

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

**Casper College
Casper, WY 82601**

March 23-25, 2009

FOR

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

EVALUATION TEAM

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ASSURANCE SECTION

I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit:

The purpose of this visit was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation at the associate's degree level.

B. Organizational Context:

Casper College is a comprehensive two-year institution located in Casper, WY – a community of approximately 50,000 people located near the geographical center of the state. The College provides academic transfer, vocational, continuing education and basic skills education primarily for the citizens of Casper and Natrona County. The organization began offering classes in September 1945. It is the oldest of seven community colleges in the state of Wyoming.

Despite the fact that the local unemployment rate was among the lowest in the nation and young people in the area could find high-paying jobs in the energy industries without a college education, enrollments have increased in recent years at Casper. In fall 2008, the College had an unduplicated credit headcount of 4,365. That represented a 6.7% increase from fall 2006. Forty-five percent of the credit students at Casper are enrolled full-time, which is significantly more than the current national average for community colleges (40%). Fifty-nine percent of the student body is female, which is slightly more than the current national average of 58%. And, at 28.3, the average age at Casper is slightly less than the current national average of 29. The College also served 1,520 noncredit students in fall 2008.

Casper College has more than 370 full-time employees, including more than 160 full-time faculty. More than 80% of the full-time equivalent students at Casper are taught by full-time faculty.

Casper College currently offers 134 degrees and certificates. Its largest programs are general studies, elementary education, registered nursing, fire science, and business administration/management.

Casper College has been accredited by the North Central Association since 1960. The most recent comprehensive visit took place in 1999.

The Casper College Board of Trustees is comprised of seven individuals elected by Natrona County voters. Each trustee serves a four-year term with approximately half of the representatives running for election on each alternate two-year election cycle. The

trustees themselves elect the board officers. The Board is responsible for fiscal oversight, policy, and hiring the College President.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

A heavy snowfall forced the College to close around noon on Monday, March 23. As a consequence, the Team could conduct only a limited number of interviews with students, faculty and staff that afternoon.

An interview with the Director of the Wyoming Community College Commission was conducted over the telephone.

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited:

At the present time, Casper College does not have any sites or branch campuses.

E. Distance Education Reviewed:

The State of Wyoming has established a video network linking every high school in the state as well as all seven community colleges and the university. This network is referred to as the Wyoming Equality Network (WEN). The WEN allows students at remote sites to take classes from another institution that might not be available at their local school. Approximately a half dozen classes per year are delivered over WEN to students across the state. Many of the students are high school students receiving concurrent enrollment credit at their local school as well as at Casper College.

Casper College has been offering courses online since the late 1990s. In August 2005, the Higher Learning Commission extended Casper College's accreditation to include distance delivery of degree and certificate programs. The College currently offers four associate degrees in a completely online format:

- Associate degree in Agricultural Business
- Associate degree in General Studies
- Associate degree in Early Childhood Education
- Associate degree in Fire Science

The organization also offers an associate degree in Medical Lab Technician in a hybrid (partially online, partially face-to-face format). No prior Commission approval is required to offer additional online degree and certificate programs.

The College currently uses two course management software systems: WebCT6 and Moodle. It is expected that full migration from WebCT to Moodle should be completed by the end of the 2009 fall semester.

In 2007, there were nearly 2,800 enrollments in various distance learning programs at Casper College. This accounts for nearly 15 percent of the College's total full-time

equivalency. The vast majority of Casper's distance education students, nearly 80%, live within Natrona County.

In developing and delivering its distance education programs, Casper College has been highly involved in the formation of the Wyoming Distance Education Consortium and has worked closely with the Wyoming Community College Commission.

F. Interactions with Institutional Constituencies:

Governing Board and Executive Management

1. Casper College Board of Trustees
2. College President
3. Vice President of Academic Affairs
4. Vice President of Administrative Services
5. Vice President of Student Services

Faculty, Management and Staff

1. Administrative Alliance
2. Assessment Committee
3. Assistant Director, Human Resources
4. Associate Vice President/Athletic Director
5. Coordinator of Admissions
6. Coordinator of Alumni
7. Coordinator of Student Success
8. Dean of Community Education and Community Partnerships
9. Director of Accommodative Services
10. Director of College Relations
11. Director of Counseling
12. Director of Financial Services/Controller
13. Director of Human Resources
14. Director of Institutional Research
15. Director of the Museum
16. Director of the Physical Plant
17. Faculty (61 members at an open meeting)
18. Foundation Accountant
19. Foundation Executive Director
20. General Education Committee
21. Manager of the Bookstore
22. Registrar
23. Staff Alliance (53 members at an open meeting)
24. Student Success Office Personnel
25. Supervisor, Grounds Maintenance
26. Supervisor, Custodial Services

