

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

NEW MEXICO JUNIOR COLLEGE
Hobbs, New Mexico

November 7-9, 2005

FOR

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 purpose of the HLC November 7-9, 2005, site visit to New Mexico Junior College (NMJC) was to conduct a comprehensive continued accreditation review and evaluation, as well as to evaluate and recommend action relating to a "request for institutional change in educational offerings" to extend accreditation status to allow online delivery of degree programs.

B. Organizational Context

NMJC is a strong and well-run institution. NMJC is located on the high desert plains (elevation of 3,622 feet above sea level) in the southeast corner of New Mexico in Hobbs, a community of 31,528, which is fewer than ten miles from the Texas border and 325 miles southeast of Albuquerque. NMJC's service area includes Lea County, which covers 4,393 square miles, as well as border communities in Texas, including Seminole, Denver City, Plains, and Seagraves. NMJC serves over 3,350 students, with nearly 1,800 full-time equivalent students. A comprehensive two-year public college that grew out of the 1965 New Mexico Junior College Act, NMJC now offers a wide range of both academic transfer and career/ technical training programs, as well as numerous adult education, area high school dual enrollment, and community service offerings. As such, NMJC functions as a full-service community college.

Although NMJC has been in existence for over forty years and has been accredited through the Higher Learning Commission since 1970, NMJC is characterized by substantial change since its last comprehensive site visit ten years ago. NMJC has experienced a major turnover on its College Board, with the most senior member having been on the Board for six years. Also, as noted in its self study "Letter from the President," NMJC has recently experienced a "major transition" in its administrative leadership, who average approximately 4 _ years of experience in their current positions. As a result, most of the current Administrative Cabinet members were not at NMJC when the last comprehensive visit took place in 1995-1996, and much of NMJC's institutional history has been lost through retirement of key faculty and administrators. Until his recent hire in July 2005, NMJC had been without a Vice President for Instruction for the past year. NMJC has had a continuity of leadership at the presidential level, though, with NMJC's president having headed the college for the past eight years and having been at NMJC since 1980 and moving up through the ranks.

NMJC has also experienced changes at the state level. Higher education in New Mexico recently has been reorganized by the state legislature, lending some uncertainty to budgetary and programmatic processes. In many ways, then, although NMJC is celebrating its 40th anniversary, it faces many of the challenges (and opportunities) of a new college. Such challenges can be both frightening and liberating.

Fortunately, though, NMJC has access to resources not available to many colleges in the country today. NMJC is a recipient of the state's mineral wealth, as well as of a recent successful state bond initiative, giving the college access to substantial funding for operations and for capital expansion. Days after the team visit, NMJC planned to dedicate its expanded Ben Alexander Student Center, enabling the college to offer a "one-stop" facility for increased accessibility of services to students. The college also plans to open its impressive new Western Heritage Museum and Lea County Cowboy Hall of Fame in January 2006 and, is currently building a 100-bed student housing project, with occupancy scheduled for Fall 2006. Thus, many additional changes are on the horizon, including the challenges of meeting oil and gas industrial training

needs.

One thing has not changed, however; NMJC continues to be a valued partner with community, industry, and other stakeholders, and its faculty and staff are deeply committed to its students.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

In addition to the climate of change noted above, a unique aspect of the comprehensive site visit is the inclusion of "a request for institutional change in educational offerings" to extend accreditation status to allow online delivery of degree programs as noted above.

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited

Team members visited off-campus sites at Jal, Literacy Center, Tatum, and Del Norte.

E. Distance Education Reviewed

The team reviewed NMJC distance learning which includes online courses, ITV classes and video conferencing. Thirty six of the online courses were made available for team access and review. Online courses reviewed included courses in Business, Criminal Justice, Early Childhood/Education, English, Fire Science, Geology, Government, History, Math, Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, and Transitional Studies courses. Online visits to these courses revealed explanatory syllabi, online student participation in virtual classrooms, and help desk and other resource information prominently included on NMJC's website.

F. Interactions with Constituencies

College President
 North Central Steering Committee
 Community representatives from government and business (12)
 Vice President for Finance
 Vice President for Instruction
 Vice President for Student Services
 Students (2 separate formal meetings, plus informal interaction)
 NMJC Board Members (6)
 Administrative Cabinet (22)
 Administrative Staff
 Focus Group Steering Committee (19)
 Dean of Extended Learning and other deans
 Executive Director of Foundation
 NMJC Foundation Board (8)
 Faculty
 Community leaders
 Strategic Planning Committee (6)
 Academic Standards Committee (11)
 Curriculum Committee (19)
 Outcomes Assessment Committee (20)
 IT Planning Committee (13)
 Director of Institutional Effectiveness
 Assistant to the Director of Institutional Effectiveness
 Distance Learning WebCT Coordinator
 Distance Learning Academic Coordinator
 Distance Learning Technical Coordinator
 Director of Library Services

Director of Student Life
 English Faculty (2)
 Math Faculty (2)
 HR Assistant
 Assistant to President Internal/External Affairs
 Professor, Communications/Theatre
 NMJC coaches and Athletic Director
 NMJC staff (51)
 NMJC faculty (50)
 NMJC students (24)
 NMJC students (4)
 NMJC students (40)
 Student Services Staff (4)

