Washtenaw Community College

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Assurance Argument

Higher Learning Commission Reaffirmation of Accreditation

2020

Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), formerly known as the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), one of six regional accreditors nationwide, is the primary means of ensuring quality of higher education institutions in the United States and is required to enable institutions to provide student access to federal financial aid funding. Accreditation is voluntary and is predicated on a system of peer review focused on continuous improvement. In addition to institutional accreditation, the college maintains a number of program-specific specialized accreditations.

Washtenaw Community College has been accredited by the HLC since 1973. WCC is part of the **open pathway** for reaffirmation of accreditation. This process for maintaining accreditation follows a ten-year cycle and emphasizes quality assurance as well as documentation of evidence that the institution meets the HLC's five Criteria for Accreditation. Requirements for reaffirmation of accreditation include the following:

- ❖ Submission and completion of a Quality Initiative (QI)
  - ○ WCC's participation in the HLC Assessment Academy served as the college's Quality Initiative. In 2019 HLC informed WCC that the college had fulfilled its Quality Initiative requirement with an Assessment Academy project focused on improvement in the following areas:
    - ▪ Culture and climate related to assessment
    - ▪ Course-level assessment
    - ▪ General Education assessment
    - ▪ Program-level assessment

- ❖ Submission of an Assurance Argument narrative documenting how the institution meets the criteria for accreditation (available to WCC faculty/staff through the college portal)

- ❖ Submission of an Evidence File containing documentation in support of the Assurance Argument

- ❖ Submission of a Federal Compliance Filing

- ❖ A comprehensive evaluation visit by a peer review team on March 23-24, 2020

Showing Our Good Work to the Higher Learning Commission

The WCC campus was engaged throughout 2019-20 in discussions on WCC's Mission, Values, and Vision and the institution's good work since the last 2009 HLC visit. In winter 2020, divisions and departments across the college participated in activities reflecting on how everyone on campus plays a role in helping the college meet the five Criteria for Accreditation.

A resource team consisting of members of the college's executive leadership launched initial evidence identification, while a faculty/staff Criteria Team provided critical feedback and input during the process, breaking into separate teams to focus on specific criteria. Many additional individuals, departments, and committees across campus contributed evidence, provided detailed information, and offered resources to assist in preparing materials for the Assurance Argument, Federal Compliance filing, and evidence file.

The summaries that follow provide key highlights from the Assurance Argument followed by examples of evidence that were provided to the HLC to support the argument. To read the full argument, please log in to MyWCC, where you will find it in the HLC folder on the portal.

Resource Launch Team

Larry Barkoff, General Counsel

Linda Blakey, Executive Vice President, Student and Academic Affairs

*Kris Good, Dean, Arts and Sciences, Co-Chair

Kimberly Hurns, Vice President, Instruction

William Johnson, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer

Julie Morrison, Executive Director, Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Accreditation, Co-Chair

Michelle Mueller, Vice President, Economic and College Development

Brandon Tucker, Associate Vice President, Workforce/Community Development

*Sam Veltri, Vice President, Human Resources

*No longer at the college

Faculty/Staff Criteria Team

Co-Chairs

Kimberly Hurns, Vice President, Instruction

Julie Morrison, Executive Director, Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Accreditation

Criterion One

Jimmie Baber, Dean, Advanced Technologies and Public Service Careers

Kimberly Jones, Faculty, English

Peter Leshkevich, Director, Student Development and Activities

Anthony Terry, Faculty, Business

Brandon Tucker, Associate Vice President, Workforce/Community Development

Criterion Two

Valerie Greaves, Dean, Health Sciences

Brian Martindale, Faculty, HVAC

Eva Samulski, Dean, Business and Computer Technologies

Tracy Schwab, Faculty, Physical Sciences

Criterion Three

Peter Baccile, Executive Director, Online Learning, Educational, and Media Technology Services

