REPORT OF A VISIT
TO
BLUEFIELD STATE COLLEGE

Bluefield, West Virginia
February 11-13, 2002

for the
Commission on Higher Learning
Of the
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
August 12, 2002

Dr. Robert E. Moore  
President  
Bluefield State College  
219 Rock St.  
Bluefield, WV 24701

Dear President Moore:

This letter is formal notification of the action taken concerning Bluefield State College by the Higher Learning Commission. At its meeting on August 5, 2002, the Institutional Actions Council voted to continue the accreditation of Bluefield State College, and to adopt any new items entered on the attached Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS). The Commission Board of Trustees validated that action through its validation process concluded on August 12, 2002. The date on this letter constitutes the effective date of this new status with the Commission.

Normally a new Record of Status and Scope (RSS) is attached to this letter. The RSS includes the SAS and the Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities (SISA). The SISA is generated from the database and includes specific information gleaned from your Annual Report as well as from the team. This year we are holding the annual report information gathered online until our database redesign is complete. The Annual Report was designed to link with the new database, not our current one. Therefore, instead of sending you a Record of Status and Scope that is not current, I choose only to send the SAS portion of it. As soon as the new database is finished and tested, I will forward your full Record of Status and Scope. It will summarize the relationship between the Commission and Bluefield State College. Modifications to it may require prior approval from the Commission, although several sections of the Statement of Institutional Scope and Activity can be modified through submission of the Annual Report. In the meantime, I highly recommend that if you have any questions about how planned institutional changes might affect your relationship with the Commission, you write or call John A. Taylor, your staff liaison.

Changes in your institution that would require further Commission action prior to their initiation are found in Chapter 12 of The Handbook of Accreditation, Second Edition and on pages 42-46 of the March, 2002, Addendum to the Handbook. The Addendum can be found on the Commission’s website at www.ncahighercolorningcommission.org under the Information for Affiliated Institutions and Consultant Evaluators. Please review them with care.

Information about informing the public of this action is found in Chapter 15 of the Commission’s Handbook.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I thank you and your associates for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Steven D. Crow  
Executive Director

Enclosure: Statement of Affiliation Status

cc: Evaluation Team Members  
Chair of the Board
BLUEFIELD STATE COLLEGE
219 Rock St.
Bluefield, WV 24701

Statement of Affiliation Status

Status: Accredited (1951-.)
Highest degree awarded: Bachelor's.
Most recent action: August 12, 2002.
✓ Stipulations on affiliation status: None
New degree sites: No prior Commission approval required for offering existing degree programs at new sites within the state.
✓ Progress reports required: None.
✓ Contingency reports required: None.
✓ Other visits required: None.
Last comprehensive evaluation: 2001-02.
✓ Next comprehensive evaluation: 2011-12.
REPORT OF A VISIT
TO
BLUEFIELD STATE COLLEGE
BLUEFIELD, WEST VIRGINIA
FEBRUARY 11-13, 2002

For the
Commission on Higher Learning
Of the
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Dr. Hector R. Carrasco, Dean College of Education, Engineering, and Professional Studies, University of Southern Colorado, Pueblo, Colorado, 81001-4901

Dr. Felix Moses Edoho, Associate Professor/MBA Program Coordinator, Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Missouri, 65102-0029

Dr. Ty Julian Handy, Chancellor, Ivy Tech State College, Sellersburg, Indiana, 47172

Dr. Muriel Hawkins, Assistant Vice Chancellor, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, 54901.

Dr. Thomas Flickema, President, Black Hills State University, Spearfish, South Dakota, 57799 (Chairperson)
Introduction

Organization of the Report

Section One:
Describes the purpose and scope of the visit, provides an summary of the accreditation history of the campus, summarizes the team activity, and evaluates the benefits of the self-study process and self-study report to the College.

Section Two:
Evaluates the College's responses to the 1992 comprehensive Evaluation.

Section Three:
Evaluates the criteria for accreditation.

Section Four:
Contains the team's advice and suggestions of institutional improvement.

Section Five:
Presents the team's concerns and challenges.

Section Six:
Contains the team's recommendations and the rationale for each recommendation and the revised SAS.
Section One: Purpose and scope of the visit

Accreditation History of the Campus

The West Virginia State Legislature founded Bluefield State College in 1895 as a black normal school, a role it fulfilled throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The North Central Association of Colleges and Universities granted initial accreditation to the College in 1951. Bluefield State College was integrated in 1954. By 2002 blacks made up only ten percent of the College's student body, although the campus has retained its classification as a historically black college. In the second half of the twentieth century the College expanded the number of baccalaureate majors. Today the focus of the campus is largely upon serving the economic needs of southeastern West Virginia with associate and baccalaureate programs in two-plus-two sequences in fields such as nursing, business, engineering technology, and allied health. Some of these programs are offered at sites in Beckley and at Greenbrier Community College in Lewisburg, West Virginia. Throughout this evolution the campus has retained North Central Association accreditation. The last comprehensive North Central Association accreditation took place in 1992.

Scope of the Visit

The purpose of this site visit to Bluefield State College (February 10th through February 13th, 2002) was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation for the campus for continued accreditation at the baccalaureate level. Prior to arrival the team received the self-study report and the current College Catalog. Additional documents were available
on campus in the team conference room or upon request. One team member visited the Beckley site and one team member visited the Lewisburg (Greenbrier) site.

Two team members interviewed the chair and chancellor of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC). All team members interviewed seven members of the Institutional Board of Governors. The team also interviewed faculty, students, and support personnel. Meetings with alumni and community leaders provided additional information. In addition the team interviewed many members of the campus administration, including the President and senior administrators.

Generally the Self-Study Report described the campus and self-study process in accurate terms. The self-study process involved a wide range of campus constituencies. Nonetheless, the Self-Study Report would have been strengthened with more specific information at a number of points. While evaluative, the Self-Study Report at times lacked specific information to support its generalizations. Several important topics—civil rights issues and academic program changes—did not appear in the report. The team was concerned about these omissions. Nevertheless, the team believes the College used the Self-Study Report to evaluate its current situation and to face the future.
Section Two: Campus responses to concerns of the 1992 team

*Concern One. The existing mission statement needs to be rewritten separating the mission portion from the purposes. The purposes need to be identified and used in the model for assessing student academic achievement.*

Bluefield State College has not made significant progress in addressing this concern. The mission statement continues to be a comprehensive statement that includes the purposes of the College. However, the visiting team thoroughly reviewed the existing statement and discussed its effectiveness with internal and external constituencies of the campus and has determined that the existing statement does, indeed, accurately describe the roles, responsibilities, and purposes of the college. In short, the team believes the existing statement serves the College well and is not in need of immediate revision. The team recognizes, however, that the expectations of higher education institutions in West Virginia are currently undergoing significant changes. Accordingly, the team believes the mission statement should undergo a comprehensive review once these changes have solidified. At that time the College should also separate its mission statement from its purposes.

