

**Reaffirmation of Accreditation Recommendation
for
Northwest Missouri State University
Maryville, Missouri**

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

July, 2012

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

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I. Context and Nature of the Review

A. Review Purpose, Process, and Materials

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

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

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

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

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

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

Northwest Missouri State University (NMSU) was first accredited in 1921 and was admitted to AQIP in October, 2005. Since admission to AQIP, the University submitted a Systems Portfolio in 2008 and received a Systems Appraisal Feedback Report in February, 2009. The University attended Strategy Forums in 2006 and 2009 and there was a Quality Checkup visit in January, 2012. Subsequently, the visiting team provided a report of findings to the Institution. (IH, QC)

The Institution awards one Associate degree, 101 Bachelor's degrees, 39 Masters and 3 Specialist degrees through one campus and multiple in-state and out-of-state locations. Sundry certificate, bachelor and master degree programs are awarded through online programs. (OP)

Northwest Missouri State enrolls 5555 full-time and 726 part-time undergraduate students and 264 full-time and 680 part-time graduate students. Dual enrollment students in April, 2012 numbered 359. (OP)

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

During the Quality Checkup visit of January 24-26, 2012, the team verified that all federal compliance issues and Commission requirements were fulfilled. The University supplied documents that confirmed the Institution's notification of the forthcoming visit and an invitation to comment. No comments were received by the Higher Learning Commission. (QC)

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

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

The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report identified accreditation issues that the Checkup Team concluded Northwest Missouri State had since successfully addressed. Activities currently in place to address those issues include the development of a new, mission-driven strategic plan, a complete revision and reformatting of the Systems Portfolio, and the creation of an infrastructure for collecting and utilizing data across the organization. (SR, QS) The Institution's approach to these issues, documentation, and performance were acceptable and consistent with the Commission's and AQIP's expectations.

II. Fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation

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

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

The University is committed to "serve as a learning centered community of scholars offering undergraduate and selected graduate programs." The mission, vision and values are integrated into the strategic plan, *2011-2014: A Plan to Execute and Succeed*. (SP, SR, QS)

Mission documents are clear and articulated publically through multiple media including the University catalog, website and student publications. (SP)

Northwest's culture of quality is managed through a shared governance model, characterized by shared responsibility, collaboration and open communication. It strives to foster a culture of trust and integrity where free and open exchanges of ideas occur naturally. (SP, SR)

Northwest emphasizes diversity in recruitment by making special efforts to attract minorities, international students and first-generation college applicants. (SP)

Northwest utilizes an Equal Employment Opportunity Committee to monitor policies for compliance and assistance enforcing integrity and ethics. The University conducts workshops and peer reviews and uses a comment card feedback system to assure ethical practices. (SP)

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

None.

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

None.

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

None.

5. Recommendation of the Panel:

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

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

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

The University "has a comprehensive and well articulated planning process in place that integrates budgeting, planning at multiple levels, and feedback loops to drive process improvement." The newly implemented strategic plan, *2011-2014: A Plan to Execute and Succeed*, addresses issues of private support and the HLC's Composite Financial Index. (QS)

Phase 1 of the strategic plan includes a regular environmental scan to assess societal and economic trends. (SP, SR)

The Listening and Learning System utilized by the Institution supports the collection of feedback from students and stakeholders, thereby bringing to the forefront ideas, issues and recommendations for enhancing the organization's operation. (SP, SR)

The Office of Assessment, Information and Analysis collects, stores, and disseminates multiple data. Enrollment Management and academic departments use the EIS database for decision making to monitor and assess market trends, market share, student demographics and competitors. (SP)

The University has developed and executed a Seven-Step Planning Process (SSPP) used to document, streamline and improve support service processes; SSPP is linked to performance, individual development and initiative, and organizational learning. (SP, SR)

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

None.

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

None.

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

None.

5. Recommendation of the Panel:

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

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

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

Assessment programs and evaluations at Northwest are both formative and summative and include a variety of data sources such as the Education Testing Service Core Competencies and Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPPS) exams. (SP, SR)

In addition to the Higher Learning Commission, Northwest holds membership in six accrediting associations, including the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs, American Association of Family and Consumer Services, American Chemical Society, American Dietetic Association, National Association of Schools of Music, and National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. Northwest programs meet or exceed the minimum standards set by the accreditation agencies. (SP, SR)

The Director of Assessment, Information and Analysis coordinates university-level assessment activities that provide data for decision making in areas of program development and presentation. (SP, SR)

All classes are taught by qualified faculty; the institution does not allow graduate assistants to teach, which distinguishes Northwest from many peer institutions. (SP, SR)

Northwest is committed to providing quality support service to all students. The Learning Assistance/Services providers form a network of academic and student affairs personnel who

monitor student needs and accommodations. The Student Support Services Program is a federally-funded and student-oriented program that provides financial, career, personal and academic services to first generation and low-income students, and to students with disabilities.

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

None.

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

None.

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

None.

