

**MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Agenda Item Summary Sheet**

**Committee:** Academic and Student Affairs Committee    **Date of Meeting:** September 8, 2009

**Agenda Item:** Higher Learning Commission Campus Visits Update

- Proposed Policy Change       Approvals Required by Policy       Other Approvals       Monitoring
- Information

**Cite policy requirement, or explain why item is on the Board agenda:**

The Board of Trustees has requested an overview of re-accreditation visits scheduled in FY2009. This item will offer an opportunity for Board members to share their experience.

**Scheduled Presenter(s):**

Linda L. Baer, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

**Outline of Key Points/Policy Issues:**

Board of Trustee members, the Chancellor and an Office of the Chancellor Representative support the Higher Learning Commission re-accreditation visits of system colleges and universities.

**Background Information:**

In FY2009, ten Minnesota State Colleges and Universities were evaluated for re-accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission—the regional accrediting body for colleges and universities in the Midwest region.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES  
*INFORMATION ITEM***

**HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION CAMPUS VISITS UPDATE**

**BACKGROUND**

In the United States, accreditation is a non-governmental, peer-review process that assures the quality of the postsecondary education. Educational institutions or programs volunteer to undergo this review periodically to determine if certain criteria are being met. There are three types of accreditors: regional, national, specialized and professional. Applicable to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, regional accreditors accredit public and private, nonprofit and for-profit, two- and four-year institutions.

Accreditation is the primary means by which colleges and universities assure quality to students and the public. It is required for access to federal funds such as student aid and is important to students for a smooth transfer of courses and programs among colleges and universities. Accreditation is important to employers when evaluating credentials for job applicants and when deciding to provide tuition support for current employees seeking additional education. General information about accreditation is available at [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org).

Accreditation is ongoing – it takes place on a cycle that may range from every few years to as many as ten years. Steps in the accreditation process involve preparation of evidence of accomplishment, scrutiny of these materials, a site visit by peers, and action to determine accreditation status by the accrediting organization.

**The Higher Learning Commission**

For Minnesota colleges and universities the regional accrediting organization is The Higher Learning Commission, which is a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools founded in 1895 as one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States. The Higher Learning Commission accredits, and thereby grants membership in the Commission and in the North Central Association, to degree-granting educational institutions in the North Central region: Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, New Mexico, South Dakota, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Wyoming. More information about The Higher Learning Commission is available at <http://www.ncahlc.org>.

The Higher Learning Commission uses five broad “Criteria for Accreditation” and “core components” within those criteria to evaluate colleges and universities:

- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- Criterion Five: Engagement and Service. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

Detailed information about the Criteria and the Core Components can be found on the Higher Learning Commission's Web site mentioned above.

Described below, The Higher Learning Commission provides two programs for maintaining accredited status: the Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) and the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). The Higher Learning Commission is considering the design of additional accreditation pathways including an institution-designed and defined pathway, a commission menu of topics and options, multi-institution collaborative topics and options and commission-mandated focus.

*Higher Learning Commission PEAQ Accreditation Process.* PEAQ employs a five-step comprehensive evaluation process that includes

- an institution self-study is conducted for approximately two years resulting in a report of findings in accordance with Commission expectations,
- an evaluation team of Consultant-Evaluators to conduct a comprehensive visit for continued accreditation and to write a report containing the team's recommendations,
- documents relating to the comprehensive visit are reviewed by a Readers Panel or, in some situations, a Review Committee,
- The Institutional Action Council (IAC) takes action on the Readers Panel's recommendation. (If a Review Committee reviewed the visit, the Review Committee takes action.)
- The Board of Trustees validates the work of IAC or a Review Committee, finalizing the action.

The formal PEAQ procedure culminating in Reaffirmation of Accreditation occurs every ten years.

PEAQ Minnesota State College and Universities:

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| ○ Anoka Technical College                         | ○ Minnesota State University, Mankato            |
| ○ Anoka-Ramsey Community College                  | ○ Minnesota West Community and Technical College |
| ○ Bemidji State University                        | ○ Northland Community and Technical College      |
| ○ Central Lakes College                           | ○ Pine Technical College                         |
| ○ Dakota County Technical College                 | ○ South Central College                          |
| ○ Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College        | ○ Southwest Minnesota State University           |
| ○ Itasca Community College                        | ○ St. Cloud State University                     |
| ○ Mesabi Range Community & Technical College      | ○ Vermilion Community College                    |
| ○ Minnesota State Community and Technical College | ○ Winona State University                        |
| ○ Minnesota State University Moorhead             |  |

*Higher Learning Commission AQIP Accreditation Process.* Launched in July 1999, the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) provides an alternative evaluation process for organizations already accredited by the Commission. AQIP is structured around quality improvement principles and processes and involves a structured set of goal-setting, networking, and accountability activities. With AQIP, an institution has the opportunity to demonstrate it meets the Higher Learning Commission's accreditation standards and expectations through sequences of events that naturally align with those ongoing activities that characterize organizations striving to improve their performance. By sharing both its advancement activities and the results of these actions with AQIP, an institution provides the Higher Learning Commission with the evidence it needs *both* to make a public quality assurance judgment *and* to support and to assist the institution in its efforts to excel at achieving the distinctive higher education mission it has set for itself. AQIP employs these steps to reaffirm an organization's accredited status.

