



## Substantive Change Application Distance Delivery

### Background Information on Distance Delivery<sup>1</sup>

Higher Learning Commission (HLC) policies outline when institutions need to notify the Commission about distance-delivered instruction and when they need to seek approval. (See policy 3.2(a) and the information below.)

This document defines the characteristics of distance delivery, specifies when institutions must notify the Commission or seek approval for distance delivery, and provides the form for seeking approval.

#### Commission Definitions for Distance-Delivered Courses and Programs

The Higher Learning Commission uses the following definitions for the purpose of applying its policy on distance delivery to its accredited and candidate institutions:

- Distance-delivered **courses** are those in which all or the vast majority (typically 75% or more) of the instruction and interaction occurs via electronic communication, correspondence, or equivalent mechanisms, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other.
- Distance-delivered **programs** are those certificate or degree programs in which 50% or more of the required courses may be taken as distance-delivered **courses**.

#### Reporting and Seeking Approval for Distance-Delivered Offerings

The chart below identifies the Percentage Brackets for determining the scope of distance delivery by an institution. The Commission determines the appropriate Percentage Bracket for each institution. Such determination is based on information provided by the institution in its Annual Institutional Data Update to the Commission or when it seeks and receives approval of a proposed change.

Percentage Bracket	Percentage of Distance-Delivered Offerings (calculations are based on degree programs, not certificates)
3	Up to 100% of total degree programs
2	Up to 20% of total degree programs
1	Initiation of distance-delivered offerings up to 5% of total degree programs
0	No degree programs or more than four certificate programs (Commission policy does permit the institution to offer up to four certificate programs as well as a limited number of courses leading to degree programs through distance education or correspondence education without seeking prior approval.)

Higher Learning Commission policy requires an institution to seek the Commission's prior approval if the institution plans to **initiate** or **expand** its distance-delivered offerings as described below. When initiation or expansion is anticipated, an institution must submit a substantive change request using the forms contained in this document.

**Initiation** occurs and a review is required when the institution:

- plans to initiate its first distance education degree program, even when it has been approved to offer distance education certificates or correspondence education degree programs or certificates;
- plans to initiate its first correspondence education degree program, even when it has been approved to offer correspondence education certificates or distance education degree programs or certificates;
- has initiated four distance education certificates and plans to initiate a fifth, unless the institution has already been reviewed and approved to offer one or more distance education degree programs; or
- has initiated four correspondence education certificates and plans to initiate a fifth, unless the institution has already been reviewed and approved to offer one or more correspondence education degree programs.

**Expansion** occurs and a review is required when the institution:

- plans to increase its current activity in distance education degree programs or its current activity in correspondence education degree programs to a higher Percentage Bracket.

In addition, the Commission may require a substantive change evaluation if the institution:

- has never had a focused review of distance or correspondence degree or certificate programs and is offering one or more programs or five or more certificates; or
- has a significant annual increase in enrollment.

In addition to reviewing distance-delivered courses and programs through its substantive change processes, the Commission evaluates delivery whenever it comprehensively reviews an institution. In these comprehensive reviews, the Commission examines the institution's capacity to provide education to its students and the quality of its performance in doing so, whether via distance delivery or traditional face-to-face modes. Comprehensive reviews examine curriculum, staffing, support services, access to appropriate laboratory and library resources, and all other facets of quality higher education.

## Questions

For general questions on approval of distance-delivered programs, send an e-mail to [changerequests@hlcommission.org](mailto:changerequests@hlcommission.org) or call 800-621-7440 x137. For institution-specific questions, contact the Commission staff liaison assigned to the institution by calling 800-621-7440 and asking to be transferred to the liaison.

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<sup>1</sup> Wherever distance delivery is mentioned throughout this document it means distance or correspondence delivery. The following are the Federal definitions (2009) of distance and correspondence education:

Correspondence education means:

- (1) Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor.
- (2) Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student.
- (3) Correspondence courses are typically self-paced.
- (4) Correspondence education is not distance education.

Distance Education means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include:

- (1) The internet;
- (2) One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines,

- fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;
- (3) Audio conferencing; or
  - (4) Video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3).

**Substantive Change Application, Part 1: General Questions**  
**Distance Delivery**

*Note: Wherever distance delivery is mentioned it means distance or correspondence delivery.*

**Institution:** \_\_\_\_\_ Colorado Northwestern Community College  
\_\_\_\_\_ Craig **City, State:** Colorado \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of person completing this application:** \_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Pamela Gardner \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Submitted:**  
05/14/2012

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_ Dean of Instruction, Craig Campus \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** 970-824-1111 \_\_\_\_\_  
**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_ pamela.gardner@cnc.edu \_\_\_\_\_

The questions are designed to elicit brief, succinct, detailed information, rather than a narrative or references to extensive supporting documents. Do not attach other documents unless they are specifically requested in the questions.

The total submission should be no more than 10-12 pages on a single classification of change. The submission should be no more than 20 pages total on an application addressing multiple change requests.

