EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in early 2006 with the review of both paths to continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) and Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), Monroe County Community College (MCCC) embarked on an inclusive, sustained, and evidence-based institutional accreditation self-study process that substantiated compliance with the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools-Higher Learning Commission (NCA-HLC) criteria for accreditation.

On September 28, 29, and 30, 2009, a team of HLC peer reviewers will be visiting the Monroe County Community College campus in an effort to confirm the evidence presented in the self-study report. Upon completion of the visit, the team will make a recommendation regarding the College’s accreditation status to the Higher Learning Commission.

This executive summary provides an overview of the self-study evidence supporting the College’s request that the HLC continue its accreditation, for a period of ten years.

CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY

The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

Monroe County Community College has clearly articulated mission documents, including Mission, Vision, and Core Values and Educational Objectives, as well as related documents (Assessment Philosophy and Institutional Plan) which are widely
distributed and/or visible to internal and external constituents. These documents are reviewed on a regular basis and revised when appropriate, as was the case most recently in 2008.

The College's mission is fulfilled through quality academic programs and noncredit instruction, an array of student support services and community partnerships, all operated under the auspices of highly qualified, highly committed faculty, administrators, and maintenance and support staff.

MCCC is committed to providing an academic environment conducive to preparing students for study and work in a global society. A sustained effort to support the Diversity Initiative at the College has existed since early 2004 and includes the later establishment of a diversity standing committee and continued external advisory group. In addition, components of diversity and globalization are imbedded in program and student learning outcomes, employee search and selection processes, and campus cultural events and activities.

Institutional integrity at MCCC is maintained through a comprehensive set of policies and procedures. Formal language in these documents guides the College’s expectations for employing qualified faculty and staff, treating employees fairly, creating and maintaining quality curricula, implementing a shared governance structure, providing a strong complement of student support services, partnering with the community, addressing the needs of employers, providing an array of life-long learning opportunities, and acting in ways that are ethical and in line with the College mission.

The College’s governance structure serves to maximize participation by individuals and constituent groups. Five groups play important roles in the governance of the College community: faculty, students, support staff/maintenance, administration, and the Board of Trustees. Subject to whatever legal limitations may exist, members of the College community, through the divisions/areas, standing committees, organizations, and other appropriate channels, have the privilege to discuss and recommend educational policies of the institution for review by the Board of Trustees and other appropriate government agencies and officers, as expressed in legislation of the Board of Trustees.

**Strengths**

- MCCC has a clearly written set of mission documents that are understood and strongly supported by all staff. These documents are regularly reviewed.
- Most constituents agree that MCCC fulfills its mission.
- The Board of Trustees takes responsibility for the mission and understands its role in ensuring the College stays on mission.
- Departments and divisions with their own mission and/or vision statements developed documents that are in congruence with the institutional mission statement.
• Academic programs, noncredit programs, and student support services follow the edicts of the mission.

• The rapid and comprehensive response to the MCCC Diversity Survey and diversity focus groups demonstrates MCCC’s commitment to further developing and promoting diversity on campus.

• MCCC uses campus and community feedback to improve services to diverse constituents and enhance campus awareness and understanding of diversity issues.

• MCCC offers a diverse complement of courses, delivery systems, and services to serve an ever-changing and diverse constituency.

• The faculty and staff are well-qualified.

• Institutional policies and standardized processes and documents regarding hiring and evaluation are in place.

• Governance structures and processes at MCCC are reflective of a shared governance model.

• A standing committee structure that provides opportunity for constituents to participate in decision-making is in place.

• The Institutional Governance Committee has committed to review its charge and the standing committee structure and processes as they relate to overall College operations and utilization of human resources.

• Fiscal and legal integrity are a high priority at MCCC.

• Procedures are well-documented and fair at MCCC, and complaints are dealt with in a timely manner.

**Opportunities/Challenges**

• Mission documents should be made available in more places than the College website and catalog. For example, the *Annual Report* could include these documents.

