

Mineral Area College

Application to Join the Academic Quality Improvement Program

Respectfully submitted to:

The Higher Learning Commission
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400
Chicago, Illinois, 60602-2504



October 25, 2005

Contact:

Dr. Terry Barnes, President
Mineral Area College
5270 Flat River Road
P.O. BOX 1000
Park Hills, Missouri 63601-1000
Telephone: (573) 518-2146
Fax: (573) 518-2164
E-mail: tbarnes@mineralarea.edu

*Evidence of Compliance with Accreditation Expectations
(Questions 1 – 2)*

Question 1: How does your organization currently demonstrate that it meets each of the Higher Learning Commission’s five *Criteria for Accreditation*?

Criteria 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.

- **Core Component 1(a):** *The organization’s mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization’s commitments.*

At its April 14, 2005 meeting, the Mineral Area College Board of Trustees approved the modification of the college’s mission, values and goal statements. The revisions to the statements were derived from input from all faculty and staff during in-service break-out sessions, and were finalized by the Faculty Forum and the President’s cabinet. These modifications form the basis for the revision of the strategic plan.

A primary goal of the college is to inform every constituent group about the mission of the college. Therefore, the college will maintain the document’s consistency by publishing the mission statement in college publications and other mediums of communication.

- **Core Component 1(b):** *In its mission documents, the organization recognized the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.*

Mineral Area College’s mission, vision and values statements emphasize student diversity. Within the mission statement are seven specifically adopted organizational priorities, one of which is diversity. That priority states: “Develop a faculty and staff that are committed to respecting students’ diversity of culture and educational backgrounds, and equally committed to providing diverse learning opportunities to address students’ unique needs.”

Additionally, a goal of the college is to “provide a variety of activities and events which are responsive to the advancement and enhancement of the region’s diversity and quality of life.” The mission revision has provided an additional mechanism for the college to increase the number of cultural opportunities and levels of awareness for its students, thus modeling the importance of diversity to the community.

- **Core Component 1(c):** *Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization.*

The mission emphasizes Mineral Area College’s commitment to preparing students transferring to a college or university, and helping them live and work successfully in a technologically complex, culturally diverse world. The needs of the region were a driving force in the revision and improvement of the mission statement. Further to this commitment, the college has adopted several goals to clarify the mission, including dedication to general education, college/university

transfer, career and technical education, developmental education, customized and contract training, continuing education, student services, and community and cultural services. Thus, the mission sets a clear foundation for the college to connect with its planning and programs.

- **Core Component 1(d):** *The organization's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.*

Mineral Area College is governed by an elected six-member Board of Trustees. Each member's abilities, education and business-driven opinions, and community involvement allow him/her to draw objective conclusions regarding the needs of the college. Each trustee is elected for a period of six years. The trustees meet monthly to conduct college business and to monitor and adopt policy. Additionally, the Board of Trustees hire a president with authority to effectively manage the organization, thus enabling the organization's chief administrative officers to exercise effective leadership.

Within the college's organizational priorities, emphasis is placed on operational effectiveness and efficiency by maintaining a close relationship with state licensing agencies. This relationship ensures programs operate effectively within the college structure and are in compliance with state regulations.

Finally, college-wide participation in the collaborative process was essential in revising the mission, values, and goal statements over the last academic year. This collegial approach has succeeded in making Mineral Area College personnel committed to supporting the mission and pursuing its fulfillment.

- **Core Component 1(e):** *The organization upholds and protects its integrity.*

Within Mineral Area College's organizational structure, the mission statement and its components are incorporated into the objectives of each department or subgroup. This can be evidenced by examination of the individual department/subgroup's mission statements. These departments operate under the authority of regulatory agencies such as the Higher Learning Commission and local, State and Federal licensing boards. Each organization continues to monitor the college according to their specific adopted rules and regulations. Therefore, some departments are in a continuous circle of rewriting, improving, and involvement in some form of general or specific audit.

Regarding its financial integrity and obligations, the college has externally audited financial statements available for inspection by the public. For over a decade, the college has received unqualified opinions in the audited statements. In addition, the college has diligently prepared for a possible visit by the Missouri State Auditor. These activities have revealed that the college has presented itself accurately and honestly to the public.

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.**

- **Core Component 2(a):** *The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.*

Mineral Area College continually evaluates existing programs and plans new programs that have good potential for need, integrity, and application to community, state, and nationwide employment of graduates. National, state, and local trend studies regarding business impact are included in the departmental directors' yearly goals. The goals and budget requests related to incorporating these plans are forwarded to the deans for further inquiry and application.

In addition, all Career and Technical programs at Mineral Area College have active advisory committees utilized by the college. Each committee represents the major businesses and organizations within the college taxing district. Most of these committees meet quarterly in order to give the college valuable information to improve and change their respective programs and assist in planning, and executing new programs. This assures the educational environment of the college is supportive of innovation and change.

Certificate programs are encouraged for those who have the ability and talent for a specific career field. The certificated students are also encouraged to return to the campus to complete an advanced degree after receiving immediate employment as a result of the certificate program.

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

In its mission documents, Mineral Area College emphasizes life-long learning opportunities for its stakeholders. For the college's faculty and staff, professional development opportunities are provided, such as college classes, graduate level courses, continuing education, seminar attendance and memberships in professional organizations. This proactive effort is important to maintain momentum for preserving and strengthening quality within the faculty and curricula and the institution in general. Additionally, enhancement grants made available via sources such as the Mineral Area College Foundation and Funding For Results assist both the college's instructional and non-teaching faculty in improving its services to the students.

