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July 31, 2012

Dr. Rebecca Paneitz  
President  
NorthWest Arkansas Community College  
One College Dr.  
Bentonville, AR 72712-5091

Dear President Paneitz:

Attached is the report of the team that conducted NorthWest Arkansas Community College'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.

I Hope you will read and study the report carefully, because the team invested heavily in preparing for and conducting this visit, and its perceptions and advice are valuable to your institution. Please consider distributing it widely throughout your institution, since its positive feedback can be helpful in strengthening and broadening involvement in your quality improvement efforts.

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. Prior to that review, we will send you a listing of the materials the Panel will consider, and give you an opportunity to update or supplement them if you so desire.

To comply with federal requirements, we need you, as CEO of your institution, to formally acknowledge receipt of this report within the next two weeks, and to provide us with any comments you wish to make about it. Your response will become a part of the institution's permanent record.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen D. Spanghel".

Stephen D. Spanghel  
Vice President for Accreditation Relations

QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

# North West Arkansas Community College

Bentonville, Arkansas  
July 16 - 18, 2012

**Quality Checkup team members:**

**Dave Overbye**  
Dean of Academic Affairs  
Realtor University

**Jill Wright**  
Dean of English, Social Sciences, and  
Language Studies  
Illinois Central College

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

*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.*

Northwest Arkansas presented satisfactory evidence that it met the goals of the Quality Checkup. The reviewers were sent the necessary reports and documentation prior the visit. The materials were complete, comprehensive, informative, and sent in a timely manner. The primary documentation sent included a copy of the AQIP Systems Portfolio, the improvement plan for the updates on the O's and OO's, the federal compliance information, credit hour information, enrollment data, etc. Their approach was professional and informative.

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

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

The institution takes a comprehensive approach to the oversight of distance education. Faculty oversight is provided by the campus deans, and many full time faculty also teach online courses. Online course curriculum development follows the same process as for traditional face-to-face courses. Student services for online students are comparable to those designed for campus students.

**Review of the organization's quality assurance and oversight of distributed education (multiple campuses, additional locations, off-campus course sites)**

*In the team's judgment, the institution has presented satisfactory evidence that its distributed education activities (operation of multiple campuses, additional locations, off-campus course sites) are acceptable and comply with Commission's standards and expectations.*

The institution presented a review of the sites prepared by staff who work at the sites and the appropriate administrator. The institution does not have multiple campuses but offers classes, including adult basic education, at three sites. Those sites are intended to assist students who may have a distance to travel to the only campus; hence, student access is made easier by these sites. Students are not able to complete a degree at a site though. Degrees are only offered on campus.

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

*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.***

The institution has incorporated AQIP into all levels of its culture, including the faculty level with their engagement in the process and AQIP action projects. The institution is committed to the process through both their approach and deployment of daily work. For example, faculty are currently working with an AQIP action project that will help them continue classroom and program level assessment. The faculty are leading the project and working with Institutional Research to make sure the data collection, measures, and analysis will help the institution grow and develop. In turn, faculty recognize how student learning and assessment are at the core of classroom and program analysis. The institution is committed to core processes, measurement, data analysis, and re-tooling. Constituents at all-levels of the institution participate actively in all parts of the process.

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

***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.***

The institution presented a cohesive, comprehensive document which included the steps it was using to work on its O's and OO's. During the visit, the team had in-depth discussion with NWACC administration, staff, and faculty about the opportunities the institution is embracing. Clear action is being demonstrated by NWACC in response to its Systems Appraisal report. One of the opportunities the Institution is embracing is aligning student services to meet student need at the campus and at the site locations. To do this, the team who assist with student learning, i.e. the learning lab tutors, have published schedules for each tutor, have introduced themselves in classes, and are meeting with faculty to ensure the connection between the students' needs, the faculty needs, and learning needs.

**Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement**

***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.***

The institution has met this goal. The visit was well-planned and the agenda was followed. Prior to the visit, the contact at the Institution sent the necessary information and provided immediate feedback to

follow-up questions. The Institution is in the process of preparing its next AQIP Systems Portfolio and is committed to its continual creation and implementation of new and revised processes. Many of these process changes are a direct result of short-term AQIP action projects. An innovative project that has moved the Institution forward was a project which involved looking at energy consumption on campus. After the project was complete, the project team, which included a skills trade employee, developed a plan to reduce energy consumption by using different lighting in the parking lot.

Most notably, faculty have also shown engagement through faculty senate. The senate is very supportive of the AQIP effort and has demonstrated that support through the facilitation of action projects (such as the assessment project) and encouragement of faculty to support overall institutional objectives. Hence, a very positive working relationship between the faculty senate and the administration continues to move the institution forward as it proposes and completes multiple AQIP projects.

### **Other AQIP issues**

NWACC uses principles of Quality and process-focus to guide its daily and overall actions. The AQIP principles are evident among its business, academic, and support services. Collectively, all groups work toward the goal of quality, and this drives its ability to understand process design, data collection (both qualitative and quantitative), measurement, data analysis, and improvement. The culture lives the AQIP principles; faculty and staff demonstrates that they understand the concept of “spiral” learning, knowing that a project may be complete but that continued learning about the process, the data collection, and the analysis continues. NWACC knows change is good. Furthermore, the institution identifies stakeholders at every level of the Institution (from executive management to hourly employees) and outside the Institution (community members and potential employers who may seek to employ its graduates). It is integrating multiple levels of employees on its Quality Council, including full-time and part-time faculty, administration, and staff. The Quality Council has the mission of steering the AQIP process. The reviewers commended the Institution for progress on its AQIP journey and suggested that NWACC even share its journey with other AQIP Institutions who are beginning their AQIP journey.