Submit the completed application as a single electronic document (in Adobe PDF format) emailed to [changerequests@hlcommission.org](mailto:changerequests@hlcommission.org).

**Requested Change(s).** *Concisely describe the change for which the institution seeks approval.*

Please Note: If submitting a change request for a new program *and* distance offerings or a new program *and* location, the institution should submit the New Program Application. Otherwise an institution submitting more than one change request should complete multiple applications, one for each type of change.

CNCC seeks approval to add a Small Business Management AAS degree to its distance education offerings using the Virtual Classroom (synchronous) platform, which would be followed with a limited number of additional degree programs over the next five years. The Small Business Management degree has been approved through the Colorado Community College System, and any additional degrees offered through the Virtual Classroom would have prior state approval.

**Classification of Change Request.** Check all boxes that apply to the change.

*Note: not every institutional change requires prior review and approval. Review the [“Overview of Commission Policies and Procedures for Institutional Changes Requiring Commission Notification or Approval”](#) to make certain that current HLC policy requires the institution to seek approval.*

**Change in mission or student body:**

- change in mission
- change in student body

**New academic program(s) requiring HLC approval:**

- certificate
- diploma
- associate's
- bachelor's
- master's/specialist
- doctorate

<p><b>New additional locations:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> in home state</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> in other state(s) or in other country(ies)</p> <p><b>New branch campus:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> new or additional campus(es)</p>	<p><b>Distance Delivery:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Initiation of distance education</p> <p>X Expansion of distance education</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Initiation of correspondence education</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Expansion of correspondence education</p>
<p><b>Consortial or contractual arrangement:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consortial arrangement</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Contractual arrangement</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The institution has completed the Screening Form for Contractual Arrangements and has been advised that approval is required. (If not, see the Substantive Change Screening Form for Contractual Arrangements)</p>	<p><b>Other:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substantially changing the clock or credit hours required for a program</p>

**Institutional Context for Substantive Change Review.** *In 1-2 paragraphs, describe the key dynamics — institutional mission and internal or external forces — that stimulated and shaped the change.*

Colorado Northwestern Community College is a rural college located in the northwest corner of Colorado. CNCC has two campuses, Rangely and Craig, which are ninety miles apart. CNCC serves communities in three counties—Rio Blanco, Moffat and South Routt. Geographically, the counties cover 10,341.93 square miles; however, the combined population is only 40,000. The population density ranges from a low of 2.0 people/sq. mile to a high of 8 people/sq. mile in the Steamboat Springs area.

The population is generally employed in mining, agriculture, oil and gas exploration and extraction, power plant operation, and recreation. Many residents work variable hours in these industries and are not always available to participate in college classes offered during traditional, daytime hours.

With the inherent isolation of both campuses, the expanse of the service area and the limited population, distance education is a viable option for delivering educational offerings to the residents in the surrounding communities. The Virtual Classroom program provides a type of synchronous distance education not currently available through the CCCOnline consortium, and allows CNCC to offer cohort-based degree opportunities particularly suited to non-traditional students. The College currently offers two HLC approved and successful degree programs in Early Childhood Education and Banking and Finance; we are seeking authorization to add a limited number of additional degree programs beginning with Small Business Management.

The Mission of CNCC is to provide accessible, affordable quality education. ...Prepare students to achieve goals. ...Reach out to the Northwest Colorado Community and beyond. Its Vision is to become the engine for the economic and cultural development of Northwest Colorado. Expanding the availability of classes through distance education is consistent with both the mission and vision of Colorado Northwestern Community College.

**Special conditions.** *Underline YES or NO attesting to whether any of the conditions identified below fit the institution. If YES, explain the situation in the box provided.*

Is the institution, in its relations with other regional, specialized, or national accrediting agencies, currently under or recommended for a negative status or action (e.g., withdrawal, probation, sanction, warning, show-cause, etc.)?	YES <u>NO</u>	
Is the institution now undergoing or facing substantial monitoring, special review, or financial restrictions from the U.S. Dept. of Education or other federal or state government agencies?	YES <u>NO</u>	
Has the institution's senior leadership or board membership experienced substantial resignations or removals in the past year?	YES <u>NO</u>	
Is the institution experiencing financial difficulty through such conditions as a currently declared state of exigency, a deficit of 10% or more, a default or failure to make payroll during the past year, or consecutive deficits in the two most recent years?	YES <u>NO</u>	
Is the institution experiencing other pressures that might affect its ability to carry out the proposal (e.g., a collective bargaining dispute or a significant lawsuit)?	YES <u>NO</u>	

**Approvals.** Check the approvals that are required prior to implementing the proposed change and include documentation of the approvals to the request.

- Internal (faculty, board) approvals
- System approvals (for an institution that is part of a system)
- State approval(s) for requests other than for Distance Delivery
- For Distance Delivery only: process in place to ascertain and secure state approval(s) as required
- Foreign country(ies) approvals (for an overseas program or site)
- No approval required

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**Specialized Accreditation**

Complete this section only if specialized accreditation is required for licensure or practice in program(s) covered by this change application.

