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June 18, 2014

Dr. Walter H. Nolte  
President  
Casper College  
125 College Dr.  
Casper, WY 82601

Dear President Nolte:

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

On behalf of the Commission, staff accepts the report on assessment of general education. No further reports are required. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2018 – 2019.

Also enclosed is a copy of the institution's Statement of Affiliation Status, which reflects the actions taken by the Commission. For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Specialist, at [lnakutis@hlcommission.org](mailto:lnakutis@hlcommission.org). Your HLC staff liaison is Linnea Stenson ([lstenson@hlcommission.org](mailto:lstenson@hlcommission.org)); (800) 621-7440 x 107.

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



**STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT**

**DATE:** June 18, 2014

**STAFF:** Linnea Stenson

**REVIEWED BY:** Katherine C. Delaney

**INSTITUTION:** Casper College, Casper, WY

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER:** Walter H. Nolte, President

**PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION RE: REPORT:** An interim report due 7/1/2014 on assessment of general education.

**ITEMS ADDRESSED IN REPORT:** The office of the Commission received the institution's report on the above topic on 6/11/2014.

**STAFF ANALYSIS:** Casper College hosted a comprehensive visit in March 2009. At the time of the visit, the comprehensive team expressed a serious concern about general education at the College:

*... 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. ...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 comprehensive visit team recommended a progress report on general education that was submitted on 6/27/2012. The staff analysis of that report concluded:

*It is clear from the progress report submitted by Casper College that a great deal of work, collaboration and thought has gone into the revision of the general education outcomes. The three years dedicated to this work was ample time, but now that the College community is steeped in the issues relating to general education, perhaps the general education assessment plan can be accomplished in shorter order. It will be critically important that the assessment plan, its full implementation and several years of collected data will be in place in time for the comprehensive review in 2018-2019. In order to assure that timetable, the College will submit a progress report on 7/1/2014 that give evidence of the development of the general education assessment plan and its full implementation. By that time, as well, initial data should be completed and should be included in the progress report, along with the manner in which the College has used that data to "close the loop" in order to improve student learning.*

**Implementation of General Education Assessment**

Responding to the Higher Learning Commission's advice regarding the number of student learning outcomes, a subcommittee of the General Education Committee was convened in September 2012 to reduce the discipline-specific learning outcomes to fewer, more general, outcome. Ultimately, the

subcommittee submitted the following list of eight learning outcomes, which were approved by the Faculty Senate in November 2013:

*As graduates of Casper College, students will be able to*

- 1. demonstrate effective oral and written communication*
- 2. use the scientific method*
- 3. solve problems using critical thinking and creativity*
- 4. demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultures and historical perspectives*
- 5. appreciate aesthetic and creative activities*
- 6. use appropriate technology and information to conduct research*
- 7. describe the value of personal, civic, and social responsibilities*
- 8. use quantitative analytical skills to evaluate and process numerical data*

At the same time, a 3-person group attended the HLC assessment workshop in October 2012 and drafted an implementation and communication plan for developing a general education outcomes assessment process to be in place by spring 2013. The process involved the following:

- Each school submitted a list of appropriate courses from which could be collected student artifacts that document achievement of the new outcomes.
- The Assessment Team planned for campus-wide communication at the spring semester convocation in January 2013.
- The Assessment Team reviewed other institution's published general education assessment plans. The Team decided to use the existing VALUE rubrics produced by the AAC&U to analyze student artifacts.
- A decision was made to assessment two outcomes per semester using a sample of student artifacts taken from sophomore-level courses.

#### Description of the Assessment Process

Every semester the College assesses two general education outcomes according to the following cycle:

- semester one: outcomes 1 & 6
- semester two: outcomes 2 & 8
- semester three: outcomes 3 & 7
- semester four: outcomes 4 & 5

So far, all of the general education outcomes have been assessed except for outcomes 4 and 5, which are scheduled for fall 2014.

Student artifacts are collected every term and faculty volunteers score the artifacts using a VALUE rubric chosen by the Assessment Team. The Assessment Office randomly selects twenty student artifacts, anonymizes the artifacts and creates twenty identical binders that include an AAC& VALUE rubric for each artifact. Faculty volunteers then assess each of the artifacts based on the directions provided by the assessment facilitator. Two weeks later, the group reconvenes to discuss their findings. The comments are documented and formatted into a feedback report. Scores from the rubrics are then calculated and data are generated to demonstrate process findings. The process is duplicated twice yearly for two outcomes each time and is on a continue cycle.

