



Higher Learning Commission
A commission of the North Central Association

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November 22, 2013

Dr. John Gratton
President
New Mexico State University Carlsbad
1500 University Drive
Carlsbad, NM 88220

Dear President Gratton:

Attached is the report of the team that conducted New Mexico State University Carlsbad's Quality Checkup site visit. In addition to communicating the team's evaluation of your compliance with the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation and the Commission's Federal Compliance Program, the report captures the team's assessment of your use of the feedback from your last Systems Appraisal and your overall commitment to continuous improvement.

A copy of the report will be read and analyzed by the AQIP Panel that reviews institutions for Reaffirmation of Accreditation at the time your review is scheduled.

Please acknowledge receipt of this report within the next two weeks, and provide us with any comments you wish to make about it. Your response will become a part of the institution's permanent record.

Sincerely,

Mary L. Green
Process Administrator, AQIP Accreditation Services

QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

New Mexico State University

Carlsbad, New Mexico
October 23-25, 2013

QUALITY CHECKUP TEAM MEMBERS:

Connie Wilson

Professor and RN-BSN Program Director
University of Indianapolis

Ann Leslie Claesson

Contributing Faculty; DBA Program
College of Management & Technology
Walden University
Part-time Faculty
School of Nursing
Northern Arizona University

Background on Quality Checkups conducted by the Academic Quality Improvement

Program

The Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) conducts Quality Checkup site visits to each institution during the fifth or sixth year in every seven-year cycle of AQIP participation. These visits are conducted by trained AQIP Reviewers to determine whether the institution continues to meet The Higher Learning Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*, and whether it is using quality management principles and building a culture of continuous improvement as participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) requires. The goals of an AQIP Quality Checkup are to:

1. Affirm the accuracy of the organization's Systems Portfolio and verify information included in the portfolio that the last Systems Appraisal has identified as needing clarification or verification (System Portfolio Clarification and Verification), including review of distance delivery and distributed education if the institution is so engaged.
2. Review with organizational leaders actions taken to capitalize on the strategic issues and opportunities for improvement identified by the last Systems Appraisal (Systems Appraisal Follow Up);
3. Alert the organization to areas that need its attention prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation, and reassure it concerning areas that have been covered adequately (Accreditation Issues Follow Up);
4. Verify federal compliance issues such as default rates, complaints, USDE interactions and program reviews, etc. (Federal Compliance Review); and
5. Assure continuing organizational quality improvement commitment through presentations, meetings, or sessions that clarify AQIP and Commission accreditation work (Organizational Quality Commitment).

The AQIP peer reviewers trained for this role prepare for the visit by reviewing relevant organizational and AQIP file materials, particularly the organization's last *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* and the Commission's internal *Organizational Profile*, which summarizes information reported by the institution in its *Annual Institutional Data Update*. The Quality Summary Report provided to AQIP by the institution is also shared with the evaluators. Copies of the Quality Checkup Report are provided to the institution's CEO and AQIP liaison. The Commission retains a copy in the institution's permanent file, and will be part of the materials reviewed by the AQIP Review Panel during Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

Clarification and verification of contents of the institution's Systems Portfolio

Conversation with the leaders of the institution's quality initiatives reported on a variety of actions that are being taken to address in response to the Systems Portfolio Feedback report. Some of the initiatives described include: using Quality Matters for online courses, creating and sharing system-wide rubrics, enhancing support through the student support TEAM Center with mentoring, writing across the curriculum initiative, retention focused activities including the "Red-Green" awareness day and improving the process for identifying at risk students for early intervention. This group also acknowledged that it may not have told its story regarding its processes well enough in the Systems Portfolio. While the institution understood that much of its data was kept in silos, with a new institutional researcher and improved collaborations, data now is more accessible across campus, and informs decision-making. Category 8 was recognized as a priority in addressing strategic planning, alignment with AQIP projects and the budget process. The past year's strategic planning process addressed this alignment.

The executive team shared larger initiatives being considered that included a child care center associated with a new Child Development program, expansion of the offerings in health science with a Surgical Technology program, an Early College program linking the identified needs of the high school and community with the college, and a new committee structure being planned that would engage staff, exempt and non-exempt, IR and faculty more fully through a Collaboration Team. The President also shared improvements to Category 4 that address faculty and staff morale including increased recognition and added compensation to bring salaries up to the mean level of peers.

The meeting with VPs clarified how policies are system-wide with some exceptions when NMSU Carlsbad can justify a difference in practice is needed. For example, the Grievance Policy is system-wide and followed; however, as an exception, NMSU Carlsbad will handle all complaints that arise rather than forwarding them to the main NMSU campus. The VPs verified that services are effectively shared between Carlsbad and the main campus such as financial aid packaging. It was also verified that NMSU Carlsbad has significant representation in the NMSU system including the University Council, Faculty Senate, Teaching Council, Academic Matters, and Nursing Council.

The Quality Check-Up Team applauds the institution for its focus on improvement and its numerous accomplishments since the Systems Portfolio Feedback Report was received.

