

Highlights of the 2011 Self-Study Report
Accreditation Team Visit: November 14-16, 2011



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION Accreditation Criteria

Mission and Integrity
Planning for the Future
Student Learning and Effective Teaching
Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge
Engagement and Service

NEBRASKA'S FIRST COLLEGE

PSC was founded as a teacher's college in 1867, the same year that Nebraska became a state. Over the years it broadened its mission until it now offers 13 undergraduate programs with 47 options (including 20 teaching endorsements), 17 minors, 17 pre-professional programs, eight online programs and two Master's degrees. Over the past 10 years almost \$50 million has been invested in the Campus of a Thousand Oaks. More than 45 clubs, organizations, music ensembles, theatre performance opportunities, and athletic teams keep students actively involved throughout the year. PSC is a member of the Nebraska State College System.

MISSION

In educating the individual to the benefit of society, Peru State College cultivates the capacity and propensity for life-long learning by fostering independent inquiry and promoting the value of knowledge and discovery. Through innovative undergraduate and graduate programs, Nebraska's first college continues its commitment to making a vital contribution to the future of the region and the state.

Distinctive Attributes of the College

Strong Academics

It is not just the case that Peru State faculty members are well qualified academically, or that they have actually done what they teach, it is the fact that they *do teach* as much as possible. Academic programs are thoughtfully designed and periodically evaluated to balance the theoretical with the practical and to maximize relevance. Students report being very satisfied with their academic experiences.

Personal Relationships

There is a personal touch at PSC that can be difficult to experience at larger institutions. The student-to-faculty ratio and advising loads support interaction and relationship building. Opportunities for involvement and leadership are more readily accessible, including the opportunity for undergraduate students to work directly with faculty on service, research and creative projects.

Flexibility

Admission requirements are flexible enough to allow students with varying degrees of college preparation the opportunity to pursue higher education. Equally important, transfer and prior learning credit policies are designed to facilitate degree progress without artificial barriers or lost credits. Students are able to complete the most popular degrees online, mix on-campus and online courses, or take advantage of the 2+2+1 schedule (Fridays can be optional for most students) to meet their needs, accelerate their studies, or take advantage of internship and employment opportunities.

Value

Perhaps the College's greatest competitive advantage is the quality of the educational experience relative to the cost. The College offers degree and residence experiences that are among the most affordable in the country. Affordability for non-resident students wishing to study on campus has been enhanced by the One Rate, Any State program, which allows non-residents to attend at Nebraska resident rates. Online students benefit from our cost advantage as well, which is sizeable compared with most alternatives.

Strengths of Peru State College



Mission and Integrity

- Clear mission statement that is published widely, known by most constituencies, and used to guide programs, decisions and planning
- Recognition of the value of diversity and commitment to celebrating and honoring all varieties of diversity including diversity of race, national origin, culture, religion, wealth, ability, perspective, and life experience with a wide array of guest speakers, programs and events
- Recruitment initiatives to attract a diverse population of students, faculty, staff, and administrators to join the campus community
- Innovative programs and activities that allow students to engage, inquire, discover, and apply knowledge
- Competent governance and leadership that promotes integrity, transparency, and accountability to all constituencies and to the public
- Policies and procedures that promote student success, academic integrity, fairness, legal compliance, safety, and prompt and effective resolution of grievances

Planning for the Future

- A robust planning process that included the whole campus community and launched a six-year transformational plan that addresses all major areas of college endeavor, embraces a shared vision, and positions the college for a vibrant future beyond the term of the plan
- An organizational assessment orientation that generates strategies to direct funds to core mission and highest priority programs and provides value and results for student learning and satisfaction
- Sustained and significant investment in physical facilities and technology upgrades during the past ten years
- Demonstrated capacity to accommodate significant increases in demand and other environmental dynamics
- A history of exceptional operational efficiency

Student Learning and Effective Teaching

- Clearly defined goals for student learning for each academic major and for the general studies program
- Robust shared-governance systems that facilitate participation in assessment of student learning and leads to evidence-based decisions
- Appropriate tools for assessing student learning and effective teaching and a cultural orientation toward the use of this information down to the individual student level
- Assessment results indicating that PSC students achieve on par with students in peer institutions and are prepared for advanced college work and life-long learning
- A culture that celebrates and rewards effective teaching and use of engaging and innovative practices that result in student achievement
- A commitment to student development in co-curricular and residential programs and innovation in design of such programs

Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

- A culture that supports and recognizes acquisition and application of knowledge by faculty, staff and students in a manner consistent with the teaching mission
- Policies, practices, programs, and resource allocations that demonstrate the institution values a life of learning, responsible research, intellectual property, and academic freedom
- Opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to engage in primary research and creative activities with faculty mentors

Engagement and Service

- Opportunities for students to engage with society in formal and informal ways including practicums, internships, service learning, and volunteer activities
- Partnerships, campus-based activities and events that enhance the student experience while opening the campus for community use and benefit

Strategies for Improvement

- 1) Develop a long-term funding and human resource acquisition strategy to sustain quality and support defined and to be developed student engagement initiatives and increased prominence of the College.
- 2) Strategically communicate College strengths, distinctiveness, and successes to sustain enrollments.
- 3) Foster engaged learning and achievement through studying best practices and supporting professional development and program innovation.
- 4) Revise and enhance the general studies program to clarify objectives and increase focus on critical thinking and engagement of students.
- 5) Continue technology upgrades and provide enhanced training, support and expertise to assist in use of technology in on-campus and online courses, and to improve services to students.
- 6) Assess academic advising provided to students and improve advising services, practices and systems.
- 7) Continue efforts to recruit diverse learners and members of the College workforce.
- 8) Improve assessment of campus events and programs to allow for better evaluation of the value of these programs to students and members of the community.

Questions?

Questions regarding the self-study process can be directed to Christy Hutchison, Self-Study Steering Committee Chair, 872-2421 or chutchison@peru.edu.