Reaffirmation of Accreditation Recommendation

for

Mineral Area College

Park Hills, Missouri

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

November 23, 2012

2012-13 Academic Quality improvement Program Review Panel on Reaffirmation
(lead reviewers starred)

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I. Context and Nature of the Review

A. Review Purpose, Process, and Materials

AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation reviews are scheduled seven years in advance, when an institution joins the Academic Quality Improvement Program or when an institution already participating in AQIP is reaffirmed via the AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation process.

In conducting these reviews, the AQIP Reaffirmation review panel examines the following materials for each institution, and may use abbreviated references to these documents in its recommendations or rationales.

AP	Action Projects and Annual Updates (from the Action Project Directory)
CM	Federal Compliance Materials (provided by institution just before a Quality Checkup visit))
FP	Financial Panel (report from institution responding to concerns)
IH	Current Commission History File of institutional actions
IR	Institutional Responses (to reports from the Commission)
IW	Institution's website
MR	Monitoring Report (from institution)
OP	Current Commission Organizational Profile, which incorporates last Institutional Update
PI	Systems Portfolio Index to compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation
QC	Quality Checkup Report
QS	Quality Highlights summary (provided by institution immediately before reaffirmation review begins)
SAS	Current Commission Statement of Affiliation Status
SP	Systems Portfolio
SR	Systems Appraisal Feedback Report

The panel also reviews any other major reports or documents that are part of the institution's permanent Commission files; references to such materials will not be abbreviated.

Two lead panelists from the AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation drafted a recommendation that was reviewed and approved by the entire panel before it was forwarded to the Institutional Actions Council.

B. Organizational Context, Scope, and Structure (including extended physical or distance education operations)

Mineral Area College (MAC) is a two-year public, local community college first accredited in 1971 and admitted to AQIP in 2005. Mineral Area College submitted a Systems Portfolio in 2009 and received a Systems Appraisal Feedback Report in February, 2010. There was a multi-location visit in 2010. Subsequently, the visiting team provided a report of findings to the institution. The College attended two Strategy Forums in March of 2006, and November of 2010. (IH, QC)

The Institution offers 37 Associate's degrees through the main campus and multiple in-state and out-of-state locations. Mineral Area College also offers a dual degree program with area high schools. (OP)

MAC enrolls 2462 full-time and 1573 part-time undergraduate students. Dual enrollment students in April, 2012 numbered 533. (OP)

C. Compliance With Federal Requirements (including Notification of Quality Checkup Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment)

During the Quality Checkup visit of September 26-28, 2012, the team verified that all federal compliance issues and Commission requirements were fulfilled. The College supplied documents that confirmed the Institution's notification of the forthcoming visit and an invitation to comment. No comments were received by the Higher Learning Commission. (QC)

The Quality Checkup team examined evidence provided and verified all federal and Commission requirements have been met.

D. Evidence of the Organization's Responsiveness to Previous Commission Concerns Regarding Fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation

The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report identified strategic issues and the Checkup Team concluded that MAC had since successfully addressed. Activities are currently in place to address more formalized processes to use data to support decisions in a variety of areas including assessment and helping students learn.(SR, QC) The Institution's approach to this issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and consistent with the Commission's and AQIP's expectations.

II. Fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation

A. CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY. The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

The mission documents, which were approved in 2008 as part of the strategic planning process, include a clearly constructed mission statement, philosophy of purpose, value statements, vision statements, and include organization priority and goals. Mission, vision and goals are communicated through staff meetings, printed material, and the website. (SP, 3-4)

MAC strives to prepare students to live in a diverse society through comprehensive strategies including required general education course work and opportunities for immersion in activities that focus on diversity, including student organizations and cultural events. (SP, 10-11)

The College functions through a well-defined organizational structure; the district is governed by a six-member, elected Board of Trustees which delegates primary responsibilities to the President. Through an open, honest, two-way flow of communication, the Board relies on the President for recommendations for long- and short-term goals and objectives. (SP, 6, 48)

The College upholds and protects its integrity. Reporting requirements for the federal government are consistently met, financial statements are annually audited by an external

CPA firm, and the College receives consistent, unqualified opinions based upon such examinations. (SP, 6, 87)

MAC's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable it to fulfill its mission. Students are represented on the College Standing Committees, including, the Curriculum, Admissions, Welfare and Conduct, and Financial Aid Committees. Employees are encouraged to participate in all employee, divisional and department meetings and are empowered to recommend changes to the processes, measurements, and benchmarks of the College's instructional and non-instructional objectives. (SP, 32, 36-37)

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and Commission monitoring (e.g., Action Project, Systems Portfolio, required report).