*Concern Two. The institution should develop a plan and schedule for making all major facilities accessible to the handicapped. It should also develop a plan for meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.*
Since the 1992 team visit the campus has made considerable progress in addressing disability issues. With the exception of one building, Dickason Hall, the campus appears to comply with all ADA requirements. Although the four floors of Dickason Hall are accessible, the ground floor allows access only through a boiler area, a situation that could pose safety issues for disabled persons. An elevator was constructed in the main administration building. All buildings have electric door openers and access ramps are available at various locations. Signage clearly delineates handicapped accessible locations. The College has established an ADA Committee. Students with disabilities are assigned a counselor, who in cooperation with the ADA coordinator, develops customized strategies to accommodate the educational needs of the disabled students. A separate file is maintained for each student. Services provided include test reading, scribes, texts on tape, text enlargement, note-takers, language interpreters, and computer-assisted software. An average of forty-five disabled students are accommodated each year.

Concern Three. The institution needs to be audited by an outside agency on a scheduled basis.

Beginning in 1994, the College has contracted with an outside auditing firm for an annual audit covering both the financial statements of the institution and the effectiveness of its system of internal controls. A review of these statements indicates that the College is effectively stating its financial performance and position and does employ an effective system of internal control.
Concern Four. There has been a lack of significant progress in minority hiring in all areas, administrative, faculty, and classified staff, despite affirmative action policies and procedures and clearly expressed administrative commitment. Female representation in administrative and senior faculty ranks also remains low. Increased commitment, creative effort and perhaps additional resources may help bring about change.

Bluefield State College has made significant progress in minority hiring at the administrative level. Minorities on the President’s administrative staff have increased from 12.5% in 1992 to 27.3% in 2000, including an increase in females from 12.5% to 36.4%. Progress in hiring black faculty is not as significant, registering a gain from 10% to 12.3% over the last decade. While gains in hiring black faculty are modest, it should be noted that the black population of the State of West Virginia is only 3.79%.

The College’s Equal Opportunity Policy and Affirmative Action Plan are in the process of revision. Department heads and faculty were aware of the Affirmative Action Plan even though they did not know specific details. Search and screen committees carefully adhere to the processes specified by the Director of Human Resources to ensure compliance with affirmative action. The College advertises nationally for open positions through the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and discipline specific minority publications. The Director of Human Resources states that she reviews all applications for all positions to ensure that candidates meet minimum qualifications and that an adequate pool of candidates is available for consideration. In addition the Director of Multicultural Affairs is a member of all faculty search and screen committees. It appears, however, that the person serving in that role has been absent from campus frequently. The Director of
Human Resources indicated that while faculty evaluations are the responsibility of the Provost, the Human Resources Office handles all personnel grievances. While no specifics were given, the Director of Human Resources believed that they have handled about ten grievances in the last eight years. The team is also aware of a letter directed to the Higher Education Policy Commission alleging harassment of black faculty and staff. This issue was discussed with the current Chancellor, who stated that the HEPC investigated the charges and cleared the President and his staff of all charges of discrimination and harassment.

Concern Five. The contrast between Bluefield State College's status as a historically black institution and its current enrollment of only 8% minority students (7% black) suggest that even greater emphasis may be needed on enrollment and retention of minority students to bring the student body diversity essential to the college and the area. Although the percentage of minority enrollment has stopped declining, it has not yet begun to increase. The team commends Admissions/Enrollment Management personnel for newly implemented strategies but urges even greater efforts supported by clear and active commitment and involvement of all college constituencies.

Strategies implemented by Bluefield State College have made a modest difference. Black enrollments are up to 10%, with overall minority enrollments rose to 11%. This 3% increase over the last decade should be viewed in terms of the low proportion of the black populations in the seven counties of the College's primary service area: Greenbrier (4.03%), Mercer (7.44%), McDowell (13.7%), Pocahontas (1.58%), Raleigh (8.42%), Summers (6.05%), and Monroe (0.08%). Therefore the College's goal
of a 20% minority population will be difficult to achieve unless the campus is able to move forward with the construction of on-campus housing and finds additional funds to devote to the recruitment of minority students.

*Concern Six.* Extensive renovation and reallocation of space is needed in the Student Union. *A significant reorganization of the bookstore is needed as well as new management and marketing strategies directed toward student needs and desires.*

The Student Center, including the bookstore, has been completely refurbished. Asbestos has been removed and replaced with new ceiling tiles. New furniture, window coverings, and carpet have been installed. New management in the bookstore provides a much wider variety of merchandise in response to student needs. Consequently the sale of items other than textbooks has increased significantly. The renovation of the Student Center has also created space for campus organizations.

*Concern Seven.* *The physical plant of the Greenbrier Community College is inadequate for the quality and quantity of academic and student services needed by the existing faculty, staff, and student body. New facilities are badly needed.*

Greenbrier Community College Center is located at Lewisburg about 100 miles from the main campus and serves a three county area with a population of 60,000. Six full-time faculty members serve at Lewisburg, as well as 45-50 part-time faculty members. The site enrolled 678 students during the fall 2001 term. The Greenbrier Community College Center occupies a modern, state-of-the-art facility. The prior site at Lewisburg has been abandoned and the campus has moved into a renovated four-story
Bluefield State College

building that previously belonged to Greenbrier College. This building has been
renovated at a cost of six million dollars. The renovated building offers attractive and
functional classrooms, including two interactive distance education classrooms, current
science labs, and three computer labs. In addition, it houses offices, a library, bookstore,
student center, and an auditorium. The team member who visited the Lewisburg campus
described the facilities as excellent, both aesthetically and as an effective environment for
learning. Serious discussions are underway which could result in the construction of a
$3.5 million dollar library that will be a joint College and County facility.
Section Three: Evaluation for accreditation

Criterion I. The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

Bluefield State College has a clear and publicly stated mission statement that includes its purposes as part of the mission statement. This statement, while lengthy, captures the unique role of the campus as an institution that provides a number of two-plus-two programs, with a corresponding seamless opportunity for students to move from the two-year degree to the four-year degree. This targeted role of the College serves well the educational and economic needs of southeastern West Virginia, an area that faces serious economic challenges. The College has developed long- and short- range institutional and education goals that are congruent with the mission of the institution. These goals are detailed in a document known as the Bluefield State College Response to Senate Bill 653 Compact and Master Plan. These goals were developed through a process that encouraged broad campus participation and reflect the views of its constituencies. Students, community members, employees, alumni, and governing board members expressed to team members an understanding of and agreement with the mission and purposes of the College, including respect for the freedom in inquiry. This mission and purposes are effectively communicated to the public through the college catalog.

The team found a state of uncertainty and anxiety on campus due to substantive changes emanating from the West Virginia State Legislature and the Higher Education Policy Commission. One proposed change would direct Bluefield State to separate the first two years of its undergraduate experience from the second two years by creating an independently accredited community college at the Beckley site. The proposal is
problematic in that Bluefield State has successfully integrated its freshman and
sophomore level courses with its upper level courses through a seamless two-plus-two
curriculum. Bluefield State appears to have already achieved the goals of the separation
without having to undergo the time, expense, and frustration of a complete separation.
The team urges caution in responding to the mandate to create an independently
accredited community and technical college at Beckley. Accreditation and cost issues
require a detailed analysis.