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

2004-2005 Self-Study Report for Continued Accreditation
 Self-Study Criterion Binders in the Resource Room
 1995 Self-Study Report for Continued Accreditation
 Statement of Affiliation Status
 Organizational Profile
 2005 Student Handbook
 2005-2006 Student Handbook and Planner
 Fall 2005 Course Schedule
 2003 Financial Statements
 2004 Financial Statements
 2004-2005 NMJC Catalog
 2005-2006 Employee Handbook
 NMJC Strategic Five-Year Rolling Plan and Executive Summary
 2002-2006 Strategic Plans and Project Report (Reference room/web site)
 2002-2005 Mission Crosswalk 1 (via web site)
 2002-2005 Mission Crosswalk 2 (via web site)
 2004 Update to Strategic Plan
 2005-2010 Strategic Plans and Project Report (Reference room/web site)
 Minutes of the 2004 fiscal year NMJC Board. (web site)
 Minutes of the 2005 fiscal year NMJC Board. (web site)
 New Mexico Junior College web site www.nmjc.edu
 Assessment documentation, including:

- Committee data,
- Minutes from Outcome Assessment Committee;
- Spring 2004 Assessment of Student Learning Handbook;
- Assessment Implementation Timetable Example; and
- June 30, 1996, Assessment for Student Academic Achievement Plan.

 Noel-Levitz Spring 2005 Student Satisfaction Inventory
 2001 Campus Environment Survey
 2002 Campus Environment Survey
 Student Retention Plan
 Graduate Surveys
 Procedure for Logging Student Complaints and 2005 Incident Report
 2005 Campus Crime Log
 Career Exploration and Job Placement Manual
 2008 Albuquerque MSA Employment Projections
 New Mexico Labor Market Report, June 2005
 2006 and 2012 New Mexico Employment Projections IN Brief
 Distance Learning Online Program Proposal
 Institutional Research Priorities and Progress Report
 2005 IR priorities list
 2005 Institutional Snapshot

Student Services Policy Manual in Resource Room
 By-Laws of Faculty and Staff and other representatives bodies in Resource Room
 Governance Documents in Resource Room as follows:

- Charter
- Bylaws
- Policies
- Memberships
- Minutes
- Reports

A Complete Roster of all Faculty Members (Full- and Part-Time)
 Teaching Assignments during the Current Academic Term (Resource Room)
 Formal Agreements for all Consortia or Contractual Relationships (Resource Room)
 Board Rosters, Charters, and Bylaws, Including those of separate corporate entities (Resource Room)
 Reports from other Agencies or Accrediting Bodies (Resource Room)
 Documents Concerning Title III Compliance and Recertification (Resource Room)
 Third Party Comment Notices (Resource Room)

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

Both prior to and during the site visit, NMJC demonstrated that it took the self study process very seriously and that it had made every effort to ensure broad participation in the self-study process. The self study report was well organized and professionally done, the Resource Room was well organized and fairly complete, and NMJC staff members were accommodating and responsive to the site visit team's needs and requests.

Nevertheless, the self study process suffered from staffing changes; insufficient use of data and evaluative analyses; and a compressed timeframe.

Staffing changes and vacancies impeded continuous work by the same individuals over a sufficient period to produce a truly evidence-driven, thoughtful, and evaluative self study report.

In addition, the self study report, for the most part, lacked supporting data in even brief summary form, requiring the team to make numerous requests for various documents prior to the visit. Although many of the supporting documents were available in the Resource Room, the self study report should have included the evidentiary basis for the report's conclusions, at least in summary or graphical form. Overall, the self study report provided little evidence of supporting data or past practices on which future directions for the college were based and often even lacked evaluative conclusions to assist NMJC in achieving future improvement, although much of the needed data were available on site.

The self-study preparation officially began in 2002 in the Administrative Cabinet. By the fall of 2003 the official "kick-off" of the process was introduced by the former Vice President of Instruction. The Self-Study Coordinator, NMJC's Associate Director of Institutional Effectiveness, wasn't appointed until 2004. A steering committee was formed under her leadership, and chairs for various subcommittees were identified. Individuals were chosen based on their experience within the following criteria: diversity, expertise and college-wide knowledge and leadership abilities.

Although the total length of the described self-study process appeared to take place over three years, evidence shows that the majority of the work took place in the year immediately preceding the site visit. Moreover, numerous changes in self-study leadership and committee membership occurred throughout the self-study period,

impeding careful and thorough data gathering and analyses. In the year immediately preceding the site visit, the college was without a Vice President for Instruction, so the College President assumed academic leadership during 2004-2005, along with his own presidential duties. The new Vice President for Instruction assumed his duties in July 2005, just months before the site visit. Staff turnover in key positions may have hampered sufficient attention to critical academic issues relating to the self-study.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

NMJC's self study fairly and accurately reflected the structure, programs, and processes at the college, and NMJC administration, faculty, and staff demonstrated institutional commitment to the self-examination process.

