

Casper College - WY

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Introduction

Message from the President

Casper College is one of seven community colleges and one university in Wyoming that provide access to comprehensive higher education resources that strengthen, support, and enrich communities across the state. It is our commitment to quality higher education that brings the colleges together to provide dynamic lifelong learning environments through higher education, workforce development, innovative partnerships, and civic and global engagement leading to responsible citizenship and economic, social, and cultural prosperity.

As a symbol of quality, Casper College prides itself on having been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) since 1960 and on its commitment to fulfilling its responsibility of accreditation to the fullest extent. It is the college's intent to continually improve and adapt to the changing needs of our community and the resultant transformation required of our graduates.

Casper College is very proud of its many program accreditations. Sixteen specialized accreditations from addictionology to theatre underscore the quality of the college's educational programs.

From a small classroom located in Natrona County High School (NCHS) in 1945, Casper College has evolved into a vital community asset and leading higher education institution. What began in that small classroom at NCHS now rests on 200 acres on the south edge of Casper and serves thousands of students each year from Wyoming, the region, and the international community. The college is testament to the power of community that to this day, is just as strong as it was in 1945.

This same community support is reflected in the generous contributions and scholarships offered through the college. Over the last ten years, Casper College has awarded over \$27.8M in scholarships that currently represents just under \$3M per year. Many of the scholarships come from 243 endowments that are managed by the Casper College Foundation.

The Casper community's Strong support was reinforced in 2008 when the Casper community approved \$35M in general obligation bonds to build five new buildings, including a union/university building, music building, gateway center, early childhood learning center, and residence halls. Each building was intended to transform the campus and learning environment for students in special ways, including the expansion of the college's partnership with the University of Wyoming (UW) with the building of the union/university building that provides space for UW to expand its degree offerings locally. The partnership makes it possible for Casper College students and hundreds of others living and working in Casper to continue their education.

The physical aspects of our college have improved significantly in the last ten years, and our plans are to continue that progress. However, our focus has shifted from infrastructure growth to managing student enrollment and increasing success. In 2016, Casper College retained the services of an independent consultant to help us transform our strategic enrollment planning and management processes. The college is now in the implementation stages of a plan that comprehensively addresses enrollment goals as well as student retention, experience, and success. Additionally, Casper College is engaged with its partners statewide to improve student outcomes, including the completion of matriculation agreements with the University of Wyoming that ensure students in more than 30 different programs can smoothly transfer.

In 2009, the college formed five distinct schools, including health sciences, business and industry, science, fine arts and humanities, and social and behavioral sciences. The purpose of the schools was to have each of them led by a dean and organized around their unique program needs. While this helped organize the more than 120 degrees and 43 certificate options students have at Casper College, it also allows each school to pursue planning and quality initiatives more suited to their individual program needs within the college framework.



Wyoming's economy is largely reliant on energy, and with that reliance comes the inherent risk in its lack of economic diversification. The Casper community has struggled with economic diversification throughout its history and although it has been successful in growing its regional energy, medical, financial, educational, and service industries, its efforts to diversify have been overwhelmed by the sheer size of the energy industry alone. Casper came to the realization in 2007 that it needed to revitalize its population and invigorate its entrepreneurial environment. Casper College led the effort to build a 35,000 sq. ft. small business incubator to provide both the environment and resources needed by new startups to succeed. The new incubator, run by the University of Wyoming, soon led to a comprehensive network and community support for entrepreneurs including Wyoming's first angel investment network.

In 2015, the state economy experienced a significant downturn due to the drop in global oil prices as well as demand for coal that had historically provided economic support for Wyoming during times when oil prices were low. In 2016, Governor Matthew Mead announced his Economically Needed Diversity Options for Wyoming (ENDOW) initiative to coordinate and expand Wyoming's efforts to diversify its economy of which the community colleges are an integral part. Given Casper College's location in one of the largest economic centers in the state and region, the college will continue to play a key role in economic development through its programs and leadership.

Through the financial support of a local Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), students may take courses in the local school district that can meet requirements for high school graduation and also become part of a college degree or certificate. All standards applied to full-time Casper College Faculty for training or experience necessary to be an effective instructor are applied to all BOCES partner teachers in the high schools and all adjuncts teaching for the college in any on-campus or online format. Through partnership with the Wyoming Department of Education, community colleges, the university, and Complete College Wyoming, Casper College is integral to further progress for Wyoming residents needing post-secondary credentials.

The reaffirmation of accreditation process provides an opportunity for us to validate our institutional quality and effectiveness and importantly, highlight ways in which we can improve. It is our intention to continue a long tradition of providing educational services by continuously improving and anticipating changes that strengthen outcomes for students and transform our community and state.

Sincerely,

Darren Divine, Ph.D.

President