Mike Duff, Faculty, Auto Services

Joy Garrett, Director, Curriculum and Assessment

Kimberly Hurns, Vice President, Instruction

Criterion Four

Joyce Hommel, Executive Director, Library

Charlie Johnson, Faculty, Humanities

Liz Orbits, Dean, Support Services

Kristina Sprague, Faculty, Dental Assisting

Criterion Five

Barbara Fillinger, Director, Budget and Purchasing

Sandy McCarthy, Librarian

Roger Mourad, Director, Institutional Research

Kristy Norris, Faculty, Psychology

HLC Criteria for Accreditation

Criterion 1 | # Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

WCC's mission, values, and vision have a long history and continue to encapsulate a commitment to both the open door and success across all levels of the organization, including students, staff, and community. The mission has undergone periodic review since the founding of the college in 1965, including revisions in 2009 as part of the last HLC self-study, and review in 2012 as part of the strategic plan process, at which time the mission was reaffirmed. The publicly stated mission guides the college's operations and is aligned with the comprehensive strategic plan that was developed under new leadership in 2011-12, the first strategic plan in over a decade. The process engaged internal and external stakeholders and confirmed that the mission is reflective of the work and core functions of the college: access and success.

WCC's diverse student population, primarily in-district but with a range of ages and backgrounds, is served by a wide range of services and 137 degree and certificate programs providing transfer, general, and occupational education that aligns with its mission. To meet the accessibility needs of its populations, offerings are provided on campus, via distance learning, and at off-campus sites such as extension sites and high schools. The college includes diversity as one of its values, and validates this through a wide range of diversity initiatives, such as LGBTQIA+ resources, an International Student Center, English as a Second Language classes, the Wadhams Veterans Center, courses with diverse subject matter, multiple clubs and student organizations supporting diverse student communities, ideas, and cultures, and numerous events focused on diverse subjects.

The college values its role as a community and educational partner, and provides local economic impact through hosting summer instructor training for multiple trades associations such as the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters, Iron Workers, Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons, and Roofers Unions. The college has expanded its partnerships with K-12 and works in partnership with business and industry as appropriate for its mission, and is a community resource for enrichment, training, and economic development.

Examples of evidence:

- Mission Values, and Vision documents
- Board Policy 1050: Mission
- Board Policy 3010: Assurance of Student Success
- Board Policy 5087: Staff Success
- Board Policy 8028 Access, Success, and Equity for Diverse People
- WCC Strategic Plan 2012-15
- WCC Annual Report 2019
- Board of Trustee Orientation 2016
- Diverse World Course List

- Diversity Task Force Information
- English as a Second Language Information
- Gender Neutral Bathrooms Information
- Preferred Name Procedure
- Community Enrichment Enrollment/Assessment Information
- Conference Services Event Statistics
- Economic Impact Report (EMSI) 2017
- Free College Day Reports
- Enrollment Information (2018-19 Annual and 2019 Fall Student Profiles)

Criterion 2	# Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct
	The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

WCC demonstrates integrity in its operations and at all levels of the organization. The institution has policies and procedures in place to assure accountability in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions. The Board of Trustees, the scope of which is established in the College Charter and By-Laws and reinforced in the Trustee Manual and Guidelines for Board Excellence, serves primarily as a policy-making body to ensure integrity and protection from ethical or fiduciary conflicts of interest. The By-Laws ensure integrity through statements prohibiting conflicts of interest and a Code of Ethics. The comprehensive policies approved by the Board, available online in the Board Policy Manual, guide operations and ensure integrity across the institution. WCC complies with the Michigan Open Meetings Act, with the Board's operations open to the public, and members of the public and college community have the opportunity to share concerns or ideas in writing or during citizen participation at monthly meetings. This includes time specifically assigned per the By-Laws for representatives from the Washtenaw Community College Educational Association (WCCEA) faculty union.

