NWACC to Host Higher Learning Commission Team

Quality Checkup Visit Part of College’s Accreditation Process

BENTONVILLE, Ark. (July 13, 2012) – NorthWest Arkansas Community College will host a team from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools next week for NWACC’s Quality Checkup visit.

The visit will begin at noon Monday and will end Wednesday afternoon. A luncheon with the Higher Learning Commission will be held from noon to 1:30 p.m. Monday in room 108A of the Student Center on the Bentonville campus. NWACC Board of Trustees members have been invited to attend the luncheon.

The Higher Learning Commission is an independent corporation and one of two commission members of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, one of six regional institutional accrediting bodies in the United States. The Higher Learning Commission accredits, and thereby grants membership in the Commission and in the North Central Association, which is made up of degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions in the North Central region.

NWACC uses the Commission’s Academic Quality Improvement Program, an alternative process through which an already-accredited institution can maintain its accreditation. An institution in AQIP demonstrates how it meets accreditation standards and expectations through a sequence of events that align with the ongoing activities of the institution.

The Quality Checkup is a unique type of accreditation visit, said Dr. Shauna Sterling, Executive Director of Grants and Effectiveness at NWACC. Quality Checkups are not visits an institution can “fail,” so the climate surrounding them is positive. The visiting team can be viewed as perceptive, critical and supportive friends of the institution, there to help the institution understand itself and take actions that will move it toward actualizing its mission, vision and potential, Sterling said.
Two trained and experienced AQIP reviewers will conduct the NWACC visit. During the two days, the team will meet with various groups from NWACC to talk through topics such as leadership, planning and institutional performance evaluation (including assessment of learning). The team will do this by asking probing questions, listening critically to how people respond and following up with questions that cut to core institution issues, assumptions and values. The Quality Checkup is designed to help accelerate improvements and discover where and how to invest energies in the future for maximum payback, Sterling said.

“We look forward to hosting the team and talking with them about what our institution has accomplished already as we have worked through this continuous improvement process,” Sterling said.

Members of the NWACC Effectiveness Team include Sterling, Dr. Lisa Anderson, Director of Institutional Research; Dr. Diana Johnson, Executive Director of High School Relations; Brooke Holt, Dean of Learner Services; Marcus Williams, Effectiveness Coordinator/Perkins Director; and Dr. Ricky Tompkins, Assistant Vice President for Research and Planning and Chief Diversity Officer.

NorthWest Arkansas Community College is a smart choice for students wanting to pursue quality higher education. As an accredited institution through the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, NWACC is a public two-year institution that serves and strengthens its surrounding communities in Benton and Washington counties by helping our students maximize their potential and exceed expectations. With state-of-the-art facilities, NWACC provides excellent academic instruction and workforce training needed to succeed, offering personalized attention from highly respected faculty, staff, and administrators. For more information, visit www.nwacc.edu.