



News Release

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Public comment sought as NMCC prepares to undergo re-accreditation review

Aroostook County - As Northern Maine Community College prepares to undergo a comprehensive evaluation visit later this winter, the organization that will review the institution for re-accreditation is inviting the public to submit comments regarding the College.

On March 2 through 5, 2008, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) will send a team of reviewers to NMCC from institutions in the northeast similar to the Aroostook County campus.

Visiting team members, led by Dr. Katherine Eneguess, president of New Hampshire Community Technical College in Berlin, New Hampshire, will examine eleven standards, including mission and purpose; academic programs; faculty; students; human, physical and fiscal support for the institution; integrity; and public disclosure.

Before year's end, NMCC will submit to CIHE a 100-page document which thoroughly examines each of these areas.

Completion of the comprehensive report marks the end of a year-long effort which began last January with the naming of faculty members Betty Kent-Conant, chair of the nursing and allied health department, and Ron Fitzgerald, chair of the arts and sciences department, as self-study co-chairs.

“The process for preparing for an accreditation site visit requires a great deal of work prior to the visit. It includes the development of a self-study document, a narrative addressing the standards for which the college must be accountable, which must give any reader a written comprehensive review of the college. The process used in this preparation involved most of the personnel of the college - administration, faculty, staff, and students - who were assigned to committees which were co-chaired by members from all parts of the campus family,” said Kent-Conant.

Each committee was responsible for one of the eleven standards. They were charged with addressing a description, appraisal, and projection for each.

“The process has been successful in involving most of the campus employees. It has served as a great opportunity for getting people together to work on a common project; their work reflects a variety of perspectives and has heightened an awareness of how all departments and/or employees perceive and experience their daily work and responsibility meeting the standards for accreditation on a daily basis,” said Kent-Conant.

In addition to bringing people together, the effort has also proved enlightening across the campus community.

“The accreditation process forces institutions to take a look at what they are doing, how well they are doing it and what they can do to make it better. If we don't take a look at what we are doing and how well we are doing it, I think that it is impossible to improve. This process also makes one realize the many excellent things the institution is doing and how they are benefiting the students and communities we serve. The required NEASC Self Study forces NMCC to do just that,” said Fitzgerald.

With the self study document in the final stages of editing, NMCC officials are now turning their attention to preparing for the March visit.

“We are looking forward to hosting the visiting team on campus so that they can verify that the information in our self study is in fact accurate and that the College is making a positive impact on our students as well as in Aroostook County and the State of Maine,” said Fitzgerald. “The visiting team will act as consultants to the College and give suggestions as to how our College can improve and continue to move forward as an outstanding comprehensive community college.”

In advance of the visit, and in preparation for the review, NEASC is inviting members of the public to submit comments that address substantive matters to the quality of the institution to: ***Public Comment on Northern Maine Community College, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, 209 Burlington Road, Bedford, MA 01730-1433.*** Comments can also be e-mailed to cihe@neasc.org.

Written, signed comments must be received by March 5, 2008. The Commission cannot guarantee that letters received after that date will be considered. Comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution or its academic programs. Comments should include the name, address, and telephone number of the person providing the submission. Comments will not be treated as confidential.

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education is one of eight accrediting commissions in the United States that provide institutional accreditation on a regional basis. Accreditation is voluntary and applies to the institution as a whole. The Commission, which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, accredits approximately 200 institutions in the six-state New England Region.

Northern Maine Community has been accredited by NEASC since 1975, first through the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions and now through the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. The College gained candidacy status under CIHE in April 2001 after a successful site visit the previous fall.

A second NEASC site team visited the College in March of 2003 to assess the institution's readiness to move to full accreditation. After a favorable site visit, full accreditation status was granted later that year. The March 2008 visit marks the College's first full evaluation since achieving NEASC accreditation under CIHE five years ago.

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