EASTERN IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
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HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

ASSURANCE ARGUMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FALL 2024



Dear Colleagues, Students, and Community Members,

Allow me to share with you the Executive Summary of our Assurance Argument for the Higher Learning Commision's (HLC) Comprehensive Evaluation Visit, a report supported by evidence demonstrating EICC is in full compliance with the HLC's criteria for ongoing accreditation. This document encapsulates the exemplary work being done across Eastern Iowa Community Colleges (EICC) and underscores our commitment to educational excellence.

We continue to live our mission to provide high-quality education through rigorous academic offerings, up-to-date infrastructure, and impactful student support services. These efforts are evident in our thorough program reviews, strategic planning processes, and continuous improvement initiatives. Our collective work ensures EICC remains a leader in delivering relevant, effective, and innovative educational experiences that prepare our students for success in their personal and professional lives.

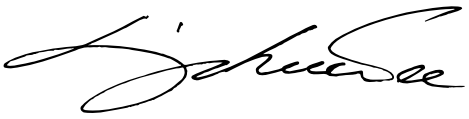
Accreditation is a critical process that validates the quality and effectiveness of our educational programs, governance, and resource planning. It provides us with an invaluable opportunity to reflect on our practices, celebrate our achievements, and identify areas for further growth. The feedback we will receive from the HLC not only confirms our strengths but also guides us in enhancing our strategies and operations to better serve our students and community.

We will use the insights gained from this accreditation process to foster a culture of continuous improvement. This involves integrating feedback into our strategic plans, continuing to invest in professional development for our faculty and staff, and maintaining our focus on student success, regional workforce development, and innovation.

I wish to to express my heartfelt gratitude to all members of our community who have contributed to this process. Your dedication and hard work are the foundation of our success. Together, we continue to uphold the highest standards of excellence and ensure EICC remains THE Community's College.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to Eastern Iowa Community Colleges.

Sincerely,



Liang Chee Wee, Ph.D.
Interim Chancellor

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HLC Criterion I: Mission

Eastern Iowa Community Colleges' (EICC) mission is to serve the educational, economic, and societal needs of the Eastern Iowa region. The college is committed to providing high-quality education and training, promoting accessible higher education, and fostering community development. This mission is reflected in EICC's strategic goals, programs, and community engagement efforts.

CHANGING LIVES, BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Mission Articulation and Implementation

Mission Development: EICC's mission was revised in 2021 through an inclusive process involving diverse stakeholders, ensuring it aligns with community needs and institutional goals. The mission focuses on delivering high-quality education, preparing a skilled workforce, and strengthening communities.

Public Commitment: The mission and related statements are publicly accessible and integrated into institutional practices, guiding EICC's strategic direction, policies, programs, and initiatives.

Commitment to Public Good

Educational Role: EICC prioritizes its educational responsibilities, serving the public rather than any external financial interests. This commitment is evident in its adherence to Iowa Code 260.1 and Board Policies that emphasize comprehensive education and community service.

Student and Community Services: EICC provides a range of services to students, including disability services, mental health resources, food pantries, and academic supports. These efforts ensure education is accessible and supports individual and community growth.

Civic Engagement and Inclusivity

Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities: EICC prepares students for informed citizenship and workplace success. This includes Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, transfer programs, career services, and continuing education opportunities.

Diversity and Inclusion: EICC fosters a climate of respect and inclusivity through professional development, student engagement initiatives, and support services for diverse populations. Programs like TRIO, GEAR UP, and various student organizations promote equity and cultural understanding.

Community and Economic Engagement

External Partnerships: EICC collaborates with local businesses, educational institutions, and social agencies to enhance educational and workforce opportunities. These partnerships include advisory councils, work-based learning experiences, transfer agreements, and customized training programs.

Regional Impact: EICC's initiatives, such as Career Advancement Centers and economic development programs, contribute to regional growth and workforce development. The college's engagement with community organizations and participation in regional planning further solidifies its role as a vital community resource.

Continuous Improvement and Strategic Alignment

Strategic Planning: EICC's strategic plan aligns with its mission, focusing on student success, community engagement, and workforce readiness. Investments in career academies, facilities, and support services demonstrate the institution's commitment to its mission.

Resource Allocation: EICC allocates resources to support its educational mission, as seen in its budget prioritization and bond levy initiatives aimed at expanding CTE programs and improving facilities.

Summary

EICC's mission-driven approach ensures that its educational offerings, student support services, and community engagements are aligned with the needs and aspirations of the region. The institution's comprehensive strategies and robust partnerships underscore its dedication to transforming lives, enriching communities, and fostering economic growth through education.

