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The Self-Study Process

Purpose of Self-Study

The College engaged in its first self-study for accreditation in 1959. Mary Miller writes in *A Chance for All* that it had been a difficult year but they had persevered with the dream of “...North Central Accreditation always before us, leading the way to greater effort on the part of those most concerned with the future of Danville Junior College.” The purpose of this self-study, as with the first, is to improve the effectiveness of the institution by linking the HLC self-examination process to College improvement efforts. The HLC self-study process has provided the opportunity for Danville Area Community College to:

- Review the college’s progress since the last self-study in 1999;
- Provide a basis for strengthening the planning process for the future of DACC;
- Identify key indicators of institutional effectiveness;
- Identify specific concerns (weaknesses) and initiate improvement activities consistent with DACC’s mission and vision;
- Develop an assessment-based process and a guide for annual planning and budgeting;
- Increase accountability to both internal and external constituents;
- Enhance a culture of inquiry to improve teaching and learning;
- Enable the College to develop strategies to meet emerging needs of future learners;
- Engage the entire College in collaborative service to DACC’s communities;
- Respond to the evolving needs of the communities in which the College finds itself.

Process of Self-Study

The journey for re-accreditation began in August 2006 with the selection of the steering committee and team chairs. The members of the steering committee were chosen by the College leadership team for their expertise as well as their leadership, process management, and strong team skills. Their role was to advise the self-study coordinator in reference to the self-study process. Five teams representing the HLC criteria and four additional non-criteria teams were established to help with other important facets of the self-study. These included: communications, operational indicators, follow-up, and institutional change request. The team chairs were chosen from the steering com-

mittee or nominated by the College leadership team. After establishment of the team chairs, the teams were created with special emphasis placed on broad representation and participation of all employee groups of the College. Considerations included:

- Identifying people who had experience and expertise with the area being studied;
- Ensuring group diversity, including diversity of gender and ethnicity as well as thought and opinion;
- Involving people representing a range of administrative areas, departments, and employee groups (faculty; management; administration; technology; professional staff association; maintenance and operations);
- Involving employees who were new to the College as well as veterans.

Each of the nine teams consisted of one chair, one co-chair and averaged seven to twelve members. They were given the charge to define, discover, demonstrate, and develop the accreditation criteria as they are realized at DACC. All self-study teams met on a monthly or bi-weekly basis to bring together the information to include in their respective chapters. The steering committee then met on a monthly basis to share the progress made by each individual team and discuss timelines, formats, and other information pertinent to the upcoming visit. Members of the steering committee had the opportunity to attend the Higher Learning Commission Annual Meeting and self-study workshops in Chicago in April 2007 and April 2008 in order to better understand the new criteria, the predominate themes of re-accreditation, and the incorporation of outcomes assessment data into the self-study process. As a way to keep the lines of information open to the rest of the College throughout the entire self-study initiative, the steering committee made presentations at each faculty/staff in-service.

As commonly encountered with any journey of this magnitude, the College experienced a few setbacks which required a reorganization of efforts. The untimely death of beloved English Professor Mary Coffman in May 2008 left the College without an editor for the self-study, and the resignation of the Director of Institutional Effectiveness in July 2008 left DACC without a self-study coordinator. The College's search for an editor led to a retired Liberal Arts professor and local author who served as the editor for the self-study in 1999. With the tremendous amount of responsibility that went into the self-study coordinator's role, however, and with only eight months before the HLC visit, finding an individual to oversee the entire process did not seem feasible. It was decided to divide up the self-study coordinator duties among tri-chairs: one was to focus on meetings and organization, one was to focus on writing the document, and one was to focus on collecting and documenting resources and formatting the final copy of the document.

