REPORT OF A CHANGE VISIT

TO

EAST CENTRAL COLLEGE
Union, Missouri


FOR

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

EVALUATION TEAM

Dr. Kathy Brock, Chief Academic Officer,
Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Moorhead, MN 56560

Jeralyn J. Jargo, Vice President
Century College, White Bear Lake, MN
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ASSURANCE SECTION

Part I: Context and Nature of Visit

A. Purpose of Visit: Requested Change

The purpose of the visit to East Central College was to review its request for a Substantive Change to offer online programming at Level 3 where the institution would be approved under Commission Policy to offer up to 100% of its total degree programs in a distance delivery format.

B. Accreditation Status

Accredited

C. Institutional Context

East Central College (ECC) is a comprehensive community college offering both transfer and career/technical programing. The College which is located in east central Missouri in the St. Louis metropolitan area has five sights. The main campus is located in Union, Missouri. In addition, ECC also offers classes in Sullivan, Rolla, Washington and Warrenton. Approximately 4,400 students are enrolled in classes each semester at the five locations or through dual credit classes at area high schools. In addition to the Associate of Arts Degree the College offers 25 career/technical Associate of Applied Science Degrees and certificate options which are available for students who intend to immediately enter the workforce.

Although the College had not specifically articulated an intention of expanding its online program delivery it has a history of using technology to increase the accessibility of its offerings to its on-ground students. To accomplish this they have used a combination of internet, ITV and audio-conferencing, often with multiple distance modalities being incorporated within a single program's delivery. With the inclusion of ITV courses in the definition of distance delivery and the changes in the definition of a distance course and distance program ECC found that it needed to submit a Change Request for expanded distance delivery.

D. Special Conditions and Contractual and Consortia Arrangements

None

E. Approvals Obtained

No approvals are required prior to implementation of this proposed change.
F. Interactions with Institutional Constituencies

President
Vice President of Instruction
Vice President of Finance
Vice President of Student Development
Division Chairs (5)
Faculty (17)
Registrar
Students (12)
Director of Financial Aid
Director of Admissions
Director of Institutional Research
Developmental Studies Coordinator
IT Director
Library Director
Learning Center Director
Book Store Staff (2)
Assessment Committee (9)
Instructional Design Coordinator
Instructional Design Specialist

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

Substantive Change Application-Distance Delivery
Statement of Affiliation Status
Organizational Profile
Institutional Update 2011-2012, 2012-2013
AQIP Review Panel on Reaffirmation Recommendations 2010-2011
Sample Online Courses (Web). https://moodle.eastcentral.edu
East Central College AQIP Systems Portfolio
East Central College 2011-12 Fact Book
East Central College 2012-2013 Fact Book
Operating Budget FY 2014
Operating Budget FY 2012
Faculty Handbook Academic Year 2012-2013
Faculty Handbook Academic Year 2013-2014
Assessment Report 2009
Assessment Report 2010
Adjunct Faculty Manual 2012-2013
Adjunct Faculty Manual 2013-2014
Online Teaching and Learning @ East Central College-
Resource Manual for Faculty and Staff
https://www.facebook.com/EastCentral
http://www.eastcentral.edu/instructional_technology/student_resources.html (Moodle Help)
Part II: Evaluation of Documentation Supporting Institution’s Request for Change

A. Commitment to, preparation for, and fit of the proposed change to the institution

a. East Central College (ECC) is well underway in updating its mission documents and its strategic plan. The College has completed the review and rewrite of its Mission, Vision and Values statements. They are currently in the process of finalizing their goals, objectives and draft strategies for their Strategic Plan which will be taken to the Board of Trustees late spring. Included in the Strategic Plan is the reference to “developing online options”. The President indicated that once the Strategic Plan is approved the College can move forward in planning for online and integrating it into the budgeting process.

b. In discussion with administrators, faculty, and staff a clear, specific strategic
goal for distance delivery and virtual learning was not articulated. Although faculty is aware of a reference to online in the revised Strategic Plan some are unsure as to where it came from or the specific implications of its inclusion.

c. In the submission of the Substance Change Application, it was identified that the College has 20% to 25% of their programs meeting the Higher Learning Commission’s definition for distance delivered courses. In reviewing the programs identified and speaking with the faculty and college administration, it became obvious that this has occurred as the result of the sum of a small number of programs which are using a variety of technology including ITV, internet, and adobe-connect. Also, with the recent change in the definition of “online program” by the Higher Learning Commission, the college finds it has a number of programs identified as online that were not specifically targeted to an online student population. It is the perception of the College community that most students who are online students are also on-ground students simply taking an online section for convenience.