With the passage of a \$6 million dollar bond issue (2002), the college recently completed plans that included expansion and remodeling of the Fine Arts Building, a new outreach center in Fredericktown, a new baseball field, and new/renovated faculty offices and classrooms. The completion of these projects evidences the organization's commitment to providing state-of-the-art facilities assisting in the achievement of educational goals.

Other programs identified by the college and/or community as feasible but not ready for immediate implementation are maintained in yearly budget requests, goals and objectives, and advisory committee meeting minutes. The college will continue to explore application and use of new programs throughout the fiscal year and through updated goals and objectives until approved or no longer found to be a viable educational program. Once implemented, all programs are given continuing appropriate budgetary and professional support from the administration to maintain their growth and integrity.

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

During the last seven years, the college has been guided by its long-range planning document, **Vision 2000**. This document was developed by input from all stakeholder groups and was adopted by the Mineral Area College Board of Trustees in 1998 and **updated** in 2000. Vision 2000 was the catalyst for the implementation of new degree programs, an online Associates of Applied Science degree, enhancement of the Human Resources Development program, the creation of the Fredericktown Outreach Center, the Perryville Higher Education Center, and the expansion of the Fine Arts Building. A thorough analysis of this plan along with its stated objectives is evidence that the college has a history of achieving its planning goals and also allows for the reprioritization of goals due to external and internal factors.

A yearly presentation before the Board of Trustees allows the Deans the opportunity to present their individual departmental programs' goals and objectives for continued support and funding. Program Directors submit collected data for evidence of success and achievement. Using data analysis, this measurement allows for definitive decision-making processes for ongoing changes and improvement. The college's administrative structure uses this information to evaluate program successes to determine community needs and services that may not necessarily be financial successes but are considered necessary for community involvement in the college district.

Since implementing its assessment plan for student learning in 1997, members of the assessment committee and the President's cabinet frequently use information collected in surveys, focus groups, and general education assessment exams. Minutes of these meetings provide evidence that the institution supports an environment of continuous improvement.

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

Long-range strategic planning will continue to be a vital part of Mineral Area College's mission, evidenced in the need to plan beyond a fiscal year for instructional support that keeps in step with innovative teaching and learning. Long-range strategic planning is also employed to adjust with and respond to the life-changing career and personal challenges and successes of students. As many as eight to ten years of planning, funding, building, and implementation may go into a program before it is recognized as a new viable part of the college.

Planning processes link with budgeting processes as a measure of sound business practices. However, as previously noted, for the good of the community and college, the college does offer, assist with, and emphasize programs that are not necessarily a financial enhancement to the college but may anticipate or respond to community need for cultural comparison or enhancement.

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.

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

Within all of Mineral Area College's course syllabi and individual/program assessment plans, student learning outcomes are fully integrated, as these outcomes are directly related to the college's mission as a transfer and career-related institution. College faculty is responsible for measuring student learning within the courses and programs via several assessment methods, which faculty has assisted in developing and implementing. The institution has endeavored to involve faculty in this process to determine whether the outcomes achieved are accurately reflected in each plan.

Mineral Area College's assessment committee (established in 1996) has proactively reported its analysis of student data to administration, faculty, students and other appropriate collegiate constituencies. In addition, the following score types are reported to the curriculum committee and are reflected in the minutes of its meetings:

- English and math entrance and exit scores
- CAAP exit exam scores
- C-Base examination scores
- Graduate survey satisfaction scores
- Nursing, law enforcement and radiology program passage rates
- Required accountability reports on federally funded career education programs.

- **Core Component 3(b):** *The organization values and supports effective teaching.*

Mineral Area College conducts national searches for the hiring of all full-time faculty, enabling the college to employ highly qualified instructors who have the essential academic preparation and/or extensive private-sector experience.

To enhance effective teaching strategies, continuing education and professional affiliation for Mineral Area College's employees are considered a priority. During the school year, faculty and instructional support staff are provided the opportunity to take continuing education courses including courses related to higher education accreditation, courses responding to advanced technology, on-line correspondence courses regarding issues in the instructors' fields, and other workshops, conferences, and seminars either provided or sponsored by the college in order to promote and increase professional development. The college assists efforts made by the faculty or staff for personal improvement and enhancement of their teaching and learning styles.

Through its Human Resource Development program, the college encourages and supports life-long learning by offering tuition waivers and reimbursements. The college presents in-house courses and seminars, and uses college and community experts to help facilitate programs. In addition, full-time faculty and adjunct instructors receive financial assistance for membership in professional organizations.

- **Core Component 3(c):** *The organization creates effective learning environments.*

Mineral Area College strives to promote a prosperous physical learning environment. The main campus in Park Hills includes eleven well-equipped computer laboratories totaling over 750 terminals that are widely available for student and employee use. Recently, the college made a substantial investment to improve the seating and desk/table arrangements and furniture style which is helping to contribute to better student learning and assisting disabled students. Many of the classrooms have now incorporated multi-media stations for instructor use which contains a camera reader, a transparency projector, videotape and DVD players, and a computer for multimedia applications.

The college's classrooms are designed to accommodate 25 to 30 students per instructor, with an average ratio of 19 students to one faculty member. This size assists student learning, allowing and encouraging students to participate in class without feeling overwhelmed as they might in a large "lecture hall" environment. Some of the classes are kept even smaller to encourage individual student achievement. While some colleges consider this type of class an "honors" course, this college considers it as a good opportunity to drive the student further than he or she might have previously considered.

