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## **ASSURANCE SECTION**

### **REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT**

TO

Eastern Wyoming College  
Torrington, Wyoming

**October 25 – 27, 2010**

FOR

#### **The Higher Learning Commission**

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

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## Contents

I. Context and Nature of Visit .....	3
II. Commitment to Peer Review .....	8
III. Compliance with Federal Requirements .....	8
IV. Fulfillment of the Criteria.....	
a. Criterion One.....	12
b. Criterion Two.....	17
c. Criterion Three .....	19
d. Criterion Four .....	20
e. Criterion Five.....	23
V. Affiliation Status.....	25
VI. Additional Comments and Explanations.....	27

## **I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT**

### **A. Purpose of Visit**

The visit is a comprehensive visit for re-accreditation.

### **B. Organizational Context**

Eastern Wyoming College (EWC) is a comprehensive, public Community College located in Torrington, Wyoming. The institution's previous re-accreditation review was in 2001. EWC received re-accreditation for a ten year period.

### **C. Unique Aspects of Visit**

The institution asked the Team to review and provide feedback on a Foundations of Excellence self-study by EWC staff in 2009. This study involved an application to the National Policy Center on the First Year of College, a consulting teleconference, and being admitted to the college cohort for 2008-2009. EWC funded the study.

### **D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited**

The team visited sites in Torrington and Douglas Wyoming.

### **E. Distance Education Reviewed**

The team reviewed the College's distance education program which consists of a robust online program and compressed video courses used primarily in service of their outreach campuses and secondary education partners.

### **F. Interactions with Constituencies**

The following groups and constituencies met with the team and provided comments on the quality and value of EWC programs and services (numbers in parentheses indicate more than one individual in the identified role):

- EWC Board of Trustees
- EWC President
- Vice President for Learning
- Vice President for Student Services
- Vice President of Finance and Administrative Systems
- Director of College Relations
- Executive Assistant to the President and to the Board
- Chair of the Science Division
- Science Instructor (2)
- Political Science Instructor
- Chemistry Instructor
- Director of Counseling and Disability Services
- Administrative Assistant – Registration and Records
- Humanities Instructor
- Psychology Instructor (2)
- Criminal Justice Instructor (2)
- Administrative Assistant – Athletics
- Director of Institutional Research
- Director – GEAR UP

Webmaster  
Developmental Mathematics Instructor  
Cosmetology Instructor (2)  
Early Childhood Education Instructor  
Instructor – Business and Industry  
Work Force Development staff person  
Veterinarian Instructor (5)  
Instructor – Weatherization  
Instructor – Welding (4)  
Instructor – Agriculture (6)  
Instructor – Agricultural Economics  
Instructor – Art  
Instructor – Elementary Education  
Instructor – Pre-Nursing  
Business Instructor (3)  
Office Technology Instructor  
Assessment Team  
Library Director  
Physical Education Instructor (3)  
Business Division Chair  
Instructor – Mathematics (2)  
Instructor – English  
Instructor – Speech and Drama  
Instructor – Education (2)  
Men's basketball coach  
Instructor – Physics  
Instructor – Social Science  
Instructor – Biology  
Director of Human Resources  
Director of Adult Basic Education  
Steering Committee – HLC Self-Study  
Steering Committee – Foundations of Excellence Self-Study  
Associate Director for Enrollment Management  
Coordinator at Sundance outreach site  
Coordinator at Hulett outreach site  
Coordinator at Upton outreach site  
Weston Curriculum coordinator  
Coordinator at Newcastle outreach site  
Superintendent – Newcastle public schools  
Coordinator at Lusk outreach site  
Assistant to the Coordinator at Lusk  
Principal – Lusk High School  
Coordinator at Glenrock outreach site  
Coordinator at Wheatland, Glendo, and Chugwater outreach sites  
Coordinator at Guernsey outreach site  
Superintendent of Guernsey public schools  
Guidance coordinator – Guernsey public schools  
Board member – Guernsey public schools  
Associate Vice President for Outreach Learning  
Administrative Assistant to the Associate Vice President for Outreach Learning  
Administrative Assistant to the Vice President for Learning

Residence Life Coordinator  
 IT Administrator  
 Athletic Director  
 Director of Adult Basic Education  
 Assistant Director of the Library  
 Food Service Staff (2)  
 Library Clerk  
 Administrative Assistant for Institutional Effectiveness  
 Senior Administrative Assistant – College Relations  
 Graphic Designer/Photographer  
 Director of Financial Aid  
 Copy Center Clerk  
 Payroll Specialist  
 Accounts Payable Clerk  
 Accounts Receivable Clerk  
 Purchasing Director  
 Maintenance personnel - Torrington  
 Associate Director Work Force Services  
 Fitness Center Director  
 EWC Planning Team – Douglas Campus  
 Massage therapy student – Douglas Campus  
 Pre-Nursing student – Douglas Campus  
 Communications student – Douglas Campus  
 Business Office Technology student – Douglas Campus  
 Physical Therapy Student – Douglas Campus  
 Foreign Language student – Douglas Campus  
 Two students without specific fields of study – Douglas Campus  
 Open meeting with students – Torrington Campus  
 33 Community members at open meeting  
 Casual conversations with students in the community of Torrington  
 Douglas Campus Director  
 Administrative Specialist – Douglas Campus  
 Business Instructor – Douglas Campus  
 Administrative Assistant – Douglas Campus  
 Maintenance personnel – Douglas Campus  
 Science Instructor – Douglas Campus  
 Learning Center Coordinator – Douglas  
 Health Technology Instructor - Douglas

#### **G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed**

The team reviewed the following documents, materials, and web pages:

Board of Trustees Minutes  
 Board of Trustees Minutes verifying semester tuition and fees schedules  
 Strategic Planning Forms Current  
 Strategic Planning Mission & Values Start up 2008  
 Personnel Directory  
 Strategic Planning Process 2008-2009  
 Strategic Planning Startup 2008-2009  
 Strategic Planning Strategic Directions Startup 2008

