

NCA column from President Glandon for Colorado Community Newspapers Littleton Independent, February 2006

This year, Arapahoe Community College (ACC) is celebrating its 40th anniversary. Hitting “middle age,” for institutions as well as individuals, often brings about introspection. Arapahoe Community College is in the midst of taking a hard look at itself.

Community colleges in Colorado have had to undergo a reaccreditation process every 10 years for the past few decades. 2006 is ACC’s year to be evaluated for reaccreditation.

The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools will be accepting our massive self-study document in September 2006 and conducting a site visit on December 4-6, 2006. The mission of this accrediting body is “serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning.”

First, a little bit about ACC’s rich accreditation history. According to statements by Dr. Allan Crawford, ACC’s first president, no community college or junior college in the nation ever gained its initial accreditation as quickly after formation as ACC did. Later, in 1985/86, ACC was the first community college in the state to have its accreditation extended for ten years – a testament to our long-standing commitment to quality.

What is accreditation, exactly? Does it mean that all ACC courses will transfer to other colleges? No. Does it mean that the Commission recommends our college to all students? No. Is it a ranking of ACC against other community colleges in the nation? No. According to the website of The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, “The purpose of accreditation is to provide public assurance of educational quality and institutional integrity.”

To this end, Arapahoe Community College will be evaluated on five specific “criteria.” Each criterion is divided into subunits called “core components” that ACC staff and faculty must prove we are satisfying by providing “evidence.”

The five criteria on which ACC will be evaluated are:

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.

In the past decade - half of which has been notable for significant reductions in state support for higher education - meeting the criteria listed above is no easy feat. In the future, I will share with the local newspaper-reading public – ACC's constituents – how we believe we are meeting the goals for reaccreditation. Feedback from our communities is critical to this process. If you have positive or negative comments that you would like to share with the steering committee compiling evidence for and writing the ACC self-study, please contact Robert Moore at 303-797-5755.