



The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the
North Central Association
of Colleges and Schools

NCA

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Serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning

December 11, 2007

TO: President Robert Mees
John A. Logan College

FROM: John A. Taylor, Director, Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality

SUBJECT: Final Team Report

Enclosed is the institution's copy of the final Team Report of a visit to John A. Logan College. The Commission encourages you to make additional copies of the Team Report to circulate to your constituencies. In addition, I have attached draft copies of the Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) and the Organizational Profile (OP). These two documents, the SAS and the OP, will be posted on the Commission website after the Board of Trustees validates the accreditation decision of the Institutional Actions Council or the Review Committee. They are enclosed now for your information and for your review. You will receive an official action letter, an SAS and an OP following validation of the action by the Board of Trustees.

You are asked to acknowledge receipt of the Team Report and the SAS and OP worksheets; and to file on behalf of your institution, a formal written response to the evaluation team's report and recommendation. Your response becomes a part of the official record of the evaluation visit. Your response also serves as an integral part of the evaluation process, and it will be included in the materials sent to the next team that visits your institution. Please send your institutional response to me **two weeks** after you receive this report, send copies to members of the visiting team, and set aside some additional copies for the Commission's review process. (See *Handbook of Accreditation, Third Edition*, Chapter 2.2-2)

In your response, you are also asked to let me know which review option you prefer: the Readers Panel or the Review Committee. A description of these processes appears in the *Handbook*, Chapter 2.2-2 and 2.2-3. Please review these options and advise me as soon as possible, whether you agree essentially with the team's report and recommendation and therefore choose the Readers Panel, or whether you wish to have the team's report and your materials examined by a Review Committee. The next Review Committee meeting is January 28, 2008, in Chicago.

Enclosed please find three evaluation forms. In an effort to strengthen its professional development program for Peer Reviewers, the Commission is initiating this structured method outside of the institution's formal written response to seek from the institution an evaluation of the team. We recommend that you distribute these to knowledgeable people representative of several constituencies at your institution. You can make additional copies if you wish. Your participation is voluntary but greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions concerning the evaluation team's report, the SAS, the OP or the review options, please let me know.

Enclosures

cc: Dr. Lloyd H. Hammonds, Team Chairperson

REPORT OF A REQUESTED FOCUSED VISIT FOR CHANGE

Assurance Section

TO

**JOHN A. LOGAN COLLEGE
Carterville, Illinois**

September 10-11, 2007

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Sarah J. Dempsey, Vice President of Educational Services, Northeast Community College, Norfolk, Nebraska 68702.

Lloyd H. Hammonds, Executive Dean, Coconino Community College, Page, Arizona 86040 (Team Chair).

CONTENTS

I. Context and Nature of Visit 3-4

II. Evaluation of Documentation Supporting Organization’s Request for Change 4-8

III. Statement of Affiliation Status 8-10

ASSURANCE SECTION

I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

- A. Purpose of Visit:** This was a focused visit for the purpose of addressing the institution's request for change to offer degree programs through distance delivery, primarily via e-learning methodologies.
- B. Accreditation Status:** John A. Logan College achieved candidacy status in 1970 and accredited status in 1972. The College has had several comprehensive visits and recently a team reaffirmed the college's accreditation during a visit in February, 2007, with the next comprehensive evaluation scheduled for 2016-2017.
- C. Organizational Context:** The College was created in 1967 as a public comprehensive community college serving portions of southern Illinois and is governed by a seven member, public board. The institution has strong partnerships with local business and industry and Southern Illinois University. The region served by the College has experienced economic difficulties in recent years. The College has assumed a leadership role in many economic development activities in the region.

The College has a significant history in offering instruction via distance delivery methods: initially, these include telecourses (video-based classes), then interactive television (compressed video), and in 1998 the first online course. Since that time enrollment has grown dramatically. Surveys conducted by the College indicate a high level of student satisfaction with their online learning experience.