• There is a need to provide employee orientation and training on the *College Constitution*.

• The creation and use of mission and vision statements and/or planning documents at the department and academic division level is sporadic across the institution.

• As of the 2007-2008 evaluation period, employees are given the opportunity to complete evaluations of their supervisors and submit their comments anonymously. However, many employees indicated that they were not aware of this opportunity.
• While the College has a statement on Academic Dishonesty, Probation, Dismissal, and Student Conduct and Discipline, these statements do not appear in the Student Orientation Handbook.

• Although the HLC Accreditation Steering Team provided a detailed assessment of the themes that emerged from the HLC Vital Focus data, much of the campus is unaware of the progress made in addressing “opportunities for improvement.”

CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

The organization’s allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

MCCC is well-positioned to plan for and meet the challenges of the future through a recently established data-driven strategic planning process that connects mission, planning, and resource allocation. Research conducted internally and within the larger community (i.e., community focus groups and surveys, Branding initiative, and Vital Focus) yielded important data that continues to be used to inform and refine the institutional planning process.

The College is supported by three main revenue streams, including state funds, student tuition and fees, and local tax dollars. The Office of Institutional Advancement has made a concerted effort over the past several years to identify and secure alternative revenue streams. The Foundation at Monroe County Community College and several million-dollar federal grant funds have made this effort a success.

Sound fiscal stewardship, flexibility in budgeting, prudent assessments in methods to generate revenue, and increasing success in securing alternative funding streams have all contributed to the College’s long standing tradition of providing access to postsecondary education while maintaining financial stability. At the same time, the College has successfully invested in facilities, technology, academic programming and workforce training, diversity and globalization initiatives, and human resources to meet the needs of the 21st century community college student.

Strengths

• Employees are committed to the students and mission of the College.

• MCCC has a history of preparing and executing fiscally responsible budgets.

• The physical appearance of the grounds and facilities make this college one of the most attractive in the state.

• The current committee structure promotes the concept of shared governance.

• The Strategic Planning Committee is currently engaged in the process of developing and implementing a data-driven strategic plan.
• MCCC is committed to diversity and the idea of global awareness.

• The annual budget contains funding for upgrading technology that is used to support teaching and learning.

• The newly revised mission confirms the College’s commitment to meeting the higher educational needs of Monroe County residents.

**Opportunities/Challenges**

• Michigan’s current economy will make it difficult to project and plan for future needs and growth.

• The budget process may be challenged by inflationary costs and possible changes in the community college funding structure.

• It will be a challenge for MCCC to keep up with the increased costs and rapid changes in the field of technology.

• The College must work to improve and maintain effective lines of communication that reach each area and department.

• The campus community should discuss and recommend a model for decision making.

• In order to facilitate data-driven decision making, a process for collecting, analyzing, sharing, and storing data should be developed and maintained.

• The institution should discuss, develop, and implement a system for assessing and measuring effectiveness.

• The Institutional Governance committee should conduct a review of the internal governance structure.

• The College should begin to develop a comprehensive and consistent model/process for reviewing and evaluating academic programs

**CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING**

The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

Monroe County Community College is committed to assessing effectiveness in all areas of teaching and learning. The assessment process at MCCC provides an appropriate, self-determined accountability mechanism that takes place in two separate but related areas: institutional effectiveness and student learning. Relevant
academic and non-academic activities are used to determine if mission mandates are being met. Assessments at the program and course levels are used to demonstrate concretely and convincingly that students are achieving competencies, attributes, and skills necessary to function as productive citizens.

The College was selected to become a member of the October 2007 Higher Learning Commission Academy for Assessment of Student Learning cohort and is currently in the process of reviewing its general education with the goal of moving from a course- to competency-based program.