These changes, which have the potential to alter the mission of the College
substantially, have created a heightened level of sensitivity to the historical culture of the
College, the current operational environment, and the potential future role of the College
in the communities it serves. This heightened sensitivity has the potential to deflect the
institution’s focus away from its existing purposes and could possibly interfere with its
effectiveness in meeting its existing core purposes. The team suggests that the College’s
Institutional Board of Governors, administrators, faculty, and staff remain focused on
achieving its core purposes and not allow the current state of uncertainty to interfere with
its day-to-day efforts.

**Criterion II. The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and
physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.**

West Virginia Senate Bill 653, effective July 1, 2000, ushered in a major
reorganization of the State’s higher education structure. This legislative action replaced
the Board of Directors of the State College system, who had governed the state’s six
baccalaureate and three community colleges, with a separate Board of Institutional
Governors for each college, while also creating the state wide Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC). Under this new arrangement the president of each campus reports to the Board of Governors (IBG), who are ultimately responsible for campus operations and policies, but work within the framework established by HEPC, a body that determines and implements state wide educational policy goals through institutional compacts with each institution. Twelve individuals, all with voting powers, sit on Bluefield State College's Institutional Board of Governors; nine are appointed by the Governor for terms up to four years, while three others are elected by campus constituencies (faculty, students, and classified staff) annually. Team discussions with IBG members revealed a high degree of commitment to the College and its role. Nevertheless Board members are still in the process of sorting out their role. Board members, for instance, do not want to micro-manage the campus, but are struggling to define this approach operationally when determining how much of their power to delegate to the President and the campus.

Bluefield State College operates using an administrative structure in keeping with the current trends in higher education. The structure is currently under revision and has been for some time. Three of the positions reporting directly to the President are currently filled by interim personnel. The College is currently engaged in a search to fill one of these three positions and will begin the search for the other two shortly. One drawback of the long-term use of interim personnel is that it requires administrative employees to be responsible for more areas than normal. This is especially true at Bluefield State in the area of institutional advancement. The interim institutional advancement officer of the College provides leadership to the Bluefield State College
Foundation, alumni affairs, sponsored programs, the Economic and Research Development Corporation, and institutional research. While the College is to be commended on its recent progress in the above areas, it is difficult for all areas to receive sufficient emphasis. Private fund raising, especially for student scholarship dollars, should receive an increased emphasis. The Bluefield State College Foundation is operational, has a capable and willing Board, and is in good financial shape as indicated in its audited financial statements. The Bluefield State College Foundation's are restricted. Only 50% of the interest income from these endowment funds can be spent, and that amount is spent for scholarship support. We encourage the Foundation's commitment to increase the number and size of scholarships.

To avoid conflicts in fund raising the team also encourages the College to clearly define the roles of the Economic and Research Development Corporation, the Bluefield State College Foundation, and the Greenbrier Community College Foundation. Each of these three entities offers promising opportunities for advancing the College. Care must be taken to make sure these bodies work in concert to maximize their effectiveness and to avoid competitive situations. Effective communication among and between these entities is critical to preserve the current positive relationships.

Interviews with administrative personnel and reviews of their qualifications indicate they are sufficiently qualified and experienced for the roles they fill. Administrative staff personnel also appear to communicate with each other effectively. The President relies upon the President's Administrative Staff as the principal decision-making body of the campus. The body meets regularly and consists of the administrative officers who report directly to the President.
The College Council is charged to “act formally on policy and procedural matters presented in an orderly and deliberative manner” (section 2.5300 of the Faculty Handbook). This body consists of 19 members, including five faculty members, five classified staff members, four student representatives, and five administrative staff members. Thus it represents an excellent cross-section of the College. A review of the College Council minutes revealed that the Council meets regularly and that the meetings are used as an opportunity to communicate important information from the College administration. The team noted, however, numerous occasions where the Council was presented information and told they would be voting on the matter at the next meeting. Future minutes did not detail any record of a vote. In fact, a review of the past two years of the minutes revealed no record of any votes taken. Nonetheless members of the Council said they did vote on matters and were surprised that these votes were not a part of the record. A review of the minutes of other campus committees revealed that several other campus entities did not adequately record their actions and deliberations. The team suggests that the college take care to improve the quality of its meeting minutes as such records are valuable for future reference.

In addition to the College Council, the BSC administration uses a newsletter known as the Bulletin, as well as campus-wide e-mail to communicate with college employees. Thus, potentially effective mechanisms of communication are in place. In spite of this, the team heard numerous concerns expressed from faculty and staff regarding the timeliness, effectiveness, and accuracy of communications. These concerns were not limited to the main campus. Employees in Beckley and Lewisburg also felt “out of the loop” on campus matters. Accordingly, the team recommends that College
communications be improved. Campus committees, for instance, should distribute copies of their minutes when appropriate. Campus e-mail provides an efficient medium for transmitting timely information. Communications with the Beckley and Lewisburg sites should be improved as well.

Bluefield State employed 76 full-time faculty members in the fall of 2000 and 135 adjunct faculty. Six of the full-time faculty members were employed at the Greenbrier Community College Center at Lewisburg and four at the Beckley Center. Of the full-time faculty members, 38% held doctorates, 59% had at least a master's degree, and 3% had earned a bachelor's degree. The Personnel Development Committee makes available funding to faculty seeking to complete a terminal degree in their field, in addition to sabbatical leaves. Faculty members in the Division of Arts and Sciences and in the Department of Education exceed the College percentage in doctorates. Other divisions fall below the campus average, although many of the individuals in these areas bring years of experience in the world beyond the campus to the classroom. Overall, in fact, Bluefield State faculty members are active in providing service to the community in their areas of expertise.

Despite limited funding and staffing, Bluefield State College's physical plant is well maintained and free of significant deferred maintenance projects. The College profits from the experience that comes with the longevity of service that characterizes most physical plant staff and the careful use of available resources. Following a facilities plan for campus improvements, the College has completed a number of significant renovation projects over the past decade, including the Student Center, the third floor of
Conley Hall, Mahood Hall, the former Greenbrier Women's College building in Lewisburg, and Dickason Hall. Plans are now underway to renovate Hatter Hall.

Campus communications and technology systems are in excellent shape with an upgraded Ethernet network, a new telephone system with voice mail, and an enhanced CAT-5 fiber optic backbone. The College has 10 computer labs in Bluefield, one at Beckley, and three at Lewisburg, and follows a four-year replacement schedule for all technology equipment. Overall these features, plus electronic classrooms and a high degree of instructional technology use in almost all classes, demonstrates that the campus is well equipped with instructional technology and is using it effectively at Bluefield, Beckley, and Lewisburg.

Students express satisfaction with campus security and the College's statistical report indicates a low incidence of crime and an absence of serious crime. A full-time Director of Public Safety, a former police officer, handles security issues during the day, assisted by students who primarily write traffic tickets. A security agency provides coverage at night and during weekends. During the time the team was on campus the College was beginning to install a sixty-camera centralized monitoring security system. The Director of Public Safety believes in taking a proactive posture, heading off situations before they become problems, and for this reason maintains close contact with the student body. In this same spirit the Director has taken the lead on ADA issues that fall within his jurisdiction, such as the plans to improve campus sidewalks and ramps.