HLC Criterion II: Integrity – Ethical and Responsible Conduct

Eastern Iowa Community Colleges (EICC) displays integrity through ethical and responsible conduct. This commitment is demonstrated through various policies and processes that ensure fairness and ethical behavior among its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff. Key areas highlighting this commitment include:

Governance and Strategic Planning

EICC's mission, vision, core values, and professional standards were developed through a collaborative process involving diverse stakeholders. The Board of Trustees maintains the integrity of these guiding principles by incorporating them into strategic planning and regular policy revisions. The 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, extended to 2025, reflects the Board's commitment to aligning the college's direction with its goals.

Financial Integrity

EICC demonstrates financial integrity through detailed financial reporting, exhaustive audits, and ethical fiscal management. Comprehensive financial reports are presented at each Board meeting and subjected to annual independent audits, contributing to positive Moody's Aa1 Bond ratings.

Academic Integrity

EICC ensures academic integrity through curriculum development, stakeholder engagement, and comprehensive review processes. Transparent communication about transfer agreements and career program standards guarantees students receive a relevant and meaningful education. Additionally, students are actively engaged in ethical research practices and information literacy, promoting academic honesty and high-quality standards.



Human Resources Integrity

EICC's hiring practices are equitable and transparent, promoting diversity and inclusion. The People Admin online application system ensures adherence to Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines. Regular training on Title IX compliance, First Amendment rights, and other responsibilities promote ethical behavior among faculty and staff.

Auxiliary Functions Integrity

Integrity extends to EICC's auxiliary functions, including athletics, the bookstore, and student housing. Policies and practices ensure ethical conduct and transparency. For example, the bookstore's Flat Rate Access program provides affordable and straightforward access to materials.

Technology Use Integrity

EICC's Technology Usage Policy outlines user responsibilities and unacceptable activities, supported by a comprehensive Information Security Program. Mandatory cybersecurity training for faculty and staff and regular phishing simulation tests enhance the institution's cybersecurity capabilities.

Transparency and Communication

EICC ensures transparency and accuracy in its academic offerings, requirements, costs, governance structure, and accreditation relationships. The institution's website, catalog, and marketing materials provide clear and accessible information, with a recent redesign emphasizing inclusivity and accessibility.

Board Engagement and Accountability

The EICC Board engages in continuous learning and improvement, ensuring informed governance. Regular workshops and public meetings allow for community input and transparency. The Board's self-evaluation process and thorough policy review cycle underscore its commitment to accountability and ethical governance.

Summary

EICC's commitment to integrity is evident in its governance, financial management, academic programs, human resources practices, and auxiliary functions. By prioritizing ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability, EICC fosters a supportive and informative educational environment for its students and community.

HLC Criterion III: Educational Excellence

Eastern Iowa Community Colleges (EICC) delivers high-quality education through its academic offerings, diverse and qualified faculty, impactful student support services, and robust infrastructure. Criterion 3 highlights EICC's dedication to educational excellence across all programs and delivery modes, ensuring students are well-prepared for their professional and personal lives.

Academic Rigor and Curricular Integrity

Course and Program Quality: EICC's courses and programs are current and meet standards appropriate to the awarded credentials. The Course Development Model (CDM) creates a framework to establish and maintain course standards, ensuring consistency and academic strength. The Educational Programs Policy and Curriculum Council (EPC) systematically reviews and approves courses and programs, ensuring they meet the institution's high standards.

Articulation and Transfer: EICC's participation in the Iowa Common Course Numbering System and Transfer Major partnerships facilitates seamless transfer pathways, ensuring course alignment with other institutions. These efforts include the Liaison Advisory Committee on Transfer Students (LACTS), which works closely with Iowa Regent universities and community colleges to streamline the transfer process.

Specialized Accreditations and Workforce Alignment: Career and technical education programs maintain industry standards through third-party testing and accreditation, supported by advisory committees and sector boards. These bodies ensure EICC's programs are aligned with current industry standards and workforce needs, providing students with relevant, high-quality education.

New Program Development: The development of new programs involves comprehensive market analysis, curriculum development, and multi-tiered approval processes, including by the Iowa Department of Education, Higher Learning Commission, and EICC's Board of Trustees. This ensures new programs are relevant and meet educational standards, addressing both current and future workforce demands.

Engaging and Diverse General Education

Mission Alignment: The general education program at EICC reflects the institution's mission by equipping students with essential competencies for personal and professional success. These competencies include effective communication, critical thinking, cultural diversity appreciation, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and ethical judgment.

Continuous Improvement: EICC employs a rigorous curricular assessment process to align each course with Institutional Learning Outcomes. Regular reviews by committees ensure the general education program remains relevant and effective.

Multicultural World: The institution's commitment to diversity and inclusion is evident in its courses and co-curricular activities, which provide students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to thrive in a multicultural world.

Qualified Faculty and Staff

Employment Practices: EICC strives for its faculty and staff to reflect the diversity of its community through continued review of hiring practices and partnerships. The Human Resources department works to attract diverse talent, and annual reviews ensure faculty and staff requirements align with enrollment trends and program demands.