- The institution has already obtained the appropriate specialized accreditation. Attach a copy of the letter from the agency granting accreditation.
- The institution has begun the process of seeking or plans to seek specialized accreditation. Specify the name of the agency and the timeline for completing the process. (If approval is a multi-stage process, the institution should contact the HLC staff liaison to discuss the timeline before submitting this change application form.)

- The institution does not plan to seek specialized accreditation. Provide a rationale for not seeking this accreditation.
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### Changes Requiring Visits

Complete this section only if the institution is already aware that the proposed change will need to be reviewed through a visit. (If the institution is unsure whether a visit is required, the Commission will advise the institution based on the information provided in the change application.)

- Request to schedule a Change Visit.

If a Change Visit has already been planned in consultation with Commission staff, specify the date set for the visit: \_\_\_\_\_

- Request to add a proposed change to an already scheduled visit. Specify type of visit and date scheduled: \_\_\_ Comprehensive Visit: 9/24-9/26, 2012\_\_\_\_\_

Whether the change will be reviewed through a separate Change Visit or embedded in an already scheduled visit, the following schedule will apply.

1. The institution files Part 1 of this change form at least 4 months before the visit. If the visit has not already been scheduled, this filing will initiate the process of scheduling the visit.
2. The institution files Part 2 of this change form at least 2 months before the scheduled visit. If the change will be embedded in an already scheduled visit, the form should be filed as an attachment to the report prepared for that visit.

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*Please note: The Commission plans to update the change forms annually, on or about September 1 of each year. However, if a Change Application form was accessed more than 90 days prior to filing, it is recommended that the institution visit <http://www.ncahlc.org/change> to ensure that there have been no changes in the application form in the intervening time.*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Substantive Change Application, Part 2: Topic-Specific Questions</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Distance Delivery</b></p>
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**Submitting a Substantive Change Request**

Attach the “Substantive Change Application–General Questions” as page one of this application. That completed form and the answers to the questions below will constitute the request for approval of a substantive change. It will be provided to future HLC review processes.

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Name of Institution:

Colorado Northwestern Community College

**Part 1. Characteristics of the Change Requested**

1. Briefly describe the planned initiation or expansion of distance delivery the institution is requesting permission to operate.

Colorado Northwestern Community College is seeking to expand its distance delivery system to include an AAS degree in Small Business Management, followed by a limited number of additional degrees over the next five years. The College is currently approved as a bracket 2 provider, with authorization to offer up to 20% of total degree programs via distance education. However, the current degree programs in Early Childhood Education and Banking and Finance were grandfathered when the HLC’s distance education delivery definitions were revised, and the College has never had a focused visit for distance education itself; hence, this imbedded change application. The Small Business Management program has received approval through the CNCC degree approval process (Academic Council), and through the State approval process. Additional degrees would be offered via the Virtual Classroom Distance Education Platform only after receiving appropriate College and State approvals, and current plans do not necessitate bracket 3 approval for offering up to 100% of total degree programs online. All degrees offered via the Virtual Classroom will be cohort-based, which allows us to closely manage enrollment growth and program quality.

2. Include a list of all proposed certificate and degree programs planned in the initiation or expansion of distance delivery. For each degree program or certificate:
  - a. Indicate the Classification of Instructional Programs [CIP codes, program name, and additional description (optional)]. CIP codes are established by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics. More information is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/>.
  - b. Specify the program level.
  - c. Specify if it is **distance education** or **correspondence education**.
  - d. Specify all modalities of delivery.

<input type="checkbox"/> Audio conferencing	<input type="checkbox"/> fiber optics
<input type="checkbox"/> Broadband lines	<input type="checkbox"/> internet
<input type="checkbox"/> cable	<input type="checkbox"/> microwave
<input type="checkbox"/> closed circuit	<input type="checkbox"/> open broadcast
<input type="checkbox"/> correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/> satellite

\_\_\_ videocassettes, dvds, and cd-roms

\_\_\_ wireless communication devices

e. Identify date the offerings will be launched (MM/DD/YYYY).

a. Small Business Management Program

CIP: 520703

The Small Business Management Program is designed for business owners, managers, key employees and students who desire to become more proficient, efficient and profitable in operating a small business. Learning Outcomes include: organizing resources to maximize goal attainment, proficiency in record keeping, effective marketing to target audiences, enhanced financial management and human resource development.

b. Program Level: AAS degree

c. Distance Education

d. Audio conferencing, Broadband lines, Internet

e. Launch date will be the semester following HLC approval

3. What organizational structures are in place to ensure effective oversight, implementation, and management of the institution's distance-delivered offerings?