The only major student complaint concerned a perceived lack of parking. In reality adequate parking is available, but not as close to the students' classrooms as they would desire.
A review of the audited financial statements of the College, along with interviews of staff responsible for the financial and human resource portions of the campus revealed that the college is managed in a fiscally conservative fashion. These efforts are assisted by a faculty and staff that is fully cognizant of the chronic under funding of higher education in West Virginia and who have proven willing to be frugal and wise in their expenditure of College funds. The pattern of expenditures demonstrates the College’s commitment to providing an appropriate environment and the human resources necessary for effective teaching and learning. In addition, the campus has in place an effective system of internal control procedures necessary to ensure that the College manages its resources in a way that maximizes the achievement of its goals and objectives. Finally, the College recognizes that its low level of state funding makes it a challenge to address basic teaching and learning needs. The College is to be commended on its effective use of grant funding to assist in offsetting what state is failing to provide. There exists the risk, however, that the campus may become too dependent upon grant-funded positions to meet the basic needs of the College. If soft money dries up, the College may find itself in a less than desirable circumstance. Accordingly, the team urges the campus to take steps to gradually reduce the number of critical positions funded through grants.

Bluefield State College’s primary service area is a seven county area of southeastern West Virginia. According to the Fall 2001 Student Profile Analysis, the College enrolled a headcount of 2,768, of which 1,799 were full time and 969 were part time. FTE figures were 2,210.8 (1,727 full time and 375.6 part time). Essentially an open admissions campus, the College’s defined admission standards are available to all applicants through the Web, the College Catalog, and other sources. Bluefield State has
experienced a healthy enrollment growth in recent years in spite of large population declines in its primary service area. Almost all other institutions in the state have experienced enrollment declines. Even larger enrollment increases could have taken place, including the recruitment of African American students, if the campus had residence halls. Bluefield State College students have a mean age of 24.8 years, a reflection of the fact that non-traditional students make up 35% of the student body. Non-traditional students are an even larger proportion of the part-time students (65%), who have a mean age of 30.5 years. Resident students make up 95% of the student body. Female enrollees account for 62% of the College’s students. Enrollment management staff indicated that a high percentage of the students are first generation college students and from low-income family backgrounds. The racial and ethnic mix continues to be largely white (89.3% white, 9.65% black, and 1% Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian) in spite of Bluefield State’s status as a historically black college.

In spite of the success of the College in increasing enrollments, the campus recruitment plan appears to be simply a listing of activities involving the admissions staff and does not contain measurable goals and objectives. The team did not see evidence of faculty participation in student recruiting, but notes that approximately 15 Student Ambassadors assist in this effort. The team did not detect close coordination between recruitment and retention efforts.

Two team members interviewed ten student government leaders who were pursuing a variety of associate and baccalaureate degrees. With one exception, these students chose Bluefield State because of family connections: a parent or relative had attended the College or is currently employed there. Students responded favorably on the
small class sizes, support they receive from faculty, job placement rates, and available
technology (the computer to student ratio is 4:1 and all students have e-mail addresses).
Students also stated the availability of the administration and the level of student support
services were strengths of the campus. They were also pleased with the opportunities to
interact with students at Beckley and Lewisburg by participating in conferences, the
Model UN, and field trips. Students made one suggestion for change: campus housing.

Bluefield State offers students a well-rounded program of student services, many
of which are geared to offering under prepared students the assistance they will need to
be successful at the collegiate level. The Office of Enrollment Management features one-
stop service. Admissions, advising, testing, orientation, and two of the three federally
funded TRIO programs are housed there. The Office of Enrollment Management initiated
the Emerging Scholars Program, a voluntary, tuition-free, summer transitional program
for students with low ACT scores and/or the need for developmental courses. This
program has averaged 80 to 100 students over the past two years, and will be offered as
an evening program later in the spring of 2002.

The Financial Aid Office provides appropriate information on available funding
to students and the opportunity to file the FAFSAs on-line or by paper. Fifty percent of
the students take out loans in addition to receiving federal aid. The default rate was high
(11% last year), but down from a rate in the 20% range during the mid-1990s. While
students expressed mixed feelings about this office, the team found that students rather
consistently complained about the failure of office staff to follow through with students
in a timely fashion.
The Registrar’s Office performs the functions ordinarily associated with this office (maintaining academic records, posting grades, certifying the completion of graduation and other requirement, and so on). Yet despite the implementation of the Banner Student Information System, many of the functions of this office are yet to be automated.

A meeting of one team member with 20 staff members from the various areas of Academic Support Services provided the staff members with the opportunity to discuss the following strengths and weaknesses as they perceived them. They perceived strengths to be the dedication of the whole campus to assisting students, state-of-the-art technology, cross-training in the Enrollment Management Office to serve students better, and the services the TRIO programs (Veterans Upward Bound, Student Support Services, and the Educational Opportunity Center) provide students. The staff perceived weakness to be the lack of residence halls, the more effective use by faculty and staff of available technology, monitoring the academic progress of students (especially those on probation), and the difficulty of providing support services to students at the Beckley and Lewisburg sites.
Criterion III. The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

General and Liberal Studies. The College requires students seeking the baccalaureate and the associate of science degrees offered by the Division of Arts and Sciences to complete a forty-hour general studies program. All other associate degrees require eighteen hours, including 12 in basic skills. The general studies program is organized in a traditional manner around basic skills, humanities, social science, science, and physical education categories and a statement of ten traditional general studies goals. However, the student is provided no direction about the relationship between general studies goals and the categories and courses in the general studies program. In short, the student has little idea of how a course he/she is taking is related to a general studies goal. Like most campuses, Bluefield State is struggling with the need to create a comprehensive way to measure student learning in general studies. However, it does require the CAAP and for this reason is in a position to evaluate student achievement in reading and writing, and in mathematical and scientific reasoning. On the basis of this information, the College is seriously considering requiring a general studies requirement of a speech communications course for all students.

The College offers an associate degree in Liberal Studies. This degree is designed to take advantage of the variety of course offerings available through the Going The Distance program offered through West Virginia Public Television. This program, however, is the only academic program listed in the catalog that fails to identify any educational competencies or outcomes to be developed by graduates of the program. Instead, the catalog focuses on how the program supports public television. The College
needs to review the Liberal Studies associate degree, determine its educational outcomes, and develop a plan for assessment of student learning for this program.

*Regent's Bachelor of Arts Degree.* The College participates in a statewide four-year degree program known as the Regents Bachelor of Arts degree. A non-traditional degree allowing student a great deal of flexibility in designing their curriculum and in selecting courses from a number of colleges, this program also permits students to earn a significant block of college credit for non-traditional activities through the use of portfolio analysis. The College carefully advises students wishing to seek this degree and routinely convinces students that this degree may not meet their aspirations for future employment. The College also works cooperatively with other state institutions to make certain students are served effectively. Learning assessment, however, appears non-existent for this program.