The college has established policies and processes to support ethical behavior on the part of personnel, including contractual language and policies on workplace rules, harassment, sexual misconduct, and other issues. Essential training on these and other topics relating to a compliant, safe, and equitable work environment is required of all new employees upon hire and annually thereafter. Human Resources promotes fair and consistent employment processes in adherence with state and federal laws, and provides a Manager's Toolkit to assure checks and balances in the hiring process. High levels of accountability and internal controls are built into financial functions and upheld through policies addressing accounting of funds, banking and investments, purchasing, and other matters. Fiscal responsibility and accountability is exhibited through engagement in a public and transparent annual budget process, and confirmed by clean annual audits.

WCC is committed to upholding freedom of expression in the classroom and on campus, through policy and practice. Academic freedom in the classroom is assured in the faculty contract. Outlets such as the *Washtenaw Voice* newspaper provide students with opportunities for free expression that include ethical guidelines. WCC supports ethical acquisition of knowledge and inquiry. Students have resources to guide their responsible use of information, such as research instruction in the Bailey Library. The college offers support for academic freedom, scholarly practice, and tools to promote academic honesty and integrity.

Examples of evidence:

- o   Board of Trustee Manual
- o   Board Policy 1010: By-Laws
- o   Board Policy 1020: Citizen Participation
- o   Board Policy 1060: Guidelines for Excellence
- o   Board Policy: 5081 Prohibiting Discriminatory Harassment
- o   Student Planner 2019-20

- o   Board Policy 6050: Purchase of Goods/Services
- o   Collective Bargaining Agreements
- o   Board Policy 4095: Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct Code
- o   Faculty Guide 2019-20
- o   Annual Audited Financial Report 2019
- o   Board Budget Process Review 2020

Criterion 3	**Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support**
	The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

WCC meets its mission of providing excellent and accessible programs and services by ensuring its programs are appropriate, current, and demonstrate clear, consistent learning goals. College policies and procedures, such as a curriculum purpose and effectiveness policy, curriculum approval/review process, and contractual faculty-led Curriculum and Assessment Committees, assure that faculty have jurisdiction over a well-defined curriculum development and review process that ensures quality control.

The college's recently redesigned general education model, aligned with the Michigan Transfer Agreement, is intended to promote smooth transfer of core knowledge and skills, and also provide a set of competencies, evidenced in outcomes and performance indicators, that will encourage communication, creative thinking and reasoning, as well as an understanding of the diversity of the human experience. The redesign was accomplished through inclusive efforts on campus to best serve students and was approved by the Board in 2017 in support of the existing General Education Philosophy of providing a strong core of common learning for degree recipients. The curriculum also complements the diversity of perspectives represented at the college, which is supported through coursework and other global and diverse education initiatives. Students and faculty share their creative and scholarly work through publications, research, exhibits, and other means.

WCC faculty and staff are qualified for the positions they hold. The college places a high value on professional development as a strategic priority, and has a robust, well-funded program that includes contractual requirements, diverse offerings for full-and part-time faculty, and resources to ensure faculty and staff are current and engaged in their work.

Support services are available to assist all students in overcoming barriers to success. Counseling/advising has put measures in place to address mental health concerns, food insecurity, and other issues, while implementing success coaches to promote a high-touch, motivational model that shows early gains. The institution has infrastructure to support effective teaching and learning, including adequate technology, library holdings, lab and other customized spaces, extensive research assistance, and services of all kinds. To enhance students' educational experience, WCC offers numerous clubs and activities to increase engagement and sustain the learning environment beyond the classroom.