A meeting with staff members confirmed that improvements have been made in Valuing People including generous development funds. Staff has the opportunity to participate in action projects and quality initiatives and feels positive about the direction of the institution.

Students report the opportunity for engagement in curriculum meetings and in Student Council. It is apparent that a variety of student organizations exists and is active in service and campus activities. Students reported that most of their needs were met and provided suggestions for further improvements.

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with the Commission's standards and AQIP's expectations.

Review of the organization's quality assurance oversight of its distance education activities.

The institution is in the early stages of applying Quality Matters to its online courses. It was noted in the quality initiative group that it could be applied to traditional classroom courses. Students report that online courses are convenient and easier than the traditional classroom courses. Additionally students report that instructors are prompt in grading and feedback and interact with students in online courses. Faculty recognized that greater oversight and more standardization could improve the online learning experience for students.

In the team's judgment, the institution has presented satisfactory evidence that its distance education activities are acceptable and do comply with the Commission's standards and expectations.

Review of the organization's quality assurance and oversight of distributed education (multiple campuses)

The team confirmed that the institution does not offer programs at additional campuses at this time, and that the institution understands it must seek HLC approval before it offers 50% or more of any program at an additional location.

Review of specific accreditation issues identified by the institution's last Systems Appraisal

There were no accreditation issues reported in the 2013 Systems Portfolio Feedback Report.

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Screening of Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components

The following section identifies any areas in the judgment of the Quality Checkup Team where the institution either has not provided sufficient evidence that it currently meets the Commission’s *Criteria for Accreditation* (and the core components therein) or that it may face difficulty in meeting the *Criteria* and core components in the future. Identification of any such deficiencies as part of the Quality Checkup affords the institution the opportunity to remedy the problem prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation. Items judged to be “Adequate but could be improved” or “Unclear or incomplete” during the Checkup Visit screening will not require Commission follow-up in the form of written reports or focused visits. However, Commission follow-up will occur if the issues remain apparent at the point of reaffirmation of accreditation.

Criterion 1: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	1A	1B	1C	1D	
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X	X	X	
Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 2: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	2A	2B	2C	2D	2E
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X	X	X	X
Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 3: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	3A	3B	3C	3D	3E
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X	X	X	X
Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 4: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	4A	4B	4C		
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X	X		
Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 5: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	5A	5B	5C	5D	
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X	X	X	
Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					

In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.

Review of the institution's approach to capitalizing on recommendations identified by its last Systems Appraisal in the Strategic Issues Analysis.

There were four strategic issues identified:

1. Lack of connections of processes (listing of unrelated processes)
2. Early phase of assessment pertaining to student and stakeholder needs
3. Analysis and reflection on data to determine needed improvements was not evident
4. Review of mission and values including engagement of faculty and staff

In response to these issues NMSU Carlsbad has completed an action project on institutional strategic planning. Other Action Projects focus on institutional-wide assessment, developmental education and employee morale.

In Category 1 recent improvements include posting a cycle of assessment activities, reinstating the annual employer survey, and identifying learning outcomes for student organizations. The Team verified the assessment reports and the Assessment Handbook that were on display. In the staff meeting, it was clear staff members understood their role in helping student learn; however staff was largely unaware of efforts to align co-curricular and curricular learning goals and how student services could be included. Students report a significant problem with articulation of credit when transferring to the system's four year universities. In particular some credits earned at the Carlsbad campus were not accepted unless an Associate Degree was earned. Students also described a very cumbersome process of re-enrollment at the transfer campus and difficult registration into classes. One student reported that courses in the major were not accepted for transfer at another campus.

Pertaining to Category 2, the institution has recognized collaborations, added key stakeholders to the Stakeholder and Collaboration Relations Committee, and is addressing comparative data.

In Category 3 NMSU Carlsbad reinstated the Noel-Levitz survey. There is a focus expressed by the quality initiative group to increase the retention and completion rates. Students reported that the institution seeks their feedback and has made improvement such as the chairs in classrooms. Students reported that engagement in campus governance and committees by students in applied majors was very limited due to full and demanding schedules.

In Category 4 a new action project addressing employee morale was launched. While this project has not as yet been widely communicated to employees, the administrative team has begun to model demonstration of appreciation to employees as individuals. In particular, off-campus employees now report feeling connected. Staff reported having access to professional development funds. Faculty

reported some improvements in efforts to elevate morale; however significant issues are still present. Faculty report: no structured new faculty orientation process, no clear process or regularity of evaluation for full-time faculty, a need for early and consistent guidance for tenure track faculty, no regular faculty meetings, a need for a Faculty Handbook that consolidates system and campus specific policies, clear expectations for the faculty role, and more involvement in campus governance, assessment and strategic planning. Department chairs expressed lack of clarity in their new roles along with insufficient leadership training and support. Stabilization of the executive team will likely build trust with faculty.

