



COMMUNITY COLLEGE
of **AURORA**

SELF STUDY 2003

Summary

For continued accreditation with
the Higher Learning Commission
of the North Central Association of
Colleges and Schools

The Higher Learning Commission
of the
North Central Association

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Dear Faculty, Staff, Students, and Friends of CCA:

Every ten years, the College seeks continued accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. To gain continued accreditation, the College must engage in an intensive institutional self-study and submit to an evaluation visit by a team of educators from other two-year colleges. The self-study report provides the team with information for the visit.

Over the last 18 months, our self-study has involved the entire CCA community in an extensive analysis of who we are and what we do. More than a dozen committees have documented how we meet the Higher Learning Commission's general institutional requirements and its five criteria for accreditation. As the self-study report took shape, we also gained a clearer understanding of the College's strengths, challenges and issues for the future. This summary presents these strengths, challenges, and issues for your consideration and discussion.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the self-study has been the involvement and contribution of so many individuals from throughout the College. Thank you to all of you who have assisted with the self-study and the report!

Many people are also helping with preparations for the April 14 - 16 evaluation team visit. During the visit, team members will meet with college programs and groups, examine report-related materials, and hold discussions among themselves. At the conclusion of their visit, they will prepare a report to which we will have a chance to respond. Their report and our response will then go to the Higher Learning Commission for its consideration.

The usefulness of the self-study report goes far beyond the evaluation visit. The report will serve as an excellent planning document for the College, providing both information and analysis about how we can better fulfill our mission in years to come. Therefore, I invite you not only to review this summary, but to view the full text of the self-study report on CCA's Website (after March 1) and to meet with the evaluation team during their April visit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Linda'.

Linda S. Bowman
President

Purpose of the Self-Study

The self-study provides information and analysis to help the College measure itself in relation to the criteria for continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (HLC/NCA). The study also provides information about the effectiveness and efficiency of CCA's programs and services, reinforces institutional self-analysis and planning and strengthens the College's sense of community.

The self-study report addresses several audiences. The primary audience includes CCA faculty and staff members, administrators and major constituency groups. They will use the report to identify the College's strengths and challenges and to improve programs and services. The report will also prepare the Commission's Consultant-Evaluator Team for its visit to the College from April 14 to 16, 2003. Finally, the report provides information about the College to students and to the public.

The Self-Study Process

In the summer of 2000, CCA's president appointed the vice president for research, development, and information services (now a faculty member) as the self-study coordinator to organize, coordinate and facilitate the College's study. The coordinator developed a self-study plan and timeline and in February 2001 conducted two all-college informational meetings. In August of 2001, the president appointed the director of grants as self-study co-coordinator.

An important goal for CCA's self-study was to involve a wide range of College faculty and staff. To achieve this goal, the coordinators used responses from surveys collected at the all-college meetings to assign both faculty and staff members to all committees. In September 2001, the President's Cabinet reviewed the committee assignments and selected the committee chairpersons. The chairpersons became the Self-Study Steering Committee. During the same period, the self-study coordinators developed questions and job descriptions for each committee based on the HLC/NCA evaluative criteria and oriented committee members and chairpersons. The committees used these questions to guide their study of their assigned area.

Thirteen committees conducted the self-study. These included:

General Committees

1. Introduction and the General Institutional Requirements
2. Steering Committee (chairpersons of other committees)

Criterion One Committees

3. Mission, Purposes and Decision-Making
4. Freedom of Inquiry and Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Criterion Two Committees

5. Governance and Administration
6. Human Resources
7. Physical Resources
8. Financial Resources

Criterion Three Committees

9. Instruction
10. Student Services and Enrollment Management

Criterion Four Committee

11. Strategic Planning Process

Criterion Five Committees

12. Integrity in Institutional Practices

13. Integrity in Institutional Relationships

The committees met regularly from October 2001 through April 2002 to gather and evaluate information. In February and March 2002, they submitted preliminary reports to the coordinators. The coordinators reviewed the responses, responded with written comments, and met with the chairpersons to discuss additions to the reports. The committees revised their responses and sent them to the coordinators in late April and early May 2002. As they compiled their reports, the committees generally used data from the five years 1996-97 to 2000-01. When available, data for 2001-02 were added.