27. Supervisor, Buildings/Maintenance & Operations
28. Textbook Editor

Students

1. Casper College Students (29 at two open meetings)

Community, State Representatives, and Other

1. Director of the University of Wyoming/Casper College Center
2. Director of the Wyoming Community College Commission
3. Members of the Community (open meeting)

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed:**Casper College Self-Study Documents and Organizational Publications**

1. Accreditation Self-Study and Appendices 2008-2009
2. Addendum to the HLC Self Study March 2009
3. Casper College Catalog 2008-2009
4. Casper College Continuing Education Courses Fall 2008 and Spring 2009
5. Casper College Credit Class Schedule Fall 2008 and Spring 2009
6. Casper College Student Handbook and Datebook 2008-2009

Casper College Administrative Documents and ReportsInstitutional Reports and Other Administrative Documents

1. Campus Security Manual/Clery Statistics
2. Contract for library services between the University of Wyoming and Casper College
3. Cooperative Agreement between the University of Wyoming and Casper College
4. Employee Directory
5. Equipment Plan
6. Faculty Handbook Fall 2008
7. Financial Statement and Audit Report 2007
8. Financial Statement and Audit Report 2008
9. Marketing Plan
10. Master Facilities Plan
11. Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Wyoming Honors Program and the Casper College Honors Program
12. Organizational Change Report
13. Policies and Procedures Manual
14. Preventive Management Manual
15. Strategic Plan
16. Student Complaint Log

17. Student Services Departmental Goals
18. University of Wyoming New Transfer Students 2007-2008

Resource Room Binders and Files

1. Articulation Agreements 2007/2008, 2008/2009
2. Articulation Agreements between Casper College and Natrona High School
3. Assessment
4. Budget Document
5. Marketing Materials
6. Organizational Structure
7. Program Brochures
8. State Appropriations Document
9. Student Survey Results

Websites and Miscellaneous

1. Casper College Website (<http://www.caspercollege.edu>)
2. Faculty Personnel Files (sample)
3. Student Transcripts (sample)

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process:

On the whole, the self-study process at Casper College was consistent with the characteristics outlined in “Hallmarks of an Effective Self-Study Process” (*Handbook of Accreditation*, Third Edition, 5.2). The Self-Study Steering Committee and various subcommittees included 10 people, with ample representation from faculty and staff as well as administration.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report:

The team believes that the self study gives a reasonably accurate picture of the strengths and challenges of Casper College at the time it was written.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The previous team report identified institutional challenges regarding the following six areas:

1. Assessment of Student Academic Achievement
2. General Education
3. Strategic Planning
4. Staff Evaluation Process

5. Computer Information Infrastructure
6. Board Policy Manual

The 2009 self-study report includes a section responding to these concerns. The team believes that Casper College has made a good faith effort to address these previously-identified challenges. However, the team also believes that the College needs to make further progress in addressing four of these six challenges:

1. Assessment of Student Academic Achievement
2. General Education
3. Strategic Planning
4. Board Policy Manual

The team's advice on how the College might address these challenges can be found in the Advancement Section of this report.

D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment:

Requirements were fulfilled.

Comment: The Commission received six third-party comments regarding Casper College and all were positive.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The visiting team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and student complaint information. The team advised the College that whenever it makes reference to its affiliation with the Higher Learning Commission, it needs to include the URL of the Commission's Web site. Otherwise, the team believes that Casper College is in compliance with federal requirements and Commission Policies regarding:

- Credits, Program Length, and Tuition,
- Institutional Compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act
- Federal Compliance Visits to Off-Campus Locations
- Institution's Advertising and Recruitment Materials
- Professional Accreditation
- Requirements of Institutions Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation
- Institutional Records of Student Complaints

The institution described how it is addressing these Commission Policies in a document titled "Addendum to the HLC Self Study, March 2009."

IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

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.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates core components are met:

- a. The current mission documents of Casper College are the result of a revision process that took place during the 2006-2007 academic year. The revision process included input from faculty, administration, and staff. The mission documents were approved by the Governing Board in 2007 and are reviewed annually. These documents broadly describe the priorities of the institution and assist in guiding the strategic planning process at Casper College.
- b. The mission documents define the varied constituencies the organization intends to serve. Casper College is a comprehensive two-year institution that provides academic transfer, vocational, continuing education and basic skills education primarily for the citizens of Casper and Natrona County.
- c. The College's mission documents are communicated via the institutions' website, catalogue, and supplemental materials. They are also posted throughout the institution. They are reviewed frequently in order to ensure that the College is being responsive to its ever-changing community.
- d. One of Casper College's core values is: "Encourage diversity of thought, culture and experience." Consistent with this core value, the College organized a Diversity Committee to "study ways in which Casper College can embrace diversity in the workplace and foster respect for all individuals." The College also hired a recruiter who was charged with increasing the organization's student diversity. This position has since been absorbed into the admissions office, with the entire recruiting team making efforts to attract a diverse student body.
- e. Understanding of and attention to the mission is prevalent throughout the organization, as evidenced by interviews with the governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.
- f. The organization's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.
- g. Interviews with faculty, staff, students, and local employers confirm that Casper College presents itself accurately and honestly to the public.
- h. The institution is clearly dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of its students. This is reflected in its student support services and in the

developmental education it provides for those students not adequately prepared for college-level coursework at the time of admission.

- i. As described in the self-study and confirmed through campus interviews, the organization's planning and budgeting priorities flow from and support the mission. There is a system-wide process that insures participation from stakeholders from throughout the institution.
- j. The Casper College Board of Trustees is well-informed, engaged in the development of the strategic plan, and committed to the success of the College. The Board also cares passionately about maintaining a family spirit at Casper College.

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

Despite efforts to increase student and staff diversity, statistics show that diversity within the student body and staff does not reflect the demographics of the county of Natrona and state of Wyoming. Although the College works to provide programs that offer diverse experiences, such as international study opportunities and ethnic dinners, it needs to develop strategies for and invest more resources in the recruitment of diverse populations. (Core Components 1b and 1e)

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

None.

4. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components is not met and requires Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up 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.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion**1. Evidence that demonstrates core components are met:**

- a. The previous Higher Learning Commission team reported concerns about the strategic planning and budgeting processes at Casper College. Since then, several strategic plans have been developed. The current strategic plan was created in fall 2007. The College also has a campus master plan and has begun the process of developing a technology plan. These documents demonstrate that the organization is responding to shifting societal and economic trends and thoughtfully shaping its own future.
- b. The organization's planning documents demonstrate that attention is being paid to emerging factors such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization. The current strategic plan, for example, includes objectives/action items related to expanding and improving the College's distance education programs, building new facilities, and increasing international student enrollment. Casper College is already successful in attracting students from foreign countries, with 15 foreign countries currently represented.
- c. The Department of International Education was created in 2006 to foster an institutional climate that fully supports international education and cross-cultural awareness in order to prepare Casper College students for a global environment. A major goal of this department is to initiate, promote, and offer international learning activities on campus, and offer the students and employees of Casper College the opportunity for international study, exchanges, travel, and volunteer experiences abroad.
- d. The College is developing new programs in response to changes in the economy. New offerings in wind power, robotics, and geographic information systems, for example, reflect a shift from traditional oil and gas energy production to alternative energy production and the increased need for high-tech education and training. In addition, because the city of Casper is a growing medical hub for the region, the College is planning new medical support majors, including paramedic and surgical technician.
- e. Casper College is using a variety of methods to assess institutional effectiveness. In 2007, the College began administering the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) for the first time. This and other assessment tools have provided valuable feedback for process improvement at Casper. Examples include: improvements in the

registration process and the management of financial aid. The College has also made improvements in new student orientation, advising, and retention.

- f. Though this has not always been the case, planning processes are now linked to the budgeting process at Casper College. For example, departmental plans are used by chairs and the executive committee during the budgeting process to prioritize expenditures. Aligning the planning and budgeting processes helps to ensure a more effective use of resources.
- g. A review of Casper College's financial statements, audit reports, assets, revenues, and expenditures indicate a sound financial basis to maintain and strengthen the organization in the future.
- h. The Casper College Foundation was established in 1962. It has been exceptionally successful in raising private funds to support College projects and in matching state legislative appropriations. Over the last five years, the Foundation has raised \$7.83 million to match state appropriations.
- i. In the past year, the College has increased its operating fund balance from 3% to the maximum 8% of the biannual operating budget allowed by Wyoming law. This better positions the institution financially to respond to possible state budget reductions.
- j. The College's master plan includes an aggressive facilities construction program to better serve the Casper community. This includes \$100 million for a new student center, new residence halls, a new administration, instructional, and student services building, and significant renovations to existing facilities.

