

## **Oakton and Accreditation: The Higher Learning Commission (North Central Association) Criteria for Accreditation**

This fall Oakton will begin preliminary planning for the self-study and accreditation team visit from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (NCA). The self-study will be due to NCA in summer 2007 and the visit will occur in the fall. This *In the Abstract* provides a brief overview of new accreditation criteria that will be the basis for the self-study and visit. For additional information see the Higher Learning Commission website, <http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/>.

### **The Criteria Headings Defined**

The Criteria for Accreditation are organized under five major headings. Each criterion has three elements: Criterion Statement, Core Components, and Examples of Evidence. These elements are defined as follows.

**Criteria Statements** These statements, adopted by the Commission, define necessary attributes of an organization accredited by the Commission. An organization must be judged to have met each of the Criteria to merit accreditation. Sanctions may be applied if an affiliated organization is in jeopardy of not meeting one or more of the Criteria.

**Core Components** The Commission identifies Core Components of each Criterion. An organization addresses each Core Component as it presents reasonable and representative evidence of meeting a Criterion. The review of each Core Component is necessary for a thorough evaluation of how an organization meets a Criterion.

**Examples of Evidence** The Commission provides in the Examples of Evidence illustrative examples of the specific types of evidence that an organization might present in addressing a Core Component. Organizations may provide other evidence they find relevant to their mission and activities. Some types of evidence suggested by the Commission may not be appropriate for all organizations; therefore, the absence of a specific type of evidence does not in and of itself mean that the organization fails to meet a Core Component.

### **The Criteria for Accreditation**

The reverse side of this *In the Abstract* presents the criteria for accreditation. As the College moves forward with the self-study these will become very familiar.

### **Timetable**

This fall, a timetable for convening self-study committees, conducting the self-study, writing the self-study report, and preparing for the team visit will be developed. Like with the criteria, the timetable will also become familiar and will be aligned with timetables for other key Oakton initiatives.

## **The Criteria for Accreditation**

### **Criterion One: Mission and Integrity**

Core Component – 1a: The organization’s mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization’s commitments.

Core Component – 1b: In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.

Core Component – 1c: Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization.

Core Component – 1d: The organization’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.

Core Component – 1e: The organization upholds and protects its integrity.

### **Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future**

Core Component – 2a: The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

Core Component – 2b: The organization’s resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

Core Component – 2c: The organization’s ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

Core Component – 2d: All levels of planning align with the organization’s mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

### **Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching**

Core Component – 3a: The organization’s goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

Core Component – 3b: The organization values and supports effective teaching.

Core Component – 3c: The organization creates effective learning environments.

Core Component – 3d: The organization’s learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

### **Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge**

Core Component – 4a: The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

Core Component – 4b: The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

Core Component – 4c: The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

Core Component – 4d: The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

### **Criterion Five: Engagement and Service**

Core Component – 5a: The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

Core Component – 5b: The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.

Core Component – 5c: The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.

Core Component – 5d: Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.