Foundations of Excellence Final Report 2009  
Marketing Plan 2010  
Strategic Planning Presentations Startup 2008  
Wyoming Community College Commission State Wide Strategic Plan 2010  
Strategic Planning Final Report 2008- 2009  
EWC College Catalog  
EWC course schedule  
Semester calendar worksheets defining the number of course section meetings per term  
Strategic Planning (large notebook) 2010-2011  
Strategic Planning Final Report 2009-2010  
Annual Budget 2011  
Annual Budget 2010  
Annual Budget 2009  
Annual Budget 2008  
Financial Report (Audit) 2009  
Financial Report (Audit) 2008  
Financial Report (Audit) 2007  
WCCC Funding Allocation Model FY11 and FY12  
Program advisory committee minutes for 16 different programs  
List of community members invited to the planning input forums.  
IPEDS Data Feedback Report 2010  
Employee Personnel Policies Handbook  
Student Handbook  
Student Code of Conduct  
Student Grievance Procedure  
Wyoming Higher Education Transfer Guide  
Wyoming Community College Commission Vocational Transfer Guide  
EWC Distance Education Handbook  
Numerous examples of print advertisements and recruitment brochures  
American Veterinary Medicine Association accreditation guide  
US Department of Education Federal financial aid audit findings  
EWC Corrective Action Plan for addressing DoE financial aid audit findings  
Board Policies  
Board Policy for Emeritus Status  
Procedures for granting Emeritus Status  
HLC Progress Report on Planning Feb. 1, 2004  
Board of Trustees Outreach Handout Notebook  
Space Needs Analysis and Planning Concepts Study 2008 (Paulien & Associates, Denver) Facilities Planning Advisory Committee 2009-2010  
Workforce Alliance Group Meetings 2007 Only  
Curriculum and Learning Council Meeting Minutes October 2009-June 2010  
Curriculum and Learning Council Meeting Minutes July 2010-October 2010  
Technology Advisory Council Minutes  
Instructional Advisory Council Meeting Minutes 2007  
Personnel Advisory Council 2005-2010  
Technical Advisory Committee Meetings October 2008-April 2010  
Press Releases 2006-2010  
Instructional Program Review Statistical Data March 2009-November 2009  
EWC Activity Calendar 2009-2010  
Student Orientation Information Packet 2010  
Board of Trustees Outreach Trips Handout

Five year Plan Brochure- Douglas High school and Eastern Wyoming College  
2009-2010 Concurrent Enrollment Eastern Wyoming College Douglas High School  
brochure  
Eastern Wyoming Distance Learning Fall 2010 brochure  
Eastern Wyoming College/Douglass Community Education Fall 2010 brochure  
Eastern Wyoming College/Douglas Fall Semester 2010 Class brochure  
E-mail dated 10/25/10 from Jamie Sullivan to sue McBride – number of courses offered  
and cancelled for Fall 2010 at Douglas Campus  
Douglas Campus Enrollment – October 25, 2010  
High School Market Share – Five year average  
Eastern Wyoming College/Douglass Fall Semester 2010 class schedule  
Eastern Wyoming College view book  
Goshen County, Wyoming 2010 Demographic profile  
EWC College Catalog 2010-2011  
EWC Student Handbook 2010-2011  
EWC Faculty Handbook 2010  
Travel/Professional Development Operating Budget Expenditures (2007-2010)  
Assessment Presentation to the Board of Trustees – 2009  
Newspaper clippings files noting accomplishments of students, faculty, & staff  
Title IV default rates from DoE website  
Financial Report 2007  
Financial Report 2008  
Financial Report 2009  
Financial Aid Report, June 30, 2009  
Numerous pages on EWC web site  
EWC Foundations of Excellence Final Report  
EWC Self Study 2010  
Continuing Education Brochure  
Class schedule for 2010 – 2011  
CD of Self Study 2010  
EWC Self Study 2000  
EWC Request for Change 2005  
Recruiting Calendar  
Recruiting Planning Calendar  
EWC Distance Learning Handbook  
Hathaway Scholarship Guidelines  
Outcomes Assessment Program Reports for 2003 – 2004, 2004 – 2005, 2005 -2006,  
2006 – 2007, 2008 – 2009  
Assessment recommendations for program changes and institutional budgeting  
Student Learning & Assessment Plan (website data)  
Course schedule  
CCSSE data  
Agriculture focus group report 2010  
Advisory Committee minutes  
Progress report to HLC on strategic planning  
Professional development documentation  
Announcements for instructor vacancies  
2010 Personnel Policy Manual  
Budget spreadsheets re: Professional development expenditures  
Listing of EWC clubs, sponsors and major activities

## II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

### A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

The self-study was a comprehensive document and accurately reflected the institution.

### B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

The self study was descriptive rather than analytical in nature. Very general information was provided that explained the systems and processes in place at EWC.

### C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The institution adequately addressed concerns identified in its previous comprehensive visit.

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

News releases inviting third-party comment were sent to all newspapers within the College's service area in early August. This was followed by paid ads in Mid-August of 2010. The team reviewed and investigated two comments received by the Commission.

## III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

**1. Credits, Program Length, and Tuition:** *The institution has documented that it has credit hour assignments and degree program lengths within the range of good practice in higher education and that tuition is consistent across degree programs (or that there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition).*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: Team members verified with the EWC Vice President of Learning the method in which credit hours are assigned to courses and found it to be consistent with common practices in higher education and based on the 50-minute Carnegie hour. Worksheets were reviewed by which semester calendars are established. The number of class sessions is carefully defined to assure that all course sections reflect a range of acceptable contact hours for the amount of college credit awarded. All programs leading to awards and certificates, as described in the College catalog as well as other program information, are of appropriate and common length. All programs use the same tuition rate.

**2. Student Complaints:** *The institution has documented a process in place for addressing student complaints and appears to be systematically processing such complaints as evidenced by the data on student complaints for the three years prior to the visit.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: The process for addressing student complaints is outlined in the Student Handbook which is distributed to students in hard copy format and readily available to students through the student portal, Campus Cruiser. Student complaint files are maintained in the office of the Vice President of Student Services. A review of these files and a conversation with the VP of Student Services revealed a lack of clarity about the requirements of the Commission related to documentation of student complaints. The team provided the Vice President with guidance and documents from the HLC website outlining these expectations for future reference. In general, the files do reflect an attempt to capture important details of student complaints and indicate

how the complaint was managed. For example, all files indicate the date on which the complaint received, a description of the complaint, and the date and manner in which the complaint was resolved. Future record keeping protocols should assure that complaints are received in written format and due process considerations are followed and diligently documented.

In addition, the College must put in place written policies and clear guidance to students regarding complaints regarding discrimination or sexual harassment. Both the Student Handbook and the Residence Hall Handbook advise students to contact the College's Affirmative Action Officer in the case of sexual harassment. However, the Affirmative Action Officer is not identified and contact information is not provided. The team could find no evidence that student or employee complaints related to discriminatory practices or events are addressed in any of the College's major information documents. While there is an informal and formal grievance process in the Student Handbook, students should have the opportunity to have complaints involving discrimination addressed through the College's Affirmative Action Officer and this process should be separate and distinct from other type of complaints that are more appropriately dealt with through the regular grievance process. Finally, while the College does have an Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement (Board Policy 3.0), the team did not find evidence of a formal process for submitting or addressing complaints related to discrimination. The College must develop, communicate, and enforce such a policy and procedure and devote attention to assuring that all members of the college community are aware of these avenues of due process.

**3. Transfer Policies:** *The institution has demonstrated it is appropriately disclosing its transfer policies to students and to the public. Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: The EWC Catalog clearly identifies the degrees and certificates offered by the College. Descriptions of the Programs of Instruction include potential transfer options and emphasize the need for transfer students to regularly communicate with both their EWC academic advisor and the institution to which they intend to transfer to ensure maximum transferability of course credits. As the University of Wyoming is the only public university in the state, the community college system has a well-developed transfer guide for associate of arts and associate of science degree programs. A common course name and numbering system exists throughout the state that facilitates clear communications with students who plan to continue their studies at the University of Wyoming. In addition, the state of Wyoming participates in the 13-state compact, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), that provides access to education in disciplines not available in the state.