As the distance learning curriculum matures, and potentially grows, the College may need to expand its current perception that online courses are only supplemental to on-campus instruction. Specific strategic and programmatic planning to address completely online programs should be considered and evaluated not only identifying instructional needs, but also appropriate access to the full complement of student support services.

d. The College has demonstrated its commitment to the change through investment in professional development. Training exists for faculty that includes a summer institute mandatory for faculty new to delivering learning through distance education. In addition, the instructional technology staff provides one-on-one support as needed for online and ITV delivery. Faculty spoke highly of the opportunity to learn from the instructional design staff and from each other especially at the summer workshop.

B. Capacity for Implementing and sustaining the change(s)

a. ECC has an Instructional Design Department which administers the College’s learning management system (Moodle LMS). This department which consists of the Instructional Design Coordinator and the Instructional Design Specialist provide helpdesk support for faculty, students and staff who are either involved with online or ITV courses. On a reoccurring basis throughout the visit, faculty identified the quality service provided by this department as one of the strongest assets at the College in support of expansion of distance education.

b. East Central College is providing training in the high paying field of Occupational Therapy. As a result of the Missouri Health Professions Consortium, which includes the University of Missouri, ECC, and three additional community colleges cost sharing is occurring. This allows ECC to provide this very expensive program, something it may not have been able to do as a single college.

c. Effective change requires a balance that recognizes successful practices of the past yet is aware of the potential as a result of change and innovation. While the College
has a rather stable faculty with much experience there are also a number of new faculty. The College is supporting new online faculty both through the continued support of the Instruction Design Department and through the repetition of the summer workshop.

d. Budget and financial practices are in place to support the change including putting in place a 3-year technology plan. The Budget Report reflects an increased investment in technology with upgrades to servers and VOIP. The finance department has a stated goal of having the technology in place to fully support teaching and learning in whatever modality is needed.

e. The Learning Center and Library services are available for students with access through email and phone calls. Tutors receive formal training. Through MOBIUS, students can obtain access to over 17 million books at 67 sites with delivery by courier within two to three days.

C. Strategies for systematically monitoring and evaluating the effects, performance, and/or quality of the change(s)

a. Although data is being combined with intuitive knowledge of distance delivery at the course and department levels, data is not being used institution-wide to make strategic institutional decisions. A systematic, comprehensive plan for monitoring of major variables related to distance education should be developed with data being shared and analyzed for institutional planning and budgeting.

b. Specific methods for gathering input from students regarding distance education need to be in place. Current course evaluations do not speak to the distance methodology. Student interviews revealed that students have concerns and suggestions regarding their own education. The group was excited to be asked for input. Students are a valuable resource in evaluating the effectiveness of online courses and the College would benefit from a broader base of student input.

c. The East Central College Assessment Report provides evidence that the College has the capability to obtain data related to its students’ profile and activities. While changes in delivery have been made in specific cases such as the biology lecture offerings, there is not demonstration of consistent collection or use of data-informed decision making relative to online offerings. There was no evidence that the pockets of information collected are being widely communicated or made part of the institutional decision making. Information should be identified to inform the three year Strategic Plan for online teaching and learning at East Central College.

D. Strategies for addressing strengths, challenges, or strategic issues (especially those previously identified by the Commission) related to the change(s)

a. ECC has gone to great lengths in defining the vocabulary of distance education and in their online faculty handbook have clarified the differences in expectations between web-online, web enhanced and web hybrid. At the course level students
can obtain specifics of course location expectations through the course scheduling information on the web-site. The College appears however to be lacking in the providing of similar expectations at the program level. The team was not able to identify either through program pages or on the web site whether a program has been developed for on-ground or distance delivery. Students from the Health Information Program identified that they assumed they were enrolling in an on-campus program and only learned it had switch to an online program when they went to register and found no on-campus courses. Although the College may have been aware they were making this transition this information should be available to students.