The Director for Extended Studies and Concurrent Enrollment oversees the delivery of the courses; hires, trains and evaluates distance learning instructors; establishes policies and procedures specific to the Virtual Classroom; supports faculty through training; oversees consistency of syllabi; schedules classes; develops marketing materials; updates relevant information and resources to distance education students on the web site; prepares matrices of faculty information; processes adjunct faculty contracts; in concert with the individual program directors, verifies that course content is consistent with classes offered on campus.

The Director reports to the Dean of Instruction, Craig Campus, who reports to the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services. There is a direct line of authority from Instruction to Extended Studies which fosters interaction and alignment of Virtual Classroom courses with the other instructional, assessment and evaluation processes at CNCC. There is consistency of curriculum across all delivery platforms.

In addition, all students, regardless of how or where they take CNCC courses, utilize the same admission, financial aid, registration, advising, and placement services.

4. Does the institution have a separately identified organizational unit for providing or marketing the distance-delivered offerings? ( X ) Yes ( ) No

If yes, please explain how this separate unit coordinates with other academic and administrative units across the institution to ensure the consistency and quality of offerings.

Distance Learning operates as a function of Instruction. There is a director who reports to the Dean of Instruction, Craig Campus. The Director interfaces with other program directors to ensure the viability, reliability, efficacy and quality of the classes offered through Distance Learning. There is consistent collaboration among the directors at both campuses. The Virtual Classroom program has its own budgetary authority as do other academic departments within the College. Moreover, administrative functions such as marketing, student services and academic support are centralized at CNCC and include services to Virtual Classroom students. The unit functions in much the same way as other instructional departments at CNCC. The College does not view the Virtual Classroom as an entity separate from other programs or processes, but as an alternative delivery platform making available instruction to students unable to access traditional instruction on our campuses.

5. If the institution is planning any involvement by external organizations (other than accredited higher education institutions) in key operations as identified below, provide the information requested for each

planned involvement. (Note that such involvement by a parent company or by one of its subsidiaries external to the institution in any of these operations should be reported.)

Type of involvement	Name(s) of external organization(s)	% of Involvement
A. Recruitment and admission of students		
B. Course placement and advising of students		
C. Design and oversight of curriculum		
D. Direct instruction and oversight		
E. Other Support for delivery of instruction		

6. If the institution is planning any involvement with other accredited higher education institutions in key operations identified above, provide the name(s) of the other institutions and the nature of the involvement.

7. Operational Data

Operational Data	Last year (actual tallies)	This year (estimate)	Next year (projected)
A. Total number of academic programs (i.e., counting different majors at all levels). Do not include certificates.	21	25	27
B. Total number of programs in item A above available via distance delivery (i.e., 50% or more of courses available as distance-delivered courses)	2	2	3
C. Percentage of programs available via distance delivery (100 x B/A)	7.4%	6.06%	8.8%

**Part 2. Institution’s History with Distance-Delivered Offerings**

8. Briefly describe the institution’s experience with distance-delivered offerings.

CNCC offers synchronous distance learning through the Colorado Community College System consortium (CCOnline). Students may register through CNCC to access classes taught by faculty from across the system. Since the offerings are system-wide, there is an administrative unit at the System Office which coordinates delivery processes and hosts D2L. Students are matriculated with individual colleges, however, and CNCC provides enrollment services, advising, and financial aid for CNCC students enrolling in CCOnline courses.

In addition, in the past, CNCC provided video/audio links between the two campuses located 90 miles apart. Because of technical issues and the lack of sufficient band width, CNCC discontinued offering synchronous classes using that technology, and attempted to identify a delivery platform that would meet the needs of our dispersed student population.

In 2009, CNCC identified a synchronous, web-based delivery platform (*Illuminate Live*) for Distance Learning (i.e., Virtual Classroom) which originates at CNCC. Under State policy CNCC is required to use CCCOnline as its platform for asynchronous distance education, so there will be no program expansion in that delivery method through CNCC itself. Our intention is to offer a very limited number of synchronous, cohort-based degree programs which will be closely managed. Currently there are two HLC approved degree programs offered through Virtual Classroom: an AAS in Early Childhood Education and an AAS in Banking and Finance. Technically, however, CNCC is approved as a Bracket 2 provider and allowed to offer up to 20% of its total degree programs via distance education. Because the current degrees were grandfathered in under the previous distance education definitions, we have never had a “focused review” of distance education, hence this substantive change application. Although the request is to add a limited number of additional degrees, our intention continues to be to operate under the Bracket 2, 20% of course offerings restrictions. Should we have a need to grow beyond the Bracket 2 definitions, this would only occur years in the future and would require a new Substantive Change Application.

9. If the Higher Learning Commission approves the institution’s initiation or expansion of distance delivery, what future growth does the institution anticipate (e.g., in the next six months, three years, 10-20 years)?