Qualified faculty members determine curricular content and strategies for instruction, and resources are dedicated to support the efforts of faculty and students. A variety of resources are necessary to support effective teaching and learning. Services are provided by the MCCC library, the Learning Assistance Lab, the Writing Center, the computer labs, and the Testing Center. In addition, the Fitness Center, Meyer Theater, and other spaces support specific departments and offer enrichment for students and staff at MCCC. Curriculum is also enhanced by the availability of clubs, student government, and student publications.

**Strengths**

- The writing component of MCCC’s general education requirement has a strong assessment tool that will continue to work when general education is transformed from course-based to outcomes-based assessment.
- Membership in the Higher Learning Commission Academy for Assessment of Student Learning will keep the College on task for a transformation to a culture of assessment.
- The College is committed to maintaining effective physical learning environments, having invested significant dollars in instructional classrooms and laboratories over the past several years.
- The College is committed to enhancing instructional technology, having invested in physical and human capital and related professional development resources over the past several years.
- The College provides multiple locations and instructional delivery methods to meet student needs.
- In keeping with its mission, Monroe County Community College provides a strong complement of academic student support services.
- Use of academic student support services is well-documented.

**Opportunities/Challenges**

- Some current assessment methods may not survive a transition to outcomes-based general education.
• The various levels of assessment currently stand alone. Links between assessment efforts are not easily identified.

• Course and program review is inconsistent and sporadic.

• The current criteria for recognition of effective teaching is perhaps too broadly defined, resulting occasionally in recognition of “effective service” that may not be directly related to teaching.

• Professional development opportunities offered internally have concentrated heavily on technology, both hardware and software. The same cannot be said in regard to sessions on teaching and learning pedagogy or content.

• Regular, meaningful evaluation of faculty is becoming more difficult due to the sheer increase in numbers.

• Faculty and staff recognition should be extended beyond the internal environment.

• Assessment of academic student support services is limited in most cases to student evaluations.

• Consistent increases in student enrollment since 2003 may require additional human and other resources to effectively serve the diverse needs of all MCCC students.

• Academic support services are not available to students at the Whitman Center.

• The MCCC library does not survey faculty and students regarding their needs and expectations for library services.

• In response to the recommendation of the Developmental Education standing committee, a college study skills course should be added to the list of available developmental education courses.

• Humanities/Social Science courses generate nearly 80 percent of all writing across the College. However, there is no permanent open computer lab in the Campbell Learning Resources Center building, where most of the writing-intensive courses are scheduled.

• The library has a limited number of computers and does not equip computers with full-function word processing software.

• Growth in student utilization of the Regional Computer Technology Center is outpacing physical and human resources.

• The Whitman Center does not have any specific area designated to handle testing accommodations.

• The LAL, located on the second floor of the CLRC, is not in the same building as MCCC’s other student services.
Executive Summary

Self-Study Report

- Disability services are housed in the LAL and, subsequently, are not always easily accessible to students with physical disabilities.
- Funding for the development of facilities and appropriate technology may prove challenging in the current economic environment.
- MCCC needs to develop a sound strategy to determine the best direction for the delivery of courses: face-to-face, blended, and online.
- MCCC can enhance experiential learning with more co-op and internship opportunities.

CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

MCCC is committed to a life of learning, not only philosophically but financially. MCCC offers many opportunities for all staff to be involved in both on- and off-campus learning to expand professional expertise. The College’s recognition of employment longevity is substantial. The financial structure of the College allows students to participate in learning at a low cost, while many enjoy the support of The Foundation at MCCC for personal scholarships and classroom enrichment activities.

General education at MCCC has had a complex and colorful history in the past two decades. The College successfully responded to the 2000 HLC visiting team’s concern regarding general education by incorporating a comprehensive general education core (with some elective choices) in all degree programs. However, the College realizes that general education is not a static element and, subsequently, selected a review of general education as the first project of the HLC Academy for the Assessment of the Student Learning.

Central to a life of learning for MCCC’s students is the view that the curriculum must be relevant outside the walls of the academy. All occupational programs have advisory committees comprised of employers and practitioners. The College systematically gathers data from graduates and their employers in an effort to assess the usefulness of the curriculum.