Timeline

August 2006	<p>First organizational meeting of the Self-Study Steering Committee. Chairs of individual teams dialogued about process, reviewed criteria, developed "operating procedures," clarified charge and roles.</p> <p>Presentation on HLC Self-Study Process to all campus during in-service.</p>
September 2006	<p>Team chairs called two team meetings. Member orientation about process and roles; general review of criteria, delegated work assignments, data collections processes.</p>
October 2006	<p>Full team meetings and reports to all campus at in-service. Self-Study coordinator attended training in Chicago.</p>
November 2006	<p>Team meetings.</p>
December 2006	<p>Team meetings.</p>
January 2007	<p>Self-Study Steering Committee luncheon: Keynote address by Dr. Robert Appleson, Higher Learning Commission liaison.</p>
February 2007	<p>Individual teams meetings.</p> <p>Continued dialogue about process, criteria, "operating procedures," charge, and roles.</p>
March 2007	<p>Team meetings scheduled: reviewed criteria, interpretation of what they meant for the College, identification of information sources, definition of tasks that needed to be done to respond to criteria.</p>
April 2007	<p>Annual HLC meeting in Chicago attended by DACC team, including representatives from steering committee.</p>
May 2007	<p>All teams submitted their interpretations of HLC components and criteria.</p>
June 2007	<p>Committees met regularly to work on examples of evidence; provided weekly updates and final evidence product. Submitted final interpretations of components and criteria.</p> <p>Submitted one completed example of evidence worksheet along with related materials.</p>
Fall 2007	<p>Intensive work on DACC's examples of evidence for each criterion. Writing began.</p>

Timeline, continued

January 2008	Self-Study Committee luncheon: Keynote address by Dr. Robert Appleson, DACC Higher Learning Commission liaison.
Spring 2008	Annual HLC meeting in Chicago attended by DACC team including representatives from steering committee. Teams submitted chapter drafts to self-study coordinator by end of semester.
Summer 2008	Working drafts reviewed.
August 2008	Implementation of the tri-chair leadership team. Teams identified conclusion, strengths, challenges, planning for the future during in-service meetings.
September 2008	Leadership team completed all sections of self-study and began preparation of resource room. Continued work on self-study website.
October 2008	Leadership team continued editing of the HLC document and development of resource room and website.
November 2008	Document sent to peer reviewer, Dr.Charles Guengerich, President of Wright College.
December 2008	Leadership Team develops executive summary of self-study.
January 2009	Presentation of the summary to faculty and staff during in-service. Faculty and staff prioritize the top ten challenges facing the College as identified in the self-study. Document sent to editor.
February 2009	Leadership Team finalizes the self-study document and prepares materials to mail to team visitors.
March 2009	Leadership Team completes preparation of Resource Room and website.
April 2009	College prepares for visit April 27-29.

Self-Study Steering Committee

The Self-Study Steering Committee was comprised of the chairs of each of the individual teams. The Steering Committee met regularly to discuss the overall direction of the self study and to make decisions and/or recommendations about self-study issues.

Dave Kietzmann Vice President	Advisor
Martha Kay Professor, Liberal Arts (retired)	Editor
Gail Morrison Chief Fiscal Officer	Member
Stacy Ehmen Director, Admissions & Records	Member
Dr. Penny McConnell Dean, Liberal Arts & Library Services	Leadership Team, Tri-Chair Criterion 1 Chair
Janet Redenbaugh Dean, Math/Science Division	Criterion 2 Chair
Jane Brown Lead Professor, Information Systems	Criterion 3 Chair
Al Bello Director, Radiology Technology	Criterion 4 Chair
Dr. Wendy Brown Instructor, Biological Sciences	Leadership Team, Tri-Chair Criterion 5 Chair
Nancy Boesdorfer Director, Institutional Effectiveness	1999 Follow-Up Chair
Dr. Eric Simonson Instructor, Music, Liberal Arts Division	Operational Indicators Chair
Maggie Hoover Instructional Designer/ Academic Web Technologist	Leadership Team, Tri-Chair Communications/Resource Room Chair
Dr. Belinda Dalton-Russell Associate VP Student Services	Institutional Change Request Chair

Self-Study Teams

Nearly ninety individuals participated in the self-study process. Participants were grouped into teams organized around the criteria, operational indicators, follow-up, request for institutional change, and communications and resource room. Each team consisted of a chair, vice-chair, and an average of seven to twelve members.