With regard to Mineral Area College's satellite campuses, a new 10,000 square foot outreach center in Fredericktown (20 miles south of the main campus) constructed in 2004 includes six classrooms, one computer lab and an interactive television classroom. The Perryville Higher Education Center (50 miles southeast) was enhanced in 2002 by the renovation of one of the buildings on the St. Mary's of the Barrens Seminary campus. The center has eight classrooms, computer lab, ITV classroom and room for library expansion. By providing these facilities, the college demonstrates its commitment to student academic achievement throughout its service region.

The college has also significantly increased the number of distance learning courses available to students over the last five years via online, interactive television (ITV) and telecourse options. Taking advantage of the synergy created by the success of online learning, the college was granted permission by the Higher Learning Commission, effective January 2005, to offer its Criminal Justice Associate of Applied Science degree entirely online. The college is planning to develop two more online degree plans within two years. The achievement of expanding distance delivery options is evidence that the college employs new technologies which enhance learning opportunities for its students.

- **Core Component 3(d):** *The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.*

Several sources of educational assistance are available to Mineral Area College students. The Learning Center employs instructors who work with students requiring remediation in reading, writing, and mathematics skills. Assistance is also available to any student who desires assistance with college level courses in English and mathematics. The college also utilizes the

EXCEL/Student Support Services program, a government-funded TRIO program available to those low-income, first-generation college students or students with disabilities who are in need of tutoring and enhancing their learning techniques. These departments ensure that *all* students have an opportunity to learn. Also, for those students with disabilities who require other forms of assistance at the college, the **ACCESS office** is available to supply readers, interpreters, extended testing facilities, and other necessities.

Furthermore, the college has greatly improved its **C.H. Cozean Library** facilities within the last few years. The college has advanced the size of its on-site library references to 33,000 volumes, 179 periodical subscriptions, as well as electronic databases, video recordings, and catalogued holdings. Mineral Area College is a member of MOBIUS, the **Missouri Bibliographic Information Users System**, a consortium of academic libraries with member colleges and universities in the state of Missouri plus the state library and cooperating partners. Through MOBIUS, students have access to over 17 million items from around the state.

Mineral Area College is also a member of the **Gateway Consortium**, a cooperative initiative including East Central College, Jefferson College, and St. Charles Community College. The consortium provides a broad selection of over 120 distance learning courses that can be applied toward the completion of an Associate of Arts degree. Also, the consortium provides training for faculty who teach online courses and provides a full-time staff member on campus one day a week for training and troubleshooting. The consortium is also available to students who need support while taking online classes. The colleges value the consortium as it supports students, staff and students in using technology effectively.

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.

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

Mineral Area College's emphasis on academic success exhibits to the community and its stakeholders the significance placed on continuous learning vital to its mission, vision, and core values. The college accentuates the success of student academic achievements by sponsoring academic fraternal organizations and by recognizing outstanding scholarship. For those students whose high grade point average warrants inclusion, a published dean's list is made available each semester to the public. Also, students who graduate with a cumulative grade point average of 3.50 or higher are recognized during commencement exercises, along with outstanding students from each instructional division.

As the college expands its ongoing learning opportunities, entry level and remedial college courses (such as Elementary Algebra and Basic Writing) designed for preparing students for successful college-level work. Additionally, the college has encouraged new course curriculum that pushes the students to reach higher into specific fields of study. For example, the nursing degree programs have bridged into advanced, specified levels of certification. Also, Public

Safety requirements of 510 hours of education for police officers have advanced to 1,000 hours of challenging levels of achievement at the college.

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

In order to comply with the Missouri Department of Higher Education's policy on general education that was mandated in 2002, a college-wide committee was charged with the responsibility of submitting institutional competencies, courses and credit hours, non-course experiences, and associated assessments in the various fields of discipline. These reflect the eight state-level goals and knowledge areas of the policy. Consequently, the general education requirements of all associate degree programs exceed the typical requirements for an associate's degree. Mineral Area College's 42-hour **general education program** is structured so student learning encompasses a breadth of knowledge and skills integral to its educational programs and is reflective of the college's mission, vision, and core values.

After reviewing, assessing, and tracking graduates from specific certificate and Associate of Applied Science programs, the minimum standards were significantly increased at the college for the benefit of community and individual students. State regulations and certification levels are no longer the only standard of educational achievement. The scope of the programs was broadened to allow students to learn the skills and competencies required for employment.

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

To ensure institutional and state academic objectives are being met, all Mineral Area College graduates are required to take an exit exam, the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency, or CAAP, which covers five areas: writing, science reasoning, reading, math, and critical thinking. The CAAP test results are distributed to the college's administration and academic/career-technical departments to better inform them of the achievements of the students and what academic issues raised by the CAAP might need to be addressed in forthcoming semesters.

In addition, a new general education assessment exam, the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), developed by the Rand Corporation, is being evaluated as a possible replacement for the CAAP exam as it delves deeper into the critical thinking and analytic writing tasks essential to the students' futures. The CLA provides higher-order thinking assignments which can more accurately reflect the effectiveness of the college's curriculum in preparing its students for "real world" demands. As with the CAAP, these results are disseminated in a similar fashion to the involved parties to assess their programs' effectiveness and be used as a tool for accountability.

Also, many career-technical degree and certificate programs at the college use advisory committees as an active forum of continuing education and advancement for their individual programs. This process enables faculty and staff to keep current with business trends, resulting in students who are more aware of their future respective career fields.

- **Core Component 4(d):** *The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.*

Mineral Area College provides effective controls to ensure that knowledge is acquired in a fair and accountable manner. Academic honesty policies, including a student appeal process, are published in college publications and featured on the college's [website](#). The process is conducted by the respective dean and includes the appropriate faculty and staff. Faculty is also required to include a statement of academic honesty in all course syllabi. By educating students about the importance of honesty, the college will be in a better position to maintain its integrity.