However, various critical areas were not addressed in the document, nor were they evident in the resources reviewed or through interviews with the faculty, administration, and staff. Examples of lack of evidence are referenced in the body of this report. The self study is more descriptive than evaluative of the institution's strengths and weaknesses. The self study lacked quantitative data, and visits with key individuals on campus revealed that while there is a process for data collection, the self study and site visit did not reveal evidence of adequate planning or follow-up to evaluate usefulness of data, timeliness of data, or information gleaned from data to effect change.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The last comprehensive site visit team report of 1995-1996, reported the following institutional challenges:

1. ***"The NMJC plan for assessing student academic achievement is adequate in its current form. It needs to be more cohesive and also needs to address several specific issues such as timelines and mechanisms for feedback of results. In addition, the focus of the existing plan needs to shift from determining institutional effectiveness to assessing the extent of classroom learning."***

Assessment of Student Learning is still a challenge that has yet to be addressed adequately. The institution recognizes that they have not fulfilled their obligations to their constituents in an adequate manner. In fact, the college specifically requested assistance with the following areas: better utilization of data for decision making; assessment of institutional resources and programs; improved evaluation process for all employees; and systematic professional development plan. All four areas are tied both indirectly and directly with student learning and its assessment.

NMJC has gathered considerable data, but no mechanism for systematic dissemination, evaluation, and use of these data for assessment of student learning, strategic planning, and other purposes has been developed.

The team considers the response of the organization to this previously identified challenge to be inadequate. These continuing challenges will be addressed in Criterion Three of this report.

2. ***"Male NMJC students have a greater opportunity to participate in extracurricular athletics than do females because there are three sports offered for males and two for females. The college should consider addition of another sport for the females to achieve equity."***

The team considers the response of the organization to this previously

identified challenge to be adequate.

3. **Recruitment of culturally diverse out-of-district students should be accompanied by the development of an on-going program to acclimate students unfamiliar with living in a rural area.**

The team considers the response of the organization to this previously identified challenge to be adequate.

4. ***“The college does not provide students adequate open-lab access to computers and software. Universal, monitored and secure student access to various types of machines, software and print capabilities during unscheduled student class and/or laboratory time is virtually non-existent.”***

While substantial progress on this previously identified challenge has been made, interviews with students revealed that open-lab access to computers is still an issue. With multiple labs on campus, one area that guarantees open-lab access with printing and assistance to users needs to be identified.

The team considers the response of the organization to this previously identified challenge to be inadequate. This issue will be addressed in Criterion Four.

D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment

Requirements were fulfilled.

The Higher Learning Commission received two online comments that were forwarded to the team chair, as well as to NMJC. Both comments were positive in nature, one from a 1976 NMJC graduate who expressed satisfaction with the high quality and variety, as well as reasonable cost, of courses; and one from a non-traditional NMJC graduate who commented favorably about the high quality of student services and of the excellence of the education offered, especially as it relates to the distance education tools provided.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information, including most recent default rates, results of any financial or compliance audits and program reviews by USDE, campus crime reporting, and release of completion/graduation rates.

IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

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.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

New Mexico Junior College has developed new mission, vision, values, and goal statements that broadly define and seem to drive organizational priorities. Interviews with stakeholders revealed that a campus environment that is based on trust, buy-in, and mutual respect among the community, faculty, staff, students and administration.

True commitment is evident in the committee structure and membership that

demonstrates NMJC's commitment to participatory decision-making and shared governance.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention.

Core Component 1d. NMJC's governance and administrative structures lack processes that promote effective communication. Effective communication is a challenge for any organization, but continual communication among all entities is essential. Although the upper administrators perceive that shared governance functions well at NMJC, the faculty, staff, and students identified areas of concern. For example, although participative management works well in the strategic planning process, the administrative-led committee for Assessment of Student Learning is ineffective and counter-productive. The committee may be too large, or it may lack focus.

Team meetings with faculty and staff indicate there are opportunities for employee input into making decisions, strategic planning, and developing procedures and policies to meet the needs of the communities served. Having the opportunity to provide input, however, is only the first step toward shared governance. Significant groups such as the Faculty Senate have meetings that are not well attended, and the Faculty Senate is not regularly providing campus leadership, nor is it empowered to resolve issues of significance, such as the compensation plan based on market equity. Misunderstandings and different conclusions about this issue were evident from meetings during which employees provided different interpretations and conclusions about the compensation plan, which was presented to the College Board in 1999-2000 and has not yet been approved by the Board.

Although NMJC is developing an improved climate of open communication and trust between its administration and its faculty and staff, additional institutional attention needs to be given to developing a stronger and more formal mechanism for faculty input on academic and other matters, as well as a careful review of the role, purpose, membership, and selection of standing committees. It may be that NMJC has become so immersed in the needs of the community that it serves that it has sometimes lost sight of its role and function to serve students and faculty. NMJC needs to focus more on its internal operations, paying more attention to the needs of its students and faculty so that NMJC can more comprehensively achieve success and continual improvement.

Criterion met; organizational attention required.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; organizational attention required.

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.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met:

Various planning documents (2002-2006 Strategic Plans and Progress Report; various institutional surveys and reports; Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey, and various other instruments) reflect the institution's commitment to addressing the issues of strategic planning for the future of the institution. NMJC has a plethora of data that has been gathered by various entities and offices within the College. In addition to collection of data from the college community, the community and end-users have been invited to offer their voice to the planning process in a two-day planning exercise that takes place every three years. NMJC's planning processes involve significant input from both internal and external constituents, which is an institutional strength.

NMJC boasts extensive and expanding campus facilities, which are extremely well maintained, attractive, and clean. Of particular distinction among community colleges is the addition of the Western Heritage Museum and Lea County Cowboy Hall of Fame, to be dedicated in January 2006, which will provide broad-ranging learning opportunities for students and citizens of all ages for the entire region.