<p style="text-align: center;">Criterion 1</p> <p>Dr. Penny McConnell, Chair Alan Thompson, Vice-Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Team Members:</p> <p>Dr. Jamie Berthel Sarah Isaac Dave Kietzmann Vickie Miller Carol Neff Pat Shedlock Marie Vanada Jeff Primmer</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Criterion 2</p> <p>Janet Redenbaugh, Chair Debbie Knight, Vice-Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Team Members:</p> <p>Mike Cunningham Viv Dudley Jonathan Jett Susie Landers Dianne Manganaro Janet Westberg Laura Williams</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Criterion 3</p> <p>Jane Brown, Chair Brian Fink, Vice-Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Team Members:</p> <p>Margie Arlington Tim Bunton Rich Christman Alice Cowan Angela Eells Ted Gallagher Carolyn Jensen Lori Jones Dr. Ben Jun Shelby May Maurice Miller Holly Nordheden Marilyn Shepherd Kathy Sturgeon Tom Szott</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Criterion 4</p> <p>Al Bello, Chair Carla Boyd, Vice-Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Team Members:</p> <p>Glenda Boling Lori Garrett Dr. Charles Hantz Scott Heatherton Lyle Hicks John Hoagland Tammy Howard Janet Ingargiola Larry Korte Chris Martin</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Criterion 5</p> <p>Dr. Wendy Brown, Chair Bruce Rape, Vice-Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Team Members:</p> <p>Steve Downing Diane Hall Brian Hensgen Timothy Morgan Connie Schroeder Sara Vandewalker Rickey Williams</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Operational Indicators</p> <p>Dr. Eric Simonson, Chair Becky Schlecht, Vice-Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Team Members:</p> <p>Dr. Charles Hantz Dr. Gregory Holden Nathan Smoot Amy Streuer Brad Weaver Jeff Wise</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Follow-Up</p> <p>Nancy Boesdorfer, Chair Gail Morrison, Vice-Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Team Members:</p> <p>Ernestine Darnell Stacy Ehmen Ann Muench Cindy Parr-Barrett Craig Potter Jeff Rush</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Request for Institutional Change</p> <p>Belinda Dalton-Russell, Chair Ryan Wyckoff, Vice-Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Team Members:</p> <p>Karen McKissack Rich Pate Eric Rayburn Jon Spors Sharon Waggaman Naomi Yonke</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Communications/Resource Room</p> <p>Maggie Hoover, Chair Dr. Ruth Lindemann, Vice-Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Team Members:</p> <p>Lara Conklin Chris Cornell Karen Flessner Ryan Stone</p>

History of Accreditation

Danville Junior College District Number 507 was granted initial accreditation with the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) in 1967. The College changed its name to Danville Area Community College, its present name, on July 1, 1979. The NCA conducted comprehensive reviews and granted the College continued accreditation in 1977, 1982, and 1989.

The last comprehensive evaluation was March 1-3, 1999. The team unanimously recommended that the College receive continued accreditation until its next scheduled review in 2008-2009. However, the team required that DACC report progress on one issue of concern by June 30, 2002, and identified four other areas of concern. These are addressed in the following section.

In 2004 the College submitted a Request for Institutional Change to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the NCA. DACC requested approval to offer all degrees and certificates online. The College gained approval to offer the Associate of Science and Arts degree (ASA) and degrees and certificates in accounting, marketing and management, and travel and tourism online. In their report the team identified three areas of concern. These are addressed in detail in the response to previous concerns section of Chapter 8 of this self-study, Request for Institutional Change.

Progress Report to the HLC June 2002

The team that visited DACC in March of 1999 required that the College report on one issue of concern by June 30, 2002. The concern was:

The integration of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), assessment, planning, budgeting, and use of data, needs to be strengthened to improve learning and to drive decision making.

The College submitted the report by the required due date, and it was accepted by the HLC. **A copy of this report is available in the Resource Room.**

Response to Concerns of the 1999 Comprehensive Evaluation

Knowledge of commitment to the assessment of student academic achievement needs to permeate the institution.

