



Washtenaw  
Community  
College

**Washtenaw Community College**  
**Self-Study Design**

**January 2008**

*Submitted to the  
Higher Learning Commission of the  
North Central Association of Colleges and  
Schools*

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# Introduction

Washtenaw Community College (WCC) has been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools since 1973. As WCC prepares for its next comprehensive accreditation visit in 2009-10, the college will be engaged for the next two years in a self-study process that is expected to be collaborative, evaluative, and guided by the goal of continuous institutional improvement.

The self-study process itself will provide an opportunity for the college community to evaluate all areas of the institution in relation to the criteria for accreditation, and use evidence gathered in support of those criteria to identify strengths, opportunities for improvement, and future goals. Above all, the college will use the self-study process in support of its mission and its central purpose of teaching and learning.

The resulting self-study report to be submitted to the Higher Learning Commission in advance of the visit will serve as documentation of WCC's capacity to meet the criteria for accreditation. The report will also provide a reflection of both the achievements and the potential of the institution for the entire college community, as well as for its external constituencies. Moreover, the self-study report will serve as a guiding document for improvement and future directions across the college.

## Self-Study Goals

With the participation and input of the WCC self-study steering committee and college leadership, the following goals for the self-study process have been identified:

- Achieve a ten-year accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of college practices, policies and programs as they relate to the criteria for accreditation.
- Document strengths and areas for improvement across the institution.
- Respond to concerns from the 1999 self-study and team visit.
- Utilize outcomes of the self-study in setting future directions and positioning the college for future success.
- Build upon self-study outcomes to guide institutional and educational improvement.
- Provide evidence that college practices and policies are aligned with the college mission, values, and vision.

- Foster a culture of community engagement through ongoing communication, collaboration, and participation in the self-study process by all college constituencies.
- Demonstrate the college's commitment to its partners and constituencies.

## **The Self-Study Process at Washtenaw Community College**

The mission of Washtenaw Community College is to “make a positive difference in people's lives through accessible and excellent educational programs and services.” As a learner-centered, open-door institution committed to student, community and staff success, the college undergoes continuous evaluation and improvement to fulfill this mission.

The self-study process for continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association (NCA) provides the college with an opportunity for systematic, comprehensive evaluation of practices and policies across the entire institution. This aligns with the college's commitment to continuous improvement of teaching and learning. WCC's mission and values reflect the Commission's own stated goal of “Serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning.” From the beginning of the process, it was determined that the self-study was ultimately to be an honest reflection of WCC's capacity to meet its mission and serve its constituencies. To that end, the process was designed early on to be participatory and collaborative, yet streamlined and well-organized.

### **Preparation to Date**

- In February 2007, a small team attended a Workday on Self-Study presented by the college's NCA liaison Ingrid Walker. At that time, the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences was appointed Self-Study Coordinator, and the college's Consultant for Assessment and Accreditation was identified as lead writer for the self-study.
- In April 2007, a larger team, including faculty and staff representing various areas of the college, attended the HLC Annual Meeting, including the Workshop on Self-Study.
- Timelines, budget, and goals were established early in the planning process.
- A steering committee was formed in June 2007 (see Self-Study Committee and Team Structure, p. 6). At the initial meeting, committee members received background materials to ensure a common understanding of accreditation and the self-study process. Materials included an informational PowerPoint presentation, examples of self-studies from other institutions, timeline, copies of the HLC/NCA Handbook for Accreditation, and initial analysis of the criteria and core components.