In Category 5 there appears to be a clearer structure for two-way communication and improved campus relations with administrators. Staff indicated that they had opportunities for engagement and the communication has greatly improved. Opportunity continues to exist for administration to provide feedback to students, staff, and especially faculty on decisions made at the administrative level related to input received from these key stakeholders. Faculty and staff both expressed a desire for their respective groups to meet periodically, without administration present, to share common issues.

In Category 6 a clear committee structure supports strategic planning. Campus processes related to operations have the opportunity to become more integrated and less in silos.

In Category 7 the institution has created a systematic approach to data collection of key performance indicators. The hiring of a new institutional researcher has provided timely key data to inform decision-making as verified by the quality initiative group.

In Category 8 a new planning process has been created that links the Strategic Plan and AQIP Action Projects. The alignment was articulated by the leadership group and verified in the published Strategic Plan. However it was noted in the faculty meeting that the planning process could be more inclusive.

In Category 9 better processes and an analysis to determine community partner needs and effectiveness of collaborative efforts are being addressed. The team has verified that these improvements have been or are in process of being implemented from the meeting with the Action Project team leaders and the Systems Portfolio Category leaders.

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

MNSU Carlsbad includes in its Quality Summary Report that it has focused on significant action projects through its committee structure. The College reports that it has initiated recent improvements aligned to

specific Categories. In discussion with the leaders of campus quality initiatives it is clear that continuous quality improvement is a focus; however the Action Project to increase campus engagement is key to development of a culture of quality. The Institutional Research Office has been refocused with a new hire to provide a more systematic approach to data collection, dissemination and informed decision-making.

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Other AQIP Considerations or Concerns

1. The College should consider how common learning goals being created for co-curricular organizations could be applied to the student services areas so alignment is across the campus in academic and non-academic services.
2. Application of Quality Matters for quality assurance of online courses once fully implemented should improve the student learning experience and can be further implemented for hybrid courses.
3. While it was noted in the executive team and quality initiatives group meetings that a system-wide articulation agreement is being worked on, a short-term improvement suggested by students was the addition of a transfer counselor at the Carlsbad campus who could facilitate a smoother transition for students transferring to other NMSU campuses.
4. While students report their input is sought, communication back to students as a result of decision-making could be improved to help close the feedback loop and improve student satisfaction.
5. Attention to faculty issues including explicit expectations, orientation, evaluation and engagement in campus governance, and planning can result in further improvements with faculty satisfaction and morale.
6. Review of the existing Faculty Handbook to cross-reference NMSU System policies and clearly articulate campus-specific policies can potentially clarify areas of confusion and provide a better guide for the faculty's role and responsibilities.
7. The College should consider reflecting overarching goals within the Strategic Plan to goals within the faculty and staff evaluation process.
8. More wide spread involvement of the campus on action project teams, i.e. staff and student led projects, can reduce the fatigue on a select individuals currently involved with AQIP initiatives and energize others who have not previously had the opportunity for involvement.

Federal Compliance Worksheet for Evaluation Teams

Effective for visits beginning January 1, 2013

Evaluation of Federal Compliance Components

The team reviews each item identified in the Federal Compliance Guide and documents its findings in the appropriate spaces below. Generally, if the team finds in the course of this review that there are substantive issues related to the institution's ability to fulfill the Criteria for Accreditation, such issues should be raised in appropriate sections of the Assurance Section of the Team Report or highlighted as such in the appropriate AQIP Quality Checkup Report.

This worksheet outlines the information the team should review in relation to the federal requirements and provides spaces for the team's conclusions in relation to each requirement. The team should refer to the Federal Compliance Guide for Institutions and Evaluation Teams in completing this worksheet. The Guide identifies applicable Commission policies and an explanation of each requirement. **The worksheet becomes an appendix to the team's report.**

Assignment of Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

Address this requirement by completing the "Team Worksheet for Evaluating an Institution's Assignment of Credit Hours and on Clock Hours" in the Appendix at the end of this document.

Institutional Records of Student Complaints

The institution has documented a process in place for addressing student complaints and appears to be systematically processing such complaints as evidenced by the data on student complaints since the last comprehensive evaluation.

1. Review the process that the institution uses to manage complaints as well as the history of complaints received and processed with a particular focus in that history on the past three or four years.
2. Determine whether the institution has a process to review and resolve complaints in a timely manner.
3. Verify that the evidence shows that the institution can, and does, follow this process and that it is able to integrate any relevant findings from this process into its review and planning processes.
4. Advise the institution of any improvements that might be appropriate.
5. Consider whether the record of student complaints indicates any pattern of complaints or otherwise raises concerns about the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation or Assumed Practices.
6. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:
 (X) The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

- () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends follow-up.
- () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends follow-up.
- () The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Comments: The process for handling complaints is systematic and timely with a clearly defined structure for complaint resolution and student appeals. This was verified by the team's viewing of the complaint log and discussion with the Executive Team. NMSU Carlsbad reports twenty-one student complaints including: grade appeals, withdrawals, instructional issues, sexual harassment and issues related to support services. There are no specific patterns in student complaints noted. There are several examples of improvements to college processes based on the resolution of student complaints. The first example relates to a complaint which was resolved regarding a student's submission of late work in an online course. The appeal was denied, but as a result of the issue NMSU Carlsbad has put a Distance Learning Task Force in place to provide campus-wide direction on best practices in distance learning. A second example of an improvement from a student complaint was related to issues which arose in a welding class. As a result, the procedures followed by temporary assistants and student workers were clarified and clear direction provided to these entities. A third example of an improvement was the inclusion of a "how to speak with your professor" segment in the student orientation procedures.

