Enclosed is the institution's copy of the final Team Report of a visit to Northwest Iowa Community College. The Commission encourages you to make additional copies to circulate to your constituencies.

You are asked to acknowledge receipt of the report and are requested to file on behalf of your institution a formal written response to the evaluation team's report and recommendation. This response becomes a part of the official record of the evaluation; it serves as an integral part of this current process, and it will be included in the materials sent to the next team to visit your institution. Please send the response to me, send copies to members of the visiting team, and set aside some additional copies for the Commission's review process. (See Handbook of Accreditation, Third Edition, Chapter 2.)

You are also asked to let me know which review option you prefer: the Readers' Panel or the Review Committee. A description of these processes appears in Chapter 2 of the Handbook. Please review these options and advise me as soon as possible, whether you agree essentially with the team's report and recommendation and therefore choose the Readers' Panel, or whether you wish to have the team's report and your materials examined by a Review Committee. The next Review Committee meeting is scheduled for January 24, 2005, in Chicago.

If you have any questions concerning the evaluation team's report or the review option, please let me know.

Enclosures

cc:  Dr. Richard L. Behrendt, Team Chairperson
ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

Northwest Iowa Community College
Sheldon, Iowa

October 18 – 20, 2004

FOR

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

EVALUATION TEAM

Dr. Richard L. Behrendt, President, Sauk Valley Community College, Dixon, IL 61021
(Team Chair)

Ms. Jeralyn J. Jargo, Academic Dean, Century College, White Bear Lake, MN 55160

Dr. Cheryl H. Mueller, Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost, University of
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F. Interactions with Institutional Constituencies

Following are the individuals with whom the team members talked:

1. Student Campus Ambassadors
2. Various faculty individually (full time and adjunct)
3. Dean of Trade and Technical Programs
4. Vice President of Continuing Education
5. Dean of Business/Health/Arts and Sciences
6. Librarian
7. Director of Distance Learning
8. Self-Study Steering Committee
9. President
10. Executive Council
11. Four students (all "non-traditional")
12. Director of Technical and Information Systems
13. Vice President of Student and Institutional Development
14. Faculty group (26)
15. Support Staff (25)
16. Board of Trustees (6 of 7)
17. Assessment Coordinator
18. Trade and Technical Faculty (5)
19. General Education faculty (3)
20. Students (7 in an unsolicited group)
21. Students who were using the Learning Center, STARS, and the Alternative High School
22. A student in e-College
23. Health Care Faculty (7)
24. Business Manager
25. Vice President of Administration's Office Manager
26. Community representatives (18, including 3 Foundation Board members)
27. Director of Financial Aid
28. Director of Enrollment Management

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

1. Catalog
2. Self-Study
3. Appendices to Self-Study (including Organization, Statistics, Assessment Plan, and Planning)
4. Audit Reports
7. Team Report of a Visit to NCC (November 1997)
8. Team Report of a Visit to NCC (April 2002)
9. ACT Student Surveys
10. Continuing Education Course Listing
11. Continuing Education Annual Reports
ASSURANCE SECTION

I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

The purpose of the visit was a comprehensive evaluation of Northwest Iowa Community College.

B. Organizational Context

Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) began in January 1964 under the name of Northwest Iowa Vocational School as a pilot program sponsored by the Iowa Department of Education and conducted by the Sheldon Community School District.

In July 1965 the Iowa State Legislature enacted Senate File 550, a statute which permitted formation of area schools. In January 1966 the State Board of Public Instruction approved an application for Merged Area IV, composed of the same area which had been served in the pilot project. Due to consolidation of school districts, Merged Area IV is now comprised of 13 school districts.

While NCC was originally organized as an area vocational school, it applied for approval to provide a limited Arts and Science program in 1973 and began offering the program in 1975. This limited program, which offered courses in an evening college format, served the needs of area residents including many veterans. As the period of peak veteran enrollment passed, overall enrollment fell to a modest level, and the Arts and Sciences program was discontinued in 1980.

In 1975 the College changed its name to Northwest Iowa Technical College (NITC). In 1988 the College received permission from the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education and the Department of Education to again offer programs leading to the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. On July 1, 1993, the name of the College was changed to Northwest Iowa Community College to reflect its status as a comprehensive community college.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

None

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited

None

E. Distance Education Reviewed

NCC is one of seven colleges involved in the Iowa Community College On-line Consortium.
II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

In the spring of 2002 a committee structure was established to write the self-study with an administrator and a faculty member as co-coordinators who were responsible for planning, coordinating and facilitating all the activities of the committees. A total of ten committees was established to collect data, write various sections of the report, edit the report, and publish the newsletter. Chairs of these committees made up the steering committee. Eight of the committees were considered “writing” teams and were each responsible for one section of
the self-study, while the other two committees were responsible for oversight and editing.