Transfer guides for occupational programs of studies are also available for students pursuing Associate of Applied Sciences degrees that have the potential for transferring wholly or in part. The College should, however, more clearly distinguish the generally terminal nature of the associate of applied science degree and the certificates it offers in its catalog.

Students transferring credits to EWC submit official transcripts to the Registration and Records Office for evaluation. Students must complete at least one credit course at EWC before their credits from another institution may be transferred and recorded as part of the student's EWC official educational record/transcript.

**4. Verification of Student Identity:** *The institution has demonstrated that it verifies the identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided to the student through distance or correspondence education.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: The team interviewed the College's distance education administrator to determine the College's current method for authenticating distant learners. At present, online students access their online courses using a unique ID and password through its student portal, Campus Cruiser. The administrator reported that the College is investigating the future of use of Acxiom, a commercial solution that uses biographical data as the basis for challenge questions to verify the user's identity. Although cost is a challenge, the College is clearly seeking a solution that will strengthen its ability to accurately authenticate distance learners.

**5. Title IV Program and Related Responsibilities:** *The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program. The team has reviewed these materials and has found no cause for concern regarding the institution's administration or oversight of its Title IV responsibilities.*

- **General Program Requirements:** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about the fulfillment of its Title IV program responsibilities, particularly findings from any review activities by the Department of Education. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.*

Comments: A financial aid audit for the year ending June 30, 2009 conducted by the Department of Education returned some negative findings relative to the fulfillment of its Title IV program responsibilities. Specifically, the College failed to ensure that FFEL loan funds are returned within the 45 to 60 day limits, the withdrawal status of some students were not accurately reported to the National Student Loan Clearinghouse, errors in calculating federal loan disbursement amounts and returns. The Department acknowledged that costs associated with errors associated with loan disbursements were under \$100. Recommended corrective actions included periodic manual reviews of return calculations by the Financial Aid Director, additional training of financial aid staff in calculating the number of semester days and net disbursement vs. gross disbursement policies, and the implementation of additional internal controls for assuring timely return of federal loan funds to the appropriate lender. In addition, the Department recommended that the College consider implementing electronic fund transfers to assist in the timeliness of transactions.

Discussions with the Vice President of Student Services and the Director of Financial Aid about these findings led the team to conclude that appropriate internal controls are now in place and that the College intends to follow the recommendations of the Department of Education to bring all affected areas into compliance with federal regulations.

- **Financial Responsibility Requirements:** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about the Department's review of composite ratios and financial audits. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.*

Comments: The team reviewed the College's financial audits and found them to be in compliance with expected standards.

- ***Default Rates, Campus Crime Information and Related Disclosure of Consumer Information, Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies:*** *The institution has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.*

Comments: The team reviewed the institution's default rates for 2006, 2007, and 2008. While the default rate improved somewhat between 2006 and 2007 (from 10.1% to 8.4%), its rate climbed significantly in 2008 to 16.5%. Given current economic conditions and the slow pace of economic recovery, the College is urged to remain vigilant in its financial aid information dissemination and its debt counseling practices. Interviews with the Director of Financial Aid indicated that the College is well aware of the potential for continued future increases in its loan default rate and is taking steps to protect the College from future financial aid liabilities. Campus crime information is documented on the Department of Education website for the Torrington campus and the Douglas branch. (No incidents were reported in any category for the past three years.) Satisfactory academic progress and attendance policies are clearly documented in the College catalog. Student outcome data is available on the College's website.

- ***Contractual Relationships:*** *The institution has presented evidence of its contracts with non-accredited third party providers of 25-50% of the academic content of any degree or certificate programs.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and recommends the ongoing approval of such contracts.

**6. Institutional Disclosures and Advertising and Recruitment Materials:** *The institution has documented that it provides accurate, timely and appropriately detailed information to current and prospective students and the public about its accreditation status with the Commission and other agencies as well as about its programs, locations and policies.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: The visiting team examined a wide range of advertising and recruitment materials used by the College (including the College's view book, advertisements, schedule of classes, catalog, and others) and concluded that the College has taken care to provide accurate and fair information to its publics. When the College refers to its affiliation with the Higher Learning Commission, it publishes both the commission's address and contact information.

**7. Relationship with Other Accrediting Agencies and with State Regulatory Boards:** *The institution has documented that it discloses its relationship with any other specialized, professional or institutional accreditor and with all governing or coordinating bodies in states in which the institution may have a presence.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: EWC is one of seven public community colleges in Wyoming's community college system. Its relationship with the coordinating commission is clearly understood by the College's officers, its Board of Trustees, and the communities it serves. No sanctions or adverse actions have been initiated by the coordinating commission or by any programmatic accrediting body associated with the College. Only one program of study—the Veterinary Technician Program—participates in any other accreditation process other than regional accreditation. The Veterinary Technician Program is accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association. The team reviewed its most recent self-study and team report (date). No sanctions were cited in this report.

**8. Public Notification of an Evaluation Visit and Third Party Comment:** *The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comments. The team has evaluated any comments received and completed any necessary follow-up on issues raised in these comments.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

Comments: EWC's various constituencies were informed of the October, 2010 comprehensive evaluation by press releases which were sent to all local newspapers serving the College's district in early August. These press releases were followed by paid ads soliciting third-party comments in mid-August. The Commission received two comments as a result of these publications. Both comments concerned potential discrimination by the College in two separate actions taken with Hispanic individuals. Both instances were reviewed extensively by the visiting team. Copies of relevant documents, discussions with individuals familiar with the situations, and general but intentional questions related to issues of diversity were posed to open meetings of faculty, staff, and community members. The team wrestled with the distinction between the ongoing efforts of the College to encourage and support diversity within its academic community and the allegations by some of perceived discrimination against Hispanic individuals. Details and conclusions regarding these situations are provided in the Assurance Section of the Team Report.

## 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.

### 1. Evidence that Core Components are met

**1a: The organization's mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization's commitments.**

The Self-Study and interviews during the visit verified that the College's academic divisions operate under mission statements consistent with EWC's institutional purposes. Campus surveys and team interviews suggest that staff and faculty have a shared understanding of the institution's mission.

Eastern Wyoming College's mission vision statements (dated 2008) appear in each edition of the *College Catalog*. The mission statement also appears in the college's *Faculty Handbook*. The mission and vision statements do not appear in the Student handbook.

The College mission statement, vision statement and values statements are posted throughout the college campus. (Board Room, classrooms, and other places)

**1b: The organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, constituents, and the greater society it serves.**

Eastern Wyoming College understands the need to broaden the diversity within its employee base and also within its student base. The mission statement, strategic directions, and vision statements (all dated 2008) make no mention of diversity. The self study did mention that the college did host one employee development session using an outside speaker on accepting change and on diversity. FOE study addressed diversity as one topic of review and (p43 of self study) and study findings indicated that a majority of EWC staff (60%) believe that EWC does not do enough to expose students to diversity outside of the college; only 39% of students agree that they are exposed to diversity from outside of the college.