Additional monitoring, if any: None.

Publication of Transfer Policies

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

1. Review the institution's transfer policies.
2. Review any articulation agreements the institution has in place, including articulation agreements at the institution level and program-specific articulation agreements.
3. Consider where the institution discloses these policies (e.g., in its catalog, on its web site) and how easily current and prospective students can access that information.

Determine whether the disclosed information clearly explains the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions and any articulation arrangements the institution has with other institutions. Note whether the institution appropriately lists its articulation agreements with other institutions on its website or elsewhere. The information the institution provides should include any program-specific articulation agreements in place and should clearly identify program-specific articulation agreements as such. Also, the information the institution provides should include whether the articulation agreement anticipates that the institution under Commission review: 1) accepts credit from the other institution(s) in the articulation agreement; 2) sends

credits to the other institution(s) in the articulation agreements that it accepts; or 3) both offers and accepts credits with the other institution(s).

4. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

- (X) The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends follow-up.
- () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends follow-up.
- () The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Comments: Transfer policies are located in the NMSU 2012-13 College catalog on p. 9 and in the Student Policies section on the College's website. Transfer policies are clear and easily accessible. Currently NMSU Carlsbad accepts transfer credit from accredited institutions and is in the process of formalizing seamless articulations within the system. Currently there are no program level articulation agreements.

Additional monitoring, if any: None.

Practices for Verification of Student Identity

The institution has demonstrated that it verifies the identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided to the student through distance or correspondence education and appropriately discloses additional fees related to verification to students and to protect their privacy.

1. Determine how the institution verifies that the student who enrolls in a course is the same student who submits assignments, takes exams, and earns a final grade. The team should ensure that the institution's approach respects student privacy.
2. Check that any fees related to verification and not included in tuition are explained to the students prior to enrollment in distance courses (e.g., a proctoring fee paid by students on the day of the proctored exam).
3. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:
 - (X) The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
 - () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends follow-up.
 - () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends follow-up.

- () The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Comments: NMSU Carlsbad offers a wide range of online courses. Verification of student identity is through password protection and proctoring. The College is exploring identification processes with the use of Canvas. No additional fee is assessed for identification verification. Online faculty who employ proctored tests notify the students of this requirement in the course syllabus. Students are informed that they will bear the responsibility of locating a proctored site and for paying any fees associated with the proctoring.

Additional monitoring, if any: None.

Title IV Program Responsibilities

The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program.

This requirement has several components the institution and team must address:

- **General Program Requirements.** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about the fulfillment of its Title IV program responsibilities, particularly findings from any review activities by the Department of Education. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.*
- **Financial Responsibility Requirements.** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about the Department's review of composite ratios and financial audits. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. (Note that the team should also be commenting under Criterion Five if an institution has significant issues with financial responsibility as demonstrated through ratios that are below acceptable levels or other financial responsibility findings by its auditor.)*

Default Rates. *The institution has provided the Commission with information about its three year default rate. It has a responsible program to work with students to minimize default rates. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. Note for 2012 and thereafter institutions and teams should be using the three-year default rate based on revised default rate data published by the Department in September 2012; if the institution does not provide the default rate for three years leading up to the comprehensive evaluation visit, the team should contact Commission staff.*

- **Campus Crime Information, Athletic Participation and Financial Aid, and Related Disclosures.** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.*

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- ***Student Right to Know.*** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The disclosures are accurate and provide appropriate information to students. (Note that the team should also be commenting under Criterion One if the team determines that disclosures are not accurate or appropriate.)*
 - ***Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance.*** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The institution has demonstrated that the policies and practices meet state or federal requirements and that the institution is appropriately applying these policies and practices to students. In most cases, teams should verify that these policies exist and are available to students, typically in the course catalog or student handbook. Note that the Commission does not necessarily require that the institution take attendance but does anticipate that institutional attendance policies will provide information to students about attendance at the institution.*
 - ***Contractual Relationships.*** *The institution has presented a list of its contractual relationships related to its academic program and evidence of its compliance with Commission policies requiring notification or approval for contractual relationships (If the team learns that the institution has a contractual relationship that may require Commission approval and has not received Commission approval the team must require that the institution complete and file the change request form as soon as possible. The team should direct the institution to review the Contractual Change Application on the Commission's web site for more information.)*
 - ***Consortial Relationships.*** *The institution has presented a list of its consortial relationships related to its academic program and evidence of its compliance with Commission policies requiring notification or approval for consortial relationships. (If the team learns that the institution has a consortial relationship that may require Commission approval and has not received Commission approval the team must require that the institution complete and file the form as soon as possible. The team should direct the institution to review the Consortial Change Application on the Commission's web site for more information.)*
1. Review all of the information that the institution discloses having to do with its Title IV program responsibilities.
 2. Determine whether the Department has raised any issues related to the institution's compliance or whether the institution's auditor in the A-133 has raised any issues about the institution's compliance as well as look to see how carefully and effectively the institution handles its Title IV responsibilities.
 3. If an institution has been cited or is not handling these responsibilities effectively, indicate that finding within the federal compliance portion of the team report and whether the institution appears to be moving forward with corrective action that the Department has determined to be appropriate.
 4. If issues have been raised with the institution's compliance, decide whether these issues relate to the institution's ability to satisfy the Criteria for Accreditation, particularly with

