

SENIOR YEAR PLUS

POSTSECONDARY COURSE AUDIT COMMITTEE

2013-2014



COMMUNITY COLLEGES
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Committee Overview

The Senior Year Plus Postsecondary Course Audit Committee was established by the Iowa Department of Education in May 2009. Mandated by Iowa Code 256.17, the committee is charged with reviewing samples of postsecondary courses delivered through Senior Year Plus programs. Standards for review are established by the committee and approved by the department.

If the committee determines that standards are not met for a concurrent enrollment course, the course is not eligible for school district

supplementary weighted funding until the issue is remedied and the committee reinstates eligibility.

Findings are posted annually on the department's website in the form of this annual report. This annual report also includes the audit plan for fiscal year 2015.

Committee membership includes representatives of K-12 school districts, community colleges, and public universities.

Committee Membership

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Overview

The Senior Year Plus Postsecondary Course Audit Committee is charged with annually auditing postsecondary courses offered to high school students in accordance with Iowa Code Chapter 261E. The committee adopted an efficient process to meet this charge that leverages the mandated audit to ensure community college participation in a larger, sustained quality improvement process. The plan for fiscal years 2010-2015 entailed the beginning of a thorough review of the quality of concurrent enrollment offerings while limiting duplication with existing accountability mechanisms. The initial fiscal year 2010 plan was approved by the director of the Iowa Department of Education in May 2009 and the most recent plan was approved in June 2014.

During the years of the committee's work, the scope of the audit was limited to concurrent enrollment courses (delivered by community colleges). In future years, if provided necessary resources, the scope may be broadened to include other Senior Year Plus offerings including Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), Project Lead the Way, or Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

The committee's review was limited to specific concurrent enrollment standards impacting community colleges and school districts. Review criteria include those stated in Iowa Code 256.17, as well as other criteria in the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnership (NACEP) standards. The charge of the committee is to review course syllabi, instructor qualifications, examples of student products, and the results of student assessments. In total, NACEP utilizes 17 national standards for curriculum, faculty, students, assessment, and program evaluation that encompass the mandated review criteria, as well as other Senior Year Plus requirements (Iowa Code 261E and

256.11) and appropriate practices. NACEP standards are in close alignment with Senior Year Plus requirements, as well as the Standards for Concurrent Enrollment Courses adopted by the community college chief academic officers in 2008. The department prepared a crosswalk which details the alignment between Senior Year Plus requirements and NACEP standards.

To ensure that NACEP standards are met, the organization utilizes an accreditation process. The audit committee has accepted institutions' submission of evidence of obtaining accredited status or adequate progress toward obtaining accredited status to demonstrate audit criteria are met.

The intent of coupling this initiative with the NACEP accreditation process is to leverage the audit committee to incentivize participation in a larger, sustained quality improvement effort. This effort aligns with other accountability mechanisms, including the state accreditation processes for community colleges and school districts. In recent years, those processes have been modified to increase accountability for Senior Year Plus programming.

The NACEP accreditation process involves a rigorous peer review of concurrent enrollment practices to ensure that institutions demonstrate they meet or exceed measurable criteria for each standard. The process includes a self-study and a thorough review by a peer group from accredited institutions which include public two and four-year universities. Once accredited, institutions go through a full reaccreditation process every seven years. Accredited status certifies that courses delivered through concurrent enrollment are the same as other community college courses in terms of faculty credentials, curricula and syllabi, assessment, and learning outcomes.

Past Activities

The PSCAC was convened in May 2009. The initial fiscal year 2010 plan was approved by the director of the Iowa Department of Education later that month.

In May 2010, the audit committee determined that each of Iowa's 15 community colleges were making adequate progress toward attaining NACEP accredited status. All 15 colleges have become full members of NACEP. Following a recommendation of the community college chief academic officers, the Iowa Association of Community College Presidents stated its commitment to the process and having each college obtain accredited status expeditiously.

The audit committee stated in its fiscal year 2011 audit plan if any college failed to make sufficient progress in obtaining NACEP accreditation, a rigorous alternative method for evaluating audit criteria would be implemented. The alternative method would ensure that the standards established by the committee and approved by the department were satisfactorily met. If any courses were found to have failed to meet the committee's standards through the alternative process, the course(s) would be ineligible for future school district supplementary weighted funding. The committee could reinstate course eligibility if corrective action was taken to remedy concerns and bring the course into compliance with the audit criteria within the specified timeframe. All audit findings would be shared with involved institutions and be shared with the public via the department's website.

