

**REPORT OF A  
COMMISSION-MANDATED FOCUSED VISIT**

**Assurance Section**

TO

**MONROE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
Monroe, Michigan**

**March 4-5, 2013**

**The Higher Learning Commission**

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

**EVALUATION TEAM**

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## I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

- A. Purpose of Visit:** The purposes of this visit included a mandated focused visit, required by the 2009 comprehensive visit, on the issues of (1) shared governance and communication, and (2) improving institutional effectiveness. In addition, the institution submitted a substantive change request to expand distance learning to the 100% level. The Team's findings and recommendations related to the embedded change review on distance learning are reported separately on the "Substantive Change Recommendation Form, Embedded Change Review."
- B. Accreditation Status:** Monroe County Community College (MCCC) has been continuously accredited by the Higher Learning Commission since 1972. Its most recent comprehensive visit occurred in 2009.
- C. Organizational Context:** MCCC is a comprehensive, public, two-year community college offering 65 certificate and associate degree programs to approximately 1,700 full-time and 2,700 part-time students in south eastern Michigan. MCCC's mission is to provide a variety of higher education opportunities to the residents of Monroe County. These opportunities include college/university transfer programs, career programs, as well as credit and non-credit personal and professional enrichment programs.
- D. Unique Aspects of Visit:** The current MCCC President, Dr. David Nixon, had submitted notice to the Board of Trustees prior to the visit that he will be retiring at the end of his current contract, July 31, 2013, after serving ten years as president.
- E. Interactions with Organizational Constituencies:** During the visit the Team met with the following groups and individuals
1. President and all Administrator Council members (22)
  2. Institutional Governance Committee & Governance Evaluation Committee (23)
  3. eLearning and Instructional Support Office
  4. Information Systems Personnel (related to distance learning)
  5. Student Support Services (related to distance learning)
  6. Online students (past and present)
  7. Faculty teaching online courses
  8. Board of Trustees (7)
  9. Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation Committee, non-administrative (14)
  10. Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation Committee, administrative (10)

11. Strategic Planning Committee
12. Learning Assessment Committee
13. Open Meeting for Support Staff and Maintenance (47)
14. Open Meeting for Faculty/Faculty Council (39)
15. Open Meeting for Students
16. MCCC Faculty Association Executive Board (7)

**F. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed:** During the visit the Team reviewed the following documents

1. HLC 2009 Report of a Comprehensive Visit to Monroe County Community College
2. 2013 Focused Visit Report
3. MCCC Website, College Catalog, and other Publications
4. College Constitution
5. "Shared Governance and Internal Communication Audit: Results," June, 2011, prepared by the CLARUS Corporation
6. Council Model of Shared Governance: Formative Evaluation Survey and Results
7. Campus Climate Surveys, 2005-2010
8. MCCC Shared Governance Model Handbook for Test Year, August 2012-April 2013
9. Board of Trustee Minutes
10. President's Cabinet Minutes
11. Institutional Governance Committee Minutes
12. Faculty Council Minutes
13. Staff Council Minutes
14. Trust and Respect Subcommittee Recommendations
15. Policies re: Code of Ethics and Mission Documents
16. Institutional Shared Governance Model
17. Working Tactical Implementation Plan
18. MCCC 2010-2013 Strategic Plan
19. MCCC Draft Instructional Assessment Plan
20. MCCC General Education Assessment Roll Out
21. Various Instructional Rubrics
22. Learning Assessment Committee Minutes

## II. AREA(S) OF FOCUS

### A-1. Statement of Focus: Institutional Effectiveness

During the 2009 comprehensive visit the HLC Team identified "evaluating and improving institutional effectiveness" as an area for focus during the current visit. The 2009 Team Report of a Comprehensive Visit to Monroe County Community College expressed the following expectations of the institution by the time of the current focused visit: complete and implement its model for institutional effectiveness, including a feedback loop; demonstrate evidence of improvement resulting from this process;

reestablish a free-standing assessment committee composed primarily of faculty; establish a process to coordinate the work of the assessment committee, strategic planning committee, and institutional effectiveness committee; and in the absence of an institutional researcher, the institution should develop an institution-wide research capacity to support assessment, planning, and institutional effectiveness.

#### **B-1. Statements of Evidence**

- **Evidence that demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.**

Since the 2009 comprehensive visit, MCCC has experienced significant progress in the area of institutional effectiveness. The institution has converted its Strategic Planning Model to the Institutional Effectiveness/Planning Model that includes institutional effectiveness measures, also known as core indicators of institutional effectiveness, and a feedback loop. As a result of the coordinated efforts of the strategic planning, assessment, and institutional effectiveness committees, the core indicators of institutional effectiveness have been developed and are evaluated in the early stages of MCCC's new planning model. This new inclusive Institutional Effectiveness/Planning Model has facilitated improvements in several areas. These improvements include the use of Strategic Planning Tactics Results Forms that allow all divisions and departments to report their tactics and methods of evaluation annually. The form also communicates how the data will be used for improvement purposes and to inform the next planning cycle, a vital piece of the model that had been missing until the adoption of the new model.