regard to whether its disclosures to students are candid and complete and demonstrate appropriate integrity (*Core Component 2.A and 2.B*).

5. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

- (X) The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends follow-up.
- () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends follow-up.
- () The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Comments:

- The most recent audit for June 30, 2012 showed no concern by the US Department of Education related to the Carlsbad campus (Carlsbad campus is not recognized as a separate entity). However, an NMSU system recommendation was made to institute formal training, create a formal policy, and strengthen the monitoring and oversight of each branch campus. The issue is being addressed by the NMSU System administration and was verified by the President.
- With a trend of increasing default rates for student loans, the NMSU System has contracted with Inceptia for default counseling and put other voluntary measures in place to include workshops on financial literacy. The three year cohort default rate reported September 2012 is 12.8%. Financial aid information is included in the College catalog and on the website.
- In compliance with the Right to Know, a link to the NMSU System website indicates trended graduation and retentions through 2011. The Student Right to Know policies and practices were reviewed by the team in the schedule and college catalog and found accurate and complete.
- The Clery Act is followed with annual publication of the crime report on the website.
- The College catalog clearly describes the policies for academic progress and a statement regarding attendance found on pages 11 through 15. These policies are available and accessible to students. Students report knowledge of these policies.
- NMSU Carlsbad has no contractual or consortial relationships.

Additional monitoring, if any: None.

Required Information for Students and the Public

1. Verify that the institution publishes fair, accurate, and complete information on the following topics: the calendar, grading, admissions, academic program requirements, tuition and fees, and refund policies.
2. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:
 - (X) The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

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- () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends follow-up.
 - () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends follow-up.
 - () The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Comments: The calendar or academic schedule is published on the website as are the various program requirements, admission procedures, and current tuition and fees. The College catalog contains grading policies (p. 11), admission policies (p. 8), procedure for tuition refund (p. 26), academic appeals process and descriptions of general requirements (p. 18), and for all academic degrees and certificate programs. The NMSU Carlsbad website contains specific links for students and consumer information.

Additional monitoring, if any: None.

Advertising and Recruitment Materials and Other Public Information

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

1. Review the institution's disclosure about its accreditation status with the Commission to determine whether the information it provides is accurate and complete, appropriately formatted and contains the Commission's web address.
2. Review institutional disclosures about its relationship with other accrediting agencies for accuracy and for appropriate consumer information, particularly regarding the link between specialized/professional accreditation and the licensure necessary for employment in many professional or specialized areas.
3. Review the institution's catalog, brochures, recruiting materials, and information provided by the institution's advisors or counselors to determine whether the institution provides accurate information to current and prospective students about its accreditation, placement or licensure, program requirements, etc.
4. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:
 - (X) The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
 - () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends follow-up.
 - () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends follow-up.
 - () The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Comments: The College's website contains the appropriate link with accurate information to the Higher Learning Commission with the Mark of Affiliation. The College catalog and website indicates affiliation with specialized accreditation agencies that is accurate and complete. Recruitment materials provide accurate information to prospective students regarding program requirements as evidenced by the recruitment flier, Quick Facts, and specific program brochures.

Additional monitoring, if any: None.

Review of Student Outcome Data

1. Review the student outcome data the institution collects to determine whether it is appropriate and sufficient based on the kinds of academic programs it offers and the students it serves.
2. Determine whether the institution uses this information effectively to make decisions about academic programs and requirements and to determine its effectiveness in achieving its educational objectives.
3. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:
 - (X) The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
 - () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends follow-up.
 - () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends follow-up.
 - () The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Comments: NMSU Carlsbad recognized a need to place more emphasis on program review. An AQIP action project is underway to revitalize the process. An Assessment Handbook guides the process of assessing student learning. A Program Review Update 2013 indicates a number of programs at varying stages of defining outcomes, creating measures and decision-making based on results. The CAAP was used to collect data on common outcomes for graduating students (i.e. two students in General Studies with markedly different results). The team verified student outcomes data collected by the institution in the assessment report on display. The leadership team reported that common learning outcomes are being identified system wide.