The College has an expectation that staff and students will behave in an ethical manner while on campus. Explicit statements of expected behaviors are found in College policies and procedures. These policies serve both the students and institution, and they are reviewed and updated as needed. Students have the opportunity to practice and expand curricular learning outside of campus. These
efforts foster an attitude that staff and students have not only a responsibility in the classroom and workplace, but in the larger community.

**Strengths**

- MCCC has demonstrated a commitment to technology through planning and financial allocation.
- The College supports professional development in a variety of ways.
- Co-curricular activities for students at MCCC are robust.
- General education is taken seriously, driven by faculty and discipline-specific input.
- MCCC’s structure includes a strong representation of external constituents, with advisory committees, graduate follow-up surveys, apprenticeship, certifications, and alumni involvement.
- The College’s students continue to demonstrate a strong performance at transfer institutions.
- MCCC graduates have consistently shown a strong performance on employee follow-up surveys.
- MCCC has published well-defined policies and procedures for academic honesty and for ethical conduct.
- The College has sponsored a variety of activities promoting social responsibility.

**Opportunities/Challenges**

- Freedom of inquiry: At the present time MCCC has no published statement of academic freedom or freedom of inquiry.
- The College could improve financial support for individuals pursuing professional development and travel.
- Recognition of achievement is improving, but it needs greater consistency.
- MCCC needs a stronger commitment to continue its data gathering process and publication as developed for NCA/HLC.
- The College’s East and West Technology buildings need renovation.
- Reporting is inconsistent for co-curricular activities.
- Stagnant levels of full-time faculty compared to student population increases means increased burden for campus tasks (curriculum development, co-curricular activity development, committee work, etc.) and a disadvantage for students who increasingly rely upon adjunct faculty.
• General education courses are not yet tied to competencies, and this causes difficulty with assessment.

• Because of funding issues, MCCC continues to have modest numbers for international study opportunities.

• The College’s program review process is struggling.

• Monroe County’s lack of racial and ethnic diversity presents a challenge to the College’s efforts to create activities promoting greater social awareness and responsibility.

**CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE**

As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

The Monroe County Community College Mission Documents establish a clear direction for the institution to maintain a strong commitment to engagement and service through the development of programs which benefit both the institution and the community.

The College has a deep appreciation for the diverse community to which it belongs and has a solid understanding of the needs of its constituents. For nearly 45 years, MCCC has proven itself capable of meeting the needs of those it serves. MCCC strives to be an inclusive institution and regards input from all of its constituents as important, not only for the future of the institution but for the good of all of its constituents. Additionally, staff members are involved in a variety of community organizations and activities.

By partnering with area business and industry, MCCC has proven itself ready to respond when industry foresees a rising need for field-specific employees. While building these strong partnerships, MCCC has gained valuable insight into the evolving characteristics of the 21st century workforce and has structured its instructional programs to better prepare that workforce. MCCC’s ability to provide training and retraining to these partners has helped employers stay competitive and profitable in today’s global marketplace.

MCCC provides many benefits for the community. Since the opening of the La-Z-Boy Center, the Meyer Theater has hosted numerous events that bring culture and entertainment into a common center within the community. Many of these events are staffed by MCCC personnel who volunteer their time. Rooms in the La-Z-Boy Center are often reserved for special meetings of area businesses and community groups.

Monroe County Community College also holds special events that help guide potential students through the admission, registration, and financial aid processes in
order to get those potential students started in the right direction without missing any of the steps necessary to become a student at the College. MCCC’s One-Stop Registration Day is a particularly busy day with many first-time College applicants taking advantage of the helpful service and guidance that is offered.

The Foundation at Monroe County Community College works to provide scholarships and grants that allow many students the opportunity to attend college to fulfill their dreams of a more successful future. The evidence demonstrates that Monroe County Community College is a multi-faceted institution capable of engaging its constituents in a way that is mutually beneficial to both.