Preparation of the Report

The self-study coordinators had primary responsibility for writing the College's report, using as their source material the responses the self-study committees supplied to them. The committee responses provided the basic information and evaluation for each chapter, as well as specific suggestions about institutional strengths, challenges, and issues for the future. As they compiled the report, the coordinators also gathered additional information from College documents and personnel.

The self-study report consists of 11 chapters. These include an introduction to the College and responses to concerns identified by the 1993 NCA evaluation team, the General Institutional Requirements, and information and evidence that CCA meets the five criteria for accreditation. Additional information will be available in the resource room and elsewhere at the College, as indicated in the document.

Strengths, Challenges and Issues for the Future

The self-study and the work of the self-study committees identified the following strengths, challenges, and issues for the future:

CRITERION ONE: *The Community College of Aurora has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.*

Mission and Purposes

Strengths

- Up-to-date mission statement, values and goals developed through collegewide discussion
- Commitment to freedom of inquiry and satisfaction with the results of that commitment as confirmed by faculty and staff responses to institutional surveys
- Commitment to excellence in teaching and learning, as confirmed by student satisfaction with instruction expressed on institutional surveys

Challenge

- Continue to inform all members of the CCA community about the College's mission, purposes, goals and decision-making

Issue for the Future

- Strengthening excellence in teaching through faculty workshops and external professional development opportunities

CRITERION TWO: *The Community College of Aurora has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.*

Governance and Resources

Strengths

- Competent, motivated employees and systematic processes for their hiring, evaluation and professional development
- Clearly defined and effectively organized governance for Colorado's higher education in general and community colleges in particular
- A well-defined College governance structure with responsibilities assigned to specific administrators and to various committees and advisory groups

- A financial management approach that has dealt successfully with austerity and continues to accomplish the College's purposes
- A growing and increasingly diverse student body
- A Learning Resource Center that provides critical services to students and an innovative, largely electronic Instructional Resource Center run in collaboration with the Aurora Public Library
- Technology integrated into administration and instruction and updated for student learning

Challenges

- To increase funding for faculty members' professional development
- To staff and otherwise upgrade the Lowry Instructional Resource Center
- To remain current with the College's inventory of personal computers
- To improve the College's networking structure and capacity for electronic-based instruction
- To increase access to technology-based instructional support services for students with special needs

Issue for the Future

- Continuing to address campus security issues

CRITERION THREE: *The Community College of Aurora is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.*

Educational Programs

Strengths

- A student-centered approach to pedagogy evident in the lifelong skills, model syllabus and teaching paradigm used throughout the College and promoted through faculty orientation, professional development and mentoring programs
- Talented and committed faculty who contribute to the College's program quality and student achievement
- High levels of student satisfaction with the quality of CCA instruction
- Instructional decision-making that is increasingly inclusive, fosters collaboration and can make the difficult decisions needed to improve instruction
- A close and positive relationship with the community and its residents that helps the College to develop new programs and to improve existing programs

- A commitment to expanding access to the College's educational programs for all segments of the community, as evidenced by the large increases in ethnic minority students earning certificates and AAS degrees in recent years
- Growing enrollment, including dramatic increases in certificate programs
- The highest rating for community colleges on the 2000-01 Colorado Commission on Higher Education's Quality Indicator System (QIS)

Challenges

- To continue to improve assessment of student learning across the institution, including systematic data collection and rigorous analysis of that data
- To maintain the quality of instruction, including faculty quality, in an era of diminishing resources
- To increase instructional support for students, including support for students taking online courses
- To take better advantage of opportunities to market the College's educational offerings as the community and the economy change
- To increase the numbers of students, particularly minority students, who complete AA and AS degrees

Issues for the Future

- Maintaining effective communication with the large number of part-time faculty members
- Assisting increasing numbers of online students with home computer, software and other technical support questions
- Testing and placing students whose first language is not English in appropriate English as a Second Language courses
- Understanding the effectiveness and quality of general and basic education courses
- Clarifying the parameters of the College's certificates, including the range of minimum credits required, the general education credits needed and the role of lifelong skills
- Applying the customer service expertise of the College's workforce training and development programs to other instructional programs
- Understanding more thoroughly the implications of the changing enrollment patterns for instructional programs and support services

Assessment

Strengths

- The College has integrated the lifelong skills across the curriculum
- The faculty has aligned student learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment strategies through development and widespread implementation of a model syllabus and a teaching paradigm
- The faculty has aligned student evaluation of instruction with the lifelong skills