- The organization during a seven year period engages in all AQIP processes, including Strategy Forums, Annual Updates, Systems Portfolio Appraisals, visit to review U.S. Department of Education compliance issues.
- An AQIP Review Panel examines the collective history of the organization's interaction with AQIP and the Commission (i.e., reports of the various processes and activities, organizational indicators, current Systems Portfolio) to determine whether this evidence demonstrates compliance with the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation. The Panel may seek and obtain additional information before making its recommendation.
- The Institutional Action Council (IAC) takes action on the Panel's recommendation regarding both reaffirmation of accreditation and continuing AQIP participation.
- The Board of Trustees validates the action.

AQIP Minnesota State Colleges and Universities:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Alexandria Technical College</li> <li>○ Century Community and Technical College</li> <li>○ Hennepin Technical College</li> <li>○ Hibbing Community College</li> <li>○ Inver Hills Community College</li> <li>○ Lake Superior College</li> <li>○ Metropolitan State University</li> <li>○ Minneapolis Community and Technical College</li> <li>○ Minnesota State College—Southeast Technical</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Normandale Community College</li> <li>○ North Hennepin Community College</li> <li>○ Northwest Technical College</li> <li>○ Rainy River Community College</li> <li>○ Ridgewater College</li> <li>○ Riverland Community College</li> <li>○ Rochester Community and Technical College</li> <li>○ Saint Cloud Technical College</li> <li>○ Saint Paul College—A Community &amp; Technical College</li> </ul> |
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**Board of Trustee, Chancellor and Office of the Chancellor Representative participation**

Accreditation site visit attendees include a Board of Trustees member, the Chancellor and a representative from the Office of the Chancellor to provide support, information and perspective. The Office of the Chancellor representative serves as a primary contact regarding the Board of Trustees, and provides system level information in response to inquiries from the college/university administration before and during the visit. The site evaluation team may request information from the representative. At the invitation of the college/university president and the chair of the visiting team, state governing board representatives may attend general sessions such as an opening session or an exit interview. The Higher Learning Commission ensures that its teams can conduct their responsibilities free of influence or interruption; all commission team meetings and deliberations are closed.

**FY2009 Higher Learning Commission Re-Accreditation Visits**

The table below lists college/university reaccreditation visits that occurred during FY2009. The table includes visit dates and Board of Trustee and Office of the Chancellor representatives.

Visit Date	College/University	Board of Trustee Representative	Office of the Chancellor Representative
<b>Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) Colleges and Universities</b>			
10/29/08 - 10/31/08	Inver Hills Community College	Cheryl Dickson	Deborah Proctor
10/29/08 - 10/31/08	Rochester Community & Technical College	Terri Thomas	Manuel Lopez
02/11/09 - 02/13/09	Hennepin Technical College	Cheryl Dickson	Ron Dreyer
02/11/09 - 02/13/09	Minnesota State College— Southeast Technical	Cheryl Dickson	JoAnn Simser
02/18/09 - 02/20/09	Ridgewater College	Christine Rice	Lynette Olson
03/25/09 - 03/27/09	Metropolitan State University	Ruth Grendahl	Manuel Lopez
03/25/09 - 03/27/09	Minneapolis Community and Technical College	David Olson	Deborah Proctor
<b>Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) Colleges and Universities</b>			
2/23/09- 2/25/09	Pine Technical College	Louise Sundin	JoAnn Simser
4/27/09- 4/29/09	Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	Tom Renier	Manuel Lopez
4/27/09- 4/29/09	Itasca Community College	Tom Renier	Ron Dreyer

**FY2010 Higher Learning Commission Regional Re-Accreditation Visits**

The table below lists college/university reaccreditation visits planned for FY2010.

Visit Date	College/University
<b>Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) Colleges and Universities</b>	
	None scheduled
<b>Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) Colleges and Universities</b>	
10/19/2009	Mesabi Range Community and Technical College
11/2/2009	Vermilion Community College
2/1/2010	South Central Technical College
3/22/2010	Bemidji State University
4/26/2010	Northland Community and Technical College