Examples of evidence:

- o Board Policy 3043: Curriculum Purpose/Effectiveness
- o Curriculum Review Process
- o WCCEA Faculty Agreement
- o General Education Requirements
- o Board Policy 3045: General Education
- o MTA Information
- o Student Club Listing

- o Classroom Equipment Investment Summary
- o Study Abroad and Global Studies information
- o Diversity Co-Curricular Events
- o Examples of Student/Faculty Work
- o Faculty Credential Requirements
- o Developmental/Placement information
- o Student Services Area Reports/Information
- o Library Collection and Research Instruction

Criterion 4	# Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
	The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

WCC demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs. The college follows a rigorous and data-informed program review process that includes extensive data and analysis, results of assessment, and action plans to improve program effectiveness. Quality is evidenced by the authority the college maintains over curriculum, expectations for student learning, and faculty qualifications. The college adheres to policy and good practice in the transcription of credit, and tracks the success of its graduates.

The college has committed itself to forwarding a culture of assessment on campus. Through the Quality Initiative pursued through the work of the Assessment Academy team, support for and engagement in assessment has advanced, and the college has successfully implemented a new general education assessment model in the last year following revision to that curriculum. A strong infrastructure with a faculty-led, joint Curriculum and Assessment Committee structure has provided leadership as assessment and the use of results for improvement have increased. While participation has grown significantly stronger, including substantial participation in professional development, the college recognizes the opportunity to continue to increase engagement as the institution moves forward.

WCC has established ambitious yet attainable goals as part of its plan to improve retention, persistence, and completion, and several gains have been achieved as the college scales up cohort strategies to broader populations. A number of interventional strategies are in place over the near future to further promote student retention, persistence, and completion.

Examples of evidence:

- o   Program Review Process/Samples
- o   Curriculum and Assessment Handbook
- o   Assessment Workbook
- o   Articulation Agreements
- o   High School Articulation Agreements
- o   Graduate Follow-Up Report
- o   Course Assessment Report Form/Samples
- o   Curriculum and Assessment Minutes
- o   General Education Assessment Reports

- o   Program Assessment Report Samples
- o   Master Syllabus Samples
- o   Retention Plan 2018-19
- o   Transfer Database Reports
- o   Wage Study Reports
- o   Academic Student Success Minutes
- o   Voluntary Framework of Accountability Outcomes Reports

Criterion 5	# Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

WCC practices integrated planning and effective resource allocation to support its mission. The college has practiced careful financial stewardship and its proactive response to enrollment and other changes demonstrate its ability to maintain a strong financial position and support quality educational programs and services, while consistently keeping costs low for in-district students. The college manages its resources wisely to support the evolution of the institution's physical and technological infrastructure needs. The college has financial, physical, and human resources to ensure students can be successful into the future. The Board of Trustees is knowledgeable of the work of the college and provides oversight of policies and practices in meeting its legal and fiduciary responsibilities, and is responsible for hiring the President and approving the annual budget.

WCC's strategic planning process has incorporated input from the entire campus community, as well as external stakeholders, and continues to draw on the expertise of faculty and staff across the campus. The strategic plan, launched for 2012-15, was updated for 2016-19 and is currently in the process of updating for 2020-23. Data and input from the college's comprehensive master plan process in 2018-19 has been integrated into strategic and operational planning efforts. The college's shared governance structure capitalizes on existing groups and teams, and provides opportunities for perspectives from across the college to be heard. The engagement of faculty departments in student success data and goal setting in 2012 set the stage for data-informed decision making that is now embedded in program review, the budget process, and other processes. The eight strategic plan priorities continue to provide the framework for operational planning at the college and budgeting. The college updates the Board of Trustees on strategic and operational planning and institutional accomplishments annually, and provides select student success data points and metrics for review each year.

The college strives to learn from its operations, and employs several data collection methods to measure and guide improvement of its effectiveness at the institutional and department/divisional level. These include comparative and benchmarking studies, nationally normed, institutional, and customized surveys, and special research projects. The college will continue to build on existing infrastructure and, with future-focused integrated planning, sustain its ability to provide excellent and accessible programs and services for its students well into the future.