Regarding the college's career-technical curriculum, the programs at the college integrate an ethical guide or requirement in their own mission statements. The 'code of ethics' is considered a foundation of the programs and is respectfully followed in all situations.

Criterion Five: Engagement and Service. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

- **Core Component 5(a):** *The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.*

Mineral Area College has consistently utilized and benefited from the input from area advisory committees for its academic, career and technical programs. These community leaders make recommendations, advise, steer, and direct specific course instruction with the support and provision of resources of the college. These advisory committees provide the mechanism for environmental scanning that is necessary to understand the changing needs of the community.

A specific example of the college's response to the needs of the community, region, and state was the creation of a new department, the Department of Public Safety. The result has been the community saving a substantial amount of expenditure for education and training of all public safety state certified employees since 1994. This process required the cooperation of the community, Board of Trustees, administration, students, faculty, and staff to make it successful. This department has now expanded from offering a Criminal Justice Associate of Science degree to offering an Associate of Applied Science degree, a bridge to a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree, plus programs for becoming a State Certified Licensed Police Officer and State Licensed Fireman, with requisite life-long continuing education.

The college also reacted to the wishes of local, regional, and state-wide entities requiring continuing education. For example, most governmental agencies such as police, fire, paramedic, Emergency Medical Dispatch and 911 operators require advanced continuing education hours ranging from 16 to 48 hours per person per year. The application of new course content and availability of these continuing education courses has been greatly increased on the main college and satellite campuses.

- **Core Component 5(b):** *The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.*

The college continuously evaluates its commitment to the areas served, ensuring the programs and classes offered are in line with the needs of the community. However, when circumstances dictate and an instructor is not available to teach certain courses required by a program, the college contracts with individual agencies for this specific course instruction. Additionally, outreach programs such as the Senior Scholars program and services like river water testing by the college's science department illustrate Mineral Area College's dedication to its constituencies.

Another element of community engagement is the implementation of an extensive internship program utilized by many degree and certificate programs at the college. This program is a conduit for career placement, familiarization, social acquisition and practical application of knowledge. Graduating students will gain job skills that are difficult to obtain in a regular classroom and guarantees that students will be better prepared for their respective career paths.

- **Core Component 5(c):** *The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.*

Mineral Area College addresses the immediate needs of its incoming first-time freshman as well as returning students by offering courses designed to assist them in making career decisions. Examples of these would be the Career Planning, Career Search and Principles of College Success classes. These courses are designed to assist students to be prepared for the choices facing them career-wise, as well as helping them develop an understanding of the discipline necessary to pass college courses.

Customized/contract training is managed through the Career and Technical dean's office. Small and large corporations and/or industry can utilize the college's resources to ensure the work population has the necessary skills and knowledge required for successful business practices. The college believes community involvement is a necessary and vital component in the framework of community communication and cultural improvement. The closer the college is to the true nomenclature of "community," the stronger both college and community can be.

Over the past several decades, the college has also engaged in partnerships with local K-12 school districts. The college operates a summer "scholars' academy" by hosting 250 students during the month of June for exposure to courses in technology, math, reading, and humanities. The college is also an active member of the Mineral Area Interactive Network, which comprises eleven regional area school districts and the college, so dual credit courses for high school students and professional development opportunities for faculty can be shared with reduced cost.

In addition, the college has been engaged in a "2 + 2" agreement with **Central Methodist University**. For over 16 years, CMU has provided baccalaureate and master's degree programs in education, psychology, nursing, and business at Mineral Area College's main campus. The college also hosts the **University of Missouri extension site** on campus which provides graduate level courses via interactive television and personalized computer training to the community. These partnerships enable students to continue their education after completing their Associate of Arts degree at the college without having to move out of the area.

Finally, in the last six months, local needs for specific advancements in health and safety entities have mandated the college instruct and manage a new two-year paramedic degree program. The Coordinating Board of Higher Education swiftly approved the application for this program and course instruction for this degree will begin this fall.

- **Core Component 5(d):** *Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.*

To illustrate its commitment to community involvement, Mineral Area College encourages private, public, and governmental meetings on the college campus throughout the year as a courtesy service. Additionally, the college partners with the Mineral Area Arts Council to present several annual programs, including the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and the Chautauqua festival. The college also hosts special groups and organizations needing outdoor space and indoor bathroom facilities because of the college's belief that it is good for the community. Examples of a few of these groups and organizations are Relay For Life, Missouri Regional Boy Scouts, Regional Math, Science, and English Fairs, the World Youth Science Exam, High School Cross-Country Competitions, and local, state and federal political forums. The college is one of the only all-access entities in the region that can accommodate large crowds with safety needs.

The college also allows the State of Missouri's Department of Corrections to use its facilities for academy training and other required state instruction. The college has become a regional training site for all police, sheriff's deputies, firefighters and other agencies that need high quality training rooms, buildings and outdoor site training locations for advanced education.

Question 2: Answer both parts of this question candidly and substantively.

2A. *Through what specific actions has your organization demonstrated its responsiveness to the Commission in addressing specific accreditation concerns or challenges identified by the Commission's last comprehensive evaluation?*

In 1998, the Commission conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Mineral Area College for continuing accreditation of the institution. In their "*Report of a Visit to Mineral Area College*," the evaluators recommended that the college be awarded continued accreditation. "Having reviewed all available information, the visiting team concluded that Mineral Area College satisfactorily meets the General Institutional Requirements for continued accreditation." (p.4) Furthermore, the team members agreed that Mineral Area College met the Criteria for Accreditation and recommended that the next scheduled accreditation visit take place in 2007-2008.