Financial documents indicate an increase in money spent on instruction from 4.2 million in 2000/2001 to 5.3 million in 2004/2005 (8.56%). The IT plan has responded to the needs of teaching/learning in the 21st Century by creating multiple SMART classrooms and open labs. Interviews with the board, administration, faculty, and staff validate that planning and financial allocation provide resources necessary for a lifetime of learning.

Criterion met; no follow-up required.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

Core component 2c. NMJC has a process for data collection, but lacks adequate planning or follow-up to evaluate usefulness of data, timeliness of data, or information gleaned from data to effect change.

Data are being collected, but are neither analyzed nor distributed to end-users. Data are not being shared, nor do they seem to effect change within the institution. Decisions are not data driven. In many cases, necessary data are not being collected at all. Examples of lack of data for decision making or evaluation include the following: athletics have no student-athlete success data; student services does not have data assessing their area; instructional support labs do not have student usage data; nor is there adequate diversity data in recruiting, student success, or college programming (growth of ESL credit and non credit). Also, the College Foundation does not have data to track if its goals are being met.

Although NMJC has demonstrated a long history of broad-based strategic planning, the institution is encouraged to develop a formal process for external environmental scanning and to develop needed action plans to implement strategic priorities. A formalized process of environmental scanning needs to be instituted. While the two-day retreat is a positive activity, the needs of the students, community, and staff need to be priority. Collecting data to reside in a file cabinet or on a shelf is not only unproductive, but also harmful to the advancement of the College and its mission.

NMJC has gathered considerable data, but no mechanism for systematic dissemination, evaluation, and use of these data for assessment of student learning, strategic planning, and other educational purposes has been developed.

While faculty and staff salaries appear adequate, widespread concern about the lack of participation in the social security program was expressed in meetings with the site team. NMJC is working to address this issue and is encouraged to do as soon as possible.

Criterion is met; organizational attention required.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None noted.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

Recommendation of the Team:

Criterion is met; organizational attention required.

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.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

NMJC has begun to develop the process to develop student learning outcomes and to assess student learning campus wide. Career and Technical Education, as well as Associate of Applied Science areas, are areas that may be utilized as a template for assessment of the Associate of Arts and Associate of Sciences degrees. NMJC has attempted to develop assessment goals as evidenced by the Spring 2004 Assessment of Student Learning Handbook. Appropriate institutional learning outcomes have been identified and are appropriate for general education curriculum.

NMJC's Automotive Program is a wonderful example of a comprehensive student learning driven model. These students are immersed in a "learning community" that is developed throughout all of their courses, from automotive classes to required general education courses, and the instructors have developed communication and partnerships with their counterparts to develop a program that is truly in the best interests of their students, their potential employers, and other constituents.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

Core components 3a, 3b, and 3d. Organizational learning outcomes identified through the Outcomes Assessment Committee are appropriate for the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual inquiry. However, there appears to be a critical need to develop an effective strategy of data analysis that demonstrates that outcomes have been achieved.

Although NMJC has developed a policy of mandatory placement of students into math, English, and reading classes appropriate to the student's ability, as was recommended by the 1995 comprehensive visit team, both students and staff indicated that many students are allowed to circumvent this policy. NMJC is encouraged to review the extent to which this policy has been fully implemented.

NMJC has placed priority on faculty professional development and on the assessment of student learning and effective teaching through the allocation of staffing resources, involvement of faculty, development of course outcomes, program review plan, and portfolio review, but these efforts have not yet been fully implemented, documented, and systemically utilized for institution-wide improvement of student learning and effective teaching.

The organization's academic and student support programs contribute to the development of student skills and attitudes fundamental to responsible use of knowledge. NMJC provides a variety of academic and student support programs in counseling, tutoring, TRIO, Adult Basic Education, math lab, writing lab, tutoring lab, library services, and computer labs to support the acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge. Interviews with faculty and administration further validate institutional financial commitment to these services. However multiple student complaints indicate that computer lab hours are inconsistent, unpredictable, too short, and not meeting student needs, especially of English students. NMJC is encouraged to develop a Writing Lab, perhaps within the existing computer lab, to help students.

While substantial progress on this previously identified challenge has been made, interviews with students revealed that open-lab access to computers is still an issue. With multiple labs on campus, one area that guarantees open-lab access with printing and assistance to users needs to be identified.

Criterion is met; organizational attention required.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

Core component 3c. NMJC's 1995 comprehensive visit team report stated as follows: "NMJC's plan for assessing student academic achievement is inadequate in its current form. It needs to be more cohesive and also needs to address several specific issues such as timelines and mechanisms for feedback of results." To date, there is no evidence that New Mexico Junior College has made adequate progress in the last ten years to demonstrate that NMJC is adequately fulfilling its educational mission with regard to student learning.

While evidence suggests that NMJC has developed a climate of identifying and assessing student learning, evidence does not show that assessment of student learning at multiple levels (course, program, and institutional) is taking place across the institution at a systemic or broad-based level. NMJC must plan for the future by critically evaluating their student learning outcomes not only at the course level, but also at the program and general education levels. The college needs to more broadly emulate its learning communities, such as those in the automotive programs, so that its faculty can learn from each other how to create a better environment for student learning.