The team hosted 33 community representatives at the public community forum. There were many positive comments about the role and the importance of the College in the community made by most all of the business and professional leaders. There were 5 comments made by members of the Hispanic community that indicated that the College had issues with and needed to work on diversity. The College understands the need to be much more inclusive but, there is much more to be done to accomplish their desired results. (See also Federal Compliance III.2. Student Complaints and Core Components 5c and 5d)

Responses to Requests for Public Input

Just prior to the team's visit, the Commission received two separate complaints alleging discrimination against Hispanics at Eastern Wyoming College. The first complaint was from the parent of a student whose housing application to the College's dormitory had been denied. The second complaint was from a former faculty member who had been denied emeritus status. The second complaint also expressed concern about the student whose housing application had been denied. In addition, the team conducted a Community Forum as part of the comprehensive visit. The College sent invitations to over 100 individuals. Thirty-three community members attended. Five persons in this forum expressed concerns about a pattern of on-going discriminatory practices at EWC. One of these individuals was the mother of the student who wrote to the Commission.

**Housing Complaint**

Regarding the first complaint, the team requested and/or reviewed the following documentation from the College:

- (1) A copy of the College's dormitory housing policy
- (2) A copy of the College's housing application
- (3) The 2010-11 Resident Student Handbook
- (4) Information from the College's website outlining the procedure for determining the status of a housing application
- (5) A detailed listing of all students whose housing applications had been accepted

A review of these documents revealed:

1. No formal Board-approved dormitory housing policy exists. Information about applying for dormitory space is provided on the College's website. Students may apply online. The team could find no evidence of an EEOC statement relative to student housing on campus.
2. The College's housing application requests standard information commonly found in higher education. The application does not request ethnicity information.
3. Although not readily available, the College provided completed information about students whose housing applications had been accepted. This included first and last names, semester, date of deposit, gender, and race.
4. Of the 99 females listed on the application spreadsheet, four cancelled their applications prior to July 22, 2010, including the student who later reported not obtaining housing. Of the remaining 95, six were designated as Hispanic students, one of whom was the student whose request for housing was denied. Her deposit was received on 4/29/10.
5. The institution uses a process of date of application as the first step in selecting applicants for housing, and then alphabetical listing of surnames for ties on date of application. There is no evidence that institutional officials used surnames to identify an applicant's ethnicity, however, individuals who hold surnames that may be identified with a given ethnic group are understandably sensitive to the use of surnames to identify successful candidates for an institutional service.
6. Two white students, whose deposits were received on 6/4 and 6/14, were in the dorms on Day 1, according to the spreadsheet, however the document notes that these two students did not have a housing application on file.

In conversations with the Vice President of Student Services and the Vice President of Learning, the team was informed that housing decisions were made later than usual for fall, 2010. When the final rooms were being assigned, there were two women students and only one room. Although the website indicates that housing decisions are made based on the date of application and receipt of deposit, this particular decision was based on alphabetical order by last name. The College acknowledges that both students' names were known at this point. The student in question's last name is Garcia.

The student who was did on obtain housing was told, according to College officials, that she could reapply and that she would be considered if someone cancelled prior to fall. The student did not reapply. No record of a formal complaint by the student to the College was found in the College's student complaint file.

#### Emeritus status complaint

Although the individual who wrote to express his concerns to the Commission has not been an employee of EWC for many years, he instructional employee of the college for an extended period of time before leaving to take a job at another institution of higher education. In his letter, he alleged that he had been denied emeritus status in 1997 based on his ethnicity. He also asserted that no other Hispanic had received emeritus status and that his was the first and only application ever denied by the College.

Regarding this complaint, the team:

- (1) Reviewed Board policy regarding the process for awarding emeritus status to faculty.
- (2) Conducted interviews with faculty and staff who had known this faculty member during the time of his employment with the College.

The EWC Board policy for granting emeritus status is clearly stated. Based on interviews conducted separately with several individuals, the process was followed as stated in the policy. Although no written documentation was reviewed, it was reported that the Council denied the request based on the applicant's frequent outspokenness and manner of communicating with colleagues. Everyone interviewed by the team contended that his teaching quality was not generally poorly regarded. When asked why each person believed his emeritus status was denied, however, each individual mentioned the applicant's difficulties in maintaining collegial relationships with his peers.

Because this incident occurred so long ago and very little documentation could be found regarding the decision-making process, it was difficult for the team to reconstruct a clear and fair picture of the situation.

**1c: Understanding of and Support of Mission Prevalent in the Organization**

Employees understand the mission of the EWC. Interviews with staff revealed that they are dedicated to the provision of educational opportunities; instructors believe that is their job to see that students are gainfully employed after graduation or transfer successfully to complete a bachelor degree. The college uses a budget planning process which focuses on the institution's seven (7) functional areas to develop the budget which will drive resources to achieve the strategic directions of the college. (Self Study pp45, 46)

**1d: The organization's governance and administrative structure promotes effective leadership and supports collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.**

EWC is one of seven community colleges in the state of Wyoming. The Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) provides oversight to all community colleges in the state, but each institution operates independently, with a locally elected board of trustees. EWC has a seven member elected Board that meets regularly and functions according to state statutes. The Self Study, review of Board minutes, and interviews with Board members revealed that the Board functions at a policy review and budget approval level and has the necessary authority to perform its oversight functions for the institution. Board meetings follow Wyoming open meetings requirements and minutes are published in a local newspaper. The Board members are committed individuals and have deep roots in the community. They understand that their role is to build a strong working relationship with their president and to set the vision for the College.

EWC has an appropriate administrative structure to assure oversight of day-to-day functions on the institution and the leadership teams meets on a regular bases. (Self Study pp47 & 158-159) Academic Affairs leadership and faculty have curriculum oversight responsibilities and curriculum decisions are made through the Curriculum and Learning Council. (Self Study p48) New programs are approved the Board of Trustees and sent on to the Wyoming community College Commission for final approval. (Self Study pp48, 49) The college has an active committee structure composed by all segments of college employees appropriate for its size. (Self Study p49)

**1e: The organization upholds and protects its integrity.**

The organization upholds and protects its integrity. This is evidenced in several ways including: The President's Welcome letter to students on the College Web site; Integrity is imbedded in the Faculty Handbook and it is provided to all faculty; The College complies with all audit requirements, system regulations and policies of the Wyoming CC System; The College used a standard syllabi format; The college uses the Wyoming CC curricula for commonly taught

courses; The College meets other state and federal policies and requirements such Fair Labor, OSHA, EPA, etc; The College policy manual in on the College web site.

## **2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**

Review of community and institutional demographic data included in the Self Study, of the conclusions reached by EWC staff in the college's Foundations of Excellence Study, and information gathered from interviews with EWC employees led the team to conclude that there is recognition within the institution of a need to more aggressively address organizational diversity.

## **3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

The Team recommends Commission follow up related to Core Component 1.b based on the following patterns of evidence.