Faculty Qualifications: EICC adheres to Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) standards, ensuring all instructors are appropriately qualified. This includes in-depth hiring processes and credential reviews that align with state and national accreditation requirements.

Ongoing Professional Development: Faculty and staff engage in continuous learning through structured professional development programs. Full-time faculty must complete 45 clock hours of professional development every three years. Adjunct faculty are required to complete six clock hours every three years after four years of continuous teaching.

Evaluation and Support: Regular evaluations and comprehensive support systems maintain high teaching standards and foster a culture of continuous improvement. New faculty undergo a probationary period with term evaluations, and all faculty are provided with opportunities for professional growth and development.

Student Support and Learning Resources

Impactful Student Services: EICC's wide range of student support services includes mental health resources, food pantries, transportation assistance, and holistic advising. These services ensure that all students have the resources and support necessary to succeed academically and personally.

Learning Support: The institution uses multiple measures to place students in appropriate college-level courses, including placement exams and co-requisite courses. Specialized programs support English Language Learners and students needing developmental education in reading and writing. The college's libraries, tutoring, and skills shops provide a variety of learning supports.

Infrastructure and Technology: Significant investments in campus facilities, libraries, and technological resources support effective teaching and learning. Recent investments include the construction of new buildings, upgrades to libraries, and enhancements to technological infrastructure, ensuring that students and instructors have access to state-of-the-art resources.

Summary

Through these concerted efforts, EICC exemplifies its dedication to providing high-quality education and support, ensuring students are well-prepared for their academic and professional futures. The institution's strategic investments in academic rigor, faculty excellence, student support, and infrastructure collectively contribute to a robust educational environment that fosters student success.

HLC Criterion IV: Teaching and Learning – Evaluation and Improvement

Eastern Iowa Community Colleges (EICC) is committed to ensuring the quality and effectiveness of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services. EICC employs comprehensive evaluation processes to promote continuous improvement, focusing on key areas such as program review, assessment of student learning, and specialized accreditation.

Quality Assurance and Program Review

EICC systematically reviews its Arts and Sciences and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs on a four-year cycle. This data-informed review process involves extensive faculty participation to ensure curriculum relevancy and effectiveness. For Arts and Sciences, the review process includes large group meetings, data analysis, and collaborative efforts to address faculty needs and update instructional approaches. Similarly, CTE program reviews are thorough, spanning an entire year to develop future-oriented action plans and allocate resources for program innovation and student workforce preparedness.

Assessment of Student Learning

EICC's assessment framework includes faculty-driven initiatives and structured assessment committees such as the Outcomes Assessment Committee and the HLC Assessment Academy Committee. These committees guide the development of student learning outcomes and program-level outcomes, ensuring alignment with institutional goals. The college employs tools like the Assessment Technologies Institute for nursing programs to track and improve student competency levels. Additionally, EICC utilizes comprehensive assessment plans and Canvas resources to support faculty in implementing effective practices.

Co-curricular Assessment

EICC has made strides in co-curricular assessment by integrating the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education goals. In 2023, EICC launched a pilot program with mental health, career services, and advising departments, using pre- and post-surveys to align assessments with CAS standards and EICC's strategic plan. Career Services, for example, has started demonstrating knowledge acquisition and integration through these assessments. This initiative ensures co-curricular activities support academic learning and contribute to holistic student development, setting the stage for broader implementation across all student development programs.



Transfer Credit and Prior Learning Evaluation

EICC adheres to the Iowa Liaison Advisory Committee on Transfer Students agreement and collaborates with other state institutions to facilitate smooth credit transfers. The college evaluates various forms of prior learning, including Advanced Placement exams, College-Level Examination Program exams, and military credits. EICC also accepts international transfer credits. EICC ensures all evaluations maintain academic integrity and consistency.

Specialized Accreditation

EICC holds specialized accreditations for several programs, including Automotive Technology, Nursing, and Veterinary Technician, among others. The college is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships, ensuring rigorous standards for dual credit courses. These accreditations help the college maintain high standards and enhance student success.

Graduate Success and Program Outcomes

EICC employs graduate surveys and advisory councils to assess program effectiveness and ensure alignment with industry standards. The college uses external resources like the Iowa Department of Education State Outcomes Dashboard to benchmark success rates and outcomes. Specific programs, such as Radiologic Technology and Surgical Technology, have improved certification exam pass rates through targeted curriculum adjustments based on assessment data.

Retention, Persistence, and Completion

EICC's strategic plan prioritizes student success, equity, and innovation. The college has implemented initiatives such as mental health counseling services, revamped student orientation, and created comprehensive retention plans. The Institutional Research (IR) department supports these efforts with detailed data reports, enabling informed decision-making and strategic planning. EICC's retention and enrollment committee, established in 2024, enhances these initiatives through focused projects and collaborative efforts across divisions.