- D. Unique Aspects of Visit:** The College is a participant in the Higher Learning Commission's Academy for Assessment of Student Learning and is actively engaged in the development and implementation of assessment processes for online courses.
- E. Interactions with Organizational Constituencies:** In the course of its visit the team met with the following:

- President and Vice Presidents
- Online Degree Committee
- Faculty during an open forum
- Student Support Services personnel
- Online students (3)
- Information Technology personnel
- Assessment Committee
- Governing Board members (3)
- Dean and Associate Dean
- Title III Committee
- Community members (4)
- Some individual faculty & staff

- F. Approvals Obtained:** John A. Logan College has the necessary approvals from

its educational departments, Board of Trustees, Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education to offer current programs online. College curriculum processes and procedures provide for rigorous review of new courses or degree programs.

- F. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed:** In the course of its visit, the team reviewed a variety of documents, materials, and web pages, including the following:
- Request of Approval of Proposed Change
 - Report of the HLC Comprehensive Visit Team in February, 2007
 - John A. Logan website
 - College catalog
 - Distance learning advertising brochures
 - Online class enrollment data
 - Online student surveys
 - Online curriculum guide and related procedures and documents
 - Technology plan
 - Random review of faculty credentials
 - Assessment rubric for online courses
 - Guidelines for online course development
 - “Logan at 50: A Strategic Plan for 2017 and Beyond”
 - Retention rate comparisons
 - Information for advisers on distance learning classes
 - Web accessibility report
 - Financial reports and budgets
 - Fulltime and adjunct faculty handbooks
 - Fall 2007 class schedule
 - Chart of supervisors and accompanying responsibilities

II. EVALUATION OF DOCUMENTATION SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION’S REQUEST FOR CHANGE

A. Evaluation of Request

1. Evidence that demonstrates adequate preparation and planning

- John A. Logan College has nine years of experience in developing and delivering online curricula. The first courses were offered online in 1998; prior to that date the College had used online discussion boards to supplement in-class materials. Since first offering online courses in 1998 enrollment has grown to 1,144 enrollments for 58 sections for the fall, 2007 semester. The College has experienced dramatic, double-digit growth in online enrollments for the past several years—63.7% over the past year—and expects continuing increases.
- In addition to experience in offering online courses, the College has a history of offering distance education for more than thirty years—initially with telecourses (video-based classes) and then migrating to interactive television (compressed video) before moving to an online modality.
- The institution’s rationale for offering online degrees—expanded accessibility, flexibility, convenience, and competitiveness—are consistent with and advance the mission of the College.
- Surveys of students enrolled in online courses indicate a high level of satisfaction with the convenience, content, rigor, and availability of such courses. Nearly three-fourths indicated they intended to

enroll in online courses in the future at John A. Logan College and similar majorities indicated they would recommend these courses to friends.

- Instructional design services and on-going professional development workshops for distance learning faculty provided through the College's Teaching and Learning Center are offered on a regular schedule and are taught by qualified and capable faculty.
- Faculty have developed the online curricula. They have not simply used "off the shelf" publisher or third-party curricula. Instead, faculty have worked with staff to develop online versions of existing curricula, and these undergo the same approval processes as all other John A. Logan curricula.
- A set of "best practices" in the form of guidelines for online course development are used in preparing for online instruction.
- The technology and personnel resources afforded through the College's Title III grant are providing greatly enhanced opportunities to explore new technologies and to provide faculty with the necessary pedagogical skills for teaching in an online environment.
- The team was provided with passwords to access the content and functionality of all of the College's current online courses. The team observed that effective and efficient design standards were in place, navigation schemes were generally consistent, and the content was well-organized.
- The adoption of Blackboard in 2000 as a course delivery system provides 24-hour technical support (through corporate headquarters in Washington, D.C.) and helps ensure a reliable, accessible, user-friendly interface for students and faculty.
- A small, but impressive library of books about teaching, learning, and assessing student learning in an online environment has been purchased and is located adjacent to the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC). The TLC is generously staffed and training opportunities are available in both individual and group settings.
- The institution's participation in the Assessment Academy is a tangible and significant example of its commitment to integrate comprehensive and authentic assessment activities into all of its learning activities, including online education. A variety of assessment methods, including an assessment rubric for online courses, were described by faculty and a healthy, informed, and on-going conversation is taking place about the unique challenges of conducting effective assessments for online courses.
- The College is an active participant in the Illinois Online Network (ION), a faculty development collaborative between all forty-eight community college in Illinois and the University of Illinois to help faculty develop and deliver courses in a completely online format, and also to incorporate best practices for engaging students in discussions and critical thinking.
- Faculty are learning to use technology-based tools that are enhancing the online learning experience for students and providing personal attention when students need extra help. One specific example is the use of an online tool that allows the faculty member to create instant online tutorials with screen shots and instructions, as appropriate to explain various concepts and guide student inquiry. This software was put to use during the visit when a team member was attempting to sign into the course management system from off campus and encountered some difficulties. The request for assistance received a prompt response and the