Since 1999, DACC has been addressing the issue of outcomes assessment and how data is analyzed and used. Over the last decade, assessment has evolved in many ways at DACC and today the institution uses data from the various assessments conducted in the academic divisions and in the non-academic departments that make

up the student services and administrative divisions of the College. DACC now assesses student achievement at all levels - course, program, department, and institutional - in order to gauge institutional effectiveness. The College monitors the effectiveness of the assessment initiative and documents what DACC is doing with assessment data to elicit change and improvement in the classroom and in the offices that support the overall mission of the College. **For a complete discussion of the assessment initiative at DACC and how it contributes to institutional effectiveness, refer to the progress report submitted to the commission in 2004 available in the Resource Room and Core Components 2c, 3a, and 3c of this self-study.**

A coherent system to manage assessment information and involve all stakeholders in decision making needs to be more fully developed.

Since the 1999 visit an institutional effectiveness model and plan have been developed and implemented. **For a complete discussion, refer to the Progress Report submitted to the commission in 2004, which is available in the Resource Room, and Core Component 2c of this self-study.**

The strategic planning process needs to pay continued attention to issues raised by declining enrollment.

The Board of Trustees responded to this HLC concern by hiring a president who, among her many other leadership qualities, had experience in marketing. Their charge was for her to focus on increasing enrollment. Each of the strategic plans since that time has included the goal of increasing enrollment and several initiatives have been directed towards that goal. These have included increasing the number of honor students from area high schools who come to DACC, the number of high school students who take advantage of dual-enrollment opportunities, and the number of international students at the College. Other initiatives have included increasing the College's online offerings, expanding the nursing program and adding other high demand programs to the curriculum, focusing on diversity, changing the College's marketing strategy, eliciting more input from community members, taking responsibility for educational programming at two correctional centers, and improving retention rates.

Approximately forty percent of all high school graduates in DACC's district come to the College, but in the past significantly fewer of the honor graduates enrolled at DACC. A nationally recognized marketing consultant worked with DACC faculty and staff to develop a marketing plan to increase the number and percentage of honor students who choose to come to DACC after graduation. Some of the recommendations that were implemented included having DACC faculty and staff attend high school honors programs and personally present awards to the recipients, extending the Presidential Scholarships from one- to two-year awards, and conducting a major gifts campaign

that resulted in more scholarships for students. Currently nearly thirty percent of the honor students from area high schools enroll at DACC after graduation.

The number of students who participate in dual-enrollment opportunities has increased substantially since the 1999 visit, primarily due to the inception of College Express. This program, which provides career and technical education opportunities to junior and senior high school students, has brought over three hundred students per year to the DACC campus since it began in fall 2005. For more information on this program, refer to Core Components 2a and 5c.

In order to recruit more international students, the College identified a faculty sponsor to recruit and work with international students, lowered international tuition rates, and set up an international student center on campus. Since 2005 the College has hosted 46 international students from 17 countries. For more information, refer to Core Component 2a.

The College has also focused efforts on increasing the online offerings as a means of increasing enrollment. At the time of the last NCA visit, just a few courses were offered online. Today the College offers over one hundred courses online and also offers degrees and certificates. In 2004 the HLC approved DACC to offer the Associate of Science and Arts degree, as well as degrees and certificates in accounting, marketing and management, and travel and tourism online. In fiscal year 2005 just under 900 students were enrolled in one or more online classes. By 2008, 1382 students were enrolled in at least one online class. This represents an increase of almost 500 students (50 percent) in just four years. The College has experienced an increase in not only the number of students enrolled in online courses over the last several years, but also in the number of credit hours generated by online classes. That number has grown from 6,934 in 2006 to 8,859 in 2008, an increase of nearly 28 percent. Online classes accounted for 16 percent of the total credit hours generated in fiscal year 2008.

DACC has expanded its nursing program and added other high demand programs as another way of increasing enrollment. At the time of the last visit, the College had approximately 30 students in the Licensed Practical Nursing Program. Today DACC offers an Associate Degree in Nursing with a capacity of 110 students. The College has added programs in radiologic technology, health information technology, diagnostic medical sonography, and automotive technology.

Believing that DACC is for all, the College has placed an emphasis on diversity. A visiting scholar on diversity was hired and made several recommendations that the College implemented. These are discussed in Core Components 2a and 5a. Since the inception of these diversity-related activities, enrollment of students from minority backgrounds has increased. In spring 2001, 445 students were from minority backgrounds; by spring 2008 that number had grown to 623, an increase of 40 percent.