Challenges

- To strengthen the College's data collection, analysis, and storage infrastructure to support the work of the Instructional Assessment Committee
- To collect program- and institutional-level data on student achievement of the lifelong skills
- To move rapidly to develop pilot projects that use the results of assessment to improve teaching and learning and the quality of instructional programs across the institution
- To utilize assessment outcomes in the College's annual budgeting and planning processes

Issues for the Future

- Continuing to focus the College's efforts on program- and institutional-level assessment.
- Specifying the procedures and responsibilities for turning assessment results into instructional change
- Continuing to provide regular and adjunct faculty with training on the lifelong skills to ensure their use in all College courses
- Broadening the scope of assessment to include occupational skills and knowledge, using existing external measures (licensing exams, for example) as well as internally developed measures

Student Services

Strengths

- Students very satisfied with the quality of the Student Services Division's services and customer service
- Faculty and staff satisfied with the services provided in the Student Services Division
- Improved availability of retention, completion and transfer data

Challenges

- To meet expanded hours of operations and operate efficiently and effectively with smaller budgets and reduced staff
- To continue to improve the performance of the financial aid department

Issue for the Future

- Providing the level of student services needed to match enrollment growth at the Lowry campus

CRITERION FOUR: *The Community College of Aurora can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.*

Planning and Effectiveness

Strengths

- The tested capability to respond to budget challenges through greater budget openness, conservative budgeting, and cautious enrollment and revenue projections
- A focus on responding to new challenges with funding generated through the CCA Foundation and from government and foundation grants
- More opportunities to fulfill the College mission at an expanded Lowry campus and the recently completed facilities at the CentreTech Campus
- Experienced and committed faculty and staff, including many adjunct faculty members drawn from community businesses and organizations
- A growing service area, with major development areas (Buckley Air Force Base, Denver International Airport, the E-470 Corridor), large-scale redevelopment projects (Lowry, Fitzsimons and Stapleton) and increasing minority populations
- Broader participation in College decision-making through a Cabinet Advisory Council, an expanded President's Cabinet and an expanded Instructional Leadership Team
- Revised planning and decision-making processes that are more inclusive and open than in the past
- A commitment to, and strategy for, increasing the use of assessment for planning and decision-making across the institution
- Community support for the College, its students and its programs

Challenges

- To respond positively and creatively to declining state revenues and state financial support
- To more effectively meet the educational needs of underrepresented groups and of immigrants not eligible for resident tuition
- To increase minority representation on program advisory committees, the College Advisory Council and the Foundation Board so that their membership is generally proportionate to the minority populations of the College's service area
- To develop aggressive recruitment and retention strategies for minority faculty, staff and students
- To develop and implement a system to evaluate the degree to which the College meets its strategic goals and use the evaluation results to modify subsequent strategic plans
- To increase the use of assessment data in the planning process

Issues for the Future

- Finding creative ways to use the space at CentreTech vacated by programs moved to Lowry
- Seizing additional opportunities at the Lowry campus, building upon the initial successes
- Continuing to solicit input from constituencies throughout the planning process and share planning documents (including unit plans) with all CCA faculty, staff and students
- Distributing an annual planning cycle master calendar with plans, products, timelines and responsibilities

CRITERION FIVE: *The Community College of Aurora demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.*

Institutional Integrity and Federal Compliance

Strengths

- A new set of values developed as part of a recent revision of the College's mission and goals
- An increasingly diverse student body and a service area with a rapidly growing Hispanic population
- Communication of information through a variety of media to students, faculty, administrators and community constituencies.

- Positive relationships with educational, community and government groups
- Advisory committees that contribute expertise to College vocational programs
- High levels of efficiency and integrity in financial and contract matters

Challenges

- To better inform faculty, staff, and students about College policies, including sexual harassment and contract policies
- To increase the number of African American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American staff and faculty members
- To establish a more comprehensive strategy for developing relations with a changing community and increasing collaboration among CCA's existing community programs

Issues for the Future

- Completing the transition to the new CCA values, integrating them into evaluation systems and communicating them to the entire College community through many means, including the *CCA Faculty Handbook*
- Revising the *Faculty Handbook* to include more information about faculty members' rights, responsibilities and grievance procedures and making copies of the handbook available on the CentreTech and Lowry campuses