guidance was effective and easy to use. Students reported similar levels of responsiveness to their requests.

- Faculty teaching online courses are the same faculty who teach equivalent courses in the classroom setting and team interviews and student surveys indicate that faculty understand the differences and similarities between campus-based and electronically offered programs.
- The implementation of an Online Course Orientation for students taking distance learning courses has resulted in improved student satisfaction, success, and retention in online courses. The team reviewed documentation that illustrated gains in student completion rates and outcomes after the orientation course was implemented. The course is provided at no cost to students and many instructors are requiring their students to participate in this orientation prior to beginning an online course.
- The College provides a number of basic student services to students in online courses such as advising, student records, registration, financial aid, and course schedules. A checklist has been developed for use by advisers to address some of the specific needs of online learners.
- The Learning Resource Center provides an online orientation for students, including dual enrollment high school students. Students may avail themselves of online services, including the college library. The Center also arranges for any proctoring of tests which may be required, including arranging for proctoring of tests at a distant location.
- Revenue derived from online learning programs is invested to sustain and strengthen the institution's capacity to provide quality online learning into the future.
- The institution's intent to increase the number of distance education programs and enrollments is explicitly stated in planning documents and by institutional leaders. The strategic plan includes specific growth targets with budgets to support the additional marketing, academic and administrative costs. In addition, the plan includes some justification for the enrollment projections, such as marketing surveys, and contingency plans in the event that the targets are not met.
- There is a five-year technology plan that addresses the institution's goals for online learning related to enrollment, academic and student services, course development, and faculty support.
- The team identified strong support for the institution's online degree initiative among faculty, staff, students, the Board, and members of the community.

2. Evidence that demonstrates that further organizational attention is required

- The College needs to undertake a comprehensive policy review relative to offering complete programs of study fully online to address the specific and unique issues which may occur in an online learning environment.

3. Evidence that demonstrates that further organizational attention and Commission follow-up are required

- Marketing materials do not in all cases clearly define fully online courses as compared to those which may be a combination of classroom appearances and online instruction. The team's concern here is to avoid confusion among the public to whom these materials may be targeted.
- While faculty and staff interviewed by the team were clearly supportive of the online initiative of the College, the team also noticed a lack of broader discussions among faculty and other institutional constituencies about offering future degree programs online. The team would like to see greater faculty participation in this decision-making process.
- The library needs to update its interfaces to make e-books and other distance learning library resources readily searchable and available to e-learners.
- The College's present strategic planning document is written in very broad language and does not yet adequately address specific objectives and activities that are linked to its operating budget.
- There is a lack of clarity about what audience the College wishes to target for online programs. Providing greater clarity is important as it may have a significant impact on which programs should be offered online and what level of services may be required to support these programs.
- The current rubric for assessing the quality of an online course represents a good faith effort in establishing online course quality standards. However, it lacks clear definition of ranking course quality below the "exemplary" level and needs more finite guidelines to be useful as a comprehensive evaluation tool for online course quality. Furthermore, the institution's assessment program should include assessment of the overall success and satisfaction of online learning, as well as documentation of student learning in online degree programs.
- Although the institution provides a variety of student services to its online students, the College will need to explore ways to meet the on-going challenge of transitioning all on-campus services to meet the future needs of online only students as this population continues to grow. However, at present, students are expressing a high level of satisfaction in online student satisfaction surveys.

