

## **Executive Summary: Self-Study 2012-2013 Higher Learning Commission Site Visit for Re-Accreditation**

Carl Albert State College (CASC) values the importance of accreditation and peer evaluation. This value is demonstrated by the fiscal and human resources the college has committed to the self-study process and by its ongoing commitment to educating staff, faculty, and administrators about the importance of peer accreditation. For the last 10 years, CASC has sent members of the staff, faculty, and administration to the Annual HLC Conference to learn about best practices in higher education and to ensure that CASC is meeting HLC accreditation criteria.

CASC's Self-Study has been a process which has included all levels of the institution and has been a collaborative effort by the entire CASC community at both Poteau and Sallisaw. The process provided an excellent opportunity for the entire institution to gain a greater understanding of its various offices, services, and operations; a stronger sense of community, and a heightened awareness of the institution's strengths, challenges, and recommendations for improvement.

In July 2008, Dr. James Yates was hired as Dean (later changed to Vice President) of Academic Affairs with the duties of HLC Self-Study Coordinator listed as aspects of the position. In April 2008, Dr. Yates and Dr. Kathy Harrell, Vice President of CASC-Sallisaw, attended the HLC PEAQ Self-Study Workshop and Annual Conference. As Self-Study Coordinator, in July 2009, Dr. Yates met with the college President and began organizing the Steering Committee and identifying individuals to serve on the Steering Committee and needed sub-committees. Individuals were selected to ensure diversity and full involvement by staff, faculty, and administration. Criteria considered for membership included previous HLC Steering Committee experience, faculty experience, campus leadership experience, and specific area expertise. The final selections for the Steering Committee and for the sub-committees were completed and approved in June 2010. Five Criterion Chairs were selected and included both administrators and faculty. Further, 2 specific areas were added -- Assessment and Federal Compliance -- to holistically provide support for the self-study process. An events subcommittee also was created to prepare for the actual team visit. Finally, a writing team was selected consisting of 2 English instructors who would collaborate in the writing and editing of the Self-Study Report.

Drs. Yates and Harrell and former Self-Study Coordinator Nina Ritchie attended the HLC PEAQ Workshop and Annual Conference in April 2010. In April 2011, 9 members of the Steering Committee, including the 5 Criterion Chairs and the Assessment and Federal Compliance Chairs, attended the HLC PEAQ Self-Study Workshop and Annual Conference; 8 members attended the HLC Workshop and Conference in March 2012. In October 2009, Dr. Yates attended an HLC Assessment meeting at Oklahoma State University. In June 2006, Dr. Harrell, then Vice President of Academic Affairs, and several faculty members attended the HLC Assessment Workshop in Lisle, IL. In June 2012, Dr. Yates, the chair of the Assessment Committee, and a faculty member serving on the Assessment Committee attended the HLC Assessment Workshop "Making a Difference in Student Learning: Assessment as a Core Strategy" at the Q Center in St. Charles, IL. Complete lists of the Self-Study Steering Committee and various subcommittee

members, the self-study timeline, and Steering Committee and subcommittee meetings minutes, criterion reports, and self-study drafts are available in the CASC Virtual Resource Room.

### Steering Committee Responsibilities

As the Self-Study Coordinator and President organized and selected members of the Steering Committee, several responsibilities emerged with the primary tasks of the Steering Committee being:

- to assist the President and the Vice-President of Academic Affairs in the development of the CASC Self-Study Plan,
- to coordinate the implementation of the CASC Self-Study Plan, and
- to oversee preparation of the CASC Self-Study Report.

In addition to these primary responsibilities, the Steering Committee also was charged with specific tasks, such as, but not limited to

- analyzing the last HLC/CASC Self-Study Report;
- taking on an active, evaluative role in ascertaining the state of the institution;
- identifying and categorizing pertinent materials and relevant data for the Self-Study;
- establishing the institutional goals for the self-study process, and
- obtaining concurrence of institutional constituencies.

Most importantly, members of the Steering Committee would provide assurance that CASC has addressed the 5 HLC Criteria for Accreditation. The chairs, co-chairs, and members of the 5 Criterion Committees researched, gathered data, drafted reports, and submitted those reports to the Self-Study writing and editing team.

Three central questions have guided the Steering Committee and CASC's Self-Study process:

- Are we accomplishing what we set out to do?
- Are we accomplishing our mission?
- How do we know?

During discussions among Steering Committee members, various goals developed as the process moved forward:

- to produce a candid, self-disclosing Self-Study;
- to satisfactorily address concerns from the last visit;

- to determine strengths, address challenges, and propose improvements;
- to remain positive and constructive;
- to make the process public, inclusive, and enthusiastic; and
- to be transparent and concise.