Feedback from the reporting session is shared campus-wide and department chairs provide their takeaways from the process by submitting an annual assessment plan.

### Initial Data from the Assessment Process

After scoring the artifacts, a general overview of initial results was produced. Following is an example of such an overview:

#### ***Written Communication and Information Literacy, Spring 2013***

##### ***What did our students do well?***

- Artifacts were word-processed and students had a basic understanding of how to manipulate the document in that software*

##### ***What do our students need to improve?***

*Students need to:*

- more effectively communicate in language or style appropriate for a thesis-driven, college-level essay in terms of grammar, punctuation, spelling, or organization*
- better integrate and synthesize outside sources into their own writing using an appropriate documentation style and format*
- avoid using questionable or inappropriate sources in their work, and to address the source's credibility in a significant way*
- understand how to avoid plagiarism as many students cut and paste (or poorly paraphrase) work from websites or other sources*

##### ***What can we do to improve student learning in this area?***

*Faculty could:*

- encourage (perhaps require) students to use the Casper College Writing Center's resources more frequently*
- establish clear assignment sheets with an agreed-upon documentation style, preferably American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA)*
- use a grading rubric that assigns points for the quality of the writing in addition to the content required*

*Schools and departments could:*

- consider establishing a consistent documentation style for use in all classes in that area*
- coordinate better with the library faculty to learn what databases and resources are available for their specific discipline*

*Institutionally, we should:*

- ensure that all students are enrolling in their general education English courses at the beginning of their college careers*
- respond more swiftly and consistently to plagiarism*

### Steps Taken to Improve Student Learning as a Result of the Data

After campus-wide discussion of assessment findings, the following changes were accepted:

- Many departments and schools have begun the process of using one documentation style for all classes.
- English faculty chose to offer MLA and APA refresher courses for faculty and provided MLA and APA handbooks for anyone who attended the sessions.
- The College has budgeted for all new faculty to be provided books that focus on how to make relevant word processing software accommodate MLA and APA formatting requirements.
- The College noted significant problem with plagiarism. The College has adopted software called Maxient that will help “track and manage behavioral issues,” including plagiarism (Maxient.com).

Faculty received an update on this program at the semester convocation in January 2014, and began reporting instances of plagiarism and cheating in that semester.

- The College has committed to an institutional subscription to *Turnitin.com* to help faculty more thoroughly check for plagiarism and validate plagiarism suspicion.
- Many faculty—for example, in Education, Agriculture and Business—have begun using writing-specific rubrics for written assignments.
- The Writing Center has been equipped with new computers and is in process of moving the Writing Center to a new location that is larger and more visible.
- The Deans added a general education assessment section to the required annual department reports toward helping to capture information about how faculty and departments are integrating the feedback from the scoring sessions.

Staff comment: Casper College submitted a very convincing report that general education has been revitalized and successfully implemented at the College. As well, the College appears to be benefitting from the data that results from the assessment activities.

Casper College is commended for responding so thoroughly and professionally to the comprehensive team's concerns.

**STAFF ACTION:** Accept the report on assessment of general education. No further reports are required. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2018 – 2019.

## STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

Casper College  
125 College Dr  
Casper, WY 82601

**Affiliation Status:** Candidate: N/A  
Accreditation: 04/01/1960

### **Nature of Organization**

**Control:** Public  
**Degrees Awarded:** Certificate, Associates

### **Conditions of Affiliation:**

**Stipulations on Affiliation Status:** None.

**Approval of New Additional Locations:** Prior Commission approval required.

**Approval of Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:** Approved for distance education courses and programs.

**Accreditation Activities:** Open Pathway, Quality Initiative Report: 08/31/2018  
Open Pathway, Quality Initiative Proposal: 08/31/2016

### **Summary of Commission Review**

**Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation:** 2008 - 2009

**Year for Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation:** 2018 - 2019

**Last Date of Information Change:** 06/18/2014

**Accreditation Note:**  
None.

**Name Change:**  
Casper Junior College to Casper College