluative feedback. This approach recognizes the contributions of past efforts.

#### B. Comments and counsel on the AQIP Categories

Laramie County Community College submitted its first Systems Portfolio during fall 2010. It acknowledges that challenges with institutional leadership and concomitant unrest during this time frame impacted organizational processes and systems presented in its portfolio. Although Action Projects addressed diverse processes within multiple AQIP Categories, LCCC notes that the linkage and interconnectedness as well as institutional buy-in was occasionally lacking. The



College, as well as the Systems Appraisal team, identified many opportunities for improvement, and a strategic issue related intentionality and detail in AQIP documents.

Under the direction of new institutional leadership, beginning in January 2012, LCCC appears to have rededicated its efforts to continuous improvement. Participation in the April 2012 Strategy Forum enabled the LCCC team to develop a new Action Project with the stated goal of aligning its practice with its mission. By focusing on the institutional mission and correlating college policies, practices and activities in support of its mission, LCCC can present a consistent framework for continuous quality improvement. Processes within each AQIP Category can become the building blocks for an integrated approach to institutional improvement.

The institution has demonstrated a renewed commitment to AQIP for Commission accreditation, and anticipates changes in senior leadership will address Strategic Issues in Leading and Communicating suggested in the Systems Appraisal. New leadership can provide guidance, direction, and encouragement and empower internal and external stakeholders. These stakeholders can identify processes within each category, evaluate those processes, and establish improvement targets irrespective of the AQIP Category. Such concerted efforts can contribute to the inherent effectiveness and efficiency of the institution and its resources.

#### **C. Comments and counsel on the AQIP Principles of High Performance Organizations and the institution's quality program or infrastructure**

LCCC articulates a renewed commitment to continuous quality improvement and the corresponding expectations of high performing institutions predicated on the actions of new senior leadership. After assessing its status as an AQIP institution and reflecting upon recommendations from the Systems Appraisal team, the organization recognizes the challenges to be addressed. It has identified a reset approach by first developing the institutional continuous improvement model and accompanying institutional structure. From this basis, continuous and positive change can evolve.

The College reiterates its commitment to establishing and supporting quality initiatives resulting from inclusive internal and external conversations with stakeholders, Strategy Forum discussions, and feedback from the Systems Appraisal. LCCC recognizes that High Performance Organizations exhibit the principles of focus, involvement and leadership. Its new Action Project, aligning mission with practice, emphasizes this intent.

LCCC also acknowledges that accreditation and AQIP projects and processes were previously considered as activities in addition to day-to-day college functions. The institution now recognizes that continuous process improvement and AQIP should be inherent in daily operations and is working to instill CQI into organizational design, operations and its culture.

As the quality culture becomes more engrained at LCCC, process mapping and staff development in processes and systems-thinking can advance the institution and provide a foundation of documentation in the next Systems Portfolio.

#### **D. Summary of panel counsel about the organization's commitment to continuous quality improvement and its participation in AQIP**

The Reaffirmation Panel perceives that Laramie County Community College has been responsive and proactive to feedback and counsel received from the Systems Appraisal and Quality Checkup visit. This reflects the institution's renewed commitment to continuous quality improvement. The institution is encouraged to focus on assessment, distance delivery design, assessment and oversight, and continued development of a quality culture as recommended by the Quality Checkup team. Such efforts can provide the framework for continued growth within the parameters of AQIP and strengthen the fabric of a continuously improving institution.