EWC's mission statement, strategic directions, and vision statements (all dated 2008) make no mention of diversity. Foundations of Excellence results (p43) indicate that a majority of EWC staff (60%) believe that EWC does not do enough to expose students to diversity outside of the college; only 39% of students agree that they are exposed to diversity from outside of the college.

The team hosted 33 community representatives at the public community forum. There were comments made by some members of the Hispanic community that indicated that the College had issues with and needed to work on diversity.

The Commission received Third Party Comments concerning a need for EWC to address diversity issues within the institution.

Review of institutional and community demographic data in the EWC Self Study for this HLC visit confirmed student enrollment does not mirror the minority population in the college's community.

"EWC needs to improve the diversity of its student body to better match Goshen County and the state of Wyoming." (Self Study p 69)

"Similarly, EWC employee statistics of faculty, professional staff and administration status show a lack of diversity." (Self Study p 69)

The team confirmed through review of documents, meetings with students, staff, faculty, and community members that the need to address diversity at EWC has existed for some time.

## **4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met**

**and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

**Recommendation of the Team**

The Criterion has been met. Commission follow-up is 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.

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

**2a: The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.**

Eastern Wyoming College understands that planning for the future is an important component for the long term viability of the institution. EWC has invested considerable resources in this process. The team reviewed strategic planning documents dating from 2002 to the present academic year. A redesigned strategic planning process began in January 2008. Participants included students, employees, administrators, community leaders, Board of Trustee members and Foundation Board members. Five strategic directions emerged from these meetings. The College developed Vital Initiatives and Strategic Objectives for each of the Strategic Directions.

There are issues that the College has identified that will impact the future which include: Expectations that state financial support will continue to diminish (Self Study p65); number of single parents among EWC student body (Self Study p67); High percentage of non-college graduates in EWC district (Self Study p68); District has a sparse, low income population (Self Study p66); Job growth in mining (coal) and in petroleum are very important in Wyoming and when the economy slows down the energy industry follows soon thereafter (Self Study p70); and Substantial number of Hispanic residents in Goshen County. (Self Study p69)

**2b: The organization's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.**

Revenue to support the operations of the College is derived from the following sources; State Appropriations 71%, Tuition and Fees 16%, Local Appropriations 5%, and Other 8%. The College has endured a 10% budget reduction because of the reallocation of dollars when the state funding formula was revised. EWC has been successful in obtaining additional funding through a variety of different grants. These grants will help support the institution in the short run, but it will be important for the College to develop a program of on-going non traditional sources of revenue. The College has an active foundation and is making good progress in building partnerships in the community to capitalize on the financial gains the foundation can provide. The college has embraced a plan to modernize its facilities. Even though the buildings are kept neat, clean and well maintained, they are in need of energy efficiency improvements. Many projects are planned and will be implemented in the near future.

**2c: The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.**

EWC's planning process provides a good foundation for the advancement of the institution, but many of the processes are independent and not interrelated. This provides for the creation of different processes for different functional areas of the college, but the institution does not have an overarching institutional effectiveness plan in place to like them all together and to monitor the overall advancement of the college. The Self Study talks about the institution's interest in pursuing the AQIP accreditation process (p86). In pursuit of that effort, the college could benefit from the implementation of different quality tools and performance metrics to be utilized in the development of a dash board system to monitor performance improvements. Organizations such as CQIN, or state quality councils could help them in this effort.

**2d: All levels of planning align with the organization's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.**

The institutions strategic planning process and the 2008-2009 strategic plan that was developed provided a solid foundation for setting the future direction of the college. The college used a process that included a great deal of institutional and community input in the development of the plan. The college budget development process ties to the strategic plan which provides a frame work to direct resources into area that have a direct relationship in helping to achieve the strategic directions for the college. The College lacks a plan that ties all of the planning documents and different systems together. EWC has not developed a college wide Institutional Effectiveness process. The institution has developed some good plans, but they have not followed up with the systems development necessary to implement them.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**

None noted.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

None noted.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None noted.

**Recommendation of the Team**

The Criterion has been met. No Commission follow-up is recommended.

**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**

**3a: The organization's goals for student learning are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.**

The team reviewed the institution's catalog, assessment of student learning reports, reviewed the institution's web site, met with instructors, students, the assessment steering committee, and with academic leadership. Occupational programs have educational outcome statements. The institution has educational outcomes for General Education and transfer education. Review of the annual assessment reports from 2003-2004 through 2008-2009 revealed that assessment of student learning at EWC is grounded in an evaluation of the institution's clearly defined learning outcomes. Review of Board of Trustees documentation revealed that the Board reviews assessment of learning data. Board interest and support of assessment of student learning assures that effective assessment of student learning is occurring at EWC.

**3b: The organization values and supports effective teaching.**

The institution provides resources for the continuing professional development of all college staff. All staff has access to reimbursement for professional conferences and workshops. Each staff member can enroll in one course at the University of Wyoming for credit without paying tuition and fees. All staff members are able to qualify for salary schedule advancement (instruction and support staff) for approved continuing professional education. Instructors are encouraged to seek additional professional education. Instructors in occupational instructional areas who possess minimal academic credentials are required to pursue appropriate educational credentials. Based on a review of investment in the professional development of instructors and other staff, it is clear that EWC values and supports effective teaching. (See also Criterion 4)

**3c: The organization creates effective learning environments.**

The institution has provided internet accessible classrooms throughout the campus. Faculty reported that classrooms and laboratories are up-to-date and in many cases state-of-the art for their occupational programs. The visit to Douglas revealed that classroom space is limited. The campus is housed in a building that once served as an elementary school for the local school district. For example, the science lab is limited to 12 stations. Review of EWC's budget development process revealed that data from assessment of student learning is a key component of the budget development, including capital planning. It is clear that the institution directs budget resources to the creation of effective learning environments.

**3d: The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.**

Review of the annual institutional reports of assessment of student learning from 2003-2004 through 2008-2009 revealed a growing sophistication with the processes of assessment of student learning at EWC. Meetings with the Assessment Steering Committee and with academic leadership revealed a understanding that the role of the Steering Committee was to foster a culture of assessment of student learning at the institution, and not to "do the work" of assessment. The most recent annual report of assessment provided evidence that data derived from assessment of student learning are being used to plan the subsequent institutional budget. It is clear from conversations with occupational instructors, the Assessment Steering Committee, with academic leadership, and with students, that assessment of student learning is

an ongoing process the intent of which is to improve student learning. When challenged by Team members, it was clear that a process of measurement, modification of curriculum and instruction, and re-measurement is in place.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**

None

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

None

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

The criterion is met. No Commission follow-up is recommended.

**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**

**4a. The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty and staff that it values a life of learning.**

EWC devotes substantial resources to the professional development of its full-time faculty and staff. EWC staff provided expenditures reports for the past four years related to travel and professional development verifying the College's commitment to lifelong learning through attending professional conferences, meetings, and taking credit courses.