The 2004-2005 Self-Study Report stated that the Office of Institutional Effectiveness has been successful in: "building awareness for data; centralizing institutional planning and research information; sharing the need to use data to drive decisions; and providing data for individual research projects as requested" (page 46). Faculty, staff, and administrators have acknowledged the need for data, but there is little evidentiary support of appropriate decision-making as a result of such data that supports the college's mission of student learning and teaching effectiveness. Data have been compiled but are not regularly shared, analyzed, or significantly utilized as a means for decision-making.

NMJC's current assessment process lacks learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level that includes goals of all program areas, a realistic timeline, data collection process, interpretation of data, and evidence of data-driven institutional change to student learning. The assessment plan fails to adequately include a true function "to close the loop," as well as an action plan developed by the faculty that specifies expected outcomes and changes for the next semester, year, and beyond. NMJC must develop an effective strategy of data analysis through assessment of

academic achievement to demonstrate if outcomes are achieved.

A shared understanding of how general education objectives are to be met and assessed has not yet been established. A philosophy of general education must be developed. This philosophy must be the core of the assessment process of transfer students. The first round of gathering student writing samples indicated the need for tailoring and narrowing the objectives to be analyzed, but no subsequent changes to the portfolio process or resulting curricula changes were evident.

Criterion is met; Commission follow-up recommended.

Recommendation of the Team: The team recommends a progress report on the Assessment of Student Learning by January 1, 2009.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None noted.

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.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

Achievements of the institution's student population are celebrated and shared throughout the community. Strategic planning goals are student-centered and focus on teaching and learning, and students consistently voiced their satisfaction with effective and caring teaching. Multiple SMART classrooms create a positive learning environment necessary for acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge. The Board Training Manual includes teaching and learning emphases.

A review of A.A. and A.S. degrees validate a broad general education component necessary for breadth of learning and intellectual inquiry. The college has demonstrated its commitment to professional development through its in-service training programs (i.e., nationally recognized guest speakers) and sharing of financial and technological resources that allow faculty to advance in their profession (i.e., personal notebooks).

NMJC's automotive technology programs that include industry certification through General Motors (ASEP) and Ford Motor Company (ASSET) have been recognized nationally and are model career and technical programs with strong industry support, relevant industry internships, and high job placement.

A review of the NMJC employee handbook and the web site indicate NMJC supports academic freedom of inquiry. Interviews with faculty validate that the institution values this freedom within the context of learning outcomes and goals of the course/program/institution. Thus, faculty has the flexibility, creativity, and responsiveness to determine appropriate curricula and strategies to deliver these curricula in a changing world.

NMJC demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning through supporting and providing professional development activities of staff. The training is available to all faculty and staff. Training includes in-service training, online class training, FERPA, SMART classroom, supervisory training, faculty development, and attendance at

state/national conferences. Select faculty and staff interviewed expressed satisfaction with the college's commitment to professional development which supports a lifetime of learning.

NMJC also provides multiple opportunities to publicly recognize the achievements of students and faculty in acquiring, discovering, and applying knowledge. Students with a minimum GPA of 3.0 are acknowledged through publication of scholastic honors each semester. Graduating scholars with a 3.5 or higher graduate with distinction and are recognized in the graduation program and during commencement. Outstanding students can also join honors student organizations and are nominated by faculty in "Who's Who." Each academic year ends with a student awards ceremony, and the board recognizes students who have achieved honors at state and national competitions. Athletics recognizes academic All Americans with wall plaques. The college publicly recognizes staff who have attained a degree or certificate at in service. NMJC also presents awards to outstanding employees of the year to one support staff member, one maintenance staff member, and to two faculty members. These actions demonstrate an organizational commitment to valuing learning for students and staff.

A review of AA and AS Degrees validates a broad general education component necessary for breadth of learning and intellectual inquiry, although a clearly articulated philosophy of general education is lacking. The AAS Degree includes an appropriate balance between studies related to a specific field and studies meant to expand knowledge beyond mastery of information. Thus, the organization effectively integrates general education into its AA, AS, and AAS degree programs to develop the attitudes and skills requisite for a life of learning in a diverse society.

NMJC provides multiple opportunities for input from constituencies regarding currency and relevance of courses and programs. Program reviews occur every five years in AAS Degrees necessary for adequate assessment or curricula usefulness. Graduating students have the opportunity to assess the usefulness of the curricula via the graduate survey. Technical programs have advisory committees that meet once per semester. Nursing, Print Education, and Law Enforcement are approved by external agencies. NMJC works with the New Mexico Higher Ed Department to define courses necessary for transfer. Multiple agreements exist with four year institutions to provide opportunities for technical and general education students to further their education. Performance based budgeting indicators provide an overview of institutional quality and effectiveness.

Evidence acquired through document examination and interviews with students, faculty, and administration indicate the organization has effectively communicated procedures to ensure ethical conduct for employees (Employee Handbook) students (Student Handbook and Planner) and board members (board policy 304) in its research and instructional activities. NMJC encourages curricular (page 116) and co-curricular activities (page 115-117) that relate responsible use of knowledge to practicing social responsibility.

Criterion met; no follow-up required.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

None noted.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None noted.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion met; no organizational attention or follow-up required.

CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

NMJC is commended for its strong ties to and engagement with the communities it serves; its involvement of community stakeholders in its strategic planning process; its committed and effective foundation, and its effective and continuing use of career-technical community advisory committees.

