

# **1 Introduction and Overview**

## **Profile of CASC**

Carl Albert State College (CASC) was founded in Poteau, OK, in 1933. Community leaders seeking to provide educational opportunities to students during the Great Depression opened the doors to an initial 36 students meeting in the basement of Poteau High School.

From these meager beginnings as Poteau Junior College, the mission of CASC has always been to provide cost-effective learning opportunities close to home. As a result, CASC, now named after Carl Albert, Oklahoma's former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, has expanded twice, once to Idabel, OK, in 1971, and to Sallisaw, OK, in 1979. CASC now consists of the Poteau and Sallisaw campuses, after ending its presence in Idabel in 2009 due to mission variance.

Since the last accreditation visit, CASC has experienced unprecedented growth and development. Both campuses have been expanded with state-of-the-art buildings, including the Deanna J. Reed Science and Math Center in 2012, the Ollie Center for Academic Excellence in 2006, new dormitories at the Poteau campus in 2003, 2004, and 2008 (each housing 40 students), and the Delores O'Guin Mitchell Library in 2007 at the Sallisaw campus. Renovations of the Hamilton Auditorium and the Joe E. White Library on the Poteau campus also were completed in 2011 and 2007 respectively.

CASC also has experienced great change in leadership with the retirement of Dr. Joe E. White in 2006 and subsequent appointment of Dr. Brandon Webb as President in 2007. New vice presidents of academic affairs (2008), the Sallisaw campus (2008), and student affairs (2009) also have come on board.

From 2000-2001 to 2009-2010, CASC's enrollment grew from 2,890 students to 3,438, a 19.8% increase. This growth, along with a consistent ranking at the top of Oklahoma two-year school graduation rates, is a result of CASC's continued success. CASC also boasts the lowest tuition among state colleges and universities, making the college an excellent option for students seeking educational value.

Due to the lack of a local tax base and limited state higher education funding, much of the college's growth can be tied directly to the generous support and vision of the CASC Development Foundation. Organized in 1979, the CASC Development Foundation has been authorized by the CASC Board of Regents to raise private funds to promote and to expand the college's quest for academic excellence.

The college has an open-door enrollment policy with entry-level assessment requirements. Students may enroll in four basic programs: certificate of completion, associate in applied science degree, associate in arts degree (AA), or associate in science degree (AS). The certificate

and applied science programs are terminal; the AA and AS degrees are university parallel. CASC also offers a wide variety of academic, vocational, and leisure-related learning activities through its Office of Continuing Education.

Once listed among the state's poorer counties, the area has been one of the fastest growing in the state, and CASC believes it has played an essential role in this growth. Massive workforce layoffs in recent years have hit the area especially hard, yet, even in recent economic times, CASC strives to serve the population of its service area to the best of its ability. Since the 1970s, CASC has joined the community and local business/industry to identify local economic needs and to provide educational programs to meet these needs. Through these collaborative efforts, the college evolved and added academic programs and offered cooperative educational experiences to enhance local economic ventures.

Since its founding, CASC has shown dedication and determination to provide its students great opportunities. This rich history of service and improvement is poised to continue thanks to careful management, realization of opportunity, and the eye to the future which CASC, its administration, staff, and faculty always have demonstrated.

## **Characteristics of the Service Area**

CASC primarily serves residents from a three-county area in southeastern Oklahoma, which includes LeFlore, Sequoyah, and Haskell Counties. A secondary service area includes Adair, Latimer, Pittsburg, Pushmataha, Choctaw, and McCurtain Counties in Oklahoma and Sebastian County in Arkansas. The majority of the service area is rural. Ft. Smith, AR, in Sebastian County is the only major city (population 87,000) in the service area.

CASC serves a diverse group of students. While the majority of students (62%) identify themselves as White, nearly 25% self-identify as American Indian or Alaska Native. Only 6% self-identify as Black or African American, 3% as Hispanic/ Latino, 1% as Asian, and 1% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Of CASC's students, 71% are considered full-time students, and 61% are under age 24.

The target area was formerly Indian Territory, headquarters for the Cherokee and Choctaw Nations after they were forced from the East in the infamous "Trail of Tears." Thus the service area, as well as the State of Oklahoma, contains one of the largest Native American populations in the U.S.; consequently, CASC works to maintain positive relationships with both the Cherokee and Choctaw Nations.