Organization of the Self-Study

The Steering Committee determined that the most functional structure of the Self -Study report would focus on the 5 evaluative HLC criteria and their sub-components. These criteria would also serve as the focus of the data collection and evaluation efforts of the sub-committees.

Outline of Accreditation History

The following timeline details CASC’s accreditation history with HLC:

1973 – CASC first sought and received correspondent status.
1978 – CASC initially received accreditation.
1982 – CASC received full 10-year accreditation.
1992 – CASC received 10-year re-accreditation.
2002 – CASC received 10-year re-accreditation.

**CASC’s Responses to Institutional Challenges from 2002**

CASC’s staff, faculty, and administrators believe in the importance of peer review, accreditation processes, and institutional improvement. In their “Exit Report to the College Community, Carl Albert State College, November 10-13, 2002,” the HLC Peer Reviewers shared 4 areas of concern for the institution to address in the next accreditation cycle. The college recognized these concerns and committed to address them before the 2013 Site Visit for Accreditation. This section of the report details CASC’s endeavors in responding to the Commission’s 4 Institutional Challenges for the College from the 2002 Site Visit.

## **Institutional Challenge #1:**

*“Clearly, the most significant challenge the College will face in the foreseeable future is that of securing adequate fiscal resources with which to meet growing demands for instructional and student services.”*

### **CASC’s Response:**

- As a member institution of the Oklahoma System of Higher Education under the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) since 1973, CASC is provided state appropriated funding through the OSRHE; however, total funding is derived from a number of sources: state appropriations, revolving funds, federal grants, student financial aid, auxiliary operations, and capital funds.
- The CASC Development Foundation also provides funding to the college. The foundation provides professorships for faculty, the Scholars Program, and other scholarships and has constructed 7 student housing units through private funding sources.
- The college was the recipient of \$507,059 in federal stimulus funds for fiscal year 2009-10 and \$440,740 for fiscal year 2010-11. These funds provided temporary relief for diminishing state appropriations. During these same years, CASC was able to minimize tuition and fee increases to 0% in fiscal year 2009-10 and approximately 5% in fiscal year 2010-11.
- CASC maintains a healthy reserve fund by keeping expenditures lower than revenues.
- CASC receives capital funding from the state through Section 13 Offset Funds (the revenue from each Section 13 land and minerals in each township in Oklahoma) that are designated for capital expenditures.
- CASC currently has a number of federal grants, generally received through the U. S. Department of Education, in operation. Grant funds make a significant impact on the CASC budget through the 8% indirect cost that CASC receives for administering the programs ([5.A.4](#)).
- CASC is the recipient of state-funded grant programs such as Power I and Scholars for Excellence. These grants are intended to aid disadvantaged students in higher education pursuits. While most of the funding provided is for operation of grant objectives, the college does receive some compensation through indirect costs. The Oklahoma Department of Human Services has selected CASC to administer funds for a state assessment program that provides skill evaluation, job testing, and job placement advice for low income/unemployed residents of the state. With an annual budget of approximately \$2,610,000, this grant provides a significant amount of indirect cost revenue to the college.

- CASC has an Auxiliary Fund which is approved by the CASC Board of Regents. The CASC bookstore, food service, student activity fees, student facility fees, student housing, student events, and some contract operations provide the large majority of income to this fund.

### **Institutional Challenge #2:**

*“CASC will need to creatively and effectively meet the “challenges of geography and communication” that will inevitably develop as growth continues as its Sallisaw and Idabel campuses.”*

### **CASC Response:**

- In June 2009, CASC ceased its presence at Idabel due to the expansion of Southeastern Oklahoma State University and its partnership with Eastern Oklahoma State College. The impact of its withdrawal did not adversely affect CASC’s enrollment or operations.
- CASC-Sallisaw provides access to all degree plans, either by complete programs on the Sallisaw campus or a combination of Sallisaw campus and/or Poteau campus, interactive television (ITV) classes, or online classes. Currently, the following degree programs are offered at the Sallisaw Campus: business administration, general studies, health/physical education/recreation, pre-elementary education, sociology/psychology, social sciences, allied health, nursing, and English. Advisement regarding availability of complete programs includes enrollment options for students.
- Communication between CASC-Poteau and CASC-Sallisaw remains an area of improvement, and ongoing efforts by staff, faculty, and administration continue to enhance communication between the 2 campuses and render it more effective.