Community members provided examples of the college’s consistent willingness and ability to serve community needs. Community members described NMJC as the premiere provider of education and workforce development. A review of the College’s offerings demonstrate a commitment to diverse populations, including GED sites, theatrical productions, concurrent enrollment offerings to local high schools, and senior citizen-targeted physical training.

NMJC has formed impressive partnerships with various institutions of higher education, Lea County Distance Education Consortium (all five of the Lea County School Districts), hospital, workforce development, and Estacado Library Information Network.

Criterion met; no follow up required.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

None noted.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None noted.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion met; no organizational attention or follow-up required.

V. REQUEST FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

In conjunction with the comprehensive continued accreditation review, NMJC requested a “Change in Educational Offerings” to extend accreditation to include degree programs offered online.

NMJC distinguishes itself among its peers through its commitment to instructional technology as evidenced by its computer laboratories, SMART classrooms, 3-year

replacement cycle of computers, allocation of resources, long-range information technology planning, and implementation of information technology training for and service to faculty and staff.

NMJC has provided considerable training for its online faculty and offers an impressive list of online courses, but it has failed to provide an adequate rationale for offering online degree programs. NMJC must identify its target market for online degree programs; specific online degree programs that it is capable of offering in this modality; and sufficient online academic and student services to adequately support the fully online learner.

NMJC's commitment to high quality distance learning is apparent through its recent additions to its staff. Serving under the Dean of Extended Learning are a Distance Learning WebCT Coordinator, Distance Learning Academic Coordinator, and a Distance Learning Technical Coordinator. Although NMJC is commended for acquiring these new positions, on-site meetings indicated that the roles and responsibilities of these positions and how these positions fit within the overall institutional structure are not well defined. While some uncertainty can be expected during this transitional time, NMJC is advised to more clearly define the roles, responsibilities, reporting relationships, and authority of these key positions. It is imperative that those individuals directly overseeing distance learning and working directly with faculty, particularly online faculty, are included in college-wide committees and decision making. In order for NMJC to offer programs completely online, additional faculty may be needed. Should these faculty need to be hired on a part-time or adjunct basis, these new faculty members will need to be connected to the college and campus in a meaningful manner to ensure quality. The previously mentioned coordinators, as well as instructional department chairs, will be their vital links to NMJC.

The dean and staff responsible for distance learning explained that initial online faculty training was provided by Title V funds and was offered to forty-six faculty members. It was estimated that approximately fifteen of those faculty continued on to develop new online courses since their initial training. Classroom faculty not teaching online courses are encouraged to develop and use online components with their courses. The number of courses that include an online component is growing, although no schedule or target date for mandatory inclusion was provided in written form during the team visit.

In addition to sufficient faculty and training, NMJC must improve its computer access. Some faculty members complained about the lack of high-speed broad-band access, both at work and from home. Team members, too, recognized this problem during the site visit. Such technical matters must be addressed before complete degree programs can be offered.

ITV facilities and classrooms provided by NMJC serve a varied audience, most notably those students completing bachelor's and graduate coursework, as well as high school students "attending" NMJC classes. The team visited the well equipped large ITV lab in the library where coursework is delivered to and from four-year institutions. Among those institutions are Eastern New Mexico University, Lubbock Christian University, and New Mexico Highlands University. A team member visited Tatum (New Mexico) High School and its distance learning lab. The principal provided a tour and explanation of this school's long-term and beneficial relationship with NMJC. The delivery of course work to dually enrolled high school students is demonstrably well thought out, with the high school providing concurrently scheduled, same-discipline courses available for their students who find they are not yet ready for college coursework.

At the administrative level, issues of concern raised during team meetings regarding online learning include the following:

- Faculty workload,
- Faculty compensation for developing and delivering online courses, and

- Implications of program participation for the faculty member's professional evaluation processes.

These issues should be made in accordance with institutional processes customarily used to address comparable issues.

Administration may draw from the "Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs" to determine other issues for review prior to offering degree programs wholly online.

The proposed rollout for online programs must include specific information to initially predict and ensure program effectiveness. A determination of how to measure effectiveness must include:

- Cost effectiveness of the program(s) to its students and the institution,
- Student satisfaction and retention rates,
- Faculty satisfaction and teaching efficacy, and
- The extent to which online learning matches intended learning goals for general education and specific programs.

Currently offered classes may serve as pilot projects to assist in determining indicators of effectiveness.

NMJC's current online offerings are populated primarily with local students who have chosen online classes because of convenience and to resolve class scheduling conflicts. The team did not find evidence that a plan is in place to serve the place-bound students described on page 155 in the self study. Meetings with students and faculty offered evidence that testing, as well as most administrative functions, still require on-campus visits for online students. Students who have taken online classes noted this restriction as well. In addition, NMJC has not yet fully implemented its SCT Banner administrative software which will be essential for managing online degree programs and for offering necessary online student services.

Three highly qualified coordinators have been added to the staff, but there have been few formalized opportunities for this department to meet and coordinate with the instructional or marketing staffs to develop a much needed shared vision of what online learning at NMJC will be. NMJC staff expressed concerns about the appropriateness of marketing online classes to out-of-district students. A clear cut decision about this issue must be determined and communicated college-wide.

Basic questions that must be answered include:

- Who is the current NMJC online student?
- Who does the college think the online student "should" be?

NMJC lacks a clearly defined and commonly understood definition of online learning, an issue which must be addressed.