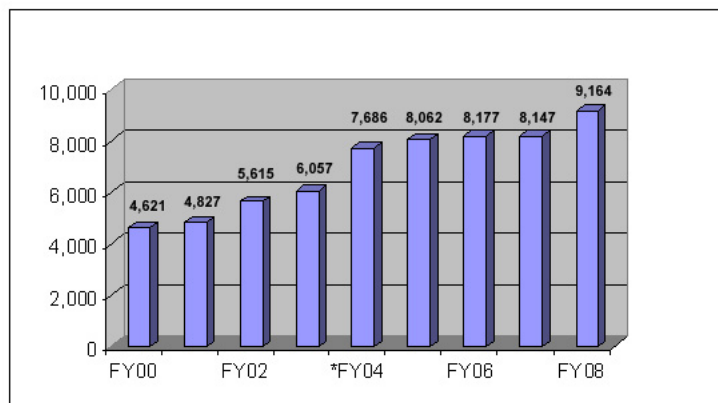
See Appendix A. It is important to note that these numbers do not include students from the two correctional centers served by the College because these diversity-related activities did not impact those populations.

In 1999 the Director of Marketing recognized that the marketing focus was mostly internal. Since that year the marketing expenditures have been increased by 78 percent and redirected to external activities. The College logo has been standardized and the website continually upgraded. The Marketing Department focuses on the College’s assets, which include award-winning faculty and staff and students and alumni who have accomplished much since their days at DACC. The Marketing Department promotes activities such as Ag Day, Academic Challenge, Family Science Night, Career Connections Job Fair, and the NJCAA Men’s Division II National Basketball Championship to bring community members, all potential students, to the campus. To increase visibility in the community, the College maintains an office at the local mall and at the One-Stop Center. DACC has been selected as one of eight colleges to implement Adult Career Pathways, a marketing tool for adults.

The College President introduced “Coffee and Conversation” focus groups around the district trying to learn how the College can better address the district’s needs. In addition, faculty, administrators, and members of the Board of Trustees make presentations to community groups, schools, and area school boards to promote DACC.

As a result of these many activities, enrollment at the College has increased substantially since the visit in 1999.

DACC Annual Credit Headcount Enrollments Fiscal Years 2000–2008



**Starting in FY04, the fiscal year data includes Winter Term*

Source: ICCB Annual Student Enrollments and Completions in the Illinois Community College System FY 2008.

Recruitment is very important in terms of enrollment; however, retention of students is equally important. The percentage of full-time, first-time DACC students graduating, transferring, or still enrolled at 150 percent of program length has consistently lagged behind the state average.

Full-Time First-Time Entering Cohort Average Fall 2002-2004 Percent Graduated, Transferred, or Still Enrolled

	Number in Cohort	Number Retained	Percent
DACC	423	252	59.5%
Statewide Total	27,091	19,166	70.7%
Pure Average	564	399	70.1%

Source: ICCB Annual Performance Report FY 2008

The College has implemented a variety of strategies to increase retention rates. One strategy has been to call first semester students, welcome them to campus, and answer questions. Another strategy has been to focus on ways to help students complete degrees and certificates. One method has been to assure that students who have completed the work to earn certificates are actually awarded the certificates, even if their ultimate goal is a degree. This ladder approach provides students encouragement along the way to degree completion. Another method has been the addition of the Associate in General Studies (AGS) degree to increase the number of adults who complete a degree. The College is hoping to participate in the national program Achieving the Dream, and will be applying for a Title III grant with the goal of improving student retention at DACC.

There is a need for more formal linkage, involving faculty, between developmental education and entry to formal college level coursework.

Since the 1999 comprehensive visit the lead instructor in developmental education has worked closely with faculty, the Vice-President of Instruction and Student Services, and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness to increase the number and percentage of students in developmental courses who complete their classes and move on to college-level work.