### **Institutional Challenge #3:**

*“The CASC student learning assessment program has not yet generated outcomes data that is being widely utilized in the budgeting, planning, and curriculum design processes at the college.”*

### **CASC Response:**

- In using a more centralized software model to keep track of many facets of the institution that up to this point have been kept manually and in many locations, CASC chose WEAVEonline, a higher education management system that provides the technology to help align multiple processes. The college needed guidance on a real-time snapshot model of how assessment, planning, accreditation, budgeting, and other items critical to quality assurance interact with each other. WEAVEonline will do this, plus map program outcomes and objective and give all members of the college a feeling of ownership in the assessment process. This tool also documents how each function is critical to the college

mission. WEAVEonline will organize and simplify gathering of pertinent data which will provide a real-time view of the college at any point. Outcomes measured each semester are currently being added to the WEAVEonline Assessment Management System.

- Implementation of WEAVEonline allows departmental connection of performance evaluation, assessment, planning, and budgeting to become linked in a more effective manner than in the past. This tool provides an integrative approach to linking these 4 critical elements of institutional operation to the mission of providing affordable and accessible educational experiences of exceptional quality. This tool has only recently been available at CASC. Training and implementation are in the beginning stages, but the college is optimistic about the usefulness of WEAVEonline in linking all phases of planning and evaluation of outcomes.
- CASC currently has clearly stated general education, course, and program outcomes. These were developed, and are annually reviewed, by the faculty in each discipline and by the Assessment Committee. These outcomes are tied to the mission of the institution as it pertains to the particular course or program.
- If criteria for success in any of the outcomes are not met, plans for improvement are developed. Also, changes can be made to outcomes if they need to be updated or replaced. The Assessment Committee is charged with reviewing the general education outcomes. If criteria for success are not met, recommendations for improvement are communicated to faculty who then develop and implement an action plan.
- The CASC Assessment Plan has been updated and will be reviewed annually with an increased emphasis on documentation of student learning, course, and program outcomes.
- In 2006 and in 2012, representative CASC administrators and faculty attended the HLC Assessment Workshop “Making a Difference in Student Learning: Assessment as a Core Strategy” in Lisle, IL, and at the Q Center in St. Charles, IL.
- Since the last HLC visit, the college has experienced significant turnover, which has affected its timely response to the concerns regarding the assessment of student learning outcomes delineated by the Site Team in 2002. Specifically, the college went 3-plus years without an assessment coordinator and saw 3 academic vice presidents and 2 college presidents. Since 2008, stability of administration at both the President and Vice President posts has provided strong leadership and continuity, though the Assessment Coordinator position remains unfilled. As a result, movement toward a “culture of assessment” slowed significantly but has now increased noticeably and continues to grow and improve.

#### **Institutional Challenge #4:**

*“CASC must devote significant attention to the impact that continued growth and success will have on faculty and staff workloads, compensation, and the college’s ability to attract and retain*

*qualified personnel. As CASC seeks to meet these demands, it will need to redesign its human resources function to more effectively address the staffing and compensation needs of a multi-faceted, multi-campus operation. In addition, while the college has made measurable progress on facility enhancement in recent years, space issues will continue to be a concern as the college grows and expands in the future.”*

**CASC Response:**

- CASC recruits faculty and staff with the highest qualifications possible. The college’s dedication to highly qualified personnel is apparent in its commitment to furthering employee education through on-going training and continuing education.
- All full-time employees of the college are employed under a year-to-year contract with the approval of the CASC Board of Regents. Full-time instructors are expected to teach 6 to 15 semester-hours per semester. Faculty teaching fewer than 15 hours per semester have been assigned other responsibilities such as division chair, athletic director, or coach. Regardless of their teaching load, all full-time instructors are required to maintain 12 office hours per week. Instructors may teach during the summer semester or the interim session. Classes taught at that time are paid on an overload basis. In certain areas, such as mathematics and the sciences, full-time faculty may be approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs to teach additional hours if it is deemed necessary to meet enrollment demand.
- Adjunct faculty are under a contract for each course taught and are compensated on a credit-hour basis. They receive none of the benefits that full-time employees receive. Part-time faculty are professional staff who teach a course or courses during a semester. They are compensated on an overload basis.
- Since the 2002 Site Visit, a full-time Human Resources Director and an administrative assistant have been hired. The Human Resources Director ensures that policies and procedures are set forth with consistency and integrity in hiring employees, addressing grievances, ensuring a safe and productive work environment, addressing discrimination and sexual harassment, and incorporating affirmative action.
- CASC has 236,541 square feet of classroom space, including the 2011 completion of a 30,614 square foot Deanna J. Reed Science and Math Center which contains state-of-the-art laboratory spaces as well as classroom technology. In 2007, major renovations were completed on the Joe E. White Library, making this centrally-located facility an outstanding resource for staff and students. The George E. Ollie Center for Academic Excellence was completed in 2006 and provided 37,466 square feet of attractive and technologically advanced classrooms.
- The college provides 58,654 square feet of dormitory space to accommodate 326 residential students. The dorms house on-campus summer camp participants, providing an opportunity for non-students to experience campus living. The Costner-Balentine