Online learning is not simply the addition of a WebCT component to on-campus classes. Those additions are supported by sound educational theory, but a clear understanding of what the Distance Learning department is charged with doing must be established.

Other basic questions to be resolved include:

- Can quality online classes be offered at the existing credit hour cost?
- How will potential faculty be identified?
- Are training opportunities in place for interested faculty?
- How will faculty be compensated for developing online classes?

- How will the responsibility for setting and ensuring academic standards be distributed between instructional and other departments?

Online learning has not been included in the strategic plan as a significant component of the future vision of NMJC, nor have those charged with increasing distance learning opportunities been provided with basic guidelines or strategic goals about online learning.

Rationale: NMJC has provided considerable training for its online faculty, hired online staff personnel, and offers an impressive list of current online courses, but it has failed to provide an adequate rationale for offering online degree programs.

Expectations: NMJC must provide:

- Definition of online degree programs;
- Evidence of the need for specific full online degree programs in the institutional strategic plan;
- Evidence of sufficient resources to fully support online degree programs, including adequate identification of and compensation for online faculty;
- Plan for assessment of student learning outcomes of online degree programs;
- Evidence of a site-bound target market beyond local on-site students who have chosen some online classes for convenience and scheduling flexibility;
- Means for testing of online students that do not require on-campus visits;
- Full range of online academic and student services, including, but not limited to, tutoring, academic advisement, registration, payment, financial aid, and full implementation of SCT Banner; and
- Marketing plan for online degree programs, including the rationale for seeking out-of-district students.

Recommendation of the Team: The team recommends denial at this time. NMJC may consider re-submitting its request for institutional change at a later time.

VI. Statement of affiliation status

A. Affiliation Status

Candidate: 1968

Accreditation: (1970-)

Rationale for recommendation: NMJC is a strong and well-run institution of higher learning. NMJC has adequately met most of the concerns of the last comprehensive site visit and has demonstrated its ability to meet the required accreditation criteria. NMJC has the necessary mechanisms and resources to continue to meet these criteria in the future. The site visit team therefore recommends continued accreditation, with the next comprehensive visit to take place in ten years.

B. Nature of Organization

1. **Legal status:** Public
2. **Degrees awarded:** Associate's

C. Conditions of Affiliation

1. **Stipulation on affiliation status:** Out-of-state offerings are limited to courses in Seminole, Texas

(No change recommended)

2. Approval of new degree sites: Prior Commission approval required.

(No change recommended)

3. Approval of distance education degree: Prior Commission approval required.

(No change recommended)

4. Reports required

Progress Report

Topic: Assessment of Student Learning

Due Date: January 1, 2009

Rationale: NMJC has raised awareness of and placed priority on a faculty-driven assessment of student learning outcomes and has also developed expected learning outcomes at the course level, and a plan for some program outcomes. However, NMJC has failed to develop, document, and implement a systemic, multilevel, and comprehensive assessment plan that utilizes data for learning improvement.

Expectations:

- Development of student learning outcomes at both the course and program level;
- An institutional-level assessment plan that includes learning goals for all program areas, a realistic timeline, a data collection process, actual interpretation of data, and evidence of data-driven decisions that result in improvement of student learning;
- A true function "to close the loop"; and
- Development of an action plan by the faculty based on assessment and expected outcomes to make changes for the next semester, year, and beyond.

Monitoring Report

(None recommended)

Contingency Report

(None recommended)

5. Other visits scheduled

(None recommended)

D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

(None recommended)

E. Summary of commission review

Timing for next comprehensive visit (academic year – 2015-2016)

Rationale for recommendation: NMJC has adequately met most of the concerns of the last comprehensive site visit and has demonstrated its ability to meet the required accreditation criteria. NMJC has the necessary mechanisms and resources to continue to meet these criteria in the future. The site visit team therefore recommends continued accreditation, with the next comprehensive visit to place in 2015-2016.

VI. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS

None.

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

NEW MEXICO JUNIOR COLLEGE
Hobbs, New Mexico

November 7-9, 2005

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Dr. Jo Anne Y. McFarland, President, Central Wyoming College, Riverton, WY 82501

Dr. Susan A. Deege, Director of Career and Advising Services, John Wood Community College, Quincy, IL 62305

Mr. Greg R. Goode, Vice President for Instruction and Student Services, Community College of Aurora, Aurora, CO 80011-9036

Dr. Sandra Veltri, Dean of Student Services, Trinidad State Junior College, Trinidad, CO 81082

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I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

New Mexico Junior College (NJMC) is an institution that has an abundance of resources, including its committed faculty, staff, and the community it serves and with which it partners. It is evident that the institution has the capability to move forward in a positive manner. These consultations are intended to share the expertise of the team with the college, and the comments included in this section need not be followed by the institution and are offered as advice only to advance the institution, at the discretion of the college.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

Prior to the site visit, NMJC specifically asked for consultation in the following four areas:

1. Better utilization of data for decision making
2. Assessment of institutional resources and programs
3. Improved evaluation process for all employees
4. Systemic professional development plan

A. Library

Based upon student complaints expressed during the site visit, the hours of various departmental services located within the Library are a factor that warrants consideration. The Library, and services available through various departments within the library, should be a resource open to all students at times that are convenient to the student and not necessarily at the convenience of the college. The team learned that some departmental services located within the Library do not have hours on Fridays and are not open at times as posted. This situation definitely warrants investigation and change. Many complaints from students indicated dissatisfaction with unpredictable and shortened Library hours and LRC computer lab hours. NMJC is encouraged to identify human and financial resources to address this problem.