*Arts and Sciences.* The Division of Arts and Sciences offers three multidisciplinary degrees: humanities, social science, and applied science. The humanities and social science majors require the students to take a common core of courses of 30 and 36 hours respectively. Social science students then go on to take 18 hours of restricted electives and a concentration of 12 hours in one of six prescribed fields. The humanities degree allows students to design a 45-hour specialization in conjunction with an advisory committee of three faculty members. Faculty dissatisfaction with the open-ended nature of the specialization has lead to a proposal to reformulate the specialization requirement along the lines of the social science major. All three of these majors require a capstone course. However, the Division did not provide information to the team demonstrating that the capstone courses fulfill the Higher Learning Commission criteria for assessing
student achievement. Nor did the Division provide information that other assessment measures were employed. For this reason the team found that these three programs did not fulfill the assessment standards of the Higher Learning Commission.

*Medical Programs.* Bluefield State College offers an Associate of Science in Nursing and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. The associate degree is accredited by the National League of Nursing Accreditation Commission and approved by the West Virginia State Board of Examiners for Registered Nurses. The BSN holds accreditation from The Commission of Collegiate Nursing Education. Both programs offer their degrees at Bluefield and Beckley. The team found the physical plant at the Beckley site well maintained, neat, and clean. This site is more than adequate to support the programs that offer courses there. In addition to the well-equipped classrooms, including two that are fully interactive, the site contains a nursing laboratory and a health services library that radiologic technology and nursing share. The associate degree program enrolls 48 students on the Bluefield campus and 28 at Beckley. These two-degree programs are linked by a two-plus-two arrangement. In fact of the 64 students currently enrolled in the BSN program, 70% graduated from the College’s associate degree, demonstrating that the two-plus-two arrangement is effective.

The associate degree prepares nurses to deliver direct client care in structured settings, such as hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, and physicians’ offices. The curriculum focuses upon holistic health promotion and wellness. The BSN is designed for working nurses seeking a baccalaureate degree for the purposes of professional development. Consequently it is offered at times that accommodate the schedules of nurses working full-time already.
Nursing faculty are dedicated to student success and offer a number of forms of support to students, including mentoring and tutoring. Nursing faculty members engage in professional development activities, such as the completion of graduate degrees, attendance at workshops and conferences, and the conduct of research. They also use their weekly practice day to stay abreast of professional developments in their field.

Assessment of student learning is a strong feature of both programs. Students in the associate degree program must pass the NLN Pre-Admission Test to gain entry into the program. Once in the program students must pass clinical assessments each semester. A senior capstone course requires each student to implement a project in a nursing setting. The last step in this process requires the student to pass the National Council Licensure Examination. BSN students must complete clinical practica at each level of the program, including a practicum that requires them to implement a project in a nursing setting that requires a formal presentation to their peers and to the faculty. Senior portfolios are also required. Surveys indicate a high level of employer satisfaction with the graduates, 30% of whom go on to earn graduate degrees.

Offered on both the Bluefield campus and at the Beckley site, the associate degree program in radiologic technology offers a curriculum focusing on medical imaging procedures. The Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology has accredited this program. Enrollment is restricted to forty-eight students. Graduates from certificate programs may obtain an A.S. in Radiologic Technology from the College by completing nineteen required semester hours in the curriculum. The program has enacted a Plan to Assess Program Goals and requires students to complete a capstone course that includes a 200 question simulated certification examination. Students must pass the
national certification exam administered by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologist. Over the past five years the rate of passage has been 95.8%. All graduates of this program secure employment within thirty days of graduation. Plans are underway, including a completed needs assessment, to develop a two-plus-two baccalaureate major in Imaging Sciences with a business management option.

The College also offers associate of science programs in Medical Assisting and in Hospitality and Tourism, as well as certificate programs in Billing and Coding and in Paramedic. The medical assisting program, which prepares an individual to perform administrative, clerical, and office/laboratory tasks under the direct supervision of a physician, has been changed to a one-year certificate program. The Self-Study Report did not discuss this change, which was made in the belief is that a one-year certificate could accomplish the same goal as the two-year associate degree. Nor did the campus Self-Study discuss the paramedic certificate program or the associate degree in Hospitality and Tourism. The latter program is offered at Lewisburg in conjunction with a number of hospitality properties, including the Chef School at the Greenbrier Hotel and enrolls seven students. The paramedic certificate program is also offered at Lewisburg to part-time students in the evening and has about 10 students enrolled. The team is concerned that a major change in one program and the addition of two new programs were not included in the campus self study.

Business. A Chair heads the Division of Business, the second largest academic unit on campus. The Division of Business, which does not have separate departments, offers six baccalaureate degrees, five associate degrees, and a certificate program in professional office systems technology. Associate degrees are offered in accountancy,
general business, marketing, and professional office systems. Baccalaureate degrees are offered in accounting, business administration, computer science, management, and marketing. Less than 100 students graduate annually from the various business programs, with the number of graduates in each program ranging from 10 to 20 students. A major strength of the Division is that it has received initial accreditation for both its baccalaureate and associate degree programs from the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACSBP) in 2001. The next accreditation visit is scheduled in 2004.

The baccalaureate program in business administration is built upon a two-plus-two curriculum, initially targeting those students, usually non-traditional students, who need a two-year degree to enter the workforce. Consequently the two-year programs are largely career-oriented, offering students the opportunity to receive training preparatory for entry-level jobs in the private, public, or non-profit sectors. At the same time the first two years provide a solid academic foundation for students who may subsequently go on for a bachelor’s degree in business administration. Students pursuing the bachelor’s degree must complete, in addition to general studies courses, the business core and two specializations from among the following fields: accountancy, marketing, management and computer science.

The Division of Business has 13 full-time faculty and four adjunct faculty. Many of the full-time faculty persons have served the campus for more than two decades. Three of the full-time faculty members are assigned to teach accounting, general business, and professional office systems technology at the Lewisburg site on a full-time basis. Six of the full-time faculty persons have doctorates. The Division also has two vacant faculty
positions, one of which is filled by an adjunct. An endowed chair position has not been filled since it was created several years ago, although the Division has submitted a proposal to the President suggesting guidelines for seeking an occupant for the chair. On the main campus faculty teach four courses each semester (including three preparations), but at Lewisburg (Greenbrier) some faculty teach five courses and, in some cases, have five preparations. While the Division has limited funds to support professional development, divisional faculty members have not taken full advantage of the funds available on the campus level.

Interviews with individual faculty and a group of faculty revealed a high level of tension between the Division Chair and the faculty to the degree that a complete breakdown in communication has taken place. Morale is very low. Divisional faculty held a meeting with the President, who subsequently hired a consultant to evaluate the situation. The consultant has yet to submit a report. Addressing these underlying issues will help to preserve a quality education and ACSBP accreditation. Additionally faculty fear that a state wide initiative to create separate two- and four-year programs will create heavier teaching loads at the two-year level, adversely impact accreditation, and lead to salary differentials. Another area of faculty concern is Mahood Hall, which houses the Division’s faculty offices and most of its classrooms. A converted residence hall, Mahood has defied renovation efforts to make it into a functional instructional facility. Chronic mechanical malfunctions and other problems commonly associated with an old building (cold in winter, and hot in summer), pillars that obstruct professor-student eye contact in classrooms, and limited classroom sizes (the largest seats 45 students), hinder the process of learning. The two computer labs are crowded.
The Division of Business has developed a well-designed student learning assessment process in compliance with ACSBP accreditation requirements. The Division administers to all students a programmatic capstone comprehensive examination, a mandatory pre-graduation questionnaire, and a five-item pre-graduation questions faculty complete on each graduating student. Moreover, the Division intends to start tracking the post-graduation activities of its students for five years by sending questionnaires to employers (or to graduate schools when appropriate) and to the graduates themselves. The Division assessment plan details the use of each of these tools, including what the tool is to measure and the expected outcomes.