Board Policy 3.8, Professional Growth and Development, provides the foundation for long-term leaves, commonly referred to as sabbaticals for faculty and administrators, and establishes. Since the last comprehensive visit, four faculty sabbaticals have been granted to faculty to pursue intellectual inquiries or complete degrees. In addition, faculty took over 103 credits over the past three years that were funded through the Professional Development Committee. Over 250 credits were earned by professional staff during the same time period. Five faculty members and ten professional staff advanced on the salary schedule as a result. Staff participation in the EWC tuition waiver program increased from 42% to 67% from 2007 through 2009 nearly half of classified staff participated in this program, further verifying the institution's commitment to encouraging a life of learning.

While the College is clearly supportive of lifelong learning for its full-time, benefited staff, there are relatively few opportunities for professional development for its part-time staff and faculty. It is essential that this portion of the college's workforce be provided with avenues for maintaining, upgrading, and improving skills related to their responsibilities at the College, particularly adjunct faculty.

EWC recognizes staff and student accomplishments in a variety of meaningful ways. The team reviewed newspaper clippings of many faculty, staff, and students who have earned awards or demonstrated excellence in some way. Scholarship winners are recognized at an annual Donor Dinner; athletes with academic honors are publicly noted at annual athletic dinners; Phi Theta Kappa students receive special recognition at graduation. Of particular note, Board minutes verify a practice noted in the self-study where the Student Senate confers a monthly Civitas Award to individuals who are recognized for some special act of kindness or helpfulness to others

**4b. The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.**

The College uses CAAP, a nationally standardized assessment that measures general knowledge in six content areas, to gauge general education outcomes for its AA and AS students. In spring, 2009, 76 students participated. A review of EWC's Outcomes Assessment Report indicated that EWC students scored above the national mean in all content areas.

All Associate of Applied Science students (certificate and associate degree) also participate in outcomes assessment activities. These assessments vary by program to reflect specific learning objectives and skills required by the fields students will enter upon graduation. However, all Applied Science student outcomes in reading, writing, and math are also measured in addition to program-specific assessments. While it was clear from assessment data reviewed by the team, (including the Outcomes Assessment Report, program and course outcomes documentation, and specific assessment examples) that this information is being collected and used appropriately, the team could find no formal analysis of Associate of Applied Science student performance in general education content areas. The team suggests that EWC include this analysis as part of their institutional effectiveness improvement planning.

The College has addressed a concern expressed by a previous team regarding the appropriate amount of general education in its degree programs and its diligence in assuring that general education instructors possess appropriate credentials to teach assigned courses. Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees have approximately 31 credits of general education; Associate of Applied Science courses have 9-14 hours of general education. General education skills are embedded in many AAS courses and are regularly assessed.

**4c. The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.**

The College's website provides an extensive explanation of its institution-wide assessment plan, its activities, and its outcomes. Program outcomes are delineated, course and program assessment strategies are described, and an Annual Outcomes Assessment report is published. Multiple examples of assessment data being used for program improvement are

included. The public availability of this information is commendable.

The FOE initiative included a Diversity Dimension committee whose report addressed diversity concerns honestly and frankly. It identified a number of areas for improvement which the team strongly encourages the College to act upon. Interviews with administration assured the team that those with the power to advance these recommendations are supportive and fully aware of the need to integrate global awareness into program curricula, expand efforts to recruit and hire a more heterogeneous faculty and staff, create a welcoming and supportive environment for students and staff from various ethnic and racial backgrounds, and systematically assess its progress toward achieving these goals.

Advisory committee minutes for occupational programs were reviewed by the team and indicate the College uses these external constituencies to assure that curricula are current and relevant to the workplace.

Twenty-two student clubs offer opportunities for leadership and co-curricular activities that strengthen and support classroom learning. The team reviewed a listing of these clubs, the major activities of each, and spoke with faculty sponsors, all of which supported a conclusion that a wide variety of learning opportunities exist outside the classroom for EWC students. In addition to student organizations, many classes include service learning components which also allow students to apply knowledge gained from the classroom in real-world settings.

**4d. The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.**

The College's Student Code of Conduct and its catalog contain specific information regarding plagiarism, cheating, and academic dishonesty. A fall 2008 FOE New Student survey found that 78.5% gave the College a high or very high rating for communicating the importance of academic honesty and 67.7% rated EWC high or very high in emphasizing the importance of ethical conduct.

A well-conceived and useful Distance Education Handbook for faculty includes information regarding the TEACH Act and copyright law. While the self-study indicated that copyright information was displayed in the copy center, the team did find this evidence suggests that this might be one additional method of assuring that copyright standards are well-publicized and understood.

An "acceptable use" statement for students using College-owned computers was recommended in the self-study process. This enhancement will further emphasize the need to acknowledge the origins of information and manage information responsibly.

Multiple clinicals and required externships exist that provide students with opportunities for applying learning in supervised, guided environments.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**

None

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

None

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

The criterion is met. No Commission follow-up is recommended.

**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**

**5a: The organization learns from its constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs.**

In addressing constituent's needs, EWC has established 13 Outreach Centers in Eastern Wyoming with the furthest center 217 miles north of Torrington. These centers offer a variety of educational opportunities including ABE/GED, community education courses, workforce training, proctoring services for other colleges, credit course offerings through distance delivery or traditional in class settings, and concurrent enrollment courses in local high schools.

EWC has business and industry partnerships that have supported existing and new industries in the institution's service area. EWC was reported as "instrumental" in the development of a new prison offering office space on the Torrington Campus during the implementation of the new Department of Corrections (DOC) prison. EWC has also collaborated with the DOC in offering college courses to inmates, assisted in the DOC Mobile Welding Lab and has continued to offering DOC staff training.

The President of EWC is a member of the local economic developmental corporation, which focuses on business retention and expansion initiatives.

EWC has partnership with University of Wyoming in which the community can continue their education towards a bachelor's degree by taking the classes on the EWC Campus in Torrington.

EWC is visible throughout the service area and responds to constituent needs through informal means. Community members, staff and faculty interviewed stated EWC has been all things to everyone and the challenge of addressing the needs is becoming a challenge with reduced funding and resources. A formal method of determining constituents' needs in the respective communities has not occurred and during interviews with community members, it was suggested that a formal method of determining community needs be considered.

**5b: Capacity**

Each of the EWC Outreach Centers/Campus in the service area has an administrative leader (coordinator) who collaborates with the community members for limited programmatic needs with the largest enrollment being concurrent courses for high school students. The centers are often based in local school district facilities. A campus in Douglas has a full time coordinator and 6 full time staff members offering college courses, community training and concurrent enrollment to meet the community needs. Interviews with coordinators and staff at the centers and campus indicated a funding concern to sustain the staff and provide continued opportunities.

Opportunities at the EWC Campus in Torrington have staff, funding and resources to address the community needs in Torrington.

Douglas Campus of EWC had just completed a focus group initiative to identify the value, opportunities and future plans for EWC. However, a systematic process college-wide to identify needs and evaluate the services has not been the standard operating practice of EWC to determine the appropriateness or effectiveness of the services at the EWC in Torrington or at the centers.