All employees were asked to volunteer for committees. Also, all College personnel were invited to be part of the self-study process. The College community was kept abreast of the self-study process through the use of the internet and the intranet. Regular newsletters were sent to all College staff, and the working drafts of the documents were made available to everyone on the College server.

The College regularly sent personnel to the annual meetings of the HLC to facilitate the self-study process. The College also contracted with an NCA-experienced outside reader to provide advice and external assessment of the self-study.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report
The Self-Study Report resulted from a serious examination of the effectiveness and efficiency of the College. The report was more descriptive than evaluative, thus the evidence to support some of the claims was insufficient.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges
The team considers the response of the organization to previously identified challenges to be adequate.

D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment
Requirements were fulfilled; no third party comments were received.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENT
Although the Self-Study contained no indication of Northwest Iowa Community College's compliance with Federal requirements, the Team reviewed the required Title IV Compliance areas and the student complaint information.

IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

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.
Salient Evidence Related to the Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates core components are met.
   a. Published materials, including the college catalogue and website, clearly articulate the mission and vision of the organization.
   b. Evidence that the College utilizes decision-making processes that are appropriate is based on the Team's interviews and meetings with the faculty, staff, students, administration, and community members.
   c. The Board of Trustees and staff regularly review and revise the mission statement to keep it current and relevant.
   d. The College has offered student activities designed to introduce cultural diversity and prepare students to work in a global community. In addition, specific program outcomes and assessments are designed to demonstrate an appreciation of diversity.
   e. The Strategic Plan, the Technology Plan, and the budget are connected to and support the mission of the College.
   f. Appropriate governance and organizational structures and personnel assignments are in place to carry out the mission.
   g. Faculty and academic leaders share responsibility for developing and delivering the curriculum and academic processes.
   h. The curriculum management process is evidence of the shared responsibility among the Executive Council, advisory committees, and faculty.
   i. Interviews with the internal and external parties provide evidence that Board policies, and faculty and student handbooks are implemented fairly and legally.

2. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components needs organizational attention.
   None noted.

3. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components requires Commission follow-up.
   None noted.

4. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components
is not met and requires Commission follow-up.

None noted.

**Recommendation of the Team**

Evidence sufficiently demonstrated that this criterion has been met. No commission follow-up recommended.

**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.

**Salient Evidence Related to the Criterion**

1. **Evidence that demonstrates core components are met.**
   
   a. The comprehensive Strategic Plan and the Technology Plan are evidence of the organization's attention to meet current and future needs and align with the organization's mission.
   
   b. The growth of Foundation assets from $200,000 in 1996 to $1.5 million in 2004 and the passing of the tax levy renewal with an 81% favorable vote demonstrate the willingness of the community to provide a resource base to support the College's mission and future.
   
   c. Self-study documents, personnel interviews, documents in the resource room, the addition and expansion of existing programs, and the grant initiatives are all indicative of an environment supportive of innovation and change.
   
   d. NCC began a formalized planning process in 1994.
   
   e. The 2004-06 operational plan directly supports the strategic initiatives that were identified in the 2004-08 Strategic Plan through measurable goals, objectives, and strategies.
   
   f. The combination of current fund balances, Board policy to maintain them at 8%, the recently approved tax levy renewal, commendable and growing Foundation assets, the students' demonstrated willingness to pay increasing tuition, the acquisition of outside grants, and a history of prudent fiscal management provide a sound resource base for the college.

2. **Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components needs organizational attention.**
The process for the evaluation of student learning is established as indicated by the development of learning objectives, capstone course evaluation, and clinical evaluations. There is not, however, the implementation of a systemic process that links assessment results to changes for improved teaching and learning. Although testimonials of teachers across the College, the classroom assessment documents, and 5-year program review reports indicate assessment activity is occurring, the lack of a formal process is problematic. A fully implemented assessment program includes an annual reporting process and provides evaluative feedback to faculty.

3. **Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components requires Commission follow-up.**

   None noted.

4. **Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components is not met and requires Commission follow-up.**

   None noted.

   **Recommendation of the Team**

   Evidence sufficiently demonstrated that this criterion has been met. No commission follow-up 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.

**Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion and Core Components**

1. **Evidence that demonstrates core components are met.**

   a. The course syllabi contain clearly stated measurable goals. The resource documentation verifies that the College uses course and program assessment tools. Reports from teaching faculty include evidence of measures of student learning. The elements are part of an effective assessment program.

   b. The College uses procedures which include faculty input and control for class and program change which allows it to respond to the changing needs of the global community.

   c. The College’s team approach for student advising, which matches the student service advisor with the faculty contact, provides focus on student success and includes purposeful interventions.
The unique approach of bringing together the resources of seven Iowa community colleges and the private vendor, e-College, demonstrates the college's openness to innovation and the application of technological advances that can positively affect student learning and the delivery of instruction.

e. The on-site library resources, access to linked databases, adequate laboratories, experiences at local clinical sites, and practical, job-related student service projects all demonstrate the organization's support for learning and teaching.

f. Review of the data reports and interviews with students provide evidence that the Learning Center, the STARS project, the Title III grant, and the TRIO project are effectively providing support for student learning.

g. The College demonstrates its support for teaching and learning by providing copy reproduction services for faculty and administration. It is readily available and users report that they receive quick, high-quality service. The equipment is modern and well maintained. Classroom equipment is standardized to promote ease of use of a variety of technologies in multiple locations on the campus.

2. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components needs organizational attention.

a. Results obtained from measures of student learning are reported to faculty by informal and inconsistent means that does not facilitate continuous improvement.

b. The College has reports of success (GPAs) at transfer universities, competency testing by state agencies and associations, and feedback from advisory committees; but there is no evidence that this information is equally and systematically reported to teaching faculty. Communication of this data would provide the means for the analysis necessary to complete an assessment cycle.

c. While the College provides funds for professional development, the amount is inadequate for anything but local conferences and the means of distribution is ambiguous.

3. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components requires Commission follow-up.

None noted.

4. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components is not met and requires Commission follow-up.
None noted.

**Recommendation of the Team**

Evidence sufficiently demonstrated that this criterion is met. No commission follow-up 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, social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

**Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion and Core Components**

1. **Evidence that demonstrates core components are met.**
   a. The organization integrates general education into all of its undergraduate degree programs as evidenced in its program plans.
   b. Extensive program reviews in the resource room validate that a formal program review process occurs at a five-year interval.
   c. A review of specific course syllabi and student assessment tools applied to the clinical/internship experience provides evidence that responsible use of knowledge is required.
   d. Board Policy 613 governs intellectual property rights for curriculum, software, and inventions to clarify ownership and promote creativity.

2. **Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components needs institutional attention.**
   a. Interviews with faculty and examination of syllabi, catalogue, and textbooks indicate that some general education courses need to be reviewed to be certain they are meeting college level content.
   b. There is no evidence of an Acceptable Use Policy for Technology.
   c. There is no evidence of a Freedom of Inquiry Policy.

3. **Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components requires Commission follow-up.**

   None noted.
4. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components is not met and requires Commission follow-up.

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Evidence sufficiently demonstrated that this criterion is met. No commission follow-up 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.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion and Core Components

1. Evidence that demonstrates core components are met.

   a. The offerings of the Community Education area demonstrates the College's commitment to aggressively meeting the educational needs of northwest Iowa.

   b. Community members verbalized, with enthusiasm, that the organization's outreach responds to identified community needs.

   c. In responding to external constituencies, the goals and funding sources of Community Education are organized as continuing education, services to new businesses, services to expanding business, or internal training to upgrade employee skills in existing businesses.

   d. The Alternative High School, the PSEO, and Tech Prep demonstrate specific partnerships with the K-12 sector.

   e. The College has significant articulation agreements with other post secondary institutions in Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota, as well as specific agreements to serve the online student population and with online universities such as Capella, the University of Phoenix, and Franklin University.

   f. Community representatives conveyed a high level of support and satisfaction with the services provided by the College and an appreciation for its role in economic development.

   g. Students from both transfer and career programs report that the quality of instruction in their classes is excellent. The students state that tutorial help is available when they need it from faculty, learning center personnel, and peer tutors. Courses transfer to
universities without difficulty and area employers give hiring preference to NCC graduates.

h. College facilities are available for use by community members which demonstrates commitment to its constituents.

2. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components needs organizational attention.

None noted.

3. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components requires Commission follow-up.

None noted.

4. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components is not met and requires Commission follow-up.