Student Center houses the cafeteria, bookstore, and exercise facility for student and community use.

- The Sallisaw campus has 63,169 square feet of classroom, library, and office space. The most recent addition to facilities on this campus was the 2007 completion of the Delores O'Guin Mitchell Library and adjoining classrooms and office spaces. Expansion of the Sallisaw facilities has been spurred by continued enrollment growth on this campus.
- The CASC governing board anticipates continued growth and expansion. Land adjoining the existing Sallisaw campus was purchased in 2007 in anticipation of future expansion. In 2011, land parcels adjacent to the Poteau campus were purchased for future needs.

### **2009 – 2012 CASC Self-Study Preparation Highlights**

**2009** CASC Administrators attended HLC PEAQ Self-Study Annual Conference. Steering Committee was formulated and organized.

**2010** April -- CASC administrators attended the HLC PEAQ Self-Study Annual Conference.

June -- HLC Steering Committee was approved.

August -- Steering Committee began meeting.

September -- HLC Kick-off events conducted at CASC-Poteau and CASC-Sallisaw.

HLC sub-committees began meeting gathering, data, and writing.

**2011** April -- Steering Committee members attended HLC PEAQ Self-Study Annual Conference.

HLC Revised Criteria announced.

Steering Committee voted to adopt Revised Criteria and to begin revising self-study with the Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta versions of the Revised Criteria.

**2012** January -- Site Visit dates approved.

April -- Steering Committee members attended HLC PEAQ Self-Study Annual Conference.

Liaison announced retirement.

May -- Site Visit Team members approved and new Liaison appointed.

September -- Fall Site Visit Rally conducted.

Self-Study Report draft submitted to Liaison.

December -- Final Self-Study Report submitted to Site Visit Team Chair.

**2013** January -- Spring Site Visit Rally

February -- Site Visit

### **Major Developments Since 2006**

- 2006 George Ollie Center for Academic Excellence completed.  
President Joe E. White retires.
- 2007 New President, Brandon Webb hired.  
New Vice President for Business Affairs, Ramona Buckner hired.  
Delores O'Guin Mitchell Library competed on Sallisaw Campus.  
Joe E. White Library renovated.
- 2008 Dr.Kathy Harrell becomes Vice President of the Sallisaw campus.  
Dr. James Yates hired as Vice President of Academic Affairs.
- 2009 CASC ceases presence in Idabel.  
New Vice President of Student Affairs, Leah McLaughlin hired.
- 2010 Conversion to Jenzabar PX begins.  
OSHRE Reach Higher Degree Completion Program adopted.
- 2011 Hamilton Auditorium renovated.  
WEAVEonline purchased.  
Complete College America Initiative adopted by OSHRE and Governor Mary Fallin.
- 2012 Deanna J. Reed Science and Math Center completed.

### **Conclusion**

Since the last HLC Site Visit, CASC has undergone significant, if not massive, changes in administration, faculty, staff, physical plant, and economic environment, as well as across the state and national higher education landscape. While these changes have presented numerous obstacles and pressures, the CASC community has repeatedly risen to the occasion and persevered. Students and students' success form the core of who we are as a College.

CASC's HLC Self-Study Steering Committee attended numerous sessions at the HLC Annual Conferences and Workshops and reviewed other colleges' and universities' Self-Study Reports in preparation for researching and writing the CASC Self-Study Report and with the goal of it being user-friendly both in text and in supporting documentation. The Self-Study has been a learning process for everyone involved.

We have learned a great deal about ourselves as an institution of higher education through the entire Self-Study process, and we are enthusiastic about applying our discoveries toward continued growth and improvement. We not only have recognized our strengths but also have found areas which call for improvement; we have formulated plans to create that improvement. These strengths, concerns, and recommendations for the future are found in each Core Component in the Criterion chapters of the report. In this spirit of anticipation and future growth and appreciation of our current progress and success, we present this self-study report.