In May 2011, the audit committee determined that each of Iowa's 15 community colleges continued to make adequate progress toward obtaining accredited status. Des Moines Area Community College sought and obtained

accreditation during the organization's 2009-2010 accreditation cycle (accredited in fall 2010) and the other 14 signed letters of intent to go apply during the 2011-2012 cycle.

A total of 12 Iowa community colleges attained accredited status following completion of the 2011-2012 application cycle.

If any college was not able to obtain accredited status and did not commit to seeking accredited status in the following application cycle (accredited in fall 2013), the audit committee would have reconvened and adopted an alternative method as previously described. This did not occur since the remaining colleges remained committed to obtaining accreditation from NACEP.

According to the fiscal year 2012 audit plan, colleges that were unable to obtain accredited status during the 2011-2012 application cycle were subject to state review. The reviews were limited in scope and focusing on core requirements in Iowa Code 256.17, including instructor qualifications and course syllabi.

Per the fiscal year 2012 audit plan, the department requested additional documentation from each of the three colleges including: the NACEP peer evaluation report identifying deficiencies, the college's plan for addressing identified deficiencies, and a letter reaffirming the institution's commitment to obtaining accredited status.

The department analyzed the documentation. Of the three colleges subject to the review, two provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that they did not violate the Senior Year Plus requirements that would be included in a limited state review. In July 2012, the committee noted these institutions were making

sufficient progress and met expectations for fiscal year 2012.

Iowa Lakes Community College did not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate review requirements were met and was subject to a site visit. During the review of randomly selected records, one instructor teaching at Algona High School was identified as not meeting state minimum faculty standards. While the instructor had a graduate degree in science, the required graduate coursework was not within the area of instruction per Iowa Code 260C.48. Both the college and district immediately addressed the issue. Per Iowa Code 257.16 and the audit plan, the course taught by the previously referenced instructor was not eligible for supplementary weighting. The section of the course delivered at Algona High School was not eligible for the fall 2012 semester. No other issues were identified through the review and in November 2012, the committee noted the college met expectations for fiscal year 2012.

During fiscal year 2013, two of the remaining three community colleges obtained accredited status. Iowa Lakes Community College did not obtain accredited status but remained committed to the process. The committee determined that a mentoring arrangement between Hawkeye Community College and Iowa Lakes Community College would be used to demonstrate the college is meeting standards until its next application is processed. Through the arrangement, Hawkeye Community College identified deficiencies in Iowa Lakes' 2012-2013 NACEP application and provided technical assistance regarding concurrent enrollment program delivery, documentation protocols, and application preparation.

Fiscal Year 2014 Report

Fourteen of the state's 15 community colleges maintained NACEP accredited status.

Iowa Lakes Community College's NACEP accreditation application is scheduled to be submitted by July 1, 2014. The application, including all required evidence, will be audited by a team of at least three peer reviewers from accredited two- and four-year institutions. The review will be completed in April 2015.

The committee reviewed the status of the mentoring arrangement in June 2014 to ensure it was meeting expectations. Hawkeye Community College submitted a report providing a summary of activities including application and documentation reviews, technical assistance, identified deficiencies, adjustments, and more. No substantial compliance issues were identified in documentation prepared for the 2014 application submission.

Standards

Per a unanimous reaffirmation vote of the Postsecondary Course Audit Committee at its June 2014 meeting, the NACEP standards (attached) are the standards by which the committee reviews concurrent enrollment courses. The standards were approved by the Iowa Department of Education.

Fiscal Year 2015 Plan

The fiscal year 2015 plan requires all community colleges to demonstrate that the committee's criteria are met through NACEP accreditation. The institution not yet accredited has been determined to meet committee standards through the completion of the 2014-2015 NACEP accreditation application cycle.

The plan does not provide for an alternative means for demonstrating state standards are met beyond the 2014-2015 application cycle. All community colleges must demonstrate standards are met through NACEP accredited status. Concurrent enrollment courses provided

by institutions without NACEP accredited status will not be eligible for supplementary weighted funding (to school districts) per Iowa Code 256.17. The committee's plan was approved by the Iowa Department of Education in June 2014.

The committee has determined the NACEP accreditation process is effective in ensuring the quality of concurrent enrollment offerings. The committee will continue to review the effectiveness of this process in ensuring the quality of concurrent enrollment in future years. The committee will also continue to review the scope of reviews and consider whether to broaden audits to courses delivered through other Senior Year Plus programs.



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