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## Appendix A Worksheet for The Evaluation Team on Federal Compliance Requirements

*Instructions:*

### **Institutional Materials Related to Federal Compliance Reviewed by the Team:**

(list materials that the team reviewed)

### **Evaluation of Federal Compliance Program Components**

**1. Credits, Program Length, and Tuition:** *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). New for 2012: The Commission has a new policy on the Credit Hour. Complete the Worksheet in Appendix A and then complete the following responses. Attach the Worksheet to this form.*

CHECK THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE THAT REFLECTS THE TEAM'S CONCLUSIONS:

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:

Additional Monitoring, if any:

**2. 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 for the three years prior to the visit.*

CHECK THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE THAT REFLECTS THE TEAM'S CONCLUSIONS:

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:

Additional Monitoring, if any:

**3. 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.*

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:

Additional Monitoring, if any:

**4. 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 has appropriate protocols to disclose additional fees related to verification to students and to protect their privacy.*

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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:

Additional Monitoring, if any:

**5. Title IV Program and Related Responsibilities:** *The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program.*

- **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 Two 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 three years of default rates. 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.*
- **Campus Crime Information, Athletic Participation and Financial Aid, and Related Disclosures:** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about its*

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*disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.*

- ***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.*
- ***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 (The institution should review the Contractual Change Application on the Commission's Web site for more information. If the team learns that the institution has a contractual relationship that may require Commission approval and has not completed the appropriate Commission Contractual Change Application the team must require that the institution complete and file the form as soon as possible.)*
- ***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 (The institution should review the Consortial Change Application on the Commission's Web site for more information. If the team learns that the institution has such a consortial relationship that may require Commission approval and has not completed the appropriate Commission Consortial Change Application the team must require that the institution complete and file the form as soon as possible.)*

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 Institution is aware of its student loan default rates and has developed a comprehensive plan which includes both an AQIP action project and a mandatory session for all aid recipients must attend prior to their financial aid being disbursed.

Additional Monitoring, if any:

**6. Institutional Disclosures and Advertising and Recruitment Materials:** *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.*

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:

Additional Monitoring, if any:

**7. Relationship with Other Accrediting Agencies and with State Regulatory Boards:** *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.*

CHECK THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE THAT REFLECTS THE TEAM'S CONCLUSIONS:

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:

Additional Monitoring, if any:

**8. Public Notification of an Evaluation Visit and Third Party 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.*

CHECK THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE THAT REFLECTS THE TEAM'S CONCLUSIONS:

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:

Additional Monitoring, if any:

## Appendix B Credits and Program Length

*Instructions: The team reviews the "Protocol for Peer Reviewers Reviewing Credit Hours Under the Commission's New Policies" before completing this Worksheet. This Worksheet must be completed for all Quality Checkup visits after January 1, 2012.*

### A: Answer the Following Questions

#### *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:

- 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?

Yes                       No

Comments:

- 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:

- 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:

#### *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:

- 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:

- 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:

- 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:

- 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:

**B: Identify the Sample Courses and Programs Reviewed by the Team. 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.**

Allied Health Careers and General Education courses, core transfer courses such as Composition, Communication, and College Algebra.

**C: Recommend Commission Follow-up, If Appropriate**

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

Yes                       No

Rationale:

The College follows the Carnegie model and the 16 week semester for fall and spring semester. For summer semester, the college follows the model of 2-five week sessions.

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**

Comment: None noted or recommended.

## Appendix C

### Clock Hour Worksheet

*Instructions: Teams complete the following worksheet only if the institution offers any programs in clock hours OR that must be reported to the U.S. Department of Education in clock hours for Title IV purposes even though students may earn credit hours for graduation from these programs. Such programs typically include those that must be identified in clock hours for state licensure of the program or where completing clock hours is a requirement for graduates to apply for licensure or authorization to practice the occupation. Such programs might include teacher education, nursing, or other programs in licensed fields.*

Federal Formula for Minimum Number of Clock Hours of Instruction (34 CFR §668.8)

1 semester or trimester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction

1 quarter hour must include at least 25 clock hours of instruction

Note that the institution may have a lower rate if the institution's requirement for student work outside of class combined with the actual clock hours of instruction equals the above formula provided that a semester/trimester hour includes at least 30 clock hours of actual instruction and a quarter hour include at least 20 semester hours.

#### A: Answer the Following Questions

- Does the institution's credit to clock hour formula match the federal formula?

Yes

No

Comments:

- If the credit to clock hour conversion numbers are less than the federal formula, indicate what specific requirements there are, if any, for student work outside of class?

- Did the team determine in reviewing the institution's credit hour policies that they reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education?

Yes

No

Comments:

- Did the team determine in reviewing the assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution that it was reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

Yes

No

Comments:

**B: Does the team approve variations, if any, from the federal formula in the institution's credit to clock hour conversion?**

Yes

No

(Note that the team may approve a lower conversion rate than the federal rate as noted above provided the team found no issues with the institution's policies or practices related to the credit hour and there is sufficient student work outside of class as noted in the instructions.)

**C: Recommend Commission Follow-up, If Appropriate**

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

Yes

No

Rationale:

Identify the type of Commission monitoring required and the due date: None noted or recommended.