Students in the Division of Business interviewed by the team expressed very positive opinions about the quality of the business program, which they held to be challenging and competitive to that offered by any other educational institution. Students praised the dedication of faculty members to student success, pointing to the faculty willingness to help when help was needed. Nonetheless, students complained about rampant course substitutions in requirements for majors because of a lack of faculty to teach them. They also said that the scheduling of different required courses at the same time caused some students to delay their graduation. Students would also like to see a business honor society.

The team sees several challenges, in addition to that of divisional cohesion, on the horizon. Business faculty members need to refine the role they play in view of the changing industrial base of the area. In addition, the need to maintain high academic standards, and the concomitant need to retain current faculty and hire high quality replacements, will be a challenge as the Division moves forward with its accreditation.
Education. Three full-time faculty members in the Department of Professional Education offer programs leading to certification in elementary (K-6) and middle school (5-9) that enroll approximately 200 students. The graduate is prepared to teach in one of four areas: English/language arts, general science, mathematics, and social science. Using the Cooperative Reflective Manager model, this program is accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. On campus the Educational Personnel Preparation Advisory Committee, composed of faculty from the Department of Professional Education and from the academic departments, as well as teachers from the public schools, is responsible for this program. To be admitted to the program the student must have a 2.5 grade point average, complete an educational foundations course, fulfill 60 hours of community volunteer work, and pass Praxis I. After completing their coursework, including the professional semester, students must pass Praxis II. Faculty members report a strong demand for their students. Employer surveys indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the graduates of this program. While figures for student placement were not presented to the team, the chair indicated a strong demand for students prepared to teach mathematics and science. Nonetheless, the serious decline of K-12 enrollments in the area suggests the need to monitor the overall demand for teachers in the future.

The Division of Engineering Technology and Computer Science. This Division provides professional and career-oriented programs leading to certificates, associate degrees, and baccalaureate degrees. The Division offers six bachelor of science and seven associate of science degrees. The Division includes the Departments of Architectural Engineering Technology, Civil Engineering Technology, Commercial
Aquaculture, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering Technology, Mechanical Engineering Technology, and Mining Engineering Technology. The architectural, civil, electrical, and mechanical engineering technology programs are accredited at both the associate and baccalaureate levels by the Technology Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology.

While enrollment data by Division was not given in the institutional study, material provided in the resource room suggests that the enrollment has been stable over the last five years with total head count in the fall of 2001 of 369 students. The Chair and Department Heads characterized enrollment as stable at the Division level, although there is a significant variation at the program level. Programs with unusually low enrollment included aquaculture and mining engineering technology with enrollment headcounts of 10 and one respectfully. It should be noted that these are the only two programs that do not offer both the associate and baccalaureate degree. The aquaculture program is offered only at the associate level and the mining program only at the baccalaureate level.

Approximately 19% of the faculty members hold terminal degrees in their fields. While low, it is adequate as a master’s degree and three years of industrial experience are the required credentials for accreditation for the engineering technology programs. While adequate funds appeared to be available for professional development, faculty members are not taking full advantage of this opportunity. Faculty did not appear to understand what resources are available or the procedure to apply for support.

The facilities and equipment in the Division range from adequate to excellent. The Division is located in Dickason Hall, which is across US Highway 52 from the rest of the campus. A pedestrian tunnel under the highway exists to allow safe access to the
Bluefield State College

site, although students were seen walking across the highway during low traffic periods. The building appears to be in good condition with some minor cosmetic needs such as missing ceiling tiles. There is sufficient laboratory space to meet current needs of the programs and for future growth. Computer laboratories are excellent while other laboratories would be categorized as adequate. Students are paying a course fee of $10 per credit hour to provide the necessary funding to update and maintain laboratory and computer equipment.

All of the programs in the Division of Engineering Technology and Computer Science are participating in assessment activities. Some of the assessment tools used by the various departments include the survey of graduates, survey of alumni, survey of employers, and projects from capstone courses. Alumni and their respective employers are surveyed two and five years after graduation. The Division Chair is responsible for the mailing of the surveys and data collection. Approximately 75% of the graduates participate. The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology requires assessment for accreditation. The Division takes assessment seriously. Concern was expressed by the Division regarding the effectiveness of the assessment of general studies.

While faculty evaluations are performed annually, concerns were expressed regarding the strength of the process, particularly when evaluating tenured faculty. Faculty members have been encouraged to increase their scholarly activities by utilizing available faculty development funds. However, there is little evidence that the faculty personnel are complying.
Overall, the Division offers strong programs that meet the needs of students seeking a career-oriented education. The programs have high standards and expectations of their students and the institution provides the resources necessary to help students succeed. Sufficient resources to meet the needs of the Division are expected to be available in the future.

Assessment. Assessment at Bluefield State College is uneven. Professional programs demonstrate a high level of effective assessment. Capstone courses, portfolios, senior level seminars, simulated certification and licensure examinations, employer, and alumni surveys are forms of assessment used in these programs. However, the baccalaureate majors in social science, humanities, and applied science engage in few assessment activities that would fulfill Higher Learning Commission expectations. The same statement applies to the associate degree in liberal studies and the Regents Bachelor of Arts degree. The team regards the lack of progress in assessing student learning among these programs as a serious issue.

The campus Standing Faculty Assessment Committee views its role as limited to developing specific learning outcomes for the general studies program. In 1997 the Committee identified ten general studies learning outcomes, but these outcomes (listed on page 66 of the catalog) are neither conditions nor criteria for measurement. In the absence of these two variables it is difficult to assess student learning. While some members of the Committee would like to require all students to take the CAAP after they have completed sixty hours, the Committee has yet to decide how to use the CAAP data they already have on hand. In short the Committee lacks a sense of direction in assessing general education learning outcomes and eschews oversight responsibilities for any other
form of assessment activities. Consequently, the campus needs to put in place a structure that will support and coordinate an effective campus-wide assessment program. A director of assessment, with sufficient authority, and a campus-wide assessment committee should be appointed. The Institutional Board of Governors has yet to act upon the campus request to create the position of assessment coordinator under the direction of the Institutional Effectiveness Office. The creation of this position will be a step in the right direction, but only if the individual holding that position has the full backing of the administration and strong powers of enforcement.