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

None

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

None.

4. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components is not met and requires Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is 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**1. Evidence that demonstrates core components are met:**

- a. The College's commitment to effective teaching is reflected in its commitment to relying primarily on full-time faculty. Despite the relatively high cost of full-time faculty, the institution feels this to be a top priority in the promotion of excellence in education. More than 80% of the students at Casper are taught by full-time faculty.
- b. Since the last Higher Learning Commission visit in 1999, Casper College has implemented several new student development programs, including learning communities, service learning, the Veritas Honors Institute, and international education. All of these initiatives are admirable attempts to support and enrich student learning.
- c. Since jobs are plentiful and the unemployment rate in Wyoming is very low, Casper College is concerned about making course offerings accessible and convenient to working students. As a result, the College has increased the number of evening classes, online classes, and classes offered at area high schools.
- d. Student success and retention has been a growing concern at Casper College. As a result, a Student Success Office was established in 2007. With the designation of two full-time positions, retention efforts have expanded in both scope and quantity. One of the new initiatives of this office is the McMurry Single Parent Grant-in-Aid program. Over the past two years, the McMurry program has provided more than \$123,000 to 92 single parents for tuition, books, supplies, and childcare.
- e. Casper College provides many resources to support student learning. This includes remedial coursework, a Writing Center, an English Lab, a Peer Tutoring Program, and a Mathematics Learning Center.
- f. Casper College's First Year Experience program was launched in 2008. The goals of this program are to increase student success and persistence to the second semester and into the second year of college. The program also tries to foster a connection between the student's educational and life goals, to integrate living and learning opportunities on campus, and to create a sense of community among first-year students. A revised and more comprehensive New Student Orientation program was the first outcome of this initiative.
- g. Because the College enjoys unusually strong financial support from its community, which has a strong minerals-based economy, its physical resources are in many ways remarkable for an institution of its size. One

example of this is the Tate Geological Museum, which appropriately displays, and encourages student involvement with, minerals and fossils found in Wyoming and imported from around the world.

- h. The organization integrates into its assessment of student learning the data reported for purposes of external accountability (graduation rates, passage rates on licensing exams, placement rates, transfer rates, etc). For example, according to a report published by the University of Wyoming (UW), new Casper College transfer students had a higher cumulative grade point average (3.26) than UW first semester students (2.91). This is an important indication of student learning and teaching effectiveness.
- i. The faculty at Casper College are well qualified to determine curricular content and strategies for instruction, as evidenced by on-campus interviews and a review of credentials. They also have a passion for their roles in promoting student learning and success.
- j. The Casper College campus is located in a beautiful natural setting. The facilities and grounds are also immaculately maintained. This pleasant environment is conducive to student learning.
- k. The organization ensures access to the resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning. The chemistry and physical science laboratories are particularly impressive. The health science and robotics labs were also spacious and very well equipped.
- l. The library is well-staffed and has excellent resources. The new library director is making efforts to make the library more visible, more attractive, and connected to the community. The librarians are reaching out to faculty in an effort to expand information literacy in the classroom.
- m. Within student services, an integrated counseling, retention, and accommodative services program has been forged to promote student success and enhanced retention.

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

- a. Although Casper College has made progress in the assessment of student learning since the last comprehensive visit, there is still need for additional work in collecting and analyzing student learning data at the program and institutional (including general education) level. Without an understanding of student learning outcomes, it is difficult for the faculty to target areas needing improvement. [Core Component 3a]

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

None.

- 4. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components is not met and requires Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None.

Recommendation of the Team

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, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates core components are met:

- a. The organization supports professional development opportunities and makes them available to all of its administrators, faculty, and staff. In 2004, for example, the College President initiated a “Leadership Institute” with the intent of developing leadership skills among current employees.
- b. Members of the Board of Trustees are active in professional development as they strive to fulfill the College mission and foster academic excellence. Over the past few years most board members have attended at least one major national or regional conference, such as the annual meetings of the Association of Community College Trustees and the American Association of Community Colleges.
- c. Casper College has been actively pursuing international learning opportunities for its students and faculty. In June 2007, for example, Casper signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UNIDAVI University in Rio Do Sul, Brazil. The purpose of this memorandum is to promote mutually beneficial educational exchanges and cooperative programs.
- d. Although Casper College is not a research institution, research opportunities are available for students, both during the school year and the summer term. For example, more than twenty students have been involved in research under the IdeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) project. The purpose of this project is to encourage students to pursue baccalaureate and advanced degrees in the biomedical sciences.