The new Institutional Effectiveness/Planning Model has already resulted in data-driven decisions to enhance the effectiveness of the institution. For example, an evaluation of the impact of energy improvement projects and building operations led to the decision to employ a new energy efficient system that has resulted in cost savings for the college.

The new position of Coordinator of Institutional Research, Evaluation and Assessment was approved for the College's 2011-2012 budget. A search was conducted in fall 2011 and the position filled in January 2012.

Through the establishment of the Institutional Research Office and the addition of a Coordinator of Institutional Research, Evaluation, and Assessment, processes for collecting, analyzing, sharing, and storing

data have been established and are beginning to create a culture of evidence at MCCC. This leadership and capacity in institutional research should prove enormously helpful as the institution continues to fully implement its Institutional Effectiveness/Planning Model.

The institution responded to the 2009 HLC Team's expectation of a free-standing assessment committee composed primarily of faculty with the establishment of the Learning Assessment Committee (LAC) on November 30, 2009, by the Institutional Governance Committee as a standing committee. The LAC was given the charge to develop and monitor implementation of the College's plan for assessing student learning at the course, program, and institutional (general education) levels. LAC identifies annual College priorities, oversees and provides support to all aspects of the assessment process, reviews assessment activities and reports, and provides feedback to departments and divisions, recommends improvements in the assessment program, and disseminates reports on the results of assessment initiatives. Membership includes two faculty members from each academic division, one student services member, two students, two academic deans (also members of the Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning) and the Vice President of Instruction (ex-officio/chair). The two faculty assessment coordinators—General Education/Transfer Programs and Occupational/Career Programs—co-chair the LAC. In August 2012 the Faculty Council passed a motion allowing only faculty members to vote and establishing term limits. The President signed the motion.

Since 2009 the College has also submitted its MCCC HLC Academy Impact Report, attended the HLC Academy Results Forum, and completed the HLC Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning.

- **Evidence that demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.**

While the Team believes the institution has met Commission expectations for the current focused visit, it is imperative that MCCC continue to monitor and evaluate the implementation of its new model to ensure that it “completes the loop” with every tactic, uses the data to drive future decisions and budget allocations, and provides a means of “reporting out” the data to all internal constituents at the completion of each planning cycle. The Team makes this observation due to the institution's short history (model implemented April, 2012) in implementing the new model. During the course of the visit and conversations with institutional personnel, including faculty, staff, and administration, the Team learned that the new model is the result of significant input and discussions across the institution and there

appears to be a commitment to its success. Continued monitoring and evaluation by the institution will help assure the successful implementation and full realization of the model.

Under the new Institutional Effectiveness/Planning Model the institution is not able to gauge progress on the evaluation of *tactics* at any given time between conception to completion because no interim reporting is required of its divisions and departments. This component is needed to keep the institution and its departments focused upon and accountable for their tactics. The College should review this aspect of the model as it conducts its evaluation of the model itself.

- **Evidence that demonstrates that further organizational attention and Commission follow-up are required.**  
None
- **Evidence is insufficient and demonstrates that Commission sanction is warranted.**  
None

#### **A-2. Statement of Focus: Communication and Shared Governance**

During the 2009 comprehensive visit the HLC Team also identified “shared governance and communication” as an area for focus during the current visit. The 2009 Team Report of a Comprehensive Visit to Monroe County Community College expressed the following expectations of the institution by the time of the current focused visit: review the structure and appointment procedures for committees with consideration given to nomination procedures and length of committee appointments; review and enhance strategies for open two-way communication to include administrative feedback to input from faculty and staff; and review and consider implementation of its 2009 Self-Study recommendations.

#### **B-2. Statements of Evidence**

- **Evidence that demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.**

Following the 2009 comprehensive visit, the Institutional Governance Committee (IGC) expanded its membership to include representation from the leadership of the Support Staff Advocates, the Faculty Association, and the Maintenance Association in an effort to improve opportunities for employee communication and input. In addition, IGC approved recommendations to eliminate, merge, and/or make changes to the membership of standing committees. IGC also reviewed membership, nomination procedures, and length of

appointment for three standing committees: Academic Review, Curriculum, and Learning Assessment. These changes were documented in the institutional evidence file titled, “College Constitution, Procedure 4.06 with changes.”