Criterion IV. The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

The College has in place a strategic planning process that effectively addresses current and future campus needs. This strategic plan is largely driven by the need to respond to Higher Education Policy Committee mandates through the preparation of institutional compacts with the state. HEPC has delineated four major initiatives: access to high education, academic outcomes, a coordinated higher education delivery system, and contributions to the economic development of West Virginia. Each major initiative is broken down into goals and sub goals, all of which provide an effective framework for the College to address the future through planning. Under access to higher education, for instance, Bluefield State is to work with high schools to increase student preparation for college, offer more developmental courses, expand educational services to adults, keep tuition and fees at competitive levels with peer institutions, and ensure full student access to financial aid. Goals are set and measured in one-two year and six year frameworks.
Overall the campus has been successful in attaining its short-term outcomes and is well on its way to meeting longer-term outcomes. The plan is updated regularly and is comprehensive in nature. It does not appear, however, that the results of student learning assessment play a significant role in the development or revision of the plan. Under academic outcomes, for example, HEPC calls upon the College to create an independently accredited community and technical college at Beckley, to improve the higher education experience and qualifications of students by ensuring students complete degrees in a timely fashion, increase the productivity and compensation of faculty, staff, and administrators, and to “enhance higher education effectiveness and student learning through assessment.” Yet sub goals call only for improving the passage rate on Praxis and national licensure exams and to maintain and expand when possible the number of nationally accredited programs. The team believes the institution has not sufficiently “closed the loop” between planning and assessment and that significant improvements to the planning process can be made if the College begins to use assessment results in conjunction with campus planning.

Nonetheless, HEPC initiatives and the resulting campus master plan, provide a sound structured assessment process and basis for future planning and involve a broad cross section of the campus community: the Institutional Board of Governors, the College Council, the Joint Academic Affairs Committee, the Faculty and Classified Senates, alumni, and community advisory boards. This process appears to be more than just a response to HEPC initiatives. The Master Plan demonstrates how the campus will fulfill HEPC initiatives, but also addresses issues such as campus resource needs, governance, and programmatic directions. During the past five years, for instance, Bluefield State
College has used program reviews and citizen advisory board input to eliminate or consolidate a number of programs, while adding six new associate degree programs in response to the expressed needs of business and industry.

As indicated elsewhere in this team report, Bluefield State College’s physical facilities are well maintained and sufficient to the success of its mission. The achievements of the past decade in campus renovations and upgrades, as well as in meeting ADA requirements, demonstrate the capability of campus to respond, even with limited resources. Future plans, which are based upon a facilities improvement plan through 2007, includes $1.2 million to improve campus roads, sidewalks, and parking, $575,000 to increase ADA access and parking, and upgrades to the business, administration, physical education, science, and student union buildings at a cost of over two million dollars. The plan also calls for the creation of another electronic classroom at a cost of $400,000.

The campus, as outlined elsewhere in this report has a strong technology infrastructure. Instructionally the campus is well served by its IVN and microwave, systems and its technology enhanced classrooms, all of which provide the means to deliver courses to various sites (including Beckley and Lewisburg). The campus technology plan provides for the systematic replacement of all computers and printers on a four-year schedule. An improved fiber optic network links all campus buildings. The Banner Student Information system links the Beckley and Lewisburg sites with Bluefield campus. Nonetheless, as indicated earlier in this report, improved communication between campus groups and between the Bluefield campus and the Beckley and Lewisburg sites should be addressed.
Financial issues loom large as Bluefield faces the future. Campus resources are managed in a sound and conservative manner, with substantial funds balances carried forth from one-year to the next to prepare for unforeseen contingencies. The low level of state funding will continue to be a crucial issue. To a large extent the campus has been highly successful in obtaining grants to offset this low level of funding. At this stage, however, a number of vital campus positions are funded through grants. Grants also fund a number of programs, such as in student support, outreach, and instructional development, and significant portions of the technology on campus. The danger is, of course, what will the campus do if their grant sources start to dry up? The College needs to have a plan of action if funding dries up. The Institutional Board of Governors and the campus administration must continue to work to increase state funding. There is also the challenge of expanding campus private fund raising efforts.

Even with positions funded from grants, human resources are at a minimal level. With 76 full-time faculty members (including four at Beckley and six at Lewisburg), the campus is staffed minimally. The current need for additional faculty at Beckley and Lewisburg will only increase as programs at both of those sites continue to expand, especially if Beckley becomes an independently accredited community college. Administrative and staff shortages are a concern too. Too many people fill more than one major administrative role. Consequently they spread too thinly to operate at maximum effectiveness in any of these roles.

Enrollment will be an issue as the College faces the future. Bluefield State College has made notable gains, including increasing minority enrollments, in face of substantial population decline in service area. The campus has employed or is
contemplating employing a number of approaches to the enrollment challenge. These include: construction of student housing, increasing scholarship dollars, expanding their recruitment area, adding academic programs, expanding tech prep and high school dual enrollments, intensifying efforts with non-traditional students, and various initiatives to improve retention. However, the team sees the need to bring all of these efforts together in a coordinated strategy that will clearly identify goals and coordinated strategies involving groups from across campus to achieve those goals. As a part of this effort the campus needs to develop measures of success in fulfilling goals. Strategies must be realistic. Is expanding recruitment area realistic without additional resources for the Admissions Office? Given the current shortage of faculty, is it realistic to develop new programs without additional resources or the elimination or reduction of current programs?

**Criterion V. The institution demonstrates integrity in practices and relationships.**

The College has developed strong relationships with other institutions of higher education throughout the state and region. In recognition of its status as a historically black institution, the College works closely with other historically black colleges and is actively involved in preserving its own rich history as well as that of black colleges in general. The College has also developed student-friendly articulation agreements with a significant number of northern Virginia and West Virginia public and private colleges. These articulations are well documented and available for student use. They are designed to assist students who are transferring out as well as those who are transferring in and are available on-line to faculty who wish to use them for advising purposes. It does appear
that a few of the articulation agreements are getting older and may be in need of an update.

The College has an effective athletic department. While it is a challenge to provide a competitive athletic program at a four-year school with no residence halls, the College does just that. In addition to its competitiveness, the College demonstrates ethical recruiting tactics, a sincere desire to meet NCAA requirements, and an excellent student success rate as measured by a graduation rate approximately twice that of the non-athlete student population and one of the highest in West Virginia.

Bluefield State College has a clearly defined grievance policy and procedures that are spelled out in the Faculty Handbook. This policy applies to all public higher education employees in West Virginia. State Code requires the filing of a grievance form and delineates the steps and procedures to follow, along with timelines. Nevertheless, the team was concerned about the number and substance of complaints from faculty and staff regarding hiring, performance evaluation, promotion, and termination practices. This concern was heightened by the fact that the College’s self-study report did not mention any of these situations. While specific complaints are difficult to chase down during a team’s short visit, the team does believe a lack of consistency is a significant contributor to employee dissatisfaction with the above functions of the college. In the area of performance evaluation, it is apparent that some areas routinely evaluate while others do not. At the time of the visit, about 50% of the prior year employee evaluations had not been submitted despite the fact that the due date has come and gone. Finally, it appears that no one on the President’s Administrative Staff has been evaluated in the past few years. Therefore, although not identified in the College’s self-study, the team is
Concerned with complaints expressed by various campus constituencies regarding hiring, performance evaluation, promotion, and termination practices.