E. Potential positive or negative effects of the change(s) on other institutional operations

a. East Central College if very focused on serving its local community. There are multiple potential positive effects for ECC as a result of offering an increasing number of online programs. The first is their ability to better serve students who cannot come to campus or have family and job demands. Distance delivery addresses the College’s identified desire to increase accessibility for students.

b. A second potential effect for ECC in an increased enrollment and increased revenue generated through additional tuition. Given the decreased enrollment from 93,012 to 77,298 credit hours from 2010 to 2013, this increased revenue would be to the advantage to the College.

c. As the College works toward enhanced services for online students, it will by default increase the flexibility of services for on-ground students. Conversations and development related to online programing by default will enhance the level of conversation across the campuses if the College strives to develop a common level of service and understanding for all their students.

d. The College is in the process of doing a Web audit. This has the potential of reviewing the strengths and challenges of the site including upgrading the on-line presence of the College through visual design and usability. It also presents the opportunity to actively market the distance education opportunities that ECC has for students. The students’ commitment or need for travel to campus for specific programs can be clearly articulated as part of that upfront information.

e. Increasing the distance education opportunities for students including fully online programs, if that is the direction the College takes, presents an opportunity to have student services become fully online including application, registration, orientation, advisement, and graduation.

F. Quality standards

a. In conversations with the Division Chairs it became obvious that quality distance delivery had been identified as a priority and that if at any time these academic
leaders felt quality was not there they felt comfortable and supported in removing that class from their online offerings.

b. ECC has supported six faculty members to take part in Quality Matters Training. These individual along with other college members have developed the template for an in-house Quality Virtual Education Review which was based on principles similar to QMT. Although still in its draft format the review considers the organization of the course, the statement of course objectives, a varied course content, a flexible course design, instructor/student communication and feedback, and collaborative learning. Additionally it specifies course technology criteria, and course structure and organization criteria.

c. Student desire for learning and success with in their program was demonstrated by a number of students in the HIM program who have formed their own study group, meeting on a regular basis at an off campus location.

d. The College has worked to define distance learning course options. These are published in Online Teaching and Learning @ East Central College: A Resource Manual for Faculty and Staff. Faculty and staff discussed these terms and opportunities in the interviews so these definitions are shared knowledge for the College. Students, however, did not seem to be made aware of the fact that the degree they were enrolling in was online rather than on-ground until they went to register for a specific course. Also, this information is not a current part of the program fact sheet nor is it included in the Web information at the award level. Quality standards should relate to all components of the distance education program, including the dissemination of clear information to students.

Part III: Recommendation and Rationale

A. Recommendation

The Team recommends the approval of the request by East Central College to offer additional degrees and certificates online up to a level 3 or 100% of course offerings.

B. Rationale for the Team's Recommendation

A review of the percentage of degrees which would be online, which is 22.6%, supports their request for a designation of level three, given their current level two approval is for up to 20% of the total degree programs to be offered distance delivery.

The College has demonstrated its commitment to the offering of quality online courses. Their efforts are impressive. Budget and staff are appropriate to support their level of online courses and their current target population which is local students.

C. Other Accreditation Issues

None
Part IV: Statement of Affiliation Status

A. Affiliation Status
   No Change

B. Nature of Institution
   No Change

C. Conditions of Affiliation
   No Change

D. Monitoring
   Progress Report:
   Yes

Monitoring recommendation of the visiting Team is the completion of a progress report to be submitted to the Higher Learning Commission by July 1, 2016 specific to online delivery.

The Team recognizes that it is the combination of instructional delivery via ITV, online and by audio-conferencing (at a minimal level) that has resulted in the Change Request by ECC. Although all three delivery methods are identified as falling under the single definition of distance delivery each by its very structure requires the consideration of different elements to guarantee quality instruction and support services.

In the Substantive Change Application the College identified two factors contributing to the need for expanded distance delivery authority—one the inclusion of ITV under the definition of distance delivery, and second the increase in the offerings via ITV. Although the inclusion of this delivery modality undoubtedly did have an impact the Team noted that the number of students enrolled in ITV dropped from 402 to 65 between 2009-10 and 2013-14 and the number of credit hours taken dropped from 1,515 to 186 during that same time span. Review of instructional delivery and student support for these students who are attending either the main campus or one of the College’s sites is established.