Both the 2009 MCCC Self-Study and the Team Report of a Comprehensive Visit identified communication and shared governance as challenges facing the institution. Wisely, the institution decided to retain external consultation on this issue. Following input from across the institution, MCCC retained the CLARUS Corporation to lead the College through an Employee Communication/Shared Governance Audit. This audit included online surveys, focus groups interviews with key stakeholders, and review of previous surveys such as the Campus Climate Surveys, PACE Survey, Vital Focus Reports from the Constellation Survey, and internal and external communication methods/materials. This audit resulted in a comprehensive report, ***Shared Governance and Internal Communication Audit Results*** (also known as the CLARUS Report). The Report was presented to all employees by a CLARUS consultant and became the basis for the creation of a new governance model at the College.

MCCC’s Institutional Governance Committee (IGC) drafted a preliminary plan to implement the recommendations of the CLARUS Report which the IGC agreed would contribute to improving shared governance and communications. All employee groups met at least twice to review the draft plan and provide input. The result was the adoption of “Reinventing Shared Governance and Employee Communication—Working Implementation Plan.” The Plan identified specific actions (“tactics”) needed to implement each recommendation, including the person responsible and the status of each action. This initial approach for improving shared governance and communications at MCCC was itself a positive exercise in practicing shared governance at the College.

One of the primary recommendations of the CLARUS Report was the implementation of a council model of governance. CLARUS had indicated that MCCC’s standing committee structure was primarily linear in nature and did not allow for College-wide communication or input. Members of the IGC visited a college in Ohio which had successfully implemented a council model. Following the visit, MCCC developed its own council model of shared governance. Significant changes from the Ohio institution were made to allow for the uniqueness of MCCC. The model was thoroughly vetted across the institution and piloted in spring, 2012. The model was subsequently adopted by the Administrator Council, Faculty Council, and Staff

Council. During the spring pilot the IGC approved the recommendation to test the council model more thoroughly over the 2012-2013 academic year. It was also agreed to place all standing committees on hiatus with the exception of three standing committees (Academic Review, Curriculum, and Learning Assessment). The Team believes these activities are important because they demonstrate that there was wide-spread participation and input across the College in the development of the new model.

The new model for shared governance at MCCC is known as the ***MCCC Institutional Shared Governance Model***. The model is also referred to as the Council Model of Shared Governance (CMSG) or the Council Model. A detailed handbook was developed to explain the implementation of the new model. Among the highlights of the model are the following:

- The stated purpose of the model is to organize the College's constituent groups to effectively promote open communication for deliberation of institutional matters and convey recommendations to the president.
- The Council Model establishes three councils—Administrator Council, Faculty Council, and Staff Council.
- Councils can initiate proposals to improve performance, promote innovation, and enhance student learning.
- Councils have the opportunity to provide input and recommendations on proposals with issues clearly labeled to designate which are informational and which are presented for a vote.
- Each of the three councils meets regularly on a monthly basis. Agendas and meeting times/places are published in advance. Council minutes are posted on the College's I-Drive.
- Forms have been developed for councils to submit proposals. Councils are expected to provide written documentation for their proposals. Councils develop study groups and task forces to facilitate conducting their business in an efficient manner and may also form study groups for specific issues.
- Each council builds a consensus on each proposal submitted to it that reflects the collective view of the council.
- Councils have the opportunity for input on proposals from other councils.
- Councils develop internal mechanisms to receive and discuss ideas and concepts that are not ready to be formalized as proposals for action.
- Electronic forms have been developed to facilitate and standardize the process, including the Request for Action and Request for Input.
- Council meetings are open to all interested persons.

- The status of all items going through the Shared Governance Model is recorded on a Tracking Form on the I-Drive.
- Council liaisons report back to employees about the work of each council to provide information and solicit input.
- Council recommendations, with rationale, are forwarded to the president;
- The College President acts upon the recommendation or may form a Conference Committee among the three councils if there is a lack of concurrence among the councils.
- When there is a concurrence among the councils and the President does not endorse the proposal, the process stipulates that he must provide a rationale for that decision to the councils.
- All final decisions are reported to the entire College and at least twice a semester all College personnel are briefed on the work and recommendations of each council.
- Importantly, the process provides for evaluation of the model by the Governance Evaluation Committee.

Although MCCC's Shared Governance Model is relatively new, an example of early success employing the new model is the decision to restructure the Curriculum Committee despite concerns on the part of some administrators.