If approved, CNCC will add the AAS degree in Small Business Management to the Virtual Classroom programs in the next six months. The addition of other degree opportunities would be incremental and managed. Future programs will all be cohort-based, which assists in validating program quality, predicting enrollment levels, and limiting financial risk. A reasonable growth estimate over the next five to six years would be to expand from the current two degree programs to five or six, though all degree cohorts may not be running simultaneously based on accumulated demand. At the end of that period, the total number of students served at any given time is likely to be less than 100. Most of those new degree programs would grow out of programs in currently existing academic departments. Without question, CNCC anticipates that it will grow the Virtual Classroom offerings. The actual number of programs to be developed in the next 10-20 years depends on too many factors to allow any level of accuracy of the projections.

10. How does the institution plan to manage this growth?

The growth of the Distance Learning offerings will be managed within the strategic-planning process, the curriculum-review process, and the annual budgetary-request process (Comprehensive Development Plan). Key groups in managing program growth include the CNCC Academic Council, The CNCC Cabinet, and the Colorado Community College. There are numerous checks and balances- both internal and external- which ensure that new programs are well-designed and financially sound. The nature of CNCC’s Virtual Classroom program, which is cohort-based and subject to class-size limits, fosters incremental growth. CNCC’s small-size and culture ensure that new program proposals are evaluated in the context of overall college priorities and capacity.

### **Part 3. Institutional Planning for Distance-Delivered Offerings**

11. What impact might the proposed initiation or expansion of distance-delivered offering(s) have on challenges identified as part of or subsequent to the last comprehensive visit or reaffirmation panel and how has the institution addressed the challenge(s)?

As recommended in the 2003 HLC self-study, CNCC developed a five-year strategic plan for FY 2009-2013. In the plan, CNCC identifies the development of distance education programs as one of its goals in response to the HLC recommendation that CNCC “develop and implement an enrollment growth plan in order to increase student numbers in low-enrollment programs and maintain a quality student pool in higher enrollment programs,” specifically to “promote flexibility and options for learners.”

Because of the isolation and rural setting of both campuses, CNCC has identified the development of distance education courses as a means to serve the local community and others in the state who would benefit from the educational opportunities offered by CNCC.

Also, as recommended in the 2003 HLC Self-study, the Director of Distance Learning has provided “leadership in the coordination of marketing, recruitment, training, scheduling resource and material acquisition and, perhaps most importantly, effective communication between and among every delivery site that Distance Learning is intended to support.” The Director oversees all outreach efforts in addition to distance learning. She has oversight responsibility for the service centers located in Oak Creek, Hayden and Meeker. She coordinates with program directors and interfaces with the Marketing Committee, Student Services, bookstore, administration, faculty and staff.

12. How does the institution determine the need to expand or initiate a distance-delivered offering? If the institution offers a traditional program now, how does it decide whether to start offering this program via distance delivery?

CNCC is a rural community college deeply embedded within the communities of Craig and Rangely where campuses are located and in service centers in Oak Creek and Meeker. Dialogue among community members, prominent industries, local boards, college recruiters, local school districts and members of the college contributes to the decision to add additional programs. The program review is an extensive process at both the internal and state-wide system levels. Program directors must demonstrate a clear community need, collect data, project enrollment and identify fiscal resources which can support the proposed program.

Once the internal review process is complete, the request goes to the CCCS approval system which may require additional information. The state process can take over six months, sometimes longer. The rigor of both the internal and external reviews discourages haphazard decisions. In addition, because the college is small and has been negatively impacted with the economic downturn in the area, CNCC is fiscally conservative and doesn't want to waste money on projects that cannot demonstrate a significant chance of success.

The existing degree programs in Early Childhood Education and Banking and Finance were both developed with strong community partnerships, as traditional degree programs, but evolved to the Virtual Classroom, as evidence of barriers to student participation in traditional classes and the advantages of making the programs available across the western Colorado region emerged. Feedback through advisory committees and evaluation of potential students demonstrated that the programs would be more successful if they could be made available in multiple communities, including both Rangely and Craig and the many other isolated communities of western Colorado. Added degrees, whether based in existing programs or degrees developed specifically for the platform, would be approved for the Virtual Classroom following similar processes. In the future, high-demand programs at the campuses may be offered through distance education if there are valid, supportable reasons to do so. Again, the review process is inclusive and extensive.

13. How does the institution plan for changes and future expansion of the role distance delivery plays in the institution? Who is involved? How do new ideas and initiatives originate, and how are they examined and evaluated?

The college utilizes a strategic master plan which has identified distance education as a viable option to provide learning opportunities to the residents of Colorado. In concert, each Program Director develops a Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) which is part of both strategic planning and budgeting. The formal process includes the presentation of the individual CDPs to the President's Cabinet which reviews and assigns budgets to all areas of the college. New program requests are reviewed in this process as well as through Academic Council. After Academic Council and Cabinet approve a proposal, it then goes through the state-wide system for approval. Ideas for new programs can come from many sources. Often the faculty members are the ones who generate new programs from listening to their students,

community members, reviewing current best practices, and participating with colleagues in conferences and workshops at the state and national levels. Also, new program ideas can come from industry partners requesting help in educating their employees. Administrators or members of the state system are often encouraged to explore new ideas because of the changing demographics of the state and the political interests of the governor and state legislature to better serve the citizens.