**Strengths**

- One of MCCC’s greatest strengths is the partnerships it has developed with other colleges and universities, business and industry, and the community.
- Employees and students are actively engaged in enriching the community via volunteerism.
- MCCC analyzes and evaluates its value to the constituents it serves through the use of advisory committees, surveys, and other data collection tools.
- MCCC strives to improve its services and effectiveness as a community asset.
- The College gains the knowledge that it needs to be able to better prepare its students for the jobs of tomorrow by engaging members of the community and leaders of business and industry.
- Instructional programs are developed that coincide with the needs of business and industry.
- MCCC understands that through its partnerships, it will make sound decisions for its constituents.

**Opportunities/Challenges**

- The College’s current technology education buildings are no longer adequate to house the newest technologies.
- The College is challenged to provide facilities that meet contemporary program needs and accommodate record enrollment growth.
- MCCC will need to secure funding to support a new career technology building that will house current and future high-tech, high-skill, and high-demand programs.
- MCCC has no mechanism for annually collecting employee volunteerism data. This information could be collected by the Human Resources Department via the annual employee-performance evaluation.
• The current Michigan economy requires the Office of Workforce Development to be aggressive in assisting both job seekers and local employers.

• A low percentage of graduates respond to the Graduate Follow-up Survey item regarding the Office of Workforce Development. It was the lowest rated service in the ACT Alumni Survey. Faculty, staff, and students need to be better educated regarding the services of the Office of Workforce Development.

**Federal Compliance**

MCCC operates with integrity, is in compliance with all state and federal regulations, and acts within its own related institutional policies and procedures. The College maintains full compliance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), including Title IV and related responsibilities and recently adopted policies on Transfer of Credit and Verification of Student Identity. Additionally the College is in compliance with requirements for Federal Compliance as listed in the Higher Learning Commission’s Handbook of Accreditation.

The College’s credit hour allocation and degree and tuition requirements are in the range of good practice in higher education and contribute to an academically rigorous environment that supports student learning.

MCCC maintains records of reviewing and resolving student complaints. Review of formal student complaints since the last HLC accreditation visit revealed no trends or patterns.

MCCC is in full compliance with Title IV Program and Related Responsibilities, including requirements related to acceptable financial aid practices and audits, sound financial management, avoidance of excessive student loan default rates, disclosure of campus crime and related consumer information, documented satisfactory academic progress and attendance policies, and disclosure of contracts with third party entities not accredited by a federally recognized accrediting agency providing 25-35 percent of any degree program.

Requests for transfer of credit for work at unaccredited institutions or for non-collegiate educational experiences are evaluated by the registrar in consultation with the respective division deans. Monroe County Community College’s practices regarding transfer credit are found in the *Policies and Procedures Manual*, the College catalog, and the On-line Transfer Information Center. College publications make it clear to students that the information is provided by the respective colleges and universities and that the final determination regarding acceptance of transfer credit lies with the receiving school.

Online courses at Monroe County Community College are delivered using Blackboard learning management system. Blackboard is a password-protected online
learning environment accessible only by MCCC faculty, staff, and students with appropriate username and password credentials.

The College provides accurate, timely, and appropriately detailed information to current and prospective students and the public about its accreditation status with the Higher Learning Commission and other accrediting agencies and organizations. This information is published in College documents, both hard copy and online.

In preparation for the HLC accreditation visit in September 2009, MCCC made an appropriate and timely effort to notify the public of the visit and to seek comments. The College notified students, prospective students, employees, Board of Trustees, program advisory committee members, employers, alumni, taxpayers, the Foundation at MCCC Board of Directors, and Alumni Association Board of Directors.

**Conclusion**

As supported by the evidence presented in the self-study document, Monroe County Community College believes that it fulfills the HLC Criteria for Accreditation and, subsequently, is well positioned to thrive well into the future. The College expects that the evaluation team members will confirm the evidence when they visit the Campus in September 2009 and recommend to the HLC that MCCC be awarded accredited status for a period of ten years.