In the 1998 report, the evaluators identified two challenges: [1] the team found that there was an insufficient number of general education courses in most of the Vocational/Technical programs. The team noted that the Associate of Science Degrees offered at Mineral Area College were not in "sync with the model common to institutions of higher education" (p.28); and [2] there was a lack of understanding in the college's assessment plan on how feedback would be used to improve programs at the college. The evaluators requested a progress report be completed by the college addressing these two challenges.

In September 2000, the college submitted its progress report, addressing the two identified challenges. As indicated in its report, Mineral Area College has made the following progress in the areas of assessment and general education:

- All Associate of Science Degree plans have been restructured, providing the number of general education hours consistent with nationally recognized models. These degree plans now exceed the minimum requirement of 25% general education hours.
- Processes were implemented for making curricular and institutional changes based on assessment results.
- Faculty was provided workshops to gain knowledge of common feedback loop processes to inform curriculum development, instruction and student services.

The “*Staff Analysis of Institutional Report*” dated February 2001, concluded Mineral Area College adequately addressed the two concerns of the evaluation team.

2B. *What specific actions or activities are you planning to take in order to address any accreditation concerns or challenges from the Commission’s last comprehensive evaluation that are still active issues?*

The following concerns (in ***bold italics***) noted by the previous comprehensive evaluation team are addressed below:

Although a Human Resources team has been formed, there is no single person or office with the sole responsibility of Human Resource Management, employee orientation, standardized hiring processes, investigation of personnel issues, and maintenance of records.

- Since the new administration was hired in Fall 2001, several improvements regarding Human Resources have taken place. An additional full-time person was hired in the Payroll/Benefits Office and the office space available for the staff has doubled as a result of a \$6 million dollar bond issue that was passed in April 2002. Basic and intermediate training has been provided for the two employees responsible for Human Resources, benefits and payroll. The President’s cabinet has standardized hiring practices among the three divisions of the college and professional development opportunities in Human Resources were provided to the staff. Also, the administration is completing a revision of board policy that addresses the investigation of personnel issues, hiring processes, and maintenance of records. A medical insurance committee comprised of faculty, staff, administration, and retirees was formed to recommend insurance coverage options for eligible employees. In August 2005, a staff and faculty benefits program manual was developed and distributed to all employees.

Although coordination has increased among employee evaluation systems, there is still little consistency between the evaluation forms used for the Vocational/Technical and academic faculty. Moreover, there is need to clearly indicate the relationship of evaluation to improvement of instruction.

- After several months of work and service, the Deans' Council and Faculty Forum re-designed and streamlined the teaching evaluation form. The criteria listed on the form fall under three major categories and focus the improvement of instruction. The Mineral Area College Board of Trustees approved the changes on December 16, 2004.

Although the college appears to have addressed the 1988 NCA Team concern about communication, some personnel and the Self-Study survey indicate that a perceptual problem still exists.

- Several examples substantiate that communication channels have improved since 1998:
 - The President meets on a monthly basis with the leadership of both the faculty and classified staff to disseminate information, address concerns, and answer questions. The presidents of both the faculty and classified staff organizations also provide a report to the Board of Trustees at their monthly meetings.
 - Each month, the entire college faculty meets with the administration to disseminate information, address concerns, and answer questions.
 - In 2004, the Mineral Area College [website](#) was redesigned with the input of faculty, staff and administration. The new website lists additional information pertaining to the processes of the college.

The College is growing both in physical plant size and student enrollment. It does not appear that plans are in place to address human resources needs so that a full-time faculty and staff are not overburdened with increased workloads.

- As mentioned previously, the [Vision 2000](#) long-range planning document developed with input from all constituent groups includes human resources needs.

Additionally, in Fall 2002, with input from faculty and staff, a list of human resources needs was generated and has been included in reports to the Board of Trustees and in budget planning documents. This list is reviewed and revised on a yearly basis.

The following concern, noted by the evaluation team of the voluntary focused visit of September 2004 concerning a new online AAS degree in criminal justice, is addressed below:

While Mineral Area College has provided for assessment of its graduates in general education, adequate provisions for assessment of student learning in the Criminal Justice major, and perhaps other majors outside the scope of the visit, are currently lacking...

- The Criminal Justice Department has progressed in the development of individual and program assessment plans. Within the last year, the department has developed individual course assessment plans, with learning objectives identified for each course. The department is also working on the development of an assessment plan that summarized the results of the data collected from individual course assessments and provides information from indirect measures of learning relevant to the program. The department hopes to finalize the formal plan within one year.

Evidence of Understanding and Commitment to Continuous Improvement
(Questions 3 –6)

Question 3: Why does your institution wish to participate in AQIP? What benefits do you hope to gain?

Mineral Area College wishes to participate in AQIP because the College will be able to formalize the systematic quality improvement processes and efforts already underway since 2001. The College's Trustees, president, president's cabinet, faculty and staff have systematically reviewed and explored the differences between the AQIP and PEAQ processes since the spring of 2004. We believe that the AQIP process for maintaining accreditation is an excellent fit for the current culture and human resource fabric of the institution. The institution has experienced a series of unexpected and dynamic changes since 2001, including changes in president, deans and business manager, style and engagement of leadership across employee groups, and severe external impact of cuts in state aid since 2001, infrastructure revitalization, establishment of outreach centers, and enrollment factors. By choosing the AQIP process, current and future improvement efforts will have a greater potential for successful integration.