None.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and Commission adverse action or sanction (i.e., probation, withdrawal of accreditation) may be warranted.

None.

5. Recommendation of the Panel:

Criterion One is met and no Commission follow up is recommended.

B. CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

MAC utilizes a standing strategic planning committee. The College president and deans provide guidance through cooperative communication and planning efforts that occur at divisional, departmental, and staff meetings. Administrators conduct strategic planning sessions that include College personnel and community stakeholders. (SP, 49)

MAC has developed a Succession Plan to accommodate anticipated changes in personnel, as well as the MAC Leadership Academy to encourage upward mobility within the institution. (SR, 24)

The Board of Trustees monitors financial data on a monthly basis to ensure adequate financial reserves for the College. In spite of the economic situation, the College received $2 million from the State of Missouri as part of the Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative. Half of the

allotment was used to implement a new administrative software system. The remaining funds were allocated for renovation of facilities. (SP, 59-60, 75)

The College uses ongoing evaluation and assessment processes to provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly inform strategies for continuous improvement, including the Annual College Outcome Survey, focus groups, and the Computer Services' department CISCO Concentrator 3005VPN router.   The Missouri Department of Higher Education Guidelines guides the General Education Reporting Matrix for the 42-hour general education block.   (SP, 3, 10, 32-34, 67-68)

The Board of Trustees maintains a calendar of agenda items to organize required meeting actions. The Board is informed of the College's progress with major functions. The activity reports on the calendar are based upon the fulfillment of the College's mission, vision and value statements. (SP, 51-52)

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and Commission monitoring (e.g., Action Project, Systems Portfolio, required report).

None.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and Commission adverse action or sanction (i.e., probation, withdrawal of accreditation) may be warranted.

None.

5. Recommendation of the Panel:

Criterion Two is met and no Commission follow up is recommended.

C. CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

The "Four Core Abilities" and the Missouri Higher Education model serve as the foundation for common student learning objectives. The College recently completed an Action Project with nursing, social science and business education programs supplementing institutional exit examinations that are linked to individual course outcomes. (SP, 10-11, 30)

Advisors inform students and faculty regarding different modes of course delivery which may fit a particular learning style; faculty incorporate various learning styles in the classroom and in laboratory assignment. The Consumer Information Survey allows students

to rate faculty performance and classroom experiences each semester; results are posted on the College website. (SP, 11, 36)

Mineral Area affirms academic success correlates with appropriate student placement and support service in math and English. Mineral Area's main campus in Park Hills and outreach centers in Farmington, Fredericktown, Perryville, Potosi and Winona provide a wide array of programs and services to support student learning, including the federally funded EXCEL/Student Support TRIO program, developmental courses, active advising, and tutoring. (SP, 4-5, 27-28)

MAC encourages the use of technology for faculty, staff and students. A recently implemented student information system allows greater functionality in web-related access and communication, assignment grading, and attendance tracking. Since 2004, the College has invested heavily in instructional technology for faculty, staff and students. (SP, 49)

All CTE students take end-of-program examinations to assess value added learning in their respective programs. MAC students have consistently scored at or above the 50th percentile on a nationally normed academic assessment examination. Since 2004, students have achieved above the state average for all Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education approved occupational career and education courses. (SP, 12-16)

Instructional oversight ensures that the off-campus sites' teaching standards are aligned with the College's commitment to quality in instruction, hiring and oversight. The off-campus curriculum standards are also aligned with those at the main campus. (QC, 5)

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and Commission monitoring (e.g., Action Project, Systems Portfolio, required report).

None.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and Commission adverse action or sanction (i.e., probation, withdrawal of accreditation) may be warranted.

 None.

5. Recommendation of the Panel:

Criterion Three is met and no Commission follow up is recommended.

D. CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE. The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

A high percentage of Board members, faculty and staff at MAC participate in professional development activities through degree and non-degree educational opportunities which encourage and strengthen the leadership ability of faculty and staff. Rotation of full-time faculty members in departmental leadership positions provides opportunity for personal growth and sharing of knowledge. (SP, 48-49; SR, 28)

MAC offers special classes, programs and student organizations to encourage a diverse student body. English as a Second Language and special study skills are available to assist non-traditional students. The ACCESS office provides individual services for students with special needs. The International Club and New Journeys Club provide opportunities for fellowship with students from outside the region. (PI, 95)

The College adheres to the competency based General Education Policy Guidelines adopted by the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education. Skill and knowledge areas provide the underlying foundation and expectation for all general education courses. (SP, 11)

The College requires all Associate's degree graduates to complete a general education component that includes competencies such as effective communication, higher order thinking, information management, valuing, social and behavioral science, humanities and fine arts, mathematics, and life and physical sciences. (SP, 2)

Several student organizations provide a framework for leadership and opportunities for activities that promote global and social awareness. Students of underrepresented classes in postsecondary, non-traditional programs achieved a higher rate of success compared to the state average. (SP, 17-21, 48-49, 82-83)

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and Commission monitoring (e.g., Action Project, Systems Portfolio, required report).

None.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and Commission adverse action or sanction (i.e., probation, withdrawal of accreditation) may be warranted.

None.

5. Recommendation of the Panel:

Criterion Four is met and no Commission follow up is recommended.

E. CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

MAC has identified its key stakeholders and grouped them into three major areas: Businesses and Employers, Arts and Cultural Community, and Community At-Large. MAC has immersed itself into the cultural environment of the community as a means of building relationships, and reaches out to its service area with a variety of academic and cultural arts programs including scheduled radio programs and newspaper articles as well as maintaining outreach centers in six communities. (SR, 21)

Mineral Area College has a structure for gathering information about the needs of its stakeholders and incorporating those needs into its offerings, whether they are academic in nature or community service related. The College currently uses several satisfaction survey tools to take the pulse of their student stakeholders, including the President's Performance Indicators and the virtual suggestion box. (SR, 2)

MAC maintains a commitment to Community Service. One of the College's Organizational Priorities is to develop economic growth and vitality in the region by providing training to meet the needs of employers and employees. To that end, one goal is to provide specialized training needs to address the specific needs of business and industry and to further the economic development of the region. (SP, 3-4)

MAC takes great pride in its community relationships and partnerships. Community involvement in the College is evident from outreach activities, relations with local school systems, civic organizations, and local universities. Community relations play a prominent role in the College's long-range goals. (QC, 7)

MAC is to be commended for effectively building a variety of collaborative relationships with both internal and external stakeholders to enhance the mission of the institution. Perhaps more importantly, the College is putting processes in place to measure the effectiveness of their relationships. (SR, 4)

MAC identifies the changing needs of its stakeholders by using a variety of internal and external instruments and resources. Once needs are identified, the College has a well-articulate process by which a recommendation can be analyzed, proposed, and considered to establish improvement targets. (SR, 20)

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and Commission monitoring (e.g., Action Project, Systems Portfolio, required report).

None.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and Commission adverse action or sanction (i.e., probation, withdrawal of accreditation) may be warranted.

None.

5. Recommendation of the Panel:

Criterion Five is met and no Commission follow up is recommended.

F. Summary of panel recommendations regarding fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation:

The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, Quality Checkup Report, and Quality Highlights indicate that the institution provided evidence that it complies with each of the Five Criteria for Accreditation and their Core Components. The Reaffirmation Panel agrees that the Criteria for Accreditation are all met. The Reaffirmation Panel's rationale for this conclusion is spelled out above for each of the five Criteria for Accreditation.

III. Participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP)

A. Comments and Counsel on AQIP Action Projects

Mineral Area College has completed 5 of 10 AQIP Action Projects. The five current Action Projects include *Improving the System of Campus-Wide Employee Communication, Developing Guidelines for Online Instruction, Course Assessment: Assessing Intermediate Algebra and Business Math, Improving Institutional Effectiveness by Updating the College's Long-Range Strategic Plan* and *Developing Student Guidelines for Online Learning*.

Improving the System of Campus-Wide Employee Communication is designed to provide a space on the server to increase employee access to information. The "tab" will help provide more consistent communication across the institution and will be completed in 2013. (AP)

Developing Guidelines for Online Instruction involves creating standards for online faculty, creating an instrument for evaluating online instructors, developing an instructor manual of 'Best Practices' for online classes, and promoting a set of resources for faculty and students alike.

Course Assessment: Assessing Intermediate Algebra and Business Math is focused on assessing two courses to determine whether or not all students are taught the same content as part of the courses, and if not, to determine what steps should be taken to ensure students are taught what they are needed for subsequent courses.