Successful performance in developmental education and subsequent related courses is one of DACC’s core indicators of effectiveness. One measure of success is the percentage of developmental education students who successfully complete their developmental education courses. The standard suggested by the lead instructor was that course completion rates in developmental classes should be at least 75 percent of the completion rates in college-level courses. In fall 2006, 42 percent of the students in developmental English completed their courses, 56 percent completed their math courses, and 58 percent completed their reading courses, with the overall average

being 52 percent. The campus-wide completion rate was 87 percent. The indicator of effectiveness the developmental education courses needed to meet was 75 percent of that, or 65.25 percent. Thus there is still work to be done in the area of course completion.

Another way the College measures successful performance in developmental education is by comparing the remedial credits earned versus remedial credits attempted at DACC, as compared to the College’s peer institutions in Illinois and all community colleges in the Illinois Community College system. Peer institutions have demographics and other characteristics that are similar to DACC as determined by the ICCB. As the following table shows, the College historically has fallen below its peer institutions and the statewide average on this measure.

Remedial Credits Earned Versus Remedial Credits Attempted by College Fiscal Years 2004–2006

	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	3-YR AVG
DACC	63.3%	54.5%	53.4%	59.4%
Peer Institutions	---	---	---	66.6%
State	67.4%	64.7%	64.2%	65.1%

Source: DACC Institutional Research Office

The College also monitors the percentage of developmental education students who advance into college-level coursework, as compared to peer institutions and the state. For example, between 2004 and 2006, 54.6 percent of the students at DACC who were in developmental courses advanced to college-level courses. This was just slightly lower than the average of DACC’s peer institutions (57.9 percent) and the state (58.3 percent). Again, there is work to be done in this area. **For a fuller discussion of these percentages, please see the Annual Institutional Effectiveness Report 2007, which is available at <http://www.dacc.edu/selfstudy> and in the Resource Room.**

The single most important strategy the College has used to increase the number and percentage of students who complete their developmental courses and move into college-level courses has been the assessment of student learning initiative, which is discussed at length in Core Components 3a and 3c. The lead instructor in developmental education sits on the Assessment Committee and works closely with faculty in developmental education, who must assess at least one class a semester. The lead instructor submits a program-level assessment report annually for each of the areas of instruction – English, reading, and mathematics. The results of these assessment activities are used to inform instruction and help students in developmental education courses master the material. **The classroom assessments and program-level assessment reports are available in the Resource Room.**

To encourage more collaboration between developmental education faculty and faculty in the other academic divisions, the organizational structure was changed. Developmental education had been housed under student services for many years, but in 2003 it was moved to the Office of Instruction. This has enhanced communication between developmental education and all of the academic divisions. In addition, the Development Education Department and the Liberal Arts Division have had an excellent, albeit informal, relationship for many years. The lead-instructor in developmental education has attended division meetings and participated on the writing committee. The Dean of Liberal Arts has taught developmental English classes, online and in the traditional classroom, and has attended developmental education departmental meetings.

In 2009 the linkage was strengthened. The developmental education budget was enhanced to add one additional full-time faculty position. The individual hired to fill that position has taught English classes in the Liberal Arts Division for several years as a part-time instructor. He is well acquainted with the skill level required for students in developmental writing classes to be successful, not only in their subsequent English classes but also in their other college-level courses. He has already formed a committee made up of developmental and Liberal Arts faculty to look at the challenges students face when they are transitioning from developmental classes to college-level classes. The committee's first order of business is to look at the placement scores of first-time students in fall 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008. What writing class were they placed in, and were they successful in that class? Specifically the committee is interested in determining if the cut-scores are valid. Do they need to be changed? In addition to verifying that students are being placed appropriately, the committee will be looking at other ways to improve the success of students who start out in developmental courses and move on to college-level classes.

Conclusion

First accredited in 1967, Danville Area Community College has laid pursuit for ten more years of continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The College has conducted a comprehensive self-study with the goal being to improve the effectiveness of the institution. This self-study involved nearly ninety participants over a three-year period. In addition DACC has responded to the concerns identified by the team that visited the campus during the last comprehensive visit in March 1999 and those identified by the team that visited the campus in 2004 in regards to the College's request for an institutional change in educational offerings.