It is no coincidence that the College has been using AQIP approaches and principles for four years. Since 2001, the administrative, faculty, and employee leadership groups have made a natural and critical shift in thinking and in action from a reactionary traditional retrospective PEAQ evaluation process to a future-based pro-active continuous quality improvement way of doing business—everyday. AQIP has resonated with our college community as the preferential motivator we needed to ensure planning and improvement efforts are not bogged down, and that we take seriously the measurement of our effectiveness with performance indicators that helps us sustain our mission goals.

Question 4: Since broad understanding of, support for, and commitment to a continuous improvement approach and AQIP are essential for their success, what is the current level and extent of these elements in your organization? What is the evidence that key groups in your organization (e.g., Board, CEO, senior leaders, faculty, and staff) understand the nature of continuous improvement efforts and the demands of AQIP?

In the summer of 2001, through retirement, the College lost its arts and science, and career and technical education deans. During the fall 2001, the long-time former president Dr. Dixie Kohn announced his early retirement to pursue other opportunities with the University of Missouri-St. Louis. In late 2001, Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education Assistant Commissioner for Community Colleges and Technical Education, Dr. Terry Barnes was recruited by the Mineral Area College Board of Trustees to become the fifth president. By July 2002, the business manager and the dean of students also retired.

Dr. Terry L. Barnes possesses a bachelor's and master's degree in business administration, and a PhD in community college leadership, and had spent over 30 years in colleges and universities as a teacher, student services, and chief academic practitioner in educational quality and performance improvement. Barnes introduced the technique of zero-based budgeting, quality assessment and quality improvement processes into nearly every facet of the organization from

the very beginning of his tenure. During this time Barnes used the talents of the two excellent academic deans, Dr. Steve Kurtz and Mr. Gil Kennon, recruited by Dr. Kohn prior to his departure, and recruited his own senior-level administrators, including the replacement dean of students, Ms Jean Merrill-Doss, business manager, Mr. Rusty Straughan, and assistant to the president, Ms. Peggy Ropelle. Each has significant academic preparation and strong backgrounds in business administration, college administration, and continuous quality improvement practice. By the start of the fiscal year 2002, all senior level administrators understood, and could easily communicate the nature of continuous improvement efforts especially with our Mineral Area College circumstances. The timely talent at the helm of Mineral Area College has ensured that our institution will remain financially strong and reliable.

Starting in July, 2001 and continuing through fiscal year 2002 and 2003, the College experienced a 38% reduction in state appropriations from about \$6.2 million to a little less than \$5 million. Because of Terry Barnes' leadership and experience, he understands the operations of the College and was quick to act with quality improvement processes and procedures. The college administrators inherited a cash flow problem with less than 10 working days of cash in the checking account and no real invested cash reserves. As a consequence, the College was forced to implement a zero-based budget, and make some drastic cost savings and cost cutting decisions. The administrators, with the support of the Board of Trustees worked carefully and thoughtfully with all the employee groups including the department chairs, Faculty Forum and Classified Staff employee groups, to set quality performance standards and dashboard-like indicators that often conflicted with many traditionally cherished and valued College goals. Nevertheless, since 2001 to present (four years), the College's liquid cash and cash reserves have grown by more than \$4,000,000. As a result of refinancing some old debt, and increase cash reserves, the College credit rating has been up-graded from an A to AA rating.

In 2002, \$7.25 million dollars of general obligation bonds, and borrowed funds were passed to up-grade multiple situations of deferred maintenance and expand the main campus infrastructure, and construct a new outreach center in Fredericktown. The College administration worked hard to teach employee groups that change is difficult and that quality improvement, in spite of a different administration and unmerciful cuts in state aid, and to think "outside the box" in order to present solutions to problems instead of just reporting problems and placing responsibility of solving problems in the hand of administration. The president of the College and the administrators continue to this day to teach and instruct on the value of continuous quality improvement and lead by example the necessity of setting goals, establishing budgets, setting appropriate performance levels, measuring effectiveness, and feeding back the results for continuous improvement. Even though quality improvement efforts have been in existence informally since 2001, the formal structure of AQIP will enable the College to successfully structure its quality improvement goals and processes into the future.

As the number issues and conditions improved since 2001, positive momentum was gained. With a PEAQ comprehensive evaluation on the 2008 horizon, as early as spring, 2004, the College's administration, faculty, and staff started exploring and examining the new standards of the PEAQ process, as well as equipping our minds to understand the new AQIP approach as a way to maintain accreditation. Consequently, several faculty and administrators attended the 2003 and 2004 Annual HLC Convention.

Dr. John Jazinski, a former faculty member at Northwest Missouri State University, expert on quality in higher education, and an AQIP consultant, was invited to speak at an all-college employee forum held in August 2004. Information was presented by Dr. Jazinski to reflect on the pros- and cons- of selecting the AQIP approach. At the conclusion of Dr. Jazinski's presentation, the College formed its first Accreditation Steering Committee to begin focusing on the best approach for the College.

As a follow-on, in January 2005, Dr. John Rucker, Dean of Instruction at Crowder College (an initial AQIP community college), visited with all employee groups of the College, for the purpose of probing deeper into the features and benefits of the AQIP approach. At the end of the day, the major stakeholder groups of the College developed a mutual agreement to explore further the option of joining AQIP. The President also provided every College employee the opportunity to attend workshops conducted by the Higher Learning Commission at St. Louis, and at Jefferson City, sponsored by St. Louis Community College and the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

The leaders of the major employee constituencies (faculty and classified staff) agreed to formally establish an all-volunteer Accreditation Steering Committee formally charged with making a recommendation to the President and Board of Trustees whether Mineral Area College should join AQIP, and with attending and obtaining additional information from the Higher Learning Commission Annual Convention, and talking to respective constituent groups. The committee met over the next two months before unanimously agreeing to make the formal application to join AQIP.