5. Recommendation of the Panel:

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

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

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

The Faculty Senate Welfare Committee facilitates professional development through multiple strategies, including colloquia on teaching and learning, the Center for Instructional Technology, the Teacher Education unit “best practices” seminars, and regular faculty development activities. (QS, SP)

The Faculty Handbook sets forth policies and procedures which articulate clear support of intellectual property and academic freedom. (SP)

Lifelong learning activities are fostered and facilitated through the McKemy Centers for Lifelong Learning in Kansas City and Saint Joseph, Missouri; the Centers provide state-of-the-art facilities and conduct workshops and training sessions. (SP)

Northwest emphasizes students’ needs to function in an interconnected and diverse world through its multicultural/diversity institutional requirement whereby students complete 3 hours in one of a variety of relevant courses. The University encourages students to study abroad by offering several exchange programs; students who complete the comprehensive major in international business must study and/or complete an internship in a foreign country. (SP)

NMSU provides a tablet PC for every faculty member. The Center for Information Technology in Education (CITE) advances technology applications and supports information technology through webinars, training, seminars on pedagogical issues related to technology in online education and in the classroom. Annual CITE Fellowships are awarded to faculty who integrate technology in the classroom. (SP)

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

None.

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

None.

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

None.

5. Recommendation of the Panel:

Criteria Four is met and no Commission follow-up is recommended.

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

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

During the process of building the new strategic plan and revised AQIP Systems Portfolio, Northwest Missouri State included a sub team to support stakeholders by understanding the relationships and setting expectations for the Institution. The resultant list of stakeholders and articulated expectations includes students, alumni, friends, Missouri Board of Regents members, State Legislature Board of Higher Education, Missouri Department of Education, parents, faculty, and staff. (QS)

Northwest recognizes they do not exist in a social, cultural, fiscal, educational or geographical vacuum, and understands institutional success relies on its ability to provide vigorous community impacts throughout the region. Northwest works to study, articulate and enhance the economic impact of the University and to link participation in community affairs to experiential learning opportunities for students. (QS)

One of NMSU's three overarching principles is, "We are focused on students and all stakeholders." A cultural Core Value is "We focus on our students and stakeholders. We care about each other."(SP)

Northwest has dozens of articulation agreements with 48 post-secondary institutions which facilitate transfer of credit and provide clear information to future students; the University has 2 + 2 agreements with 22 community colleges, and was one of the first Missouri institutions to establish a dual admission agreement with a two-year post-secondary institution. (SP)

In conjunction with the Northwest Foundation, the Alumni Association offers worldwide opportunities for involvement to alumni and University friends. Additionally, the Foundation encourages, receives, invests, manages, and disburses private support on behalf of the donors of Northwest Missouri State University, for the benefit of the University, its students, faculty, staff, and alumni. (SP)

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

None.

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

None.

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

None.

5. Recommendation of the Panel:

Criteria Five is met and no Commission follow-up is recommended.

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

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

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

A. Comments and counsel on AQIP Action Projects

Northwest Missouri has completed 5 of 8 AQIP Action Projects. The three current Action Projects include *Assessment of the Northwest Missouri State University "First Year*

Experience,” Implementation of a Comprehensive Professional Development System for Faculty and Staff, and Improvement of Annual and Five-Year Review Process.

The First Year Experience project resulted in 33 action items currently being reviewed and incorporated into the new strategic plan and AQIP Systems Portfolio for the Institution. The University is encouraged to build upon the products of this Project and to refine and prioritize the 33 action items and focus on implementing the ones which matter most.

The *Implementation of Comprehensive Professional Development System for Faculty and Staff* project resulted in the offering of several key training opportunities including FERPA, Sexual Harassment, a Professional Development Program, and Emergency Management training. Although these training sessions appear to be a start to offering professional development, it does not appear they provide an ongoing system of professional development. The University is encouraged to incorporate the series of events into a systematic process whereby topics for professional development opportunities are identified through data and delivered systematically.

B. Comments and counsel on AQIP Categories

It is apparent in the Systems Portfolio Appraisal Report and in the Quality Checkup Report that Northwest Missouri State is committed to a culture of quality. NMSU demonstrates many qualities of a high performing organization as evidenced by its response to feedback provided by the Systems Appraisal team, including the development of a new strategic plan and outline for the second Systems Portfolio. Perhaps there are additional opportunities for the University to explore continuous improvement in the realm of leadership and to broaden its stakeholder and collaborative focus.

While it is common for institutions to focus on the opportunities highlighted in the report, it is strongly recommended that the University review its strengths and commit time and energy to ensuring that those areas remain strong into the future.

C. Comments and counsel on the AQIP Principles of High Performance Organizations and the institution’s quality program or infrastructure

Based on the above discussions addressing the Criteria for Accreditation and its participation in AQIP, Northwest Missouri State demonstrates its commitment to applying the Principles of High Performing Organizations. The principles that are most clearly evident in its continuous quality efforts are its focus on its strategic plan, new AQIP Systems Portfolio, and ongoing Action Plans to gather data to support the stakeholders.

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

Northwest Missouri State shows evidence of its commitment to high performance, AQIP, and continuous quality improvement. It approaches its quality efforts systematically and deliberately, fostering a culture that bases decision making on analyzing data, setting goals, and measuring progress. The University has demonstrated good faith in dealing with AQIP by taking peer review comments seriously and applying itself to the constructive feedback it

has received, especially regarding its commitment to the strategic plan and new AQIP Systems Portfolio.

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