New ideas are examined at numerous levels at CNCC. Immediate evaluation is by the Director for Extended Studies in concert with the Dean of Instruction at Craig, other administrators and faculty. The more viable and noteworthy the proposal, the more people involved in bringing it to fruition through the formal processes noted before. Decisions are data driven and proposals are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- number of students the program might serve
- the ability to find qualified faculty
- the ability of the college to successfully support the program with required resources including equipment, space, staff, and money
- the amount of community or industrial support
- length of the program
- the ability of students to transfer to other universities in the state (articulation agreements)
- the ability of students to find meaningful work in the profession after completion of the program
- the indirect benefits, if any, to CNCC or the local communities or the state as a whole such as good will and community service
- fit with other College programs or services

The cost/benefit ratio is extremely important in the decision process.

14. How does the institution ensure that financial planning and budgeting for distance-delivered offerings are realistic? What are the institution's projected revenues and expenses?

The Director of Extended Studies submits a Comprehensive Development Plan which includes a review of the current year's accomplishments and challenges with requests for budgetary support for the coming fiscal year. Budget requests (which may include requests for funding for new programs), are evaluated in the context of projected revenue generation from the program and impact on the College more generally. Although the College seeds program development (typically through specific requests to either RJCD or MCAJCD or through the general fund) programs are expected to be both self-supporting and sustainable. Annual budget requests may be at the same level, at a lesser or greater level than the current year. The President's Cabinet reviews all CDP's and budget requests from all areas of the college and makes the final funding decisions. Distance Education is funded through the general fund which contains state allocations, tuition, and local board dollars as is any other credit-bearing division. Revenue and expenses are established through the Comprehensive Development/Budgeting Processes, examples of which are included with this self-study.

15. How does the institution assure that promotion, marketing, and enrollment of its distance-delivered offerings stay in balance with its actual resources and technical capabilities?

CNCC has a number of checks and balances to assure that all programs, not just distance-delivered offerings, stay in balance with actual resources and technical capabilities. The cohort-based nature of the Virtual Classroom program provides a natural check on program expansion, which creates a predictable model for required marketing and technical resources. All marketing and promotion must be coordinated with the Marketing Committee which oversees all activities for the college. The committee plans at the beginning of the fiscal year for expenditures during the year. Requests are assessed based on the annual marketing plan. Because of the college's budgeting process, all expenditures within a division such as distance education are pre-authorized. Any deviation must be approved by Cabinet. The Director for Extended Studies continuously monitors budgets and expenditures and reviews the finances with the Dean of Instruction at the Craig Campus. Allocations for technology are submitted and

preapproved on an annual basis. Any deviation from the approved fiscal plan needs Cabinet-level review.

16. What controls are in place to ensure that the information presented to students in advertising, brochures, and other communications will be accurate?

All promotional materials are reviewed by the Director, Dean, appropriate faculty, Marketing Committee (which includes the Dean of Enrollment/Registrar, Marketing Director, Director of Public Relations, Webmaster, Graphic Designer, President, Vice President of Craig Campus, Dean of the Craig Campus and marketer for the Craig Campus), Vice President of Instruction and Student Affairs and student recruiters. Before any materials are released to the public, they are checked for accuracy by multiple people.

#### **Part 4. Curriculum and Instructional Design**

17. How does the institution assure good instructional design in its distance-delivered offerings? How are the institution's faculty and quality control mechanisms involved in the instructional design process?

The development of the distance education courses present unique challenges as far as the delivery is concerned; however, faculty are provided with both internally and externally developed tutorials on best practices of developing online instruction. Many of the VC courses have been developed by seasoned faculty, while others are professionals in the field. Instructors are provided technical support in the specific instructional platform as well as in using other software to aid in instruction such as D2L (Desire to Learn) which is used by all CNCC faculty. Faculty are also supported in developing syllabi, classroom management, effective lessons, pedagogy, assessment of student-learning outcomes, and techniques to improve participation and involvement of students in online classes.

Course learning outcomes and content are uniform, regardless of delivery method. New programs are approved under a rigorous program approval process on both the College and the State levels, and all new or revised courses are reviewed and approved under the Colorado Community College System's Common Course Numbering System process

For currently approved Virtual Classroom programs, the Director of Extended Studies works with the Program Directors for Business and Early Childhood Education. The two program directors oversee the curriculum and assure it is in keeping with the quality of instruction expected by CNCC and is current based on industry expectation. In addition, the Director of Extended Studies works closely with other program directors when offering individual classes. Faculty are approved to teach by the individual program directors and reviewed by the Dean of Instruction.

Virtual Classroom courses are monitored by members of the CNCC instructional division since the Virtual Classroom is a part of academics and not separate as at some other institutions.

