

Barton is currently in year four of a ten-year Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Accreditation Cycle. Barton is accredited using HLC's Open Pathway model. The Open Pathway is unique in that its improvement component, the Quality Initiative affords institutions the opportunity to pursue improvement projects that meet their current needs and aspirations.

In year four we must demonstrate that we meet the Criteria of Accreditation by preparing an Assurance Filing. The Assurance Filing is comprised of an Assurance Argument and an Evidence File, using HLC's online Assurance System. In this system, we provide narrative making the case that we meet the Criteria of Accreditation.

The Core Team (Elaine Simmons/Leader, Cathie Oshiro, Jo Harrington, Myrna Perkins/Liaison, Randy Thode, Brenda Moreno, Sarah Riegel/Note Taker) is coordinating the collection of evidence and writing of arguments.

Barton will not be receiving an onsite visit in year four. Onsite visit will be in year 10 fall of 2022-2023. Our online HLC review team will be comprised of a VP of Academic Affairs, Director of Accreditation and Quality Initiatives, Professor of Chemistry, Instructor and Director of Assessment.

The final lock date for the online Assurance System is August 14th, 2017.

The Board of Trustees are responsible in the areas stated below.

"...HLC expects the governing board to ensure quality through its governance structures, with appropriate degrees of involvement and delegation. HLC emphasizes planning because planning is critical to sustaining quality. Assessment of student learning and focus on persistence and completion are ways in which the institution improves and thus assures the quality of its teaching and learning." [HLC Webpage](#)

For this round of accreditation Barton is focusing on Criteria of Accreditation and evidence.

The Criteria of Accreditation consist of:

1. Mission - The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.
2. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct - The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.
3. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support - The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.
4. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement - The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.
5. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness - The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Under each of the above criteria is a series of questions followed by a summary, which Barton must answer using evidence to prove we are following sound accreditation guidelines and meet the necessary criteria for continued accreditation.

Below are summary statements from each criterion:

1. Mission

- a. *The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.*

As a public, comprehensive community college, Barton Community College is committed to its mission of providing an educational system that is learning-centered, innovative, meets workforce needs, strengthens communities, and meets the needs of a diverse population.

The College's mission is further articulated through its Core Priorities (Values) and Board ENDS; these documents guide the development of the institutional strategic plan, programs, actions, and fiscal priorities.

2. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

- a. *The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.*

Many policies, procedures, and practices at Barton ensure the college acts in an ethical and responsible manner. To every extent possible, the College is transparent with its financial and budgeting process as well as expectations for the conduct of all representatives. Regular, established communication channels throughout the institutional layers and with external stakeholders act as a reminder of these as well as scheduled, periodic monitoring and other safeguards which are in place to address any institutional or academic integrity issues.

3. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

- a. *The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.*

All degree and certificate programs at Barton meet the rigors and expectations of higher education are consistent with industry standards and expectations. Barton's programs challenge the intellectual growth, acquisition, and application of students. The College employs internal and external processes to assure relevancy, currency, and quality of courses and programs of study across all modes of delivery and all locations.

Barton faculty and staff have credentials that meet or exceed the education and training requirements; with resources put in place to provide support their work, students receive a high-quality education and student services.

To fully comply with the new HLC expectations regarding faculty credentials, the Vice President of Instruction conducted a review of existing hiring policies and instituted new procedures. The narrative provided in 3.C.2 details processes enacted to ensure that the College can meet the deadline for implementation of the new credential requirement.

Barton provides an enriched educational environment through its varied co-curricular programs and opportunities that reinforce classroom learning.

#### 4. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

- a. *The institution demonstrates responsibility for the equality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.*

Barton Community College demonstrates responsibility for quality educational programs through regular curricular program reviews, co-curricular program assessments, external accreditations, and documentation of the success of graduates following degree completion. The institution evaluates all of the credit that it transcripts and has policies that assure rigor and quality of the transfer credit that it accepts.

Barton has processes to maintain and exercise authority over course rigor and prerequisites, expectations for student learning, access to resources, and quality of faculty.

Commitment to students' educational achievement is demonstrated and monitored through an effective, efficient assessment process. The process exhibits an alignment from course competencies to the institutional Fundamental Outcomes. The College articulates well-defined outcomes assessment processes supplemented by regular training and peer support. Qualified leadership, faculty commitment, and institutional support continuous quality improvement.

#### 5. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

- a. *The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.*

Barton allocates its resources in support of its organizational structure and develops processes to fulfill the college's mission, to improve and advance the quality of educational offerings, and to respond to future challenges and opportunities.

The College's strategic planning process is effectively aligned with the Mission, ENDS, Core Priorities (Values), and budget. Key stakeholders including the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and members of the community are encouraged to participate in the process to ensure that the College is meeting its mission.

The budget planning process has matured as evidenced by efforts to align resources and allocations with the Strategic Plan and to create a more transparent process. Increasingly, senior administrators identify and implement processes to integrate data from past performance to prioritize projects for coming years. Examples of these data may include: department/program credit hours, revenues, expenses, majors, retention, and completion.

The development of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) has been a driving force for many of the improved Strategic Planning processes. Significant resources have been allocated to grow IE from an office primarily tasked with collecting and reporting data to one that is more focused on the collection, analysis and interpretation of institutional data to support analysis, assessment, decision-making, management, and planning.

Over the past years we have focused on gathering evidence and writing the assurance argument. As we move past the half way mark in this HLC Accreditation Cycle we will expand our internal teams and begin preparing for the on-site visit in 2022-2023.

Accreditation involves Barton following HLC's procedures. To prepare the college community for the on-site face to face visit Barton will begin expanding accreditation knowledge on the following HLC procedures.

**Guiding Values** - The Higher Learning Commission's Criteria for Accreditation reflect a set of guiding values. HLC articulates these guiding values so as to offer a better understanding of the Criteria and the intentions that underlie them.

The responsibility for assuring the quality of an institution rests first with the institution itself. Institutional accreditation assesses the capacity of an institution to assure its own quality and expects it to produce evidence that it does so.

1. Focus on student learning
2. Education as a public purpose
3. Education for a diverse, technological, globally connected world
4. A culture of continuous improvement
5. Evidence-based institutional learning and self-presentation
6. Integrity, transparency, and ethical behavior or practice
7. Governance for the well-being of the institution
8. Planning and management of resources to ensure institutional sustainability
9. Mission-centered evaluation
10. Accreditation through peer review

#### **Criteria for Accreditation -**

1. Mission - The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.
2. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct - The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.
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**Assumed Practices** – Foundational to the Criteria and Core Components is a set of practices shared by institutions of higher education in the United States. Unlike Criteria and Core Components, these Assumed Practices are (1) generally matters to be determined as facts, rather than matters requiring professional judgment and (2) unlikely to vary by institutional mission or context.

- A. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct
- B. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

- C. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
- D. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

**Quality Initiative** - Focus: Assessment of Student Learning: Engaging in Continuous Improvement

The HLC Quality Initiative started Summer of 2015 and the team members are: Ange Sullivan, Randy Thode, Vic Martin and Jo Harrington.

Outcomes:

- Student Survey tool chosen and implemented
- Barton is using data to improve student learning in a timely manner with automation in place.
- All faculty meetings are held with healthy and robust assessment conversations
- Program level and Co-Curricular outcomes are developed and tied to assessment processes