- Criterion teams were established and began meeting in June/July 2007, with each team led by two steering committee members. Their initial charge was to recruit additional appropriate faculty/staff to their teams, further analyze the criteria, and begin gathering evidence. Team members were encouraged to look at the criteria in light of the distinctive qualities of WCC, keeping in mind the four cross-cutting themes that demonstrate the college to be future oriented, learning focused, connected, and distinctive.
- Criteria teams meet regularly (weekly or bi-weekly). Criteria team leaders also meet regularly (usually monthly) with the self-study coordinator and writer to go over progress to date.
- The full steering committee accomplishes and communicates much of its progress using the intranet and internet, as well as via email.
- The steering committee has been committed from the beginning to accomplish much of its work, data collection, and communication electronically. At the onset of the self-study process, electronic folders were placed on the college intranet for the use by the steering committee. Each criterion team was assigned a unique folder which includes space for meeting agendas and minutes, team information, and data. Additionally, communication and resource folders were created for all team members to share information across criteria and access information and background documents relevant to their work.
- In fall 2007, a SharePoint website was established at the college for the use of the steering committee. All information initially contained in the committee's intranet folders were transferred to the SharePoint site, which enables team members to view and work with documents and data easily. Data and sources of evidence are uploaded to the site by team members so that this information is readily available to the steering committee. In addition to assisting teams in their work, having all data available on the site will ultimately form an electronic "resource room" that the NCA/HLC team of evaluators will be able to access as part of their review of the self-study. The information contained on the intranet and SharePoint sites will form the basis of the public self-study website that will be put on the college website in mid-2008.

## **Collection and Analysis of Evidence**

- Very early in the process, a template for data collection was developed by one of the faculty on the steering committee for use by all criterion teams. This template can be adapted by each team to track evidence collected in support of the core components.
- A database tracking all data and evidence as it is collected was initially made available on the Self-Study intranet site for all teams to view. This has since been replaced by the SharePoint website, which tracks multiple attributes for all uploaded data and evidence and links directly to documents and web links. In this way, evidence can be cross-referenced when it is appropriate for use in addressing multiple core components across criteria, as well as the four cross-cutting themes.
- By the end of fall semester 2007, teams had begun writing evaluative statements indicating strengths and challenges based upon evidence for each core component. Resources on writing evaluative statements have been made available to all team

members and were included as part of an in-service session of the steering committee in January 2008. Team evaluative statements can be posted, shared, and worked on collaboratively via the SharePoint website.

- The Office of Institutional Research is represented on the steering committee, and coordinates the development, administration and analysis of survey and other data relevant to the self-study. A series of surveys addressing issues related to all the criteria and directed at students, graduates, faculty, staff, and community leaders will be administered throughout 2008.

## **Communication**

- To begin creating awareness of the self-study and accreditation process with the entire college community, the goals and expectations for the self-study were introduced to faculty and staff at the fall 2007 in-service.
- The self-study coordinator provides regular email updates to the steering committee.
- Beginning in 2008, an e-newsletter about the self-study process will be sent regularly to all faculty and staff at the college.
- In late 2007 and throughout 2008, a series of open forums for groups of faculty, staff and students will be held as part of the survey process for the self-study. These forums will focus on topics related to the five criteria, with special emphasis on the appropriateness and college community understanding of WCC's mission.
- Students will be able to learn more about the self-study process through articles in the student newspaper, *The Voice*, and through the self-study website.

## **Resources**

- The college maintains a permanent budget line for accreditation. Resources are allocated in stages as appropriate for the self-study process, with larger funds to be designated for 2008-09 and 2009-10. The President has defined providing support for the self-study as one of four priority goals for the 2007-08 fiscal year.
- Faculty serving on the steering committee receive released time to work on tasks related to the self-study.
- The Office of Institutional Research provides support and coordination for data collection, instrument development, analysis, and reporting for the self-study.
- Centralized office space is available to accommodate the collection and easy retrieval of information.
- Information Technology Services provides support for the continued maintenance and improvement of the SharePoint website, as well as support for the development and maintenance of the external self-study website.

# Self-Study Committee and Team Structure

The President and the Vice President of Instruction provide executive oversight for all matters related to accreditation. The Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences serves as self-study coordinator and provides the administrative leadership for the self-study process. The coordinator works closely with the college's Consultant for Assessment and Accreditation, who serves as the lead writer, in coordinating the self-study effort.