B. Other Accreditation Issues

None

C. Recommendation of the Team

Evidence demonstrated to recommend approval to offer the associate of arts degree program online. Commission follow-up recommended. A progress report on implementing the online associate of arts degree program due March 1, 2009.

D. Rationale for the Team's Recommendation

John A. Logan College has sufficiently demonstrated that it has the current and future capacity to offer and support an online learning environment leading to the existing associate of arts degree. The institution's request to offer this online degree program is clearly within the scope of the institution's mission and will expand higher education access in the community. The institution has a nine year history of successfully offering online courses and an even longer history of distance education. Student satisfaction surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction with online courses. While assessment of student learning in online

programs has a substantial way to go, the institution is participating in the Higher Learning Commission's Assessment Academy and faculty have developed a rubric for assessing online courses. Faculty provide the leadership and direction for curriculum and indicated their support for the institution's request. A Teaching & Learning Center provide faculty development opportunities to support teaching online. An online orientation program has been developed for students to help them make sure that taking courses online is right for them. Basic student services are offered to assistant online students including advising, registration, a Learning Resource Center, library access, test proctoring, and other services. Students reports a high level of responsiveness by faculty and technical support to issues they raise. After significant expenditures to increase bandwidth, the institution currently has the technology infrastructure to support online degree programs. Blackboard was adopted in 2000 as the course delivery system for online learning. Finally, courses in the online associate of arts degree program will not constitute new courses or changes to the curriculum. Only the mode of delivery will be changed. Offering the associate of arts degree online appears to be the next logical step for John A. Logan College. However, the team does not believe that approval should be granted at this time for additional associate degree programs until the issues identified for the progress report have been adequately addressed and the institution has demonstrated that it is ready to expand its online programs to additional degree offerings.

III. AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Summary of Commission Review

Year for next comprehensive evaluation 2016-2017

B. Nature of Organization

1. Legal status

No change

2. Degrees awarded

No change

C. Conditions of Affiliation

1. Stipulation on affiliation status

No change

2. Approval of degree sites

No change

3. Approval of distance education degree

Approval limited to the associate of arts degree program.

4. Reports required

Progress Report

Implementing the online associate of arts degree program, due 3/1/2009. The team expects that the progress report will provide:

1. Evidence that marketing materials for online programs clearly specify expectations for any on-campus attendance requirements;
2. Evidence that the College has identified the markets it is targeting for its online degree programs;
3. Evidence that faculty are involved and share in decisions regarding what degree programs should be offered online;
4. Evidence of assessment of online courses, including the assessment of student learning;
5. Evidence that sufficient library materials are available to students enrolled in fully online programs;
6. Evidence of a comprehensive strategic plan for online degree programs which is tied to the budget, including plans for advancing and sustaining the College's technology infrastructure to support online learning.

Rationale

The requirement of a progress report addressing each of the issues above will strengthen the institution's ability to satisfy the criteria for accreditation in its online degree programs. The required evidence will help make certain that advertising and marketing for online programs is accurate and informative, as well as help the institution identify who it intends to target for current and future online degree programs. While the institution has a full array of student support services for on-campus learners, transitions will need to be made to offer many of these services to strictly online learners. As the online program continues to grow and expand, the institution will need to include faculty in these broader discussions about which programs to move to an online format and when. The institution's participation in the Assessment Academy and the online assessment rubric are certainly steps in the right direction, however, more progress will need to be demonstrated regarding assessment of online learning. Also, the strategic planning processes of the institution needs to include planning for online degree activities with accompanying budgets, including expenditures for any necessary technology infrastructure. The team believes that the evidence required above in the form of a progress report will help the institution move forward in the direction they desire and strengthen their achievement of the five criteria for accreditation. The team is confident that the institution will be able to provide the evidence required in the progress report by the due date. This is based on conversations with institutional personnel, students, members of the Board, and the community, as well as a review of organizational materials, the College's website, and personal observations of the online courses currently being offered.