Although the College indicated no expected increase in enrollment via distance delivery, looking at their own data, it could be expected that there may be a continual increase in either online offerings or students enrolled in existing online programs. Although gradual, there has been a general growth both in students and in credits taken online. In 2011-12 there were 5,876 on-line credit hours. That number was 7,415 in 2013-14.

The Team is not recommending that East Central change its vision on the role online education will play at the College and recognizes that the College at this time is indicating that its plans focus on serving their on-campus students, not students who may be of some distance from the College. However students who take online courses will have expectations related to what it means to be registered in an online course. The College demonstrated that it is a very "helping" institution and that it would be willing to work with
an individual student to meet their needs. However, with the recommendation of approval for up to 100% of all programs being online, the College needs to demonstrate that the structures are in place to support a totally online program should they change their perspective related to online delivery or to serve a student at a distance from all their campus sites. The College demonstrated that it has in place systems for assurance of quality instruction, what is less certain is how the College would provide other services and support to the online student should the number and type of students taking online courses increase. Also the College’s Strategic Plan references online education yet what this statement implies in not defined and shared with faculty and staff.

Thus although the team is recommending approval of the original request they are also indicating a recommendation of a progress report. That report is to include the following information:

A. Data and analysis of trend in student enrollment in online courses.
B. Data and analysis of trend in students taking online courses.
C. Identification of the mean the College is using to articulate to potential students on-line vs on-ground programs.
D. Summary comments on the College’s current philosophy on the role of online education at the College; and
D. Either a comprehensive outline of the systems the college has in place for the serving students in an online course at a distance and the means they use to share that information with students (examples: online registration, orientation, book delivery, tutoring services) OR copies of information the College uses to communicate to students prior to their enrollment in online sections the expectation that they will need to come to campus for services.

Monitoring Report

None

Contingency Report:

None

Other visits scheduled.

None

D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

None

F. Summary of Commission Review

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation 2010-2011

Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation 2017-2018
ADVANCEMENT SECTION

I. OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

East Central College is responding to the needs of their students. In moving to distance delivery they have focused on implementing methodology that would meet those needs.

The College is committed to student success and quality instruction. Faculty take advantage of training opportunities related to distance delivery including involvement with Quality Matters. The College also provides accessible, much valued surpport though the Instruction Design Department.

The College, having identified online delivery within it’s new strategic plan, and having sought approval for expanded distance delivery is at the critical point of identifying and articulating its future vision for online delivery.

II. CONSULTATION OF THE TEAM

Although both the College’s ITV classes and on-line courses are considered a part of distance delivery from the perspective of HLC it may serve the college well to maintain a distinction between the two in communicating with students. The Team feels it is very important that the College is very open, and accurately represents its online offerings. It would be wonderful if there was a common understanding of what is meant when a course is referenced as online or hybrid but that is not the case. In fact it is recognized that there can actually be inconsistent definitions between various agencies at the federal, regional, and state level.

There appears to be barriers at East Central College to the offering of online courses in the area of science and PE. Given the number of colleges which have address this area it is suggested that arrangements be made for faculty from these disciplines to meet with faculty from other colleges were they have been offering online science and PE courses.

Resources that may be helpful include the following:
http://www.sciencecourseware.org/http://www.nature.com/polopoly_fs/1.133831/menu/main/topColumns/topLeftColumn/pdf/499288a.pdf ; Education online: The virtual lab, M.Mitchell Waldrop
; or general web searches for --Virtual Courseware, Biology Labs Online, Geology Labs Online and Virtual Courseware for Earth and Environmental Sciences

In the area of PE the College may first wish to research the level to which this remains a core component/requirement in the two year college curriculum. Should it be determined that it is appropriate to retain this requirement the team believes this would be an
opportunity for the faculty to be creative, and to possibly even link to other wellness and physical fitness initiatives in the community.

The development of distanced delivery is occurring at the department level, thus lacking a concise statement of the Colleges intentions in this area. There is not a College wide vision concerning online delivery. Although there are numerous individuals who support and are knowledgeable of online delivery, they all have multiple areas of responsibility. The college may wish to consider identifying a person who, at least as a part of the role would be the “champion” of the College’s distance program.
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS WORKSHEET

INSTITUTION and STATE: East Central College MO

TYPE OF REVIEW: Distance Delivery

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW: Request for an expansion of distance delivery into bracket three: approval for courses and programs (confirmation).