## Steering Committee

It was decided early that the self-study process for the college would be served best by a small yet very directed and focused steering committee chaired by the self-study coordinator. In addition to the coordinator and lead writer, ten individuals representing various areas of the college were asked to be part of the steering committee. In selecting members for the steering committee, several factors were considered:

- Broad representation of college units
- Involvement of a large number of faculty and staff who serve in leadership roles at the college
- Inclusion of individuals who have a long history at the college (including involvement in the last self-study), as well as newer employees
- Involvement of individuals with expertise in particular areas of the college most related to the criteria, such as planning or curriculum and assessment

## Criterion Teams

Each of the five criterion teams is led by two steering committee members. Team leaders were assigned based upon their expertise and capacity to address their particular criterion. Team leaders were charged with selecting several additional criterion team members who had the experience and knowledge to collect and analyze evidence supporting the criterion and core components. Teams were formed with the goal of having representation from as many areas of the college as possible while keeping the teams small enough to be functional and focused. In addition to team members, some teams identified resource people who, while not officially members of a criterion team, are assigned specific tasks related to collecting evidence in a particular area.

## ***Steering Committee***

*Purpose: Makes decisions concerning recommendations given by the criterion teams and provides overall direction for the self-study process.*

- ❖ Bill Abernethy, Dean, Humanities and Social Sciences (Self-Study Coordinator and Steering Committee Chair)
- ❖ Jennifer Baker, Faculty and Department Chair, Visual Arts Technology
- ❖ Linda Blakey, Associate Vice President, Student Services
- ❖ Cathie Dries, Dean, Continuing Education and Community Services
- ❖ James Egan, Faculty, Mathematics
- ❖ Joy Garrett, Director, Curriculum and Assessment
- ❖ Steven Hardy, Controller
- ❖ Julie Morrison, Consultant, Academic Assessment and Accreditation (Lead Writer)
- ❖ Roger Mourad, Director, Institutional Research
- ❖ Martha Showalter, Dean, Mathematics, Natural and Behavioral Sciences
- ❖ Lisa Veasey, Faculty, English/Writing and Chair, Curriculum Committee
- ❖ Rosemary Wilson, Dean, Business and Computer Technology

## ***Criterion Teams***

*Purpose: 1). Interpret the criterion and its core components in relation to the distinctive nature of WCC; 2). Identify, collect and assess information, data, and other evidence in support of the core components; 3). Identify best examples of evidence; 4.) Prepare evaluative statements based on the evidence concerning WCC's strengths and challenges.*

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

- ❖ Linda Blakey, Associate Vice President, Student Services (Team Leader)
- ❖ James Egan, Faculty, Mathematics (Team Leader)
- ❖ Bill Everin, Research Analyst

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

- ❖ Steven Hardy, Controller (Team Leader)
- ❖ Roger Mourad, Director, Institutional Research (Team Leader)
- ❖ Damon Flowers, Associate Vice President, Facilities Development and Operations
- ❖ Fiona Gray, Supervisor, Student Payment Plan and Collection
- ❖ Marla Stuck, Employment Manager

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

- ❖ Martha Showalter, Dean, Mathematics, Natural and Behavioral Sciences (Team Leader)
- ❖ Lisa Veasey, Faculty, English/Writing and Chair, Curriculum Committee (Team Leader)
- ❖ Cheryl Byrne, Dean, Distance Learning
- ❖ Charles Johnson, Faculty, Humanities and Chair, Assessment Committee
- ❖ Victor Liu, Dean, Learning Resources
- ❖ Kathleen Stadtfeld, Director, Educational Services