Improving Institutional Effectiveness by Updating the College's Long-Range Strategic Plan focuses on the revision of the current Strategic Plan (2008-2013) for the next five-year cycle (2013-2018). The overriding goal of this Action Project is to improve institutional

effectiveness. The AQIP categories for accreditation serve as guiding principles to the committee.

Developing Student Guidelines for Online Learning will develop a set of guidelines for students who are considering enrolling in an online class and will be done along with the Action Project titled *Developing Guidelines for Online Instruction*. The outcome will be an interactive set of criteria students may use to determine if they have the potential for success in an online learning environment.

MAC has focused its Action Projects in areas where previous AQIP teams have suggested the need for improvement. The selections are focused on long-range improvements in communication, assessment, and policy and procedure documentation. Past projects have shown quality improvements allowing MAC to proceed to new Action Projects with confidence. The Action Plans seem to be appropriately focused and planned with care taken to consider the need for involvement and length of time required to complete the Action Project. For example, the current Course Assessment project focuses on two specific courses – Intermediate Algebra and Business Math with specific goals to assure student success.

MAC seems to focus their Action Projects effectively on Criterion Three: Student Learning And Effective Teaching and Criterion 5: Engagement and Service. The College is encouraged to continue to focus on these areas; especially taking care to assure policies and procedures support the mission of the institution.

For future Action Projects, MAC is encouraged to consider building on completed Projects to support continuous quality improvement. For example, in the Strategic Planning Process, taking note to assure the next 5-year plan, beginning in 2019, is built on the current Plan. Setting ten-year goals will help maintain focus on the institutional mission.

B. Comments and counsel on AQIP Categories

According to the Quality Check-Up team, MAC embraced the suggestions made in the 2010 System Appraisal Report and provided evidence of the attention to detail when showcasing the campus to the team. MAC has also demonstrated commitment to quality improvement through the Action Projects for Long Range Strategic Planning and the two Action Projects focused on student success: *Course Assessment: Assessing Intermediate Algebra and Business Math* and *Developing Student Guidelines for Online Learning.*

MAC has shown improvement in the use of data; however, the Quality Check-up Team encouraged MAC to continue to build processes and policies to support data driven decision making. Although MAC has begun the use of data through the new Jenzabar system to support data driven decision making, it is in the beginning stages. MAC is encouraged to continue to explore other ways to make sure data is collected to support all decisions in the College. This seems to be an area where the College can improve its performance overall. The importance of data-driven decision making in a continuous quality improvement process cannot be overstressed.

The Assessment of student learning seems to be a new concept to MAC. Their Action Project for Intermediate Algebra and Business Math is a good start. However, with only two courses being assessed, MAC is far behind other institutions in Assessment of Student Learning and might consider increasing their focus on data gathering of the success of student learning. Each department might ask how to document students are learning and identify data to support the answer.

Overall, the documentation provided by MAC and in the Quality Check-Up Report indicates MAC is serious about quality improvement. Their focus seems to be on a criterion and they are encouraged to consider all criterion and their interrelationships as they move toward becoming a more data-driven institution.

C. Comments and counsel on the AQIP principles of high performance organizations and the institution's quality program or infrastructure

Based on the above discussions addressing the Criteria for Accreditation and its participation in AQIP, MAC satisfactorily demonstrates its commitment to applying the Principles of High Performing Organizations. These principles include Focus on Stakeholders, Broad-based Involvement, Leadership Support, Learning-orientation, Respecting People, Promoting Collaboration, Agility and Responsiveness to Change, Foresight to Plan Proactively, Fact-Based Information gathering, and Integrity in Words and Deeds.

The principles are most clearly evident in Mineral Area College's focus on continuous quality efforts in the strategic plan, the new AQIP Systems Portfolio, and ongoing Action Plans to gather data to support the stakeholders.

D. Summary of panel comments and counsel about the organization's commitment to continuous quality improvement and its participation in AQIP

MAC shows evidence of its commitment to high performance, AQIP, and continuous quality improvement. It approaches its quality efforts systematically and deliberately, fostering a culture that bases decision-making on analyzing data, setting goals, and measuring progress. The College has demonstrated good faith in dealing with AQIP by taking peer review comments seriously and applying itself to the constructive feedback it has received, especially regarding its commitment to the strategic plan and new AQIP Systems Portfolio.

The Institution should work to assure the new AQIP Systems Portfolio and strategic plan serve the institutional needs. This Reaffirmation Panel acknowledges that Mineral Area College is willingly participating in the Academic Quality Improvement Program of the Higher Learning Commission in its pursuit of continuous quality improvement.