Additional monitoring, if any: None.

Standing with State and Other Accrediting Agencies

The institution has documented that it discloses accurately to the public and the Commission its relationship with any other specialized, professional or institutional accreditor and with all governing or coordinating bodies in states in which the institution may have a presence.

Important note: If the team is recommending initial or continued status, and the institution is now or has been in the past five years under sanction or show-cause with, or has received an adverse action (i.e., withdrawal, suspension, denial, or termination) from, any other federally recognized specialized or institutional accreditor or a state entity, then the team must explain the sanction or adverse action of the other agency in the body of the Assurance Section of the Team Report and provide its rationale for recommending Commission status in light of this action. In addition, the team must contact the staff liaison immediately if it learns that the institution is at risk of losing its degree authorization or lacks such authorization in any state in which the institution meets state presence requirements.

1. Review the information, particularly any information that indicates the institution is under sanction or show-cause or has had its status with any agency suspended, revoked, or terminated, as well as the reasons for such actions.
2. Determine whether this information provides any indication about the institution's capacity to meet the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation. Should the team learn that the institution is at risk of losing, or has lost, its degree or program authorization in any state in which it meets state presence requirements, it should contact the Commission staff liaison immediately.
3. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:
 - (X) The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
 - () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends follow-up.
 - () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends follow-up.
 - () The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Comments: Documentation from the NLNAC (ACEN) indicates full accreditation was awarded in 2011.

Additional monitoring, if any: None.

Public Notification of Opportunity to Comment

The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comments. The team has evaluated any comments received and completed any necessary follow-up on issues raised in these comments. Note that if the team has determined that any issues raised by third-party comment relate to the team's review of the institution's compliance with the Criteria for

Accreditation, it must discuss this information and its analysis in the body of the Assurance Section of the Team Report.

1. Review information about the public disclosure of the upcoming visit, including sample announcements, to determine whether the institution made an appropriate and timely effort to notify the public and seek comments.
2. Evaluate the comments to determine whether the team needs to follow-up on any issues through its interviews and review of documentation during the visit process.
3. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:
 - (X) The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
 - () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends follow-up.
 - () The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends follow-up.
 - () The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Comments: No third party comments were received by NMSU Carlsbad or the Higher Learning Commission. The institution solicited public comments by including information in the Carlsbad newspaper, campus website, and community calendar well in advance of the Quality Check-Up visit as verified in emails and print ad.

Additional monitoring, if any: None.

Institutional Materials Related to Federal Compliance Reviewed by the Team

Provide a list of materials reviewed here:

- NMSU Carlsbad Student Handbook
- Faculty Handbook
- NMSU Carlsbad Course Schedule
- NMSU Carlsbad Catalog 2011-13:
 - Grading Policy
 - Admission Procedures
 - Academic Program Requirements-general and program specific
 - Academic Appeals Process
 - Course descriptions and associated credit hours
- NMSU Carlsbad Website:
 - Academic Schedule
 - Academic Program Requirements
 - Tuition and Fees and Refund
 - HLC Mark of Affiliation
 - Link to Student Site

[Link to Consumer Information](#)

NMSU System document on Retention and Graduation Rates 2011
Accreditation Report from NLNAC (ACEN) for full accreditation July 22, 2011
Program Review Update 2013
Assessment Handbook
Strategic Plan 2013-18
Credit Hour Determination Form
Explanation of Credit Hour
Complaint Log 2008-2013 (student complaints)
Recruitment Materials include: institutional flier, Quick Facts and program specific brochure
Notices to Solicit Third Party Comments
Annual Campus Crime Report 2012-13
Document on Three Year Default rates September 2012
Assignment of Credit Hours Worksheets
NMSU policy on Awarding Credit Hours
Action Projects results documentation
Quality Matters Binder
Canvas Training Binder
Organizational Structure
NMSU Community College Performance-Based Indicators
Core Competency Student Assessment
2010 Noel Levitz institutional report

Appendix

Team Worksheet for Evaluating an Institution's Program Length and Tuition, Assignment of Credit Hours and on Clock Hours

Part 1: Program Length and Tuition

Instructions

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

Review the “*Worksheet for Use by Institutions on the Assignment of Credit Hours and on Clock Hours*” as well as the course catalog and other attachments required for the institutional worksheet.

Worksheet on Program Length and Tuition

A. Answer the Following Questions

Are the institution's degree program requirements within the range of good practice in higher education and contribute to an academic environment in which students receive a rigorous and thorough education?

Yes No

Comments: Degree program requirements are generally 64-68 credit hours for an Associate Degree.

Are the institution's tuition costs across programs within the range of good practice in higher education and contribute to an academic environment in which students receive a rigorous and thorough education?

Yes No

Comments: Per credit hour cost is consistent across programs with published rates for regional, out-of state and out-of-region students.

B. Recommend Commission Follow-up, If Appropriate

Is any Commission follow-up required related to the institution's program length and tuition practices?