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

- ❖ Jennifer Baker, Faculty and Department Chair, Visual Arts Technology (Team Leader)
- ❖ Rosemary Wilson, Dean, Business and Computer Technology (Team Leader)
- ❖ Kris Chatas, Faculty and Department Chair, Mathematics
- ❖ Kelley Gottschang, Faculty and Department Chair, Internet Professional
- ❖ Debra Guerrero, Director, Learning Support Services

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

- ❖ Cathie Dries, Dean, Continuing Education and Community Services (Team Leader)
- ❖ Joy Garrett, Director, Curriculum and Assessment (Team Leader)
- ❖ Janet Hawkins, Coordinator, Public Information
- ❖ Judith Hommel, Executive Associate, President's Office
- ❖ Krissa Rumsey, Grant Writer Administrator, WCC Foundation
- ❖ Catherine Smillie, Executive Director, Public Relations and Marketing
- ❖ Patricia Taylor, Dean, Academic Placement and Counseling Support Services

# Self-Study Outline

**Introductory pages:** Board of Trustee and Executive Officer listings, steering committee, criterion teams, contents, list of tables and figures, abbreviations

## **I. Institutional Background**

- A. College History
- B. College Profile
- C. Community Profile
- D. College Mission and Values

## **II. Self-Study Overview**

- A. Self-Study Goals and Audiences
- B. Organization of the Self-Study Process (committee structure etc.)
- C. Methodology for the Collection and Analysis of Evidence
- D. Organization of the Self-Study Report

## **III. Accreditation History**

- A. WCC's History of Accreditation
- B. Response to Concerns and Key Changes Since 1999

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

- A. Introduction to Criterion One: WCC's interpretation of this criterion
- B. Criterion One Core Components
  - For each core component:*
    - 1. Evidence of practices/procedures that demonstrates WCC fulfills each core component
    - 2. Evaluation of each practice/procedure presented
- C. Applicable Cross-Cutting Themes across this Criterion
- E. Strengths
- F. Areas for Improvement
- G. Future Directions

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

- A. Introduction to Criterion Two: WCC's interpretation of this criterion
- B. Criterion Two Core Components
  - For each core component:*
    - 1. Evidence of practices/procedures that demonstrates WCC fulfills each core component
    - 2. Evaluation of each practice/procedure presented
- C. Applicable Cross-Cutting Themes across this Criterion
- E. Strengths
- F. Areas for Improvement
- G. Future Directions

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

- A. Introduction to Criterion Three: WCC's interpretation of this criterion
- B. Criterion Three Core Components
  - For each core component:*
    - 1. Evidence of practices/procedures that demonstrates WCC fulfills each core component
    - 2. Evaluation of each practice/procedure presented
- C. Applicable Cross-Cutting Themes across this Criterion
- E. Strengths
- F. Areas for Improvement
- G. Future Directions

## **VII. Criterion Four: Acquisition, discovery, and Application of Knowledge**

- A. Introduction to Criterion Four: WCC's interpretation of this criterion
- B. Criterion Four Core Components
  - For each core component:*
    - 1. Evidence of practices/procedures that demonstrates WCC fulfills each core component
    - 2. Evaluation of each practice/procedure presented
- C. Applicable Cross-Cutting Themes across this Criterion
- E. Strengths
- F. Areas for Improvement
- G. Future Directions

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

- A. Introduction to Criterion Five: WCC's interpretation of this criterion
- B. Criterion Five Core Components
  - For each core component:*
    - 1. Evidence of practices/procedures that demonstrates WCC fulfills each core component
    - 2. Evaluation of each practice/procedure presented
- C. Applicable Cross-Cutting Themes across this Criterion
- E. Strengths
- F. Areas for Improvement
- G. Future Directions

