NWACC Honored as ‘Model of Efficiency’
University Business Magazine Recognizes College in National Program

BENTONVILLE, Ark. (November 28, 2012) – NorthWest Arkansas Community College is one of nine colleges and universities nationwide being recognized by University Business magazine in its winter 2012 “Models of Efficiency” national recognition program. Sponsored by Higher One, a company that assists in college business office operations, the Models of Efficiency program recognizes innovative approaches for streamlining higher education operations through technology and/or business process improvements.

“Disparate systems are always costly and make it difficult for institutions to formulate timely, strategic decisions when they don’t have a cohesive picture,” said Tim Goral, editor in chief of University Business. “NorthWest Arkansas Community College’s new single-source evaluation system not only provides efficiencies in the short-term, but will also generate insight for evaluating long-term trends, and that will benefit the students as well as the school.”

The end-of-course evaluation process for NWACC was varied, with some areas using Scantrons or other printed materials, and some using Zoomerang, an online tool, and still others using an online tool created in-house. The paper process was time consuming, while Zoomerang had to be tailored for each department, and then the collected data processed into a usable format. In addition, instructors often did not receive their feedback until weeks after the semester ended. A consistent process between the divisions needed to be identified and implemented.

After a thorough vetting process, the college’s IT department purchased the SmartEval online system. The survey consists of 17 questions, along with a custom section for individual departments or subject areas. Students receive an automatic email with a personalized URL specifically for classes they take, which they can access on or off campus. A reminder email is delivered near class-end.
Piloted during the first five-week session of summer 2012, the new online system was a success, achieving a savings of $17,613. Previous annual estimated expenses were approximately $28,612.87. SmartEval costs about $11,000 per year and just two hours per month to maintain.

In addition, the system also provides more timely feedback to faculty – just three days after final grades – that can lead to better teaching, and ultimately improve student learning. “This will give them the ability to make modifications to their teaching style and materials to better serve students’ needs,” said Paige Francis, associate vice president, information technology. “In addition, they will be able to access historical data from multi-semester reports so they can see their teaching progress.”

In addition to NorthWest Arkansas Community College, winter 2012 Models of Efficiency honorees include: Baldwin University (Ohio); Dallas County Community College District (Texas); Pepperdine University’s Graziadio School of Business and Management (Calif.); Northern Michigan University; Polk State College (Fla.); Southern California University of Health Sciences; Texas A&M Health Science Center; and University of West Georgia.

Models of Efficiency is an ongoing recognition program. Higher ed institutions can participate in upcoming rounds by visiting www.universitybusiness.com/moe.

The program is sponsored by Higher One, a leading company focused on helping college business offices manage operations and provide enhanced service to students. Through a full array of services from refunds to payments, electronic billing, payment plans, and more, Higher One works closely with colleges and universities to ensure students receive financial aid refunds quickly, pay tuition and bills online, make on-campus and community purchases, and learn the basics of financial management.

“From creativity to planning to technology implementation and results, we are always inspired by the honorees’ outstanding efforts to streamline operational efficiencies,” said Miles Lasater, co-founder and COO of Higher One. “We are proud to stand with University Business to support and recognize all nine Models of Efficiency winners.”

University Business is the leading publication for senior managers at colleges and universities throughout the United States, reaching 46,000 leaders who manage offices such as enrollment, technology, facilities, and academic affairs. More information is available at www.universitybusiness.com.

Higher One (NYSE: ONE) provides its services to more than 10.8 million students at distinguished public and private higher education institutions nationwide. More information about Higher One can be found at www.HigherOne.com.

NorthWest Arkansas Community College is a smart choice for students wanting to pursue quality higher education. As an accredited institution through The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, 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.