Since 2004, the Mineral Area College Board of Trustees has been kept informed on the accreditation decision-making process and especially how the AQIP approach works and its features and benefits. On August 11, 2005, the Mineral Area College Board of Trustees approved the Accreditation Steering Committee's recommendation to the administration to submit an application to join AQIP. Every College employee had the opportunity to review and provide input into this AQIP application process, and knows the importance of this decision.

Almost everyone employed by the College should have some understanding of AQIP, because it has been the basis of the major day-to-day, short-range, and long-range activities. The external threats and opportunities plus the leadership skills exhibited by the president's cabinet toward quality improvement efforts has provided the employees with the sufficient knowledge to determine whether the AQIP model would work effectively for the College.

Question 5: What are your plans for integrating participation in AQIP into your organization's current agenda? Are there major events on the horizon (e.g. a change in leadership, a major contract negotiation, budget cuts), and how are you planning to address them or integrate them into your quality efforts?

Mineral Area College, as all community colleges in Missouri, exists in a time of enormous changes in public funding levels, public confidence in the efficiencies of higher education, and the need to restore Missouri state appropriation back to pre-FY 2002 levels to avoid raising tuition to crisis levels. Certainly connected to these issues are the need for selecting and funding new career and technical programs of instruction to enhance the employment possibilities of students, and the necessity to evaluate and possibly eliminate programs that are no longer relevant or productive. Also, mandatory costs continue to creep up with or without state aid or local property tax increases, and require budgeting decisions to be sharp and precise, including utility costs (+4.5%), information technology (+14%), supplies and services (+4%), medical insurance (+4-10%), retirement benefits (6.5%). These constraints make it difficult for the institutions to direct more money to the instruction of students when 80% of our costs are tied up in personnel and fringe benefits.

Enhancing and improving internal processes and systems such as long-range planning, collection and credit payment policies, improving the teaching and learning processes, improving success in college courses after remediation, improving graduation rates, improving value-added from general education development, improving employee and employer satisfaction after training and education, improving student data-collection and information systems, reducing errors and enhancing communications in payroll and human resources, and enrollment management techniques are absolutely essential. Mineral Area College has been employing AQIP principles for four years, is enthusiastically committed to quality improvement, efficiency, effectiveness, and has determined that AQIP is the appropriate approach for the College. Since 2004, Mineral Area College has been transforming AQIP categories and approaches from informal concepts to formal contexts as its means of establishing priorities and developing systems to allocate resources based on quality assessment.

In the fall, 2005 the Accreditation Steering Committee took one more step to make sure that all employee groups understood the nature of continuous improvement efforts and the demands of the AQIP approach. On August 15, 2005, the College administered the AQIP Examiner to each employee to help faculty and staff understand how important each of us are in furthering the efforts to improve the quality of how we understand what we do, how we communicate, and identify issues that we need to further clarify and examine for employee groups. The results have been received and forwarded to Dr. Kent Farnsworth, former President of Crowder College, an initial AQIP institution, who has agreed to serve as an outside consultant to help the College formulate potential action projects to take to strategy forum. Approximately 250 full- and part-time employees will attend the session on January 14, 2006.

Mineral Area College anticipates no major changes in the foreseeable future. The administration is stable, the budget management system is sound, and there are no issues regarding employee contracts other than trying to give some decent cost of living raises. Planning and budgeting are interlinked and currently based on AQIP processes, as we have been carrying them out.

Therefore, the College does not anticipate any internal or external forces impeding participation in AQIP, even though the College foresees a new capital improvement (no-tax increase) bond issue about 2008. As employee positions are filled, descriptions for all job openings will emphasize Mineral Area College as an AQIP institution. New-faculty mentoring programs will incorporate AQIP principles in order to ensure that employees are familiar with the process.

The College is proud of the fact that it has been using AQIP approaches as it renews its long- and short-range agendas and will continue to do so, with even more effectiveness and agility.

Question 6: How are you planning to organize your quality effort? Explain which current or new structures (committees, systems, etc.) you will use to organize and run your improvement efforts. What organizational systems, structures, and other resources (e.g. a quality council, quality “champions,” task forces, training programs, etc.) currently exist or are planned that will sustain your continuous improvement efforts?

Mineral Area College uses a traditional but effective system to communicate with its constituent employees. Besides the traditional coordinator/director/ department chair/division dean organizational structure, the president of the College meets once a week with his cabinet; once a month with the Faculty Forum (faculty senate) Executive Committee, once a month with the entire faculty, once a week with the Classified Staff Executive Committee; and twice a semester with the entire Classified Staff group.

Traditional standing committees are already organized and will be given an expanded role and utilized for the integration of our initial quality themes (**see in bold below**). Such standing committees and structures include Admissions, Graduation, and Academic Standards Committee (**Preparation for College Success and Advising**); Assessment Committee (**Assessment of Student Learning and Outcomes**), Curriculum-Library Committee (**Program Improvement/Learning Support and Technology**); Funding for Results Committee (**Budget Management and Accountability**); Recruitment and Retention Committee (**Enrollment Management**); and Human Resource Development Committee (**Staff Development and Financial Management**). The president is always in these communication loops and will expect that these committees meet on a frequent basis and begin to identify cross-purpose themes that will evolve in shared quality improvement strategies.