The team discovered as well that the College is currently under a voluntarily agreed to five-year plan to report its hiring efforts to the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Higher Education and that, in the past year, this agency was not satisfied with the efforts made by the college. The Office required a response to their concern and provided adequate time for the response to be prepared. In spite of this, the College faxed its response on the due date in order to make certain it did not fail to meet the deadline. Of significant concern to the team is that no mention of this mandated five-year monitoring is made in the self study. The team believes the College should view this issue as critical. It should have been detailed in the self-study, especially given the College’s pride in its role as a historically black institution. Accordingly, the campus must continue and intensify its efforts to increase ethnic and gender diversity among faculty, staff, and administration, and ethnic diversity among its students.
Section Four: Advice and Suggestions

1. The team urges caution in responding to the mandate to create an independently accredited community and technical college at Beckley. Accreditation and cost issues require a detailed analysis.

2. The team advises the College’s Board of Institutional Governors, administration, faculty, and staff to remain focused on achieving its core purposes and not to allow the current state of uncertainty regarding potential changes mandated by the State of West Virginia to interfere with its day-to-day operations.

3. Every effort should be made to clarify and communicate the purposes and opportunities of the professional development program to faculty and staff.

4. Private fund raising, especially for student scholarship dollars, should receive an increased emphasis. The College should also clearly define the roles of the Research Economic and Development Corporation, the Bluefield State College Foundation, and the Greenbrier Community College Foundation to avoid conflicts in fund raising.

5. While recognizing the need for prompt responses in creating certificate and associate degree programs, faculty should be involved and the campus informed of the development of these programs.
6. While the College’s student retention rates compare favorably to national figures, the College should consider responding to possible enrollment declines by developing a coordinated enrollment management/retention strategy.

7. While the College has been successful in its efforts to partially offset its low level of funding by securing grant funding on a substantial scale, the team urges the College to take steps to reduce the number of important positions funded through grants.

8. Campus communications should be improved. All campus committees, for instance, should distribute minutes of their meetings when appropriate. Campus e-mail provides an efficient medium for transmitting information. Communications to the Beckley and Lewisburg sites should be improved as well.
Section Five: Strengths and Concerns

Strengths:

1. The team commends the College community's understanding and enthusiastic support of its unique role, especially through its two-plus-two programs, in providing a seamless educational opportunity to students that positions the institution to respond to the educational and economic needs of southwestern West Virginia.

2. The number of professionally accredited programs and the effective assessment of student learning that takes place in these programs are an institutional strength.

3. The team commends the College's use of technology in all respects, and its effective replacement schedules.

4. Despite its low level of funding, the College makes very effective use of its resources and has been very successful in obtaining grants.

5. All members of the campus community are dedicated to providing students from first generation and low-income backgrounds with the educational opportunity to significantly improve their standard of living and increase their understanding of the world around them.
6. While driven largely by the need to respond to Higher Education Policy Committee mandates through the Institutional Compacts, the campus planning process addresses current and future campus needs.
Concerns:

1. The baccalaureate majors in social science, humanities, applied science, the Regents Bachelor of Arts degree, and the new Liberal Studies associate degree must develop more effective means of assessing student learning. Capstone courses are a positive step, but an effective assessment program, in response to Higher Learning Commission standards, must involve multiple forms of assessment. The team regards this issue as a serious one, and for that reason is calling for the campus to submit a monitoring report within two years that demonstrates how these programs have created a system to assess student learning that fulfills Higher Learning Commission expectations.

2. Although not identified in the College’s Self-Study Report, the team is concerned with complaints expressed by various campus constituencies regarding hiring, performance, evaluation, promotion, and termination practices.

3. Courses in general studies should be linked directly to the learning objectives and goals listed in the College catalog for the general studies program.

4. The College needs to address the need for additional full-time faculty, especially at the Beckley and Lewisburg sites.

5. Although concerns expressed by the Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education were not included in the College’s
Self-Study Report, the College must continue and intensify its efforts to increase ethnic and gender diversity among faculty, staff, and administration, and ethnic diversity among its students.
Section Six: Team Recommendations and Rationale

Recommendations

The team recommends the continued accreditation of Bluefield State College, with the next comprehensive visit in ten years and with a monitoring report on assessment to be submitted within two years, on the attached Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status.

Rationale

The team's recommendation is based in part upon the Bluefield State College Self-Study report and supporting documentation. Team discussions with the Institutional Board of Governors, the Chair and the Chancellor of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, faculty, students, staff, community members and alumni also provided a basis for the team recommendation. The team believes the College has met the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for accreditation.

The College is effectively fulfilling its role in providing an effective, career oriented education to students who overwhelmingly come from disadvantaged economic backgrounds. Student enrollments, including those of ethnic minorities, have increased in the face of declines throughout the state. In the process it is, as community leaders indicated through strong, supportive testimony, playing a critical role in promoting economic development in an economically depressed area. The entire campus community is strongly dedicated to this role. The successful performance of students on the licensure examinations of the nationally accredited programs provides still another
indication that the campus is successful in reaching its goals. Moreover, as program offerings at the Beckley and Lewisburg sites indicate, as well as course offerings elsewhere in its service areas, the College attempts, within the limitations of its resources, to respond to needs throughout its service area. Moreover, through entities such as the Economic and Research Development Corporation, the College is taking a direct role in several phases of economic development.

While the campus is under funded, the College manages its financial resources in an effective manner and has been highly successful in obtaining additional funding through grants. Partly as a result of grant funding, the campus is well equipped in all forms of technology. Administrative structures are clearly defined and effective. On the whole the physical plant is well maintained, with very little in the way of deferred maintenance. Moreover, the College has completed significant renovations and upgrades in its buildings during the past decade.

The College has also responded successfully to the mandates from the Higher Education Policy Commission. The College’s response to the short and long term goals of the HEPC, as well as its own planning efforts, position the campus to confront the challenges of the coming decade.

The team is recommending that Bluefield State submit a written monitoring report on assessment for the humanities, social science, applied science, Regents Bachelor of Arts, and the Liberal Studies programs. These programs have taken only the most tentative steps in the direction of assessing student learning in their majors. The monitoring report must demonstrate that these academic programs have adopted a system to assess student academic achievement that fulfills the stated expectations of the Higher
Learning Commission. If the institution fails to file an acceptable plan, the team recommends the Commission conduct a focused visit. The team wishes to point out, however, that all other College programs have effective measures for assessing student achievements in learning.
WORKSHEET FOR STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

INSTITUTION: BLUEFIELD STATE COLLEGE  
219 Rock St.  
Bluefield, WV 24701

TYPE OF REVIEW: Continued Accreditation

DATE OF THIS REVIEW: February 11, 2002 — February 13, 2002

COMMISSION ACTION:

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TO BE CHANGED BY THE COMMISSION OFFICE

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS: None.

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NEW DEGREE SITES:  No prior Commission approval required for offering existing degree programs at new sites within the state.

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CONTINGENCY REPORTS REQUIRED: None.

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<td><strong>Recommended Wording:</strong> NONE.</td>
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OTHER VISITS REQUIRED: None.

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TO BE CHANGED BY THE COMMISSION OFFICE

NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2001-02.

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<td><strong>Recommended Wording:</strong> 2011-12.</td>
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