The Governance Evaluation Committee has responsibility for monitoring the implementation and success of the new shared governance model during the 2012-2013 test year. In February 2013, the institution's new Office of Institutional Research conducted a "Council Model of Shared Governance Survey." As one might expect for a newly implemented governance model, results were mixed. Response rates for the survey were 39.8% overall; 82.5% for full-time faculty; 72.4% for administrative/professional personnel; and 54.2% for full-time maintenance personnel. Response rates for part-time employees were significantly lower. Areas of positive development indicated by the survey include: employees feel welcome at council meetings; council members are respectful of one another during meetings; employees are able to find council items on Blackboard; supervisors encourage employees to attend council meetings; one's council makes good use of its time; and the model gives all employees a voice. However, there were several areas of concern identified in this survey. For example, in response to the statement, "The Council Model of Shared Governance (CMSG) is an effective decision-making model," the mean response among faculty was 2.94 on a scale of 1 – 5 (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). This compared to an administrative/professional mean of 3.86 and an overall mean of 3.30.

A similar result was reported regarding overall satisfaction with the model. The statement, “The tone across campus has improved since the CMSG was piloted,” achieved a mean of 2.35 among full-time faculty. Full-time faculty as a group had the lowest satisfaction scores regarding the new model and had a 3.43 mean score that “there are major faults in the CMSG’s processes.” More encouraging is that faculty members were more positive about the model as an improvement over the former governance structure (3.1) and better understood the perspectives and interests of other parties (3.16) and believed that the model increased dialogue among different groups and individuals across campus (3.16). Importantly, all employees responded more positively (3.57) to the statement, “The CMSG gives all employees a voice (faculty, 3.37). Clearly, additional work is needed to explore opportunities for improving both the model itself and its execution. The Team emphasizes that although the results about the model appear mixed, it is important to note that the entire process has been an exercise in shared governance. These were important first steps in the effort to improve shared governance at MCCC; however, the important next steps will be how the institution responds to and addresses the concerns identified.

A shared governance organization was established in Blackboard, the College’s course management system, to enhance employee access to important information, forms, and documents including council and standing committee meeting times, agendas, and minutes, as well as to provide the status of all proposals. This appears to be one of the more successful aspects of the new model. In response to the February 2013 survey statement, “I am able to find council items (e.g. proposals, agendas, minutes, responses, etc.) on Blackboard,” the mean rating of employees was 3.71, 3.67 for full-time faculty (scale of 1-5, 1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree).

A Trust and Respect Subcommittee of the Institutional Governance Committee was established to address the issue of trust. According to the CLARUS Report, “The major issue facing Monroe County Community College for both communication and shared governance is TRUST, or lack thereof, at the organization.” The Trust and Respect Subcommittee was tasked with developing a detailed list of recommendations to build trust and respect. The committee has developed a series of recommendations; however, it is still early in the process of implementing many of these recommendations.

The new strategic planning process of the institution is also evidence of the commitment to improving shared governance. The new planning process incorporates an inclusive model with statements of measureable tactics that support the institution’s mission.

Conversations with employees confirmed the inclusive nature of the planning process.

- **Evidence that demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.**  
None
- **Evidence that demonstrates that further organizational attention and Commission follow-up are required.**

The pilot of the new governance model retained only 4 of the 17 committee structures, many of which had been in place for decades. Administrators indicated that no significant committee function was eliminated as the topics those committees addressed could all be handled through the new Council Model of governance. However, faculty indicated that significant work from the Enrollment Issues Committee and the Distance Education Committee was not addressed in the new model. While a number of faculty members indicated that the model might allow for more productive work in other areas as more people became familiar with the processes, a common comment from both faculty and staff groups was that the new model was often cumbersome, repetitive, and unclear with confusion over terminology and classifications such as the action, information, or input requests. This area of concern feeds into larger challenges with the governance model but indicates at a minimum that clearer communication about any model's processes is needed for all participating groups. It should be noted that at the time of the Team's visit the new model was in its first year of implementation.

While the Board of Trustees (an elected Board) demonstrated support for the mission of the institution and its students, as well as a strong commitment to supporting changes that will move the institution forward, there is evidence from Team meetings that a minority of Board members have demonstrated disrespectful and inappropriate behavior toward faculty in public board meetings. This behavior has included disparaging remarks about faculty. Surprisingly, this disrespect for faculty even occurred during the Team's meeting with the Board. In addition, there were instances in which Board members were disrespectful to one another. Finally, the original CLARUS Report indicated that faculty expressed some agreement (3.83 on a 5.0 scale where 5 is strongly agree) with the statement, "The Board is inappropriately involved in the day-to-day operations of the College." This concern was also expressed by some employees during the visit. Several employees indicated that one or more Board members contacted individual faculty members about operational issues at the College. It is evident that the Board could benefit from training and professional development activities that will assist in developing proper protocols for conducting meetings and in identifying the proper roles of Board members. This needs to include regular Board self-

evaluations. The education, experience, commitment, and varied talents of the Board should allow them to seize this as an opportunity for continuous improvement that will allow the institution to advance to new levels of achievement. The Board does review and adopt policies governing the institution and fulfills its fiduciary responsibilities regarding the development and monitoring of the College's budget.