## **Accreditation History**

CASC first sought and received correspondent status in 1973. The college initially received accreditation in 1978. Accreditation for the full ten years was achieved in 1982, 1992, and again in 2002.

## **CASC's Responses to Institutional Challenges from 2002**

In their “Exit Report to the College Community, Carl Albert State College, November 10-13, 2002,” 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. A detailed report of CASC’s endeavors in responding to the Commission’s four Institutional Challenges for the College from the 2002 Site Visit follows:

### **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 funds professorships for faculty, the Scholars Program, and other scholarships, and has constructed 7 student housing units through private funding sources.
- The college received \$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 (See document 5.A.4).
- CASC receives 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 and/or 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 college 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 auxiliary 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 at 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 the university’s partnership with Eastern Oklahoma State College. Impact of CASC’s withdrawal did not adversely affect the college’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. Currently, the following entire degree programs are offered at the Sallisaw campus: business administration, general studies, health physical education and recreation, pre-elementary education, sociology/psychology, social sciences, allied health, 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 administration, staff, and faculty continue to enhance communication between the two campuses and render communication 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 Assessment Management System, 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. WEAVEonline will do this, plus map program outcomes and objectives and give all members of the college a sense of ownership in the assessment process. This tool also documents how each function is critical to the college mission. WEAVEonline will organize and simplify the 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 system.

- Implementation of the WEAVEonline Assessment Management System 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 four 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, outcomes can be changed if they need to be updated or replaced. The Assessment Committee is charged with reviewing the general education outcomes. If the 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, CASC administrators and faculty members 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 President and Vice President 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 staff and faculty with the highest qualifications possible. The college’s dedication to highly-qualified personnel is apparent in its commitment to furthering employee education through ongoing training and continuing education.
- All full-time employees are employed under year-to-year contracts with the approval of the CASC Board of Regents. Full-time instructors are expected to teach 6 to 15 semester-hours per semester. Faculty who teach fewer than 15 hours per semester have other assigned 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 also may teach during the summer semester or interim sessions; faculty teaching summer and interim classes are paid on an overload basis. In certain areas, primarily mathematics and 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 contract for each course taught and are compensated on a per 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 and are compensated on an overload basis.
- Since the 2002 Site Visit, a full-time Human Resources Officer and an administrative assistant have been hired. The Human Resources Officer 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 Poteau campus has 236,541 square feet of classroom space, including the 2011 completion of the 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 provides 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 also house on-campus summer camp participants, providing an opportunity for non-students to experience campus living. The Costner-Balentine Student Center houses the cafeteria and bookstore and an 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.

- The CASC governing board anticipates continued growth and expansion at both campuses. 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.

## **Self-Study Process**

CASC's Self-Study process 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, and a stronger sense of community, as well as an awareness of the institution's strengths, challenges, and recommendations for improvement.

As Self-Study Coordinator, Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Jim Yates, met with CASC President Dr. Brandon Webb in July, 2009, 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 faculty, administration, and staff. 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 sub-committees were completed and approved in June 2010. Five Criterion Chairs were selected and included both administrators and faculty. Further, two specific areas (assessment and federal compliance) were added 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 two English instructors who would collaborate in the writing and editing of the Self-Study Report.

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

1. to assist the President and Vice-President of Academic Affairs in the development of the CASC Self-Study Plan,
2. to coordinate implementation of the CASC Self-Study Plan, and
3. 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, the following:

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

Most importantly, members of the Steering Committee would provide assurance that CASC has addressed the five HLC Criteria for Accreditation. The chairs, co-chairs, and members of the five 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:

- Is the college accomplishing what it set out to do?
- Is the college accomplishing its mission?
- How does the college know?

During discussions among the 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.

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.

Once sub-committees were selected based upon the HLC criteria, regular meetings were conducted by the sub-committees and Steering Committee to produce and to develop evidence necessary for the self-study. Multiple drafts of reports were submitted and distributed by and among the groups in an effort to produce a complete, accurate, and beneficial document.

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

**2009** CASC Administrators attended HLC PEAQ Self-Study/Annual Conference.

Steering Committee formulated and organized.

#### **2010**

April CASC Administrators attended HLC PEAQ Self-Study/Annual Conference.

June HLC Steering Committee approved.

August Steering Committee began meeting.

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



HLC sub-committees began meeting and gathering data.

## **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 began 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 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 Team Chair.

## **2013**

January Spring Site Visit Rally conducted.

February Site Visit