Examples of evidence:

- o Board Policy 1030: Policy Development
- o Board Policy 5085: Staff Collaboration and Governance
- o Selected Board Agendas/Minutes
- o College Master Plan 2019
- o Strategic Plan and Annual Updates
- o Facilities Customer Satisfaction Survey 2019

- o National Community College Benchmark Project 2019
- o Data Points and Benchmarks 2019-20
- o WCC Noel Levitz Student Success Inventory
- o Tuition Rate History and Comparison
- o Susatainability Council Information
- o Board Approval of New Programs 2019

Mission, Values, and Vision

MISSION

Our college strives to make a positive difference in people's lives through accessible and excellent educational programs and services.

- ❖ We provide a caring, open-door teaching and learning environment.
- ❖ We provide excellent teaching, counseling, and support services.
- ❖ We reach out to people who have limited income or other barriers to success.
- ❖ We enable people to progress in their academic and career pursuits.
- ❖ We work in partnership with the communities we serve.

Occupational and Career Education

We offer certificate and associate degree programs, seminars, workshops, and courses which enable people to pursue employment or advance in a career. We develop and deliver job skills and occupational education programs in partnership with business, industry, government and labor groups.

General and Transfer Education

We offer individual courses and associate degree programs in academic disciplines which transfer to four-year colleges and universities, complement career programs, and enhance personal growth.

Continuing Education and Community Services

We offer credit and non-credit courses and programs at regional centers, at local business and community sites, and via distance learning. We develop and offer programs which respond to the educational needs of specific groups in the community.

Developmental Education

We offer basic courses which strengthen reading, writing, mathematical, computer and study skills. We also offer instruction and services to people who wish to learn English as a second language.

Student Services

We offer orientation, academic skills assessment, assistance with program and course selection, financial aid, university transfer assistance, personal and career counseling, job placement, tutor assistance, child care, special needs services, computer and self-paced instructional laboratories, and library services.

Community Leadership

We cooperate with other community organizations in seeking solutions to local economic and social problems. As a primary educational resource in the community, we work to improve the quality of life in the communities we serve.

VALUES

Teaching and Learning: We embrace teaching and learning as our central purpose.

Support: We make every effort to help learners achieve success.

Diversity: We respect differences in people and in ideas.

Partnerships: We plan and work together with respect, trust, and honesty within the College and with the communities we serve.

VISION

WCC is a learner-centered, open-door college dedicated to student, community, and staff success. We offer a wide spectrum of community college services with an emphasis on premier technical and career educational programs. The College staff continuously learns to improve learning.

Student Success: Our students come first. We are committed to their learning, success, and satisfaction. We strive to serve every student in an effective, caring, and supportive way. In order to enhance student learning outcomes, we engage in continuous improvement of teaching, programs, processes, and structures. We increase our accessibility by reaching learners where, when, and how they need instruction through the use of learning technologies, workplace learning experiences, and flexible scheduling of classes.

Community Success: We are committed to community learning, success, and satisfaction. WCC's primary contribution to community success is the development of a highly skilled workforce. A strong partnership with area employers emphasizes customized employee training and rapid adaptation of WCC programs to changing job training needs. Through strategic alliances wit business, government, labor, and other educational institutions, WCC increases its emphasis on applied technology education, joint technical education programs with the public schools, and basic job-training services to underserved and at-risk groups.

Staff Success: We are committed to staff learning, success, and satisfaction. As a staff, we emphasize teamwork within College units and between the units. We support our colleagues and help them to be successful. We learn to improve learning; that is, we continuously increase our capacity to meet the educational requirements of the students, employers, and communities we serve. Through staff learning, we continuously improve services at each stage of the flow of students through WCC. All staff members align their work to contribute to improved teaching and increased student and community learning.

Eight Strategic Plan Priorities

Shaping Our Future

1. Professional Development and Organizational Health

2. Student Success and Satisfaction (Instruction and Services)

3. Institutional Agility and Responsiveness

4. Visibility and Branding

5. Workforce Development

6. Academic and Other Partnerships

7. Funding and Resources

8. Community Engagement and Development