DATES OF REVIEW: 03/17/2014 - 03/18/2014

☐ No Change in Statement of Affiliation Status

Nature of Organization

CONTROL: Public

RECOMMENDATION:

DEGREES AWARDED: Certificate, Associates

RECOMMENDATION: No Change

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS:
None.

RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS:
The institution has been approved for the Notification Program, allowing the institution to open new additional locations within the United States.

RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES:
Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

The Commission's policies and definitions for distance and correspondence education recently underwent significant change. Some institutions are currently under review to ensure conformity with the revised policies. This entry will be updated in the coming months following completion of that review.

RECOMMENDATION: Approved for Distance Education Courses and Programs.

ACCREDITATION ACTIVITIES:

AQIP, Quality Checkup: 2016 - 2017

AQIP, Systems Appraisal:
Institutional Change, Distance Delivery: 03/17/2014;
Request for an expansion of distance delivery into bracket three: approval for courses and programs (confirmation).

RECOMMENDATION: Progress Report on Distance Delivery Due: July 1, 2016

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION: 2010 - 2011

YEAR FOR NEXT REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION: 2017 - 2018

RECOMMENDATION: No Change
ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE WORKSHEET

INSTITUTION and STATE: 1800 East Central College MO

TYPE OF REVIEW: Institutional Change: Distance Delivery

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW: Request for an expansion of distance delivery into bracket three: approval for courses and programs (confirmation).

☒ No change to Organization Profile

Educational Programs
Programs leading to Undergraduate
Associates
Bachelor

Programs leading to Graduate
Masters
Specialist
Doctors

Certificate programs
Certificate

Program Distribution
31
0

Recommended Change: No Change

Off-Campus Activities:
In State - Present Activity
Campuses: None.

Additional Locations:
East Central College - Rolla Location - Rolla, MO
East Central College - Rolla North - Rolla, MO
East Central College - Sullivan Location - Sullivan, MO
East Central College - Washington Location - Washington, MO

Recommended Change: No Change

Out Of State - Present Activity
Campuses: None.
ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE WORKSHEET

Additional Locations: None.

Recommended Change: No Change

Out of USA - Present Activity
Campuses: None.
Additional Locations: None.

Recommended Change: No Change

Distance Education Programs:
Present Offerings:
Associate 43.0203 Fire Science/Fire-fighting Fire Technology Internet
Certificate 43.0203 Fire Science/Fire-fighting Fire Technology Internet
Associate 52.0302 Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping Accounting Internet
Associate 52.0302 Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping Accounting One-way or Two Way Transmission
Certificate 52.0302 Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping Accounting Internet
Certificate 52.0302 Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping Accounting One-way or Two Way Transmission
Associate 52.0101 Business/Commerce, General Business Management Internet
Associate 52.0101 Business/Commerce, General Business Management One-way or Two Way Transmission
Certificate 52.0101 Business/Commerce, General Business Management Internet
Certificate 52.0101 Business/Commerce, General Business Management One-way or Two Way Transmission
Associate 51.0803 Occupational Therapist Assistant Occupational Therapy Assistant Internet
Associate 51.0803 Occupational Therapist Assistant Occupational Therapy Assistant One-way or Two Way Transmission
Associate 19.0708 Child Care and Support Services Management Early Childhood Education Internet
Associate 51.0707 Health Information/Medical Records Technology/Technician Health Information Technology Internet
Associate 51.0707 Health Information/Medical Records Technology/Technician Health Information Technology Audioconferencing
ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE WORKSHEET

Associate 24.0102 General Studies Associate - 24.0102 General Studies Internet

Associate 24.0102 General Studies Associate - 24.0102 General Studies One-way or Two Way Transmission

Recommended Change: No Change

Correspondence Education Programs:
Present Offerings:
None.

Recommended Change: No Change

Contractual Relationships:
Present Offerings:
None.

Recommended Change: No Change

Consortial Relationships:
Present Offerings:
Associate 51.0803 Occupational Therapist Assistant Associate - 51.0803 Occupational Therapist Assistant (Occupational Therapy Assistant)

Recommended Change: No Change