Surveys of MCCC, following the implementation of the Council Model of shared governance, have provided empirical data to the College of significant discontent with the model and its implementation. This data should be useful to the institution as it moves forward in making adjustments to the model and the manner in which it is implemented.

Issues of lack of trust seem to continue even under the new model. Contributing to this lack of trust are some missed opportunities such as not conducting "regular" town hall meetings or failing to participate in "shadowing a faculty member" after stating an intent to do so.

MCCC President, Dr. David Nixon, has submitted his retirement notice to the Board of Trustees, effective July 31, 2013, after a tenure of ten years at the College. This may create some level of uncertainty at a time when the institution is in the early stages of implementing its new governance model. It will be important for the Board of Trustees to make sure that the process for selecting the next president is inclusive and that the new president's leadership style and philosophy is consistent with the needs of the institution.

- **Evidence is insufficient and demonstrates that Commission sanction is warranted.**

None

**C. Other Accreditation Issues**

None

**D. Recommendation of Team**

Evidence demonstrated. Commission follow-up recommended; focused visit on shared governance and communication as part of the institution's next scheduled visit under the Standard Pathway (Assurance Review and Comprehensive Evaluation) to be scheduled for AY 2015-2016.

**E. Rationale for the Team Recommendation**

The institution has engaged in serious, focused, productive efforts on both aspects of this mandated focused visit—institutional effectiveness and shared governance/communication. Work in these areas began almost immediately following the 2009 comprehensive visit. The Team makes the following comments about each of the areas of mandated focus review.

Institutional Effectiveness. The Team believes the institution has made adequate progress in addressing the stated expectations of the 2009 Team regarding institutional effectiveness. Specifically, MCCC has integrated institutional effectiveness and strategic planning with its new Institutional Effectiveness/Planning model; provided evidence of improvement under the new model (improving energy efficiency); created and filled the position of Coordinator of Institutional Research; established the Learning Assessment Committee composed primarily of faculty; and completed the HLC Assessment Academy. This evidence was verified by the Team in its examination of institutional documents and interviews with employees. The Team believes the institution has made adequate progress in this area and that no further Commission monitoring on this issue is needed.

Shared Governance and Communication. While the institution has made substantial progress in this area of focus since 2009, the Team believes further Commission monitoring is warranted. The institution took the very appropriate step of retaining an external consultant to help the institution in (a) identifying the various areas of shared governance/communication that needed to be addressed; (b) providing feedback and soliciting input from employees about shared governance and the issues facing MCCC; and (c) providing recommendations to the College. The development of the MCCC Shared Governance Model was a major undertaking and involved personnel across the institution. The model is in its “test” year of implementation and has enjoyed some early success as noted with the successful restructuring of the Curriculum Committee proposed by faculty. The model replaces the previous linear structure of decision-making with a more institution-wide, inclusive council model of governance that was developed with input from across the College. While initial survey results of employee satisfaction are somewhat mixed, the development of the model was a major accomplishment. Nevertheless, Team believes it is too early to effectively evaluate its success. After years of issues relating to shared governance and communication at MCCC, it is unrealistic to expect that the creation of a new model will *immediately* change the institutional climate. While it appears the new model is a good start, more time is needed to fully implement the model and change perceptions across the institution. It will be necessary to continually monitor and evaluate the model and make changes as appropriate. This will likely include professional development activities. A commitment on the part of the College administration and the Board of Trustees is critical. The Team is concerned about this “commitment” for several reasons. First, the model is new and is being introduced while the College is in the midst of a new Institutional Effectiveness/Planning model. Second, the current President is retiring and this creates some level of uncertainty. Third, current frictions among several Board members and Board and faculty perceptions of one another create issues which need to be addressed if shared governance/communication is to be realized at MCCC.

Nevertheless, despite these concerns the Team is encouraged by the development and initial implementation of the new model. The Team believes more time is needed to see the model fully implemented. Continued successes will no doubt build support for the model. It will also be necessary for all groups to follow the protocols of the model. This will require the support and commitment of the new president and the Board of Trustees. While major progress has been made since 2009 in shared governance and communication the Team believes that a visit in three years will help ensure that the institution remains on track. In addition, the Team is concerned about how the previously stated Board issues are impacting both perceptions and implementation of shared governance and communication at MCCC.