B. Professional Development Plan.

NMJC is advised to consider the following draft goals for creating a Systematic Professional Development Plan:

1. Create a system-wide training strategy for faculty and staff that integrates all training options available. Because training is not a congruent, linear process, such integration is more "progress than perfection."
2. Develop a consistent mechanism to promote training options for faculty and staff.
3. Determine if the internal training needs of non-faculty are being met. The team was unable to reach a conclusion on this issue during the site visit.
4. Give ownership to faculty and staff for on-campus training. For example, NJMC could consider creating and providing funding for a Faculty Development Committee, with no administrative membership, to create a training schedule every semester. This Faculty Development Committee or assessment committee could help determine training for staff in-services. Faculty could choose a semester theme, such as teaching and learning, accessibility services, or retention strategies. For staff, a team of administrative assistants could organize one training activity a semester.
5. Determine how to monitor the effectiveness of the plan (evaluations, attendees by areas, and hours attended, etc).

C. Academic Assessment

Many colleges have no or little administrative participation in academic assessment. In looking at NMJC resources and structure, NMJC's Associate Director of Institutional Effectiveness could work with a faculty co-chair to ensure better coordination between the administration and faculty. In addition, one dean could be assigned to attend each meeting on a rotating basis. It is also important to make certain that a faculty representative from each department or division attends meetings. NMJC could also consider allowing release time for the faculty assessment co-chair, possibly even up to half-time.

D. College Committees

Generally, institutional efficiency and effectiveness might be enhanced with fewer and smaller committees. Literature on committees generally points to 5-7 being the most effective size. Some, such as assessment, may need a larger membership.

E. Online degree programs:

Many student complaints indicated it took two–three weeks to get the PIN number to work. The visiting consultant evaluators also had some trouble accessing online documents. This matter needs review.

The three coordinators involved with online learning should be included as members on decision making committees throughout the college, particularly in terms of curriculum development, academic standards, and student services.

Issues requiring input by these coordinators and collaboration with other campus committees might include, but are not limited, to:

- Compliance with copyright law,
- Requirements for services for those students with disabilities,
- Placement testing for off-site students,
- Remote access to instructional and research resources (comparable to on campus students),
- Services related to orientation, advising, counseling and tutoring,
- Online payment arrangements, and
- Determination of technologies used for course interaction (e.g., email, telephone office hours, phone conferences, voicemail, chat rooms, Web-based discussions, computer conferences, and threaded discussions)

These last topics of discussion are very important in terms of adjunct faculty being added to the teaching ranks.

Student focus groups could be very beneficial in terms of accessing and assessing their perceptions of online courses. Such meetings could determine the extent to which online learners feel that they are part of the overall college community, or, if they feel that they are more “on their own” as online learners. With most online students also taking campus classes at this time, a strong opportunity exists for NMJC to access appropriate students for feedback about their online experiences.

F. Instructional support

NMJC is encouraged to develop a clear and coherent understanding of instructional support services available in Math, Reading, and English and how these subjects are integrated with instruction and student services. The National Association of Developmental Education at www.nade.org is an excellent resource to build a great

"transition" program at NMJC. Institution wide communication and understanding will be critical to NMJC's success in this area.

G. Cyber Café

The "cyber café" in the Ben Alexander Building is a wonderful addition and is utilized extensively by the students, particularly since open computer laboratories seem to have been absorbed into various educational departments and are not always available to students as advertised. NMJC is encouraged to include printing capabilities in the cyber café so that students always have a place to work and since this facility is open 24/7 (which in itself is VERY commendable).

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

The utilization of resources to SMART classrooms throughout the campus is certainly impressive, as is the campus as a whole. While the college is in its fortieth year of existence and many of the buildings are the original structures, the buildings have been well maintained and budgetary resources have been allocated to the physical plant to ensure optimum usage of the facilities.

In addition to the SMART classrooms, the movement of the Student Services personnel to create a "one-stop shop" for students is commendable. It is somewhat confusing that the Vice President of Student Services is not in this area, however.

Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

INSTITUTION and STATE: New Mexico Junior College, NM

TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS): Continued Accreditation

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW:

DATES OF REVIEW: 11/7/05 - 11/9/05

Nature of Organization

LEGAL STATUS: Public

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

DEGREES AWARDED: A

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS: Out-of-state offerings are limited to courses in Seminole, Texas.

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: No Change

REPORTS REQUIRED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: Progress Report, January 1, 2009, Assessment of Student Learning

OTHER VISITS REQUIRED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: None

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 1995 - 1996

YEAR OF NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2005 - 2006

Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: 2015-2016

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

INSTITUTION and STATE: New Mexico Junior College, NM

TYPE OF REVIEW:

Educational Programs

		Program Distribution	Recommended Change (+ or -)
Programs leading to Undergraduate			
	Associate	62	
	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 -)

Campuses: None
 Sites: None
 Course Locations: 5

Out-of-State: Present Wording: Recommended Change:
(+ or -)

Campuses: None
 Sites: None
 Course Locations: None

Out-of-USA: Present Wording: Recommended Change:
(+ or -)

Campuses: None
 Sites: None
 Course Locations: None

Distance Education Certificate and Degree Offerings:

Present Offerings:

None

Recommended Change:
(+ or -)