Summary

In summary, EICC's robust processes for evaluating and improving teaching and learning reflect a deep commitment to academic excellence and continuous improvement, ensuring students are well-prepared for further education and career success.

HLC Criterion V: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

Eastern Iowa Community Colleges (EICC) demonstrates a robust governance model, efficient resource management, and strategic planning processes that collectively support the college's mission to provide high-quality education and foster community development. EICC's inclusive and data-informed approaches ensure continuous improvement and responsiveness to the needs of its students and the community.

Leadership and Governance

Inclusive Governance: EICC's shared governance model effectively integrates input from all internal stakeholders—Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students. The governance framework is anchored by the Board of Trustees, ensuring community representation and policy alignment with institutional goals. Regular reviews and updates of Board Policies and Administrative Procedures involve broad participation, reinforcing transparency and accountability.

Collaborative Structures: Key councils and committees, such as the Leadership Council, Educational Programs, Policies, and Procedures Committee (EPC) and Academic Leadership Council (ALC), ensure broad participation in decision-making. These structures facilitate strategic planning and operational efficiency. EICC's successful navigation of challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the effectiveness of its governance model.

Resource Base

Financial Stability: EICC's financial health is affirmed by its Aa1 rating from Moody's Investors Service, reflecting a strong tax base and prudent fiscal management. The institution's diverse revenue streams, including tuition, state and federal funding, local taxes, and grants, ensure financial resilience and support for educational programs.

Infrastructure and Technology: Strategic investments in facilities and technology enhance EICC's educational offerings. A $40 million bond levy funded the expansion of Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities and improved health science facilities. Upgrades to the college's technology infrastructure, including a comprehensive data center refresh and new software implementations, support efficient operations and improve the user experience for students and staff.

Human Resources: EICC prioritizes professional development and educational advancement for its employees. Initiatives such as the Employee Professional Development Fund and the Employee Educational Advancement Fund support continuous improvement and staff retention.

Systematic and Integrated Planning

Strategic Planning: EICC's strategic planning processes involve stakeholder engagement and are informed by data analysis. The institution's strategic priorities—student success, enrollment, equity, and innovation—guide resource allocation and operational decisions.

Data-Informed Decision Making: EICC uses a variety of data sources to inform planning and evaluation, including enrollment and retention reports, program data, state dashboards, and student surveys. Tools like AdAstra for space utilization and course enrollment planning demonstrate EICC's commitment to optimizing resources for student success.

Continuous Improvement: EICC's integrated approach ensures assessment, evaluation, planning, and budgeting processes are interconnected, promoting a cycle of continuous improvement. Regular program reviews and strategic updates ensure alignment with institutional goals and responsiveness to evolving educational and community needs.

Summary

EICC's effective leadership, robust resource base, and systematic planning processes ensure the institution fulfills its mission and enhances the quality of its educational offerings. The inclusive governance model, financial stability, and strategic focus on student success and community engagement position EICC as a responsive and resilient educational institution, committed to continuous improvement and excellence.



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THE Community's College

MISSION STATEMENT

Deliver high-quality education and training that prepares a skilled workforce, provides equitable access to higher education, and builds and strengthens our communities.

VISION

Changing lives and building communities.

To learn more about EICC's Higher Learning Commission accreditation process, please visit **eicc.edu/hlc**

HLC Accreditation Team

TEAM LEADS

Brian Kelly
Erin Snyder
Megan Hills

HLC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Tom Arends
Steve Barleen
Alex Batten
Michael Beane
Gina Bielski
Dawn Boettcher
Anabelia Calderon-Flores
Terri Carton
Shelly Cram Rahlf
Steve Cravens
John DaBeet
Daniel Dankert
Naomi DeWinter
Megan Edens
Ann Eiseman
Mat Endress
Heather Evans
Erica Ewert
Gretchen Freed
Nichole Friedrichsen
Melek Genc Mayerle
Ezequiel Gonzalez
Nicole Gullion
William Hansen
Amy Hanzelin
Sheila Harris
Ashley Hartwig
Jane Haugland
Gabe Hearn
Lysa Hegland
Tishly Herrington
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Jill Johnson
Jeff Kaufmann
Johnna Kerres
Angelique Kimble
Gabe Knight
Chris Knudsen
Brandon Lange
Ann Lawler
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Robin Mitchell
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Dawn Neuses
Isaac Newman
Barb Nichol
Jeremy Pickard
Michelle Rasmussen
Justin Sampson
Matt Schmit
Scott Schneider
Tina Solhiem
Brooke Sweeney-Adrian
Katie Watson
Cheryl Welsch
Andrea Williams
Andrew Williams

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