At this point, the College has several organizational structures created with more being developed during December, 2005 and January 2006. Among them is a committee to revisit and revise the College’s five-year quality improvement goals. The lead team will be composed of several faculty and classified staff members, some students, area superintendents, Mineral Area College Foundation members, a couple of the retired deans with extensive quality experience, and lay-citizens at-large. More importantly all 161 full-time employees will be invited to attend an orientation session to long-range planning and quality goal attainment before we officially launch this process in early spring 2006.

In 2004, as the College was making its decision to embrace and participate in AQIP, an Accreditation Steering Committee was formed with representatives from coordinators, directors, faculty, classified staff, and president's cabinet. Once accepted into AQIP, the College expects the Accreditation Steering Committee to evolve into a formal AQIP committee charged with the responsibility of fulfilling the requirements of maintaining accreditation and becoming the primary quality work team. The make-up of the quality work team will continue to be all-volunteer but will eventually transition into a committee appointed by the leaders of the respective constituency groups, so that an environment of shared decision making will prevail.

In January 2005, in order to prepare the formal application to join AQIP, the College undertook a lengthy process to revisit and revise its mission, values, vision, and goal statements. This step was important to emphasize that improvement initiatives must have an underlying context before starting any continuous quality goals, or longer-range planning strategies. The revisions to the statements were derived from input from all 161 full-time faculty, staff, and administrative employees. The mission, values, vision, and College goals were presented to the Board of Trustees with authority to integrate these into our continuous quality improvement environment.

*Evidence of Readiness for AQIP Processes
(Questions 7 – 8)*

Question 7: Prior to attending a Strategy Forum, how are you planning to meet AQIP's requirement to conduct a preliminary self-assessment from a systems-or process-focused perspective, one that includes input from perspectives external to the organization?

Mineral Area College has already taken the following steps toward self-assessment:

- Faculty and staff attended an all-day workshop in January 2005 where participants were randomly divided into focus groups. Each group was asked to ponder the College's long-standing philosophy of purpose statement, and from several examples, reach consensus on a new mission statement, and six to eight vision and value statements that best describe the culture and strengths of Mineral Area College. Based on these results, the College's Mission Statement, Philosophy of Purpose, Value Statements, Vision Statements, Goals, and Organizational Priorities were revised and the resultant draft was edited by faculty and staff committees throughout the winter and early spring. The final draft was adopted by the Board of Trustees on April 14, 2005.
- To further ensure ownership and broad-based participation in the self-assessment process, faculty and staff were also invited to volunteer for the Accreditation Steering Committee at the January 2005 meeting. The resulting committee represents a cross-section of the college community and includes administrators, deans, faculty, and staff from all major divisions. Members of the committee attended a workshop in April 2005 where information was presented on both AQIP and PEAQ.

- Following the April 2005 workshop, the Steering Committee enthusiastically reached consensus to apply for acceptance to the AQIP approach, and to use AQIP Examiner as the program for self-assessment. The AQIP Examiner was administered on August 17th with over 139 (87%) of the full-time faculty, classified staff, general services, and administrators completing the survey. Faculty members were provided with background information on the application to AQIP at a general faculty meeting in May 2005 and input was solicited from them. A final draft of the application was approved by the Board of Trustees on August 11, 2005.
- An outside consultant, Dr. Kent Farnsworth, former president of Crowder College, an original AQIP community college, has agreed to visit the College on January 14, 2006 about the employees results and analysis of AQIP Examiner. Dr. Farnsworth will lead several breakout sessions, utilizing the results of AQIP Examiner, to help the College derive five to six potential action projects to take to the Strategy Forum. The Steering Committee will coordinate the self-assessment study and take an all-encompassing approach, involving as many faculty and staff members as possible throughout the process. In March 2006 (tentative), representatives from the committee and the College will attend the Strategy Forum in Lisle, Illinois.

Question 8: Prior to attending a Strategy Forum (within the 12 months following admission), how will your organization identify issues, challenges, problems, or opportunities that might become Action Projects?

Utilization of a tool such as AQIP Examiner during the Fall 2005 semester's in-service workshops will help Mineral Area College gain a sharper focus regarding possible action projects. This process will be further enhanced by the employment of Dr. Farnsworth to assist the College in interpreting and evaluating the results of AQIP Examiner. Also, both college employees and external constituents will assist in the development of a Strategic Planning initiative, to be in place by April of 2006.

However, the College is already in an ongoing process of self-assessment to identify areas for improvement at all levels via its committees and organizations on campus, such as Faculty Forum, Classified Staff and Student Government. Utilizing surveys, focus groups and other methods of information collection has and will continue to be instruments for advancing Mineral Area College's effectiveness as an institution. The revision of the Mission, Values, Vision, and Goals document this past year was an additional method whereby all personnel levels were involved in revising and shaping the College's primary objectives.

Respectfully submitted,

The Mineral Area College Accreditation Steering Committee

Elaine Belovich, Instructor and EXCEL Director (faculty rank)

Mark Easter, Counselor/Advisor (faculty rank)

Paul Fritch, Instructor and Technology Department Chair (faculty rank)

Kim Graham, Accounts Receivable (classified staff)

Laura Helbig, Instructor and Learning Center Director (faculty rank)

Ken McIntyre, Instructor and Mathematics Department Chair (faculty rank)

Melinda O'Connor, Nursing Instructor (faculty rank)

Sandy Price, Administrative Assistant, Upward Bound and President of the Classified Staff
Employee Group

Bruce Scott, Instructor and Director of Public Safety (faculty rank)

Gil Kennon, Dean of Career & Technical Education (administration)

Jean Merrill-Doss, Dean of Student Services (administration)

Dr. Steven Kurtz, Dean of Arts & Sciences (administration)