Monitoring Report

No change

Contingency Report

None

5. Other visits scheduled

No change

D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

None

REPORT OF A REQUESTED FOCUSED VISIT FOR CHANGE

Advancement Section

TO

**JOHN A. LOGAN COLLEGE
Carterville, Illinois**

September 10-11, 2007

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Sarah J. Dempsey, Vice President of Educational Services, Northeast Community College,
Norfolk, Nebraska 68702.

Lloyd H. Hammonds, Executive Dean, Coconino Community College, Page, Arizona 86040
(Team Chair)

CONTENTS

I. Observations of Team Regarding Change Request.....3-4

II. Consultations of Team.....5-6

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

A. Observations of Team Regarding Change Request

The observations of the team have been organized into two categories, strengths and opportunities for improvement, for ease of reference.

Strengths

- The technology and personnel resources afforded through the College's Title III grant are providing greatly enhanced opportunities to explore new technologies and to provide faculty with the necessary pedagogical skills for teaching in an online environment.
- The College's involvement with the Higher Learning Commission's Assessment Academy is a tangible and significant example of its commitment to integrate comprehensive and authentic assessment activities into all of its educational activities, including distance education.
- The College has a significant history of offering distance education, beginning with a video-based approach and moving to the current online format.
- Instructional design services and on-going professional development workshops for distance learning faculty provided through the College's Teaching and Learning Center are offered on a regular schedule and are taught by qualified and capable personnel.
- The implementation of an Online Course Orientation for students taking distance learning courses has resulted in improved student success and retention in online courses.
- The institution's governing board is knowledgeable of online learning and its potential value to the community and is committed to providing the necessary leadership and support to sustain the initiative well into the future.
- Student surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction with current online courses.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Marketing materials, current course coding conventions, and course syllabi do not identify fully online courses. The team located instances in which a course was marketed as being fully online, but in fact had a requirement of some attendance on campus. While this is not an issue for the vast majority of online students since they are also taking some classes on campus, the team believes that this issue needs to be addressed by the College in order to avoid confusion among prospective students.
- While team discussions with faculty indicated faculty support for offering the associate of arts degree fully online, faculty generally reported very little involvement in discussions and decisions about actually offering online degree programs. As the institution continues to develop its online offerings faculty should be involved in those discussions.
- While the College provides a variety of student services to its online learners, such as advising, class scheduling, registration, financial aid, orientation, technical support, library, tutoring, and others, the College will need to explore additional ways to meet the future support services of online learners as this population continues to grow. This will be important before the College expands its online offerings to additional

degree programs. However, at present, students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the services they received.

- The College's present strategic planning document is written in very broad language and does not yet adequately address specific objectives and activities that are linked to its operating budget.
- The College's current technology plan does not extend beyond 2007 and therefore does not adequately address institutional planning for sustaining its distance education infrastructure, including any planned expansions when fully online programs are implemented.

B. Consultations of Team

The following consultations are advice and suggestions which are offered for consideration with the understanding that they are *optional* ways which the team believes may help improve the College:

- As the quantity and variety of online degree programs grow, the College may wish to consider requiring a series of professional development workshops for new hires who may not have online teaching in their background. In essence, this would provide a continuous stream of internet-ready faculty to teach online when and if the need arises for specific courses.
- The College may wish to consider requiring a set of professional development workshops for existing faculty who wish to teach online. Those with considerable online experience may be exempted from this requirement using standards developed by the LRC Director of Vice President of Instruction. In line with a number of best practices associated with online learning, the team suggests that the College consider requiring participation in online pedagogical and course management system training prior to initiating a new online course. The amount of required training should be carefully determined by establishing a desired set of online teaching competencies necessary for delivering and supporting effective online learning experiences for students.
- The College may wish to consider expanding assistance to online learners during evening and weekend hours in the areas of academic advising, tutoring, career guidance, and help desk.
- The College should consider development of a system for review of online courses that assures these courses continue to have relevant and timely content, have an acceptable level of student interaction and engagement, and are in compliance with the College's plan for assessing student academic achievement.
- The College may wish to consider the addition of an on-campus server for streaming video as an enhancement to existing sources of online content for distance courses.
- Administrators should develop specific plans for utilizing results of the Online Student Survey to make important improvements to the virtual learning for online students.
- The lack of use of the library by online students should be monitored and a plan developed for encouraging students to use reliable, academic sources of information for assignments and projects in online courses.
- The library should consider purchasing subscriptions to journals that focus on best practices in online instruction.
- The library should undertake a careful review of its current collection of just over 2,000 e-book titles to assure that these resources are adequate and appropriate to any fully online degree program offerings.
- The library may wish to consider providing targeted workshops to distance learning faculty to encourage library research, information literacy skills, and the use of such services as virtual reserve rooms for students enrolled in fully online programs.
- The College is encouraged to formally survey the current technology skills and access technology of all of its students as it prepares to make available fully online degree programs.
- The College should actively seek to identify appropriate benchmarking institution's which have successfully implemented fully online degree programs. These institutions should mirror as closely as possible John Logan's size, demographics, and resource base.

- The two programs specifically cited in the self-study which are now ready for fully online implementation do not include any labs, practicums, or internships. The College should seek out and explore models of other colleges who have successfully implemented these course delivery modes in an online environment prior to implementing the same.
- The College may also wish to revisit its policy limiting the number of online courses faculty may teach each semester.

*Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

INSTITUTION and STATE: John A. Logan College , IL

TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS): Focused Visit

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW: A visit focused on the institution's request to offer a degree program through distance delivery methods.

DATES OF REVIEW: 9/10/07 - 9/11/07

Nature of Organization

LEGAL STATUS: Public

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

DEGREES AWARDED: A

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS: None.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF NEW DEGREE SITES: Prior Commission approval required.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES: Prior Commission Approval Required

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: Prior Commission approval required to offer degree programs online beyond the Associate of Arts Degree.

REPORTS REQUIRED: Monitoring Report: 11/01/2009; A report on Governance and Integrity and Ethical Behavior.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: Monitoring Report: 11/01/2009; A report on Governance and Integrity and Ethical Behavior. **Progress Report by March 1, 2009 on the effectiveness of online delivery of degree programs; addressing the six items cited in the Team Report Rationale.**

OTHER VISITS REQUIRED: Focused Visit: 2007 - 2008; A visit focused on the institution's request to offer a degree program through distance delivery methods.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

*Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2006 - 2007

YEAR OF NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2016 - 2017

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

INSTITUTION and STATE: John A. Logan College, IL

TYPE OF REVIEW:

Educational Programs

	Program Distribution	Recommended Change (+ or -)
Programs leading to Undergraduate		
Associate	82	
Bachelors	0	
Programs leading to Graduate		
Masters	0	
Specialist	0	
First Professional	0	
Doctoral	0	

Off-Campus Activities

In-State:	Present Activity:	Recommended Change: (+ or -)
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Campuses:	None
Sites:	None
Course Locations:	13

Out-of-State:	Present Wording:	Recommended Change: (+ or -)
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Campuses:	None
Sites:	None
Course Locations:	None

Out-of-USA:	Present Wording:	Recommended Change: (+ or -)
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Campuses:	None
Sites:	None
Course Locations:	None

Distance Education Certificate and Degree Offerings:

Present Offerings:

None

Recommended Change:
(+ or -)

Associate of Arts degree programs