- e. In an effort to demonstrate responsible behavior, the College has developed ethical codes of conduct for faculty, students, and staff. They have implemented a plagiarism policy and have recently created an Institutional Review Board to ensure that all research on human subjects is conducted in an ethical manner.
- f. Casper College has a tuition reimbursement policy. All employees are eligible for tuition waivers for up to six credits per semester through Casper College and up to three credits through the University of Wyoming. All employees groups can increase salary by education. Staff and administration do so by advancing their degrees and faculty do so by taking graduate-level classes or attending conferences and workshops. Additional opportunities for enhancing knowledge and skills are available to faculty and administration through the sabbatical program.
- g. The organization encourages curricular and cocurricular activities that promote opportunities for inquiry, practice, creativity, and social responsibility. Examples include Skills USA competitions, the Eye-to-Eye program, intercollegiate athletics, theater, and dance.

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

None.

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

Consistent with Higher Learning Commission expectations, Casper College has a publicly-stated general education philosophy. It also requires general education in all of its degree programs. However, some of the courses that fulfill general education requirements in the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) programs are remedial in nature, and not college-level courses. For example, in many AAS programs, students can fulfill their General Education Communications requirement by taking ENGL 0500 (Reading for Success), ENGL 0510 (Fundamentals of Reading), and other developmental courses. In addition, the General Education Requirements (GERs) listed on pages 23-24 of the 2008-2009 College Catalog are not general education requirements in the sense that they apply to all graduates of the College, regardless of their degree program. Instead, they are requirements only for the Associate of Arts, Associate of Business, and Associate of Science degrees. The College's low expectation for student learning in general education compromises the integrity of the Associate of Applied Science degree and provides graduates of these programs with an inadequate preparation for lifelong learning. [Core Component 4b]

- 4. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components is not met and requires Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; 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.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates core components are met:

- a. Casper College has an impressive service learning program. The Casper College Center for Learning through Service was established in fall 2006 to assist in nurturing in students the values of service, citizenship and civic responsibility. During the 2007-2008 academic year, the College offered 73 sections of 47 courses in multiple fields of study with a service learning component. There were more than 1,000 students involved in contributing 9,000 hours of service to the community.
- b. Casper College conducted an environmental scan in 2003 to establish baseline data for future decision-making purposes, especially as they relate to the College's ongoing strategic planning process. The scanning process continues to provide the College with timely environmental (local, state and national) information that facilitates critical decision-making by helping the College to understand the changing needs of its constituencies and their communities.
- c. All programs in the Trades and Technology division at Casper College meet at least annually with advisory boards. This includes, for example, the automotive, construction, diesel and electronics programs. This helps to insure that Casper's occupational programs are current and relevant to workforce needs.
- d. In responding to external constituencies, the organization offers programs such as continuing education, outreach, and customized training. Examples include the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, the Literacy Volunteers of Casper, and the Center for Training and Development. The latter provides onsite customized training for business and industry in Natrona County.

- e. The organization's structures and processes enable effective connections with its communities. For example, the new Casper College campus master facilities plan was created with input from the community.
- f. The organization supports effective programs of engagement and service. For instance, one of the goals of Casper College's athletic programs is to promote social responsibility through community interaction. Each year, student-athletes donate their time to organizations like Special Olympics, the Boys and Girls Club, and Habitat for Humanity.
- g. The organization's structures and processes enable effective connections with its communities. For example, the Division of Life Sciences has initiated two lecture series to enhance the learning of the community as well as Casper College students. These include the Doornbos Agriculture Lecture Series and the Zimmerman Lecture Series. The goal of the later is to "provide continuing education in biology, ecology, and natural history for lifelong learning and the enrichment of personal and community life."
- h. Collaborative ventures exist with local schools. For example, the ACE program offered by the Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) is a tax-sponsored accelerated college education program allowing high school student to earn up to nine credits per semester with tuition paid through a special tax levy. Casper College also has agreements with all four Natrona County high schools to offer dual enrollment courses. Such courses provide students with incentives to continue their education beyond high school.
- i. Each semester Casper, College offers dozens of courses, based on community interest, through Community Education or Continuing Education programs. For instance, the College's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) is a program for adults age fifty and over who wish to continue learning for the sheer joy of it. Supported by the Bernard Osher Foundation, OLLI offers the community a rich array of noncredit short courses, field trips, and general interest lectures.
- j. Casper College's Veritas Honors Institute currently holds articulation agreements with honors programs at Colorado University – Boulder, California State University – Fresno, Northern Arizona University, the University of New Mexico, the University of Wyoming, and other universities. These agreements allow Casper College honors students to seamlessly transfer into the honors programs at these other universities.
- k. External constituencies value the programming and services provided by Casper College. This is demonstrated, for example, by the fact that the College has one of the highest "participation rates" in the nation. About 6.5% of adults in the service area take classes for credit, compared with a national average of about 4%.
- l. Further evidence that the community values Casper College can be found in the fact that the citizens of Natrona County voted to increase their property taxes to approve a \$35 million dollar bond for new