While significant issues regarding shared governance remain, substantial progress has been and is being made by the institution. The institution is accomplishing its mission and goals and has competent employees committed to its success. Additional time and Commission monitoring via a focused visit should help the institution address the areas of concern remaining.

### III. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

**Affiliation Status:** No Change

**Nature of Organization:** No Change

**Legal status:** No Change

**Degrees awarded:** No Change

**Conditions of Affiliation:** No Change

**Stipulation on affiliation status:** No Change

**Approval of degree sites:** No Change

**Approval of distance education degree:** Approval to offer degree programs at the 100% level

**Reports required**

**Progress Report:** None  
**Topic(s) and Due Date**  
**Rationale and Expectations**

**Monitoring Report:** None

**Topic(s) and Due Date**  
**Rationale and Expectations**  
**Conditions (if...then)**

**Contingency Report:** None

**Topic(s)**  
**Rationale and Expectations**

**Other Visits Scheduled**

**Type of Visit:** Focused Visit

**Topic(s) and Date:** Focused visit on shared governance and communication as part of the institution's next scheduled visit under the Standard Pathway (Assurance Review and Comprehensive Evaluation) scheduled for AY2015-2016.

**Rationale and Expectations:** MCCC's new Shared Governance Model is a positive response to the 2009 Team's expectations regarding shared governance and communication. However, it has been in place for less than a year and survey evaluation results are mixed. While the model appears to be conceptually sound and was developed with input across the College, more time is needed for this council model of governance to be successful. In addition, issues regarding the Board of Trustees and the imminent selection of a new President suggest some level of uncertainty for the institution at the same time that it is trying to implement shared governance and build trust among all employees.

Expectations: The Team has set forth the following expectations for the focused visit that will be part of the institution's Standard Pathway Assurance Review and Comprehensive Evaluation in AY2015-2016. Prior to the visit the College will perform the following tasks:

1. Evaluate the Council Model of Shared Governance's "test year" and revise and modify as necessary with full vetting and input from across the College.
2. Provide documentation of enhancements in the shared governance model and processes. Surveys conducted before the next visit should indicate significant improvements in staff and faculty satisfaction and perceptions about shared governance and communication.

3. The Board of Trustees should develop and implement a plan aimed at (a) improving relations among Board members; (b) developing and following protocols for professional conduct during Board meetings; (c) developing professional and respectful relations with faculty members; (d) clarifying the proper role of the Board in the governance of the College; (e) conducting regular Board self-evaluations; and (f) engaging in professional development activities for Board members.

**Commission Sanction or Adverse Action:** None

**Placed on Notice**

**Due Date for the Report**

**Rationale and Expectations**

**Areas That Must Be Addressed**

**Probation**

**Date of Next Evaluation Visit**

**Rationale**

**Requirements for Removal of Probation**

**Denial or Withdrawal of Status**

**Rationale**

**Summary of Commission Review**

Year for next comprehensive evaluation AY2015-2016

**REPORT OF A COMMISSION-MANDATED FOCUSED VISIT**

**Advancement Section**

TO

**MONROE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**Monroe, Michigan**

**March 4-5, 2013**

**The Higher Learning Commission**

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**EVALUATION TEAM**

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Topeka Williams, Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, Mid-South Community College, West Memphis, Arkansas 72301

Lloyd H. Hammonds, Member, District Governing Board, Coconino Community College, Page, Arizona 86040 (Chairperson)

## ADVANCEMENT SECTION

### CONSULTATION OF TEAM

#### A. Observations of Team Regarding Area(s) of Focus

During the course of this focused visit the Team identified the following strengths and challenges as they relate to the areas of the focused visit and embedded change request: shared governance and communication, institutional effectiveness, and expansion of distance delivery. This list does not represent all strengths/challenges but is an example of some of the observations of the team related to the areas of the focused visit.

#### Strengths

1. A new strategic planning process has been implemented by MCCC. The new process incorporates an inclusive model that results in the development and evaluation of tactics that support the institution's mission.
2. In the spirit of continuous improvement, MCCC has begun to embrace data-driven decision making. The College has already begun to use data from the current strategic plan to make budget allocation decisions that improve institutional effectiveness.
3. The institution retained the professional consulting services, CLARUS, to help identify governance and communication issues and develop a new model for shared governance and improved communication. Follow-up surveys have also been conducted and more are planned to continually evaluate the effectiveness of the new Council Model of governance.
4. An example of MCCC's Council Model of governance is the decision to restructure the Curriculum Committee despite some hesitancy on the part of administrators.
5. The addition of the position of Coordinator of Institutional Research, Evaluation and Assessment demonstrates MCCC's commitment to creating a culture of assessment that includes collecting, analyzing, disseminating, and storing data.
6. A number of online student support services are already in place that serve not only the distance education student but also the on-site student who is looking for ease of access. While only a small group of students attended the two meetings open to students, they all reported the electronic databases provided by the library and the system for online purchasing of textbooks were accessible and reliable services.
7. MCCC's participation in the Michigan Virtual Collaborative provides a number of resources for distance education students. Although administrators indicated that few MCCC students enrolled through the collaborative because the tuition was higher than if they enrolled at their home campuses, all students who are enrolled at participating colleges have access to online resources such as self quizzes for online readiness

(both student's level of preparation and technological needs), as well as contact information for each college's testing center, help desk, and tutoring services.