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Evidence sufficiently demonstrated that this criterion is met. No commission follow-up recommended.

V. AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Summary of commission review

Next comprehensive visit: 2014-2015

Rationale: The Team found evidence that NCC met all HLC core components for all five criteria. The Self-Study was broad-based. All employees volunteered for committees and were involved in the process, were regularly sent to HLC meetings, and the College contracted with an NCA-experienced outside reader to provide advice and guidance for the Self-Study. Previously identified challenges have been met and overcome. In addition, appropriate and organized leadership—as demonstrated by College administration and Board of Trustees and the planning/budgeting process—exist to meet HLC standards and move the College forward during the next ten years. Adequate fiscal resources are available to continue fulfilling College needs. Further, outside support of the College as demonstrated by community support and College/high school articulation agreements assure continued College and student success. Finally, the capable faculty and its commitment to assessment assure improved student learning.

B. NATURE OF ORGANIZATION
Legal Status
   No change

2. Degrees Awarded
   No change

C. CONDITIONS OF AFFILIATION

1. Stipulation on Affiliation Status
   No change

2. Approval of Degree Sites
   No change

3. Approval of Distance Education Degree
   No change

4. Reports Required
   None

5. Other Visits Scheduled
   None

6. Other
   None

D. COMMISSION SANCTION OR ADVERSE ACTION

   None recommended.
ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

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Northwestern Ohio, Lima, OH 45805

Dr. Allan G. Skillman, Mathematics Faculty, Casper College, Casper, WY 82609
ADVANCEMENT SECTION

I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) presents to its constituents an organization that exhibits a collaborative, cooperative spirit that is moving the College forward as a sincere service to and for them. As students enter the campus, they are in a large parking area surrounded by attractive buildings. When they enter a building, the first thing they see are college personnel ready to serve them. All members of the Team noted that the administration, faculty, and staff displayed evidence of support for current and future students.

NCC has faced enormous change since its last comprehensive visit by an NCA Team in 1995. The scope of change at the College has included a change in leadership from the dean level to the College president. In addition, there has been an infusion of new faculty to facilitate the cultural change from a technical college to a community college. This change is influencing the way the College communicates, delivers instruction, conducts its business, and reports to the Iowa state agencies. The college planning in existence throughout this period has given a sense of stability even though the processes used for planning have changed. The College has embraced this change and used it as a tool for institutional growth.

At the time of the 2004 visit, NCC was concentrating on an analysis of the needs of the community and seeking funding to meet those needs. The association with the Iowa Online Consortium, integrating the technology and the partnership with e-College, instantly provided expanded access to general education courses. The College is prepared to face the growth these changes have precipitated. However, the NCA Team notes that team building at NCC will be essential through this continued period of growth.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

College policy statements on assessment are referred to in the assessment plan. The NCC Assessment Plan provided in the Self Study Appendix shows a four-step process, statements of learning outcomes that align with the College mission statement, identification of multiple levels of assessment and varied tools for assessment activity. The plan contains details for use of the data collected and suggested changes expected from use of the plan. The Team found evidence that NCC has completed three of the four steps in its plan but needs to show evidence that change has resulted from the data collected.

Using the policy in place and the data available, the deans and the faculty can develop a climate of mutual respect and trust that lets them look critically and comparatively at the learning teaching process. The institution would benefit from looking at comparative
data for NCC's student evaluations and grades, which could be discussed openly among faculty to determine acceptable norms.

The Team suggests some actions which may move NCC ahead with its Assessment efforts:

- Offer opportunities for face-to-face dialogue among faculty
- Further develop the resources it has
- Send faculty to conferences
- AAHE, AACC (Assessment Seminar)
- Consider someone to develop as a Consultant Evaluator for the Higher Learning Commission
- Train multiple individuals in leadership positions for assessment
- Develop a center for teaching and learning for faculty
- Make available a resource area where faculty can share best practices
- Use faculty orientation to share best practices
- Develop a plan similar to your Strategic planning document that includes the timelines for implementation and feedback
- Develop a set of institutional measures so that faculty can compare themselves to norms
- Consider using a nationally normed instrument
- Put in place a peer review and mentoring process that would help build the personal confidence that can achieve continuous improvement

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

NCC displays an extraordinary commitment of giving to their students which results in exemplary customer service. The individual attention of admissions, faculty, and support staff is reflective of the College's pervasive culture which is to provide service to the individual. The staff is to be commended for their attitudes and efforts.