## **IX. Federal Compliance and Third Party Comments**

- A. Federal Compliance
- B. Third Party Comments

## **X. Institutional Snapshot**

## **XI. Summary and Request for Continued Accreditation**

## **XII. Appendices**

## Self-Study Timeline

Date	Task
<i>April 2007</i>	Obtain self-study reports from other institutions for review at NCA Annual Meeting
	Identify self-study coordinator and primary writer
	Self-study coordinator and primary writer review self-study reports from other organizations.
<i>Spring/ Summer 2007</i>	Establish Self-Study Steering Committee and begin meeting to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become familiar with accreditation criteria and self-study goals and process</li> <li>• Organize and oversee principle subcommittees or working groups to prepare reports and data for inclusion in self-study</li> <li>• Determine what data is expected to be included in the reports (versus data that will be made available to the evaluation team on the web or in the resource room) and method for gathering/evaluating data</li> </ul>
	Self-Study Design Plan containing timeline, calendar, self-study goals, proposed committee structure, and working outline of self-study report is drafted by coordinator/writer and reviewed by Steering Committee.
	Overall self-study design and goals are shared with all subcommittees/working groups.
<i>Fall 2007</i>	Dr. Whitworth is contacted by the Commission and asked to propose dates for the evaluation visit, identify the self-study coordinator, and clarify if there will be any change in the institution's status (none are anticipated).
	Internal self-study site completed and put on college website.
	Self-study presentations are given to faculty and staff at in-service.
	Self-Study Design is completed and submitted to the Commission staff liaison.
	Self-Study Design presented to Board of Trustees.
	Subcommittees gather data and prepare outlines of chapters/reports for their areas.
<i>Winter 2008</i>	Subcommittees prepare evaluative statements with appropriate data and submit to Steering Committee.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Task</b>
	Self-study presentations given to faculty and staff
	Conduct any survey research necessary for the report.
	Steering Committee members participate in NCA Annual Meeting (April).
<b><i>No later than Fall 2008</i></b>	Send information to Commission suggesting desired team competencies.
	Confirm date of visit.
<b><i>Fall 2008</i></b>	Drafts of self-study chapters are prepared by writer with coordinator and Steering Committee.
	Self-study presentations given to faculty and staff (perhaps also to students).
	Steering committee, coordinator and writer begin organizing information for electronic resource room.
	Invite Commission staff liaison to campus to make presentation on self-study and other relevant topics
<b><i>Winter 2009</i></b>	Self-study presentations given to faculty and staff.
	Steering Committee distributes and receives reactions to draft chapters.
	Solicit third party comment.
	Writer(s)/editor(s) compile final version of report.
	Receive a list of proposed team members from the Commission and respond with any comments.
<b><i>Spring/ Summer 2009</i></b>	Self-study report given to Marketing and Publications for design by June 1.
	Self-study submitted to Board of Trustees for approval.
	Report is put on self-study website and made available campus-wide and to external constituencies.
<b><i>Summer 2009</i></b>	Team confirmed by Commission (should be confirmed by August).
	Team chair contacts WCC to organize visit approximately 3 months prior to visit.
	Copies of self-study report, last two annual financial audits, and current catalogues and student and faculty handbooks are sent to the Commission staff liaison and all evaluation team members at least eight weeks before scheduled

Date	Task
	team visit.
<i>Early Fall 2009</i>	Announce the dates of the evaluation visit to all constituent groups
	Make preparations for resource/meeting room for use by evaluation team
	Make visit preparations (accommodations, meals, scheduling, etc.) for team members.
<i>Oct. 12-14 2009</i>	Team visit takes place

## Conclusion

All successful processes have a good beginning. The self-study steering committee at Washtenaw Community College recognizes that quality preparations and a high level of collaboration at the earliest stages of the self-study are critical to a successful process and report. While the primary outcome for the self-study is that WCC achieve a ten-year accreditation, this process offers an unparalleled opportunity for reflection, engagement, and honest evaluation of all areas of the college. The self-study process and report will provide a comprehensive means of ensuring continued improvement of programs and services at WCC, as well as providing evidence to the Higher Learning Commission revealing the college's strengths, its capacity to meet challenges, and its commitment to those it serves.