8. The eLearning Resource Center offers regularly scheduled training on technological topics that faculty surveys identify as areas of need. In addition, the Center provides individualized training by appointment and walk-in for faculty and students. However, the training is not mandatory.
9. Distance education courses offer content consistent with on-site offerings by following the same procedure for adoption of new courses, including a requirement to identify minimum competencies the course will address, regardless of format. These competencies are included in standardized course outlines posted under the "Academic" link on the website and referenced on the eLearning page of the website in the listing of available online and blended courses available at MCCC.
10. Deans have access to enter courses for all online instructors and several indicated that they regularly did so to review quality and insure courses are consistent with on-site courses. Faculty referenced examples of courses being taken off-line when activities comparable to on-site courses were not possible to assess learning.

### **Challenges**

1. The Learning Assistance Lab provides tutoring during some evening and weekend hours for the working student; however, distance students are limited in available tutoring references. The Writing Center accepts emailed submissions of drafts and provides feedback, but other subject areas do not offer online assistance. Staff working in student support services indicated that the online instructor addressed the tutoring needs in these areas; however, students reported that, while not the norm, some instructors took so long to answer emails that homework deadlines had already passed before they received replies
2. Through the added position in institutional research, deans reported receiving semester-end summaries of retention and grade distributions in each subject area, broken down by section for comparison of online and on-site courses. A faculty member, however, commented to the Team during an open meeting that there had been no studies comparing retention for these formats, and no one in the faculty countered this perception. This inconsistency in viewpoints suggests data is being gathered but may not be shared with all of the key decision makers for curriculum, and data that is not being used for a transparent purpose can contribute to negative perceptions about the role of assessment as well as adding to communication and governance concerns.
3. The pilot of the new governance model retained only 4 of the 17 committee structures, many of which had been in place for decades. Some faculty members expressed concern that some

important functions were not covered by the new model. While a number of faculty members indicated that the model might allow for more productive work in other areas as more people became familiar with the processes, a common comment from both faculty and staff groups was that the new model was often cumbersome, repetitive, and unclear with confusion over terminology and classifications such as the action, information, or input requests. This area of concern indicates at a minimum that clearer communication about the model's processes is needed for all participating groups

4. Interviews with employees indicated that some Board members have demonstrated disrespectful and inappropriate behavior toward faculty in public board meetings. This behavior has included name-calling and disparaging remarks about faculty. This also occurred during the Team's meeting with the Board.
5. Surveys of MCCC, following the implementation of the Council Model of shared governance, have provided empirical data to the College of significant discontent with the model and its implementation.
6. Issues of lack of trust seem to continue even under the new model. Contributing to this lack of trust are some missed opportunities such as not conducting "regular" town hall meetings or failing to participate in "shadowing a faculty member" after stating an intent to do so.

## **B. Consultations of Team**

The following are the collective consultations of the team and serve as voluntary advice and suggestions to the institution. The institution may choose to implement or modify some, all, or none of the consultations offered.

- The Board of Trustees should consider active participation in a national association for college/university trustees such as the Association of Community College Trustees ([www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org)) or the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges ([www.agb.org](http://www.agb.org)). Both offer professional development through annual conferences, programs for new trustees, webinars and publications on virtually all aspects of community college trusteeship. ACCT provides a self-evaluation instrument for Boards to review and evaluate their performance. Overall, these organizations can help the MCCC Board of Trustees obtain the professional development which they need.
- The Board of Trustees should consider reviewing their by-laws for the purposes of more clearly identifying the Board's role in the (1) leadership of the College, (2) interactions among Board members and with employees, and (3) protocols for conducting meetings.
- The Board may wish to consider retaining an external consultant to help it address the issues identified by the Team.

In particular, the issue of improving relations among Board members and with faculty may especially benefit from this approach.