Yes No

Rationale: Noted above.

Identify the type of Commission monitoring required and the due date:

Part 2: Assignment of Credit Hours

Instructions

In assessing the appropriateness of the credit allocations provided by the institution the team should complete the following steps:

1. Review the Worksheet completed by the institution, which provides information about an institution's academic calendar and an overview of credit hour assignments across institutional offerings and delivery formats, and the institution's policy and procedures for awarding credit hours. Note that such policies may be at the institution or department level and may be differentiated by such distinctions as undergraduate or graduate, by delivery format, etc.
2. Identify the institution's principal degree levels and the number of credit hours for degrees at each level. The following minimum number of credit hours should apply at a semester institution:
 - Associate's degrees = 60 hours
 - Bachelor's degrees = 120 hours
 - Master's or other degrees beyond the Bachelor's = at least 30 hours beyond the Bachelor's degree
 - Note that one quarter hour = .67 semester hour
 - Any exceptions to this requirement must be explained and justified.
3. Scan the course descriptions in the catalog and the number of credit hours assigned for courses in different departments at the institution.
 - At semester-based institutions courses will be typically be from two to four credit hours (or approximately five quarter hours) and extend approximately 14-16 weeks (or approximately 10 weeks for a quarter). The description in the catalog should indicate a course that is appropriately rigorous and has collegiate expectations for objectives and workload. Identify courses/disciplines that seem to depart markedly from these expectations.

- Institutions may have courses that are in compressed format, self-paced, or otherwise alternatively structured. Credit assignments should be reasonable. (For example, as a full-time load for a traditional semester is typically 15 credits, it might be expected that the norm for a full-time load in a five-week term is 5 credits; therefore, a single five-week course awarding 10 credits would be subject to inquiry and justification.)
 - Teams should be sure to scan across disciplines, delivery mode, and types of academic activities.
 - Federal regulations allow for an institution to have two credit-hour awards: one award for Title IV purposes and following the above federal definition and one for the purpose of defining progression in and completion of an academic program at that institution. Commission procedure also permits this approach.
4. Scan course schedules to determine how frequently courses meet each week and what other scheduled activities are required for each course. Pay particular attention to alternatively-structured or other courses with particularly high credit hours for a course completed in a short period of time or with less frequently scheduled interaction between student and instructor.
5. **Sampling.** Teams will need to sample some number of degree programs based on the headcount at the institution and the range of programs it offers.
- At a minimum, teams should anticipate sampling at least a few programs at each degree level.
 - For institutions with several different academic calendars or terms or with a wide range of academic programs, the team should expand the sample size appropriately to ensure that it is paying careful attention to alternative format and compressed and accelerated courses.
 - Where the institution offers the same course in more than one format, the team is advised to sample across the various formats to test for consistency.
 - For the programs the team sampled, the team should review syllabi and intended learning outcomes for several of the courses in the program, identify the contact hours for each course, and expectations for homework or work outside of instructional time.
 - The team should pay particular attention to alternatively-structured and other courses that have high credit hours and less frequently scheduled interaction between the students and the instructor.
 - Provide information on the samples in the appropriate space on the worksheet.
6. Consider the following questions:
- Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution?

- Does that policy address the amount of instructional or contact time assigned and homework typically expected of a student with regard to credit hours earned?
- For institutions with courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy also equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the timeframe allotted for the course?
- Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that the Commission will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)
- If so, is the institution's assignment of credit to courses reflective of its policy on the award of credit?

7. If the answers to the above questions lead the team to conclude that there may be a problem with the credit hours awarded the team should recommend the following:

- If the problem involves a poor or insufficiently-detailed institutional policy, the team should call for a revised policy as soon as possible by requiring a monitoring report within no more than one year that demonstrates the institution has a revised policy and evidence of implementation.
- If the team identifies an application problem and that problem is isolated to a few courses or single department or division or learning format, the team should call for follow-up activities (monitoring report or focused evaluation) to ensure that the problems are corrected within no more than one year.
- If the team identifies systematic non-compliance across the institution with regard to the award of credit, the team should notify Commission staff immediately and work with staff to design appropriate follow-up activities. The Commission shall understand systematic noncompliance to mean that the institution lacks any policies to determine the award of academic credit or that there is an inappropriate award of institutional credit not in conformity with the policies established by the institution or with commonly accepted practices in higher education across multiple programs or divisions or affecting significant numbers of students.