**5c: Responsiveness to constituencies and communities**

Review of the Self Study and feedback from faculty, staff, students, and community members supported EWC's responsiveness to the community and constituent's needs through course offerings, scheduling of courses, implementation of distance learning options, and business and industry needs in the EWC service area.

The Self study and FOE identified a need for more efforts towards diversity in the student population, staff members, and a culture of diversity imbedded in the curriculum at EWC. Interviews of students, staff and community members supported the need for more diversity at EWC and as one student stated "it's not that we discourage diversity we just don't promote it". (See Core Component 5d and 1b)

**5d: Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides**

EWC has been a pillar of the community and is valued by students, parents, business and industry, high school students, secondary administrators, and community members. During the community meeting with 33 attendees, the majority of the feedback was supportive for the initiatives and offerings that EWC has provided. There were five members of the Hispanic community who voiced concerns about the College serving ethnic minorities within the community. (See also Core Components 5c and 1b)

Interviews with community leaders revealed that the College has made their facilities available for community use. A valued service is the use of EWC facility for the local theater group that was noted in interviews and the self study. The community greatly appreciates the "opening of the doors" to EWC

Senior citizens commented in the community meeting that services offered for them have been outstanding which included the fitness center accessibility and course offerings in the evenings. Additionally, the cultural opportunities that are available through or in collaboration with EWC were endorsed as high quality and affording the community cultural experiences.

Community members interviewed stated the need for the college is warranted because EWC is a “major anchor” and valued by parents, community members, business and industry and other higher education entities. Community members noted that EWC has been flexible and creative in offering educational courses to meet their constituent needs. EWC has also “provided economic stimulus” to the Torrington community and was a recruitment draw for families relocating to the area as noted in the meeting.

EWC has encouraged active partnership with community groups. Faculty, staff, and administration actively participate in community service organizations, boards, and schools. Interviews and review of staff evaluations provide evidence that faculty and staffs are providing service to the community.

2. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**  
None
3. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**  
None
4. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**  
None

#### **Recommendation of the Team**

The criterion is met. No Commission follow-up is recommended.

## **V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS**

[Refer to instructions for standardized language and team options to insert here.]

### **A. Affiliation Status** No change

Rationale for recommendation:

### **B. Nature of Organization**

1. **Legal status** No change
2. **Degrees awarded** No change

### C. Conditions of Affiliation

**1. Stipulation on affiliation status** No change

None

**2. Approval of degree sites**

Retain existing language

**3. Approval of distance education degree**

Retain existing language

**4. Reports required**

**Progress Report** None

**Monitoring Report** None

**Contingency Report** None

**5. Other visits scheduled**

Focus Visit in 2014-2015 to review institutional efforts to closer mirror the diversity of the institution's community

### Rationale and Expectations

The team spent a great deal of time reflecting on the comments of staff, faculty, community members, and the written complaints received by the Commission. In addition, issues related to diversity in the curriculum, the demographics of the EWC population, staff, and faculty, and the desire to strengthen global awareness in all aspects of the College's culture were identified in the EWC's HLC self-study and in the FOE self study. Evidence for on-going concerns with diversity is presented in Criteria 1, 4, and 5 of this report. It should also be noted that the team also found evidence in its conversations with members of the academic community (which included staff, faculty, students, and administrators) that an awareness of these issues exist and that those charged with addressing them are sincere in their intent to improve their policies and practices that underpin operational activities in support of diversity on its campuses. Given this pattern of evidence, the team recommends a focus visit in 2014/15 to enable the EWC to show evidence that it is making progress in the support of a more diverse student enrollment and in staff recruiting. The team recommends that EWC address the following objectives in preparing for the focus visit.

- College will demonstrate upward trends in percentage of ethnic diversity in the student body that is more reflective of the regional minority populations that EWC serves.
- College will demonstrate upward trends in the percentage of ethnic diversity of the employees of EWC that is more reflective of the regional minority population that EWC serves.
- College will develop a plan and implement a series of employee development workshops focusing on awareness, understanding and serving regional minority populations.
- College will demonstrate student engagement in multi-cultural diversity in curricular and co-curricular activities.
- EWC may wish to make use of input from members of the minority communities in its district in designing services to support minority students and in supporting the employment of minority staff.

**6. Organization change request**

None

**D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action** None

**E. Summary of Commission Review**

Timing for next comprehensive visit (academic year - 2020-2021)

Rationale for recommendation: The institution has successfully met the criteria for continued accreditation.

**VI. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS**

None

# REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

## Advancement Section

TO  
Eastern Wyoming College  
Torrington, Wyoming

October 25 – 27, 2010

## The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

### EVALUATION TEAM

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**ADVANCEMENT SECTION**

## **CONSULTATION OF TEAM**

### **A. Observations of Team**

The team observed that Eastern Wyoming College (EWC) has dedicated employees who keep the well being of the institution's students uppermost. The campus is well maintained and classrooms are current with instructional technology. The original campus buildings are being systematically updated to address energy efficiency.

The institution has an effective planning process, as is exemplified by the use of assessment of learning data in organizational planning and budgeting. In addition, the Foundations of Excellence (FOE) self-study is evidence of the willingness of EWC in systematically analyze its performance and to use the results of such an analysis to define specific action goals. Effective processes that involve planning, the collection and review of data related to student learning and other significant institutional goals, and the documentation of organizational performance improvements will be essential at EWC considers a systems-based approach to institutional accreditation.

EWC depends on state budget allocations for a significant proportion of its budget. In recent years, due to the current economic downturn that the State of Wyoming has shared with most of the rest of the nation, EWC has had to factor state allocation cuts into its budget. To date, the institution has been successful supporting educational and co-curricular offerings for students, in spite of budget challenges.

It is clear that EWC enjoys wide-spread support throughout its eastern Wyoming service area. The participation of educational leaders from a number of communities in the meeting Outreach Coordinators is evidence of the impact that EWC has on the local, rural K-12 districts in the college's service area.

EWC has made a well designed effort to address the needs of first year students. As is often the case with a community college, many of the freshmen class attending EWC are the first generation in their family to attend college. The FOE self study addressed directly the need for EWC to design, implement, and measure efforts to improve the first year experience of the institution's students. The team was very positively impressed with the college-wide participation in the FOE self study and in the comprehensiveness of the resulting Strategic Action Plans.

### **B. Consultations of Team**

The community of Torrington has experienced an important change in its economic base with the opening of new state prison just east of the city. The addition of several hundred new jobs in the community has had an impact on the local housing market, including the rental market students use in the community. In addition, there has been recent activity in the region in prospecting for petroleum and natural gas reserves. If these reserves develop, then the city of Torrington and the nearby region will likely experience additional growth.

EWC is likely to experience a significant impact on its service area population, on the services it may be called upon to provide, and on its enrollments due to the increased economic activity in the region.

Review of documentation on campus revealed that EWC does indeed have in place many of the systems that will be necessary for the institution to advance its efforts in on-going organization improvement. Indeed, it is clear that systems awareness and thinking are routine at EWC. The institution may wish to have staff participate in the various professional organizations related to organization quality improvement in higher learning, such as the College Quality Improvement Network (CQIN). CQIN and similar organizations can assist EWC in the design and development of internal and external review and reporting related to quality improvement activities. Documentation of quality improvement efforts and outcomes is essential to the process.