18. What processes and procedures will the institution use for technology maintenance, upgrades, back up, remote services, and for communicating changes in software, hardware or technical systems to students and faculty?

IT personnel work closely with the Director of Extended Studies and are consulted on software, hardware, technical issues, upgrades and advancements of the delivery system *Illuminate Live*. The learning management system (D2L) and internet infrastructure are maintained locally and system-wide by effective technicians. If there is a problem that can't be solved locally, then it is referred to the system offices in Denver who have a team of technicians. Any changes or upgrades are immediately communicated to faculty and students through email to their CNCC accounts. Updated information is also posted on the Virtual Classroom web site.

19. How does the institution assure that it provides convenient, reliable, and timely services to students or faculty needing technical assistance, and how does it communicate information about these services?

CNCC provides multiple levels of support services to students and faculty. CNCC hires a technical person who has developed online tutorials and also provides one-on-one training for faculty in effectively using the platform and D2L. In addition, CNCC employs IT personnel at both campuses who can help with issues during regular business hours. The state-wide system provides help during other times of the day. All information on what support is available and how to access it is sent to students in a welcome letter when they enroll in a VC course. In addition, access information along with upgrades and changes are communicated through emails and are posted on the web site. The Director provides support to both faculty and students by fielding phone calls and emails.

20. What is the institution's experience, if any, in collaborating with other institutions or organizations to provide distance-delivered education?

CNCC provides asynchronous distance education through the CCCOnline consortium, a state-wide collaboration that delivers courses for all 13 colleges in the Colorado Community College System. Operating asynchronous online courses through CCCOnline allows Colorado to consolidate resources and serve more students efficiently.

CNCC also has concurrent enrollment agreements with several high schools throughout western Colorado. The Director of Extended Studies oversees concurrent enrollment. Some of the high schools have elected to offer VC courses at their schools for students who opt for college credit while they are still in high school. In addition, the Banking and Finance Program works directly with financial institutions that often provide time, funds and/or technology support to their employees enrolled in the program.

21. If the institution is planning partnerships or agreements with external organizations or institutions as identified in Questions 5 and 6, how will the institution ensure that students can use these services effectively?

No agreements with external organizations identified in questions 5 and 6.

### **Part 5. Institutional Staffing and Faculty Support**

22. How does the institution staff distance-delivered programs? How does this differ from the institution's processes for staffing traditional programs?

Staffing patterns in distance education are the same as in other academic areas. Faculty teaching in the Virtual Classroom must meet the same credentialing standards, through the same hiring processes as faculty in other areas of the College. The Virtual Classroom has a director who has oversight responsibility to hire, train and evaluate the faculty in collaboration with program directors in academic departments. All program directors have similar responsibilities and report to an instructional dean who reports to the Vice President of Instruction and Student Affairs.

23. What is the institution's process for selecting, training, and orienting faculty for distance delivery? What special professional development, support, or released time does the institution provide for faculty who teach distance-delivered offerings?

The process for hiring faculty is the same as in other academic programs; however, there is more extensive training on the development of online courses and in effectively using the online platform. There are both internally and externally produced tutorials, and one-on-one tutorial assistance offered. All training and informational materials are available on the web site. The Director for Extended Studies and the directors for Business and Early Childhood Education are available to help as well.

Full-time faculty who teach VC courses can teach them as part of their salaried workload or as overloads at the adjunct compensation rate. All first-time faculty are paid for one additional credit hour (around \$500) to help compensate for the time it takes them to develop the course.

24. How does the institution assure copyright compliance and keep distance delivery faculty aware of institutional policies on using others' intellectual property?

Policies regarding copyright compliance and intellectual property rights are posted on the CNCC web site under IT, under Library, and stated in the VC Adjunct Handbook. All syllabi are required to contain a plagiarism statement. CNCC expects compliance with all copyright laws and guidelines from all faculty, students and staff.

### **Part 6. Student Support**

25. How does the institution assure that distance delivery students have access to necessary student and support services (e.g., institutional information, application for admission, registration, tutoring or academic support, advising, financial aid, tuition payment, career counseling and placement, library resources, complaint processes)? How does the institution provide them information about using these services, and how does it monitor and evaluate their use of these services?

All CNCC services are available to online students as well as those who attend classes on site. Admission applications and registration are online for all students. Support services such as financial aid are available online and through the telephone system, which routes student calls to appropriate personnel. Both campuses have experts who can answer student questions and set up appointments either in person, through online chats or utilizing Skype. Advising is provided by program directors and faculty who teach in the programs. Access to services is posted on the web site. In addition, distance education students are surveyed frequently to see what information they need and what they might have missed. Issues are addressed by faculty and staff through personal attention and communication by email or phone.

The complaint process is clearly identified in the student handbook which can be accessed on the CNCC web site. Also, for new students this fall, CNCC will supply a flash drive with the student handbook, study tips, useful information, FAQs and other important information for student success.