Worksheet on Assignment of Credit Hours

A. Identify the Sample Courses and Programs Reviewed by the Team (see #5 of instructions in completing this section)

Academic courses reviewed:

Course #	Course Title	Credit Hr	Ground	Hybrid	Online
ACCT-200	Survey of Accounting	3		X	
ANTH-201	Introduction to Anthropology	3		X	
COMM-253	Public Speaking	3		X	

CS-110	Computer Literacy	3		X	
NURS-258	Psycho-Social Deficit Approach	3		X	
MGT-201	Introduction to Management	3			X
NURS-155	Special Topics	3		X	
MATH-121	College Algebra	3			X
SWK-221	Introduction to Social Work	3			X
NUR-150	Medical Terminology	3			X
NUR-120/ HIT129	Introduction to Pharmacology	3			X
ENG-116	Perspectives on Film	3	X		
EP-110	Human Growth and Behavior	3	X		
CCDR-105	Fundamentals of Academic Reading	3	X		
BCT-290	Special Problems in Building Technology	4		X	
CMT-190	Digital Video Production I	3	X		
ECED-125	Curriculum Development Through Play	3	X		
DRFT-181	Commercial Drafting	3	X		
WELD-125	Introduction to Pipe Welding	3	X		
ECED-125	Health, Safety, and Nutrition (dual credit)	2	X		

B. Answer the Following Questions

1) Institutional Policies on Credit Hours

Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution? (Note that for this question and the questions that follow an institution may have a single comprehensive policy or multiple policies.)

Yes No

Comments: The team reviewed the NMSU Carlsbad policy for awarding credit and found that it adequately addresses all of the three delivery formats (ground, hybrid/flex, and online) used.

Does that policy relate the amount of instructional or contact time provided and homework typically expected of a student to the credit hours awarded for the classes offered in the delivery formats offered by the institution? (Note that an institution's policy must go beyond simply stating that it awards credit solely based on assessment of student learning and should also reference instructional time.)

Yes No

Comments: The NMSU Carlsbad policy for awarding credit hours does clearly define expectations for homework, and instructional/contact time for all academic formats offered

and is listed in the Student Handbook and on the NMSU system and NMSU Carlsbad websites.

For institutions with non-traditional courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the timeframe and utilizing the activities allotted for the course?

Yes

No

Comments:

NMSU Carlsbad does offer certificate programs focusing on specific areas of need defined by the community such as an Industrial Maintenance program track for certificate training for employment in the local potash, oil and gas, welding, and building industries. Other certificates reviewed included Nurse Aid, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) some of which had credit hour requirement over the expected five credit-hour threshold.

After evaluation of past credit hour requirements for certificate programs by the leadership and academic performance, and Steering Committee teams, the programs are being revised to extend the programs to an Associate Degree level plus industry-specific certification testing (where appropriate) as well as revision of program requirements.. This is due in part to the extensive hands-on requirement for this type of industrial and medical training and part of the AQIP program evaluation and review project.

While none of these programs were found to be in an alternative delivery format with less instructional time than expected, the team felt that the identification of this community-based need and the revaluation of the existing prior certificate programs to meet academic requirements and community need was an important aspect of how this institution is working to meet the defined goals in its strategic plan with attention to student need and learning expectations.

Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that the Commission will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

Yes

No

Comments: The team reviewed the NMSU Carlsbad policy and found it to be reasonable and within compliance of the federal definition and expectations of good practice in higher education for the degrees offered.

2) Application of Policies

Are the course descriptions and syllabi in the sample academic programs reviewed by the team appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit? (Note that the Commission will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

Yes No

Comments: The team reviewed 20 courses offered in ground (8 courses), hybrid/flex (7 courses), and online (5 courses) across multiple programs. The course descriptions and syllabi were found to be appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on awarding credit.

Are the learning outcomes in the sample reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit?

Yes No

Comments: A Program Review Update 2013 and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment 2013 handbook indicates that a number of programs were at various stages of defining program-specific learning outcomes, creating measures and decision-making based on results. An NMSU system wide project focuses on system-wide common learning outcomes.

The learning outcomes identified in each of the 20 courses reviewed were in alignment with identified NMSU system common learning outcomes project, dignified Carlsbad graduate outcomes, and program-specific learning outcomes.

If the institution offers any alternative delivery or compressed format courses or programs, were the course descriptions and syllabi for those courses appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of academic credit?

Yes No

Comments: The NMSU Carlsbad in conjunction with other NMSU system campuses offers a dual-credit program for high school and college credit based on identified community need. No compressed or alternative delivery format courses are offered.

If the institution offers alternative delivery or compressed format courses or programs, are the learning outcomes reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit? Are the learning outcomes reasonably capable of being fulfilled by students in the time allocated to justify the allocation of credit?

Yes No

Comments: No compressed or alternative delivery format courses are offered.

Is the institution's actual assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution reflective of its policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

Yes No

Comments: NMSU Carlsbad assignment of credits across all programs and course delivery format was found by the team to be appropriate and in alignment with its stated policy and commonly accepted practice in higher education.

C. Recommend Commission Follow-up, If Appropriate

Review the responses provided in this section. If the team has responded "no" to any of the questions above, the team will need to assign Commission follow-up to assure that the institution comes into compliance with expectations regarding the assignment of credit hours.

Is any Commission follow-up required related to the institution's credit hour policies and practices?

Yes No

Rationale:

Identify the type of Commission monitoring required and the due date:

D. Identify and Explain Any Findings of Systematic Non-Compliance in One or More Educational Programs with Commission Policies Regarding the Credit Hour