buildings at Casper College. Thanks to strong community support, the Casper College foundation is also very healthy and continues to grow.

- m. The organization's evaluation of services involves the constituencies served. In a recent survey of the residents of Natrona County, 87% of the respondents felt that Casper College's instruction was excellent or good.
- n. The University of Wyoming/Casper College (UW/CC) Center is a partnership between the University and Casper College. The Center offers a variety of courses and degree programs taught in Casper to meet the academic needs of students in central Wyoming. Students can complete their first two years at Casper College and continue their education in a number of University of Wyoming programs without leaving Casper by enrolling at the UW/CC Center. In fall 2008, 44 students transferred directly from Casper College to UW/CC.

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

None

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

None.

4. Evidence that demonstrates one or more specified core components is not met and requires Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS**A. AFFILIATION STATUS**

No change

B. NATURE OF ORGANIZATION

1. Legal Status: *No change*
2. Degrees Awarded: *No change*

C. CONDITIONS OF AFFILIATION

1. Stipulations on Affiliation Status: *No change*
2. Approval of Degree Sites: *No change*
3. Approval of Distance Education Degree: *No change*
4. Reports Required: *Progress Report on General Education by June 30, 2012*
5. Other Visits Scheduled: *None.*

Rationale and Expectations:

As a result of the previous comprehensive visit in 1999, Casper College was required to submit a Monitoring Report on the Assessment of Student Academic Achievement, General Education, and Institutional Planning (including Faculty and Staff Evaluation). The current team also has concerns about Casper College's general education requirements.

Consistent with Higher Learning Commission expectations, Casper College has a publicly-stated general education philosophy. It also requires general education in all of its degree programs. However, some of the courses that fulfill general education requirements in the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) programs are remedial in nature, and not college-level courses. For example, in many AAS programs, students can fulfill their General Education Communications requirement by taking ENGL 0500 (Reading for Success), ENGL 0510 (Fundamentals of Reading), and other developmental courses. In addition, the General Education Requirements (GERs) listed on pages 23-24 of the 2008-2009 College Catalog are not General Education requirements in the sense that they apply to all graduates of the College, regardless of their degree program. Instead, they are requirements only for the Associate of Arts, Associate of Business, and

Associate of Science degrees. The College's low expectation for student learning in general education compromises the integrity of the Associate of Applied Science degree and provides graduates of these programs with inadequate preparation for lifelong learning.

The Progress Report on General Education should include the following elements:

- a. A description of the revised requirements for the College's Associate of Applied Science degrees. These revised requirements should not allow students to use remedial or developmental coursework to fulfill the College's general education requirements.
- b. A revised statement of the College's goals or intended learning outcomes for general education. These goals for general education should apply to all graduates of the College, regardless of their degree program. In other words, they should apply to its Associate of Applied Science and Associate of Fine Arts graduates as well as its Associate of Arts, Associate of Business, and Associate of Science graduates.
- c. A plan for assessing all of these general education goals or intended learning outcomes and using the results of assessment to improve student learning and inform the planning and budgeting process.

D. SUMMARY OF COMMISSION REVIEW

Timing for next comprehensive visit: 2018-2019

Rationale for the recommendation: The institutional culture at Casper College is marked by a strong commitment to helping students learn and achieve their goals. The organization operates with integrity; has a sound resource base to carry out its mission; has competent, forward-looking governance and leadership; a strong, dedicated faculty; and enjoys strong support from its community and the employers of its graduates. After reviewing the self-study and other documents provided by the institution, conducting extensive interviews with students, faculty, staff, and other constituencies, the team concludes that Casper College meets all five Criteria for Accreditation and that a ten-year cycle is warranted.