Participation in organizations such as CQIN might also be useful to EWC as the staff addresses how the various systems at the college inter-relate. On occasion, a review of systems by an outside review is helpful. While participation and a systems analysis must include the people who operate the system, and those whom it is intended to serve, it is not always easy to evaluate a system, or a group of systems, if one is living in the middle of it.

The team observed that EWC has an effective planning process that includes the review of data from assessment of student learning. Conversations with staff revealed that EWC has begun a process of designing and adopting institutional effectiveness measures and monitoring. The team believes that institutional effectiveness measurement is a critical process for ongoing institutional improvement. The team encourages EWC to continue the development of its institutional effectiveness model.

### **C. Significant Accomplishments**

The institution's efforts to support student success via its first year student initiative will be of even more crucial if the community of Torrington continues to experience economic development. A Foundations of Excellence (FOE) self study was conducted in 2009. The first year experience was a primary focus of this study. Teams of college staff addressed 10 institutional dimensions by examining data from surveys of students and college staff. The self study was published in August of 2009.

The FOE self study and the related Strategic Action Plans were provided to the Comprehensive Visit Team for review and comment. EWC identified 7 over-arching Strategic Action Plans. Each plan incorporated a large number of specific activities that would help the institution move toward a more integrated set of processes to enhance first year student academic success. In fact, the list of activities seems exhaustive in their extent, which is probably why EWC leadership and staff decided to focus on a more limited number of activities. Most of the activities identified in each of the 7 FOE plans are identified as "high priority" actions. It is laudable that so many FOE study teams value so highly their areas of investigation, and that college leadership has been supportive of this high level of staff energy and dedication. However, as the college moves forward in the implementation of the FOE plans, it

would be useful if some process could be identified to establish priorities among the many activities.

The Strategic Action Plans that resulted from the FOE self-study are:

- Plan 1: First year communication improvements
- Plan 2: Advising improvements
- Plan 3: College Studies improvements
- Plan 4: Retention initiatives
- Plan 5: Diversity improvements
- Plan 6: Assessment improvements
- Plan 7: Professional improvements

Each of the above goals has a focus on the first year experience. For example, improving assessment relates to improving the assessment of the first year experience of EWC's students, not to improving the institution's overall assessment of student learning efforts.

The team is very supportive of the institution's self identification of a need to address diversity in Plan 5. It is noted that the college team reviewing this institutional dimension of EWC did not rate the institution highly on this measure. Review of the intended activities related to Plan 5 revealed the beginnings of the foundations of an institutional plan for addressing diversity at EWC. The activities identified in Plan 5 are a promising start. A diversity plan should include measurable outcomes that the staff at EWC can use to determine whether or not the college is making progress in addressing and enhancing organizational diversity. As presently written, it is unclear how the institution would use the activity statements as metrics of organization progress in address Plan 5.

In addition, the activities in Plan 5 address the student body; no need for greater diversity within among EWC staff is addressed. It is understood that the FOE self study focus was on services for first year students. However, an institutionally diverse atmosphere cannot overlook the roles that instructors and staff play in the daily lives of students. Therefore, in designing a comprehensive strategy for institutional diversity it may be useful to address faculty and staff recruitment.

The effort undertaken for the FOE self study, in addition to preparing an HLC self study is clear evidence of the willingness of EWC to engage in self examination and to plan in a systematic fashion. Self examination is often a difficult process as it can reveal information that contradicts an examiner's pre-conceived ideas. The team charged with Chapter 9 found that 48% of EWC staff believed that EWC "does slight or not at all" in terms of preparing students to be involved in their community. The committee, for a variety of reasons, disagreed with this finding and rated the college very high on this particular measure. Indeed, this committee was the only team to rate EWC as a "B+" in a study dimension. The committee focused on learning gave EWC a "B" and all other groups rated the institution at the "C" or "D" levels on their dimensions. It is puzzling that the Chapter 9 team chose to disagree with the findings of their colleagues at EWC.

The assessment of student learning processes in place at EWC should also be a

source of important information related to the first year student experience at the college. Data from assessment of student learning are reviewed by instructional staff, institutional leadership, and the EWC Board of Trustees. Combined with the outcomes of the seven strategic initiatives identified in the FOE study, the results of assessment of student learning should enable institutional leaders to target specific goals for improvement of the first year experience and, thereby, of student retention and success.

*Team Recommendations for the  
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** Eastern Wyoming College, WY

**TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Continued Accreditation

**DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Will be a Special Emphasis comp visit, focusing on the First Year Experience, as part of the Foundations of Excellence principles.

**DATES OF REVIEW:** 10/25/10 - 10/27/10

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**Nature of Organization**

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**LEGAL STATUS:** Public

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**DEGREES AWARDED:** A

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**Conditions of Affiliation**

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**STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS:** None.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS:** Prior Commission approval required.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES:** New Commission policy on institutional change became effective July 1, 2010. Some aspects of the change processes affecting distance delivered courses and programs are still being finalized. This entry will be updated in early 2011 to reflect current policy. In the meantime, see the Commission's Web site for information on seeking approval of distance education courses and programs.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**REPORTS REQUIRED:** None

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**OTHER VISITS SCHEDULED:** None

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** Focused Visit in 2014-2015 on diversity.

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**Summary of Commission Review**

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**YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION:** 2000 - 2001

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**YEAR FOR NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION:** 2010 - 2011

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** 2020 – 2021

## ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** Eastern Wyoming College, WY

**TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Continued Accreditation \_X\_ No change to Organization Profile

### Educational Programs

	Program Distribution	Recommended Change (+ or -)
Programs leading to Undergraduate		
Associate	48	
Bachelors	0	
Programs leading to Graduate		
Masters	0	
Specialist	0	
First Professional		
Doctoral	0	

### Off-Campus Activities

<b>In-State:</b>  Campuses: Additional Locations: Course Locations:	<b>Present Activity:</b>  Douglas (EWC--Douglas Campus) Lusk (EWC) ; Newcastle (EWC) ; Wheatland (EWC) 8	<b>Recommended Change:</b> (+ or -)
<b>Out-of-State:</b>  Campuses: Additional Locations: Course Locations:	<b>Present Wording:</b>  None None None	<b>Recommended Change:</b> (+ or -)
<b>Out-of-USA:</b>  Campuses: Additional Locations: Course Locations:	<b>Present Wording:</b>  None None None	<b>Recommended Change:</b> (+ or -)

### Distance Education Programs:

Present Offerings:

Associate - 24.0101 Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies (Associate in Interdisciplinary Studies) offered

via Internet;Open broadcast; Associate - 43.0104 Criminal Justice/Safety Studies (Associate in Criminal Justice) offered via Internet;Open broadcast; Associate - 52.0204 Office Management and Supervision (Associate in Business Administration) offered via Internet;Open broadcast

**Recommended Change:**

(+ or -)

**Correspondence Education Programs:**

Present Offerings:

None