26. How does the institution measure and promote interactions among distance delivery students and faculty (e.g., email, online chats, discussion groups, phone or streaming audio, "office hours," cyber buddies/mentors and tutors)?

Distance education instructors are encouraged to incorporate various communication methods in their courses that enhance the interaction of instructors and students. Emails, online chats and discussions groups are considered an integral part of distance delivery courses. Since the VC courses are synchronous, faculty hold class at a designated time—students are expected to "attend" class and participate online with their instructor and classmates. Students are also encouraged to interact with classmates outside of the scheduled class time. Distance delivery instructors are required to hold virtual office hours and often times "meet" with students outside of class through the *Elluminate Live* platform, by phone or through Skype.

27. How does the institution assure that the distance delivery students it enrolls and to whom it awards credit and credentials are the same ones who did the work and achieved the institution's learning goals (student authentication)?

Student work is submitted through CNCC email accounts, which are individually assigned to students. Because the course work is synchronous, faculty can hear a student's voice, the style of response in discussions, verbal role-playing, student's "writing voice," in-class assignments, and group work done

during or outside of class. Faculty create a closer connection to students than in an asynchronous environment. Students must show their work in an assignment. Faculty also use proctored examinations which require identification.

28. How does the institution protect student identity and personal information?

CNCC adheres to the FERPA guidelines which are communicated to all faculty and staff employed by CNCC. The Colorado Community College System uses "S numbers" as individual identifiers rather than social security numbers for all students who attend any of the 13 community colleges in the system. CCCS also employs online security systems to protect student information.

### **Part 7. Evaluation and Assessment**

29. How does the institution assess, review, and evaluate quality in distance-delivered offerings?

Students in distance delivery courses use the same evaluation tool to evaluate their faculty as is used to evaluate faculty on the campuses. In addition, CNCC has implemented a student-satisfaction survey this year which is available to all students, and will isolate for data in the VC program. Students enrolled in distance education courses are also asked to complete a narrative evaluation form which is used to assess their experience in the VC courses. Results are considered in the annual Comprehensive Development planning process and shared with appropriate faculty, staff and administrators who have been receptive to making the necessary changes in order to provide continuous improvement in instruction and services.

30. How are the measures and techniques the institution uses for distance-delivered offerings equivalent to those used to assess and evaluate traditional face-to-face offerings? If there are differences, why are these differences appropriate?

Virtual Classroom distance education courses are assessed under the same structure and processes as other CNCC courses. After the HLC visit in 2003, CNCC established an Assessment Committee to oversee all assessment activities. The committee identified an assessment process, created forms and trained faculty. The committee continues to provide information, training, data collection and issues a comprehensive assessment report every two years. In spite of continuous efforts, the Assessment Committee has been dissatisfied with the quality of the data resulting from existing process and the decision was made to seek HLC assistance through the Assessment Academy. In the Assessment Plan developed through participation in the Assessment Academy, we address the shortfalls of previous assessment efforts, including the challenge of assessing courses taught by adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty (including those teaching in the Virtual Classroom) will receive assessment training in assessment processes during the 2012-2013 AY. Full implementation will be completed by Fall 2013. Although we recognize the shortcomings of past assessment efforts, we are in the process of addressing them through Academy participation and believe that assessment of our distance education efforts through the Virtual Classroom should be considered as part of the overall assessment agenda .

31. How does the institution assess the learning of the students it educates in its distance-delivered offerings to ensure that they achieve the levels of performance that the institution expects and that its stakeholders require?

Instructors teaching in distance education utilize many of the same assessment techniques that are used in classes offered on the campuses. The students are held to the same standards of performance set by CNCC. The learning outcomes are expected to be the same regardless of the delivery medium. Research papers, individual and group projects, examinations, discussion points, in-class assignments, online chats, outside class work are some of the assessment techniques used by online faculty to assess student learning. Each semester, instructors identify specific learning outcomes, activities and goals for the student competencies they have identified. At the end of the semester, they report on specific

activities they have used to teach and assess student learning. Those reports are compiled in the Assessment Report generated by the Assessment Committee. CNCC's membership in the Assessment Academy is being designed to strengthen and support faculty in their ability to assess student learning in a variety of settings through identification of best practices, appropriateness of the activities, awareness of various learning styles and multiple intelligences of the students, and techniques to create a better learning environment.

32. How does the institution encourage and ensure continuous improvement of its distance-delivered offerings?

CNCC is committed to quality improvement in all aspects of the College. The Comprehensive Development Planning process is specifically designed to encourage an annual program review, and to incorporate funding for program improvements in the related budget development process. The degree programs delivered through the Virtual Classroom have industry advisory committees which assist program directors in keeping the program current and evaluating program quality. Faculty will be enhancing their assessment of student-learning through CNCC's participation in the Assessment Academy. Faculty and staff are open and willing to make the necessary changes to improve student learning, improve the CNCC experience, improve communication, establish new communication and work patterns, foster better relationships with students, members of the community and internally among faculty, administration and staff