- As part of the Board's plan required for the next visit, the Board may wish to consider establishing core indicators or benchmarks for its own performance and publish these across the College, along with results achieved.
- MCCC could benefit from the use of planning software to collect, analyze, evaluate, and store assessment data at the institutional, program, and course levels. Software such as TK20, WEAVEOnline, and Compliance Assist are available for such use.
- To more fully serve online students, MCCC should review online tutoring services and/or tutors available through Skype or other electronic means during some evening and weekend hours.
- The Faculty Council should review a position statement for quality standards on online classes and address such issues as anticipated turnaround time for emailed questions (e.g. no longer than 48 hours) and for grading and posting of scores (e.g. no longer than one week), as well as the stipulation that instructors indicate when they will be available online for student feedback. There are strong faculty leaders who might direct these discussions so that the quality standards are set by faculty, for faculty, rather than being dictated from administration.
- While training is available through the eLearning Resource Center on a number of topics related to teaching online, no process is currently in place for standardizing this training as a requirement to teach online. The director of these training options indicated that faculty attendance was sporadic for a number of sessions but strong during required faculty work days. For a consistent level of quality in online delivery, it would be helpful to have an agreed minimum level of training approved through the Faculty Council and supported by the College administration.
- Best practices in higher education suggest distributing data to all constituency groups. MCCC administrators need to do a better job of distributing data on institutional effectiveness, assessment, attrition/retention, and other areas to faculty. This should improve with the new governance model and the creation of the position of Coordinator of Institutional Research, Evaluation and Assessment. However, significant data reports should be shared at least annually with appropriate Councils to determine the need for additional committee or task force studies, make timely curriculum decisions related to course offerings, and insure regular faculty input into programmatic decisions.

*Team Recommendations for the  
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** Monroe County Community College, MI

**TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Focused Visit

**DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW (from ESS):** A visit focused on shared governance and communication; evaluating and improving institutional effectiveness. Also review on distance delivery.

**DATES OF REVIEW:** 3/4/13 - 3/5/13

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**Nature of Organization**

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**LEGAL STATUS:** Public

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**DEGREES AWARDED:** A

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**Conditions of Affiliation**

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**STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS:** None.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS:** Prior Commission approval required.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES:** The institution has been approved under Commission policy to offer up to 100% of its total degree programs through distance education. The processes for expanding distance education are defined in other Commission documents.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change [above language appears to have been changed prematurely since this FV had an embedded change for distance delivery and expansion to 100%.]

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**REPORTS REQUIRED:** None

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**OTHER VISITS SCHEDULED:** Focused Visit: 2012 - 2013; A visit focused on shared governance and communication; evaluating and improving institutional effectiveness. Also review on distance delivery.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** Focused visit on shared governance and communication as part of the institution's next scheduled visit under the Standard Pathway (Assurance Review and Comprehensive Evaluation) scheduled for AY2015-2016.

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**Summary of Commission Review**

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**YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION:** 2009 - 2010

*Team Recommendations for the  
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

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**YEAR FOR NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2019 - 2020**

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION: 2015-2016 Standard Pathway Comprehensive Evaluation  
(Year 4); 2019-2020 for Reaffirmation of Accreditation.**

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## ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** Monroe County Community College, MI

**TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Focused Visit

\_x\_ No change to Organization Profile

### Educational Programs

		Program Distribution	Recommended Change (+ or -)
Programs leading to Undergraduate	Associate	36	
	Bachelors	0	
Programs leading to Graduate	Masters	0	
	Specialist	0	
	First Professional		
	Doctoral	0	

### Off-Campus Activities

In-State:	Present Activity:	<b>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</b>
Campuses:	None	
Additional Locations:	Temperance (Whitman Center)	
Out-of-State:	Present Wording:	<b>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</b>
Campuses:	None	
Additional Locations:	None	
Course Locations:	None	
Out-of-USA:	Present Wording:	<b>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</b>
Campuses:	None	
Additional Locations:	None	
Course Locations:	None	

### Distance Education Programs:

Present Offerings:

Associate - 11.0301 Data Processing and Data Processing Technology/Technician (Application Software Specialist) offered via Internet; Associate - 11.0501 Computer Systems Analysis/Analyst (CIS: Accounting/CIS)

offered via Internet; Associate - 11.9999 Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services, Other (End User Support) offered via Internet; Associate - 24.0101 Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies (Associate of Arts) offered via Internet; Associate - 24.0101 Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies (Associate of Science) offered via Internet; Associate - 40.0501 Chemistry, General (Chemistry) offered via Internet; Associate - 51.0705 Medical Office Management/Administration (Medical Office Coordinator) offered via Internet; Associate - 51.3801 Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse (LPN to RN Online Option) offered via Internet; Associate - 52.0302 Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping (Accounting) offered via Internet; Associate - 52.0402 Executive Assistant/Executive Secretary (Administrative Professional) offered via Internet

**Recommended Change:**

(+ or -)

**Correspondence Education Programs:**

Present Offerings:

None