



May 8, 2015

Dr. Laura M. Meeks  
President  
Eastern Gateway Community College  
4000 Sunset Blvd.  
Steubenville, OH 43952-3598

Dear President Meeks:

Attached is a copy of the Multi-Location Visit Report completed following the visit to Eastern Gateway Community College. As detailed in the report, the pattern of operations at the locations appears to be adequate and no further review or monitoring is necessary.

Within the Multi-Location Visit Report, you will find brief comments on the instructional oversight, academic services, student services, facilities, marketing and recruitment information and adequacy of assessment of student performance. Please consider these comments as advice for continued improvement of the additional locations.

Per HLC policy, completion of these visits and fulfillment of the requirement will be noted in your institution's history record and the completed report will be included in your institution's permanent file.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the Multi-Location Visit or the attached report, please contact Pat Newton-Curran ([pnewton@hlcommission.org](mailto:pnewton@hlcommission.org)).

Sincerely,

Higher Learning Commission

### Multi-Location Visit Report

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Institution:                          | Eastern Gateway Community College  |
| Ad. Location #1:                      | The Valley Center, 101 Federal Street, Youngstown, Ohio 44555                    |
| Ad. Location #2:                      | Warren Center, 239 Main Ave. SW, Warren, Ohio 44556                              |
|                                       |  |
|                                       |  |
|                                       | <b>(please include Additional Locations Name, Street, Town, State, Zip Code)</b> |
| Date Reviewed:                        | April 6-7, 2015  |
| Evaluator Name, Institution, & Title: | Linda Stacy, University of Toledo, Consultant                                    |

Instructions: In order to document effective administrative systems for managing multiple additional locations, please complete the following. For each item, check **adequate** or **attention needed**, and indicate in Comments the institution's strengths and/or opportunities for improvement in controlling and delivering degree programs off-campus. If comments pertain to a specific location, they should be included along with the identity of that location.

**Overview Statement.** Provide information about current additional locations and the institution's general approach to off-campus instruction. Describe the growth pattern at the institution since the last review of off-campus instruction. Provide information about the involvement of external organizations or other higher education institutions.

**Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:**     adequate                       attention needed

**Comments:** On April 6-7<sup>th</sup>, a multi-location visit was conducted at Eastern Gateway Community College (EGCC) to review all aspects of the institution's operations at the Youngstown and Warren locations. April 6<sup>th</sup> was spent at the main campus in Jefferson county meeting with administrators responsible for oversight of the various operations at the two locations and reviewing documents that support many aspects of the expansion. April 7<sup>th</sup> included visits to the locations.

Eastern Gateway Community College has a long history serving the citizens of Jefferson County. Under former Governor Ted Strickland and Chancellor Eric Fingerhut, the college accepted the challenge to increase its service district to three additional counties in 2009. While the original concept assumed sharing of space with several career centers, and a major emphasis on distance learning, rapid growth and a desire for place based instruction by residents, has led to the addition of the above named sites. Among colleges with enrollment between 2,500-4,999 students, Eastern Gateway is currently the 10<sup>th</sup> fastest growing community college in the U.S., this growth is due to the additional instructional sites, as the enrollment at the main campus is stagnant.

A number of Enrollment reports were provided for the campus as a whole, as well as individual locations. These provided comparisons of enrollment statistics from Fall 2014 to Fall 2013, Spring 2015 to Spring 2014, Summer 2015 to 2014, and Fall 2015 to Fall 2014. The reports documented the headcount and FTE, and provided extensive demographic information. Fall 2014 head count increased collectively by 26% at the two locations, while the increase for Spring 2015 over Spring 2014 at the Valley Center was more modest at 3%, there was an 11% increase in returning students. The Warren Center had 16% head count growth for Spring 2015 and a 26% increase in returning students. Growth at the two sites is expected to continue to increase at a robust level, as residents become more aware and educated about community colleges in general. The population of the four county service area is 600,000 versus 60,000 in the Jefferson service area. Currently (Spring 2015), the main campus/Jefferson County has an enrollment of 1,600, while the Valley Center already has grown to over 1,300 students.

While it's clear the additional counties were underserved areas, partnerships and community involvement within the new service area have also contributed to the growth of the two locations. Campus personnel are involved in local chambers, k-12 Advisory groups, Ohio Means Jobs, Rotary Clubs, United Way, manufacturing advisory councils, and a number of groups associated with the growing energy industry in this part of the state. Northeast Ohio has an active higher education planning group, Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education, and the college president serves on the board of directors. A full list of all community involvement was provided for the entire campus, as well as for the three new counties. In a short time, the college has developed impressive community linkages.

**Institutional Planning.** What evidence demonstrates that the institution effectively plans for growth and maintenance of additional locations? Identify whether the institution has adequate controls in place to ensure that information presented to students is adequate. Describe whether the financial planning and budgeting process has proven effective at additional locations.

**Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:**     adequate                       attention needed

**Comments:** Eastern Gateway quickly outgrew the original facilities in the expanded service area. As state capital dollars were not appropriated to support the college's need for facilities in the three additional counties, EGCC has entered into a partnership agreement with a private company, Higher Education Partners (HEP), which has provided a unique solution for the operation of the two facilities. A meeting with the Vice President of Business Services, Jim McGrail, and the Vice President of Administrative Services, Sherri VanTassel, provided background information pertaining to the new facilities, and an overview of the operating agreement. As a result of this public/private partnership, HEP assumed the responsibility for the initial purchase, remodeling, and equipment needs of the instructional sites and now assumes all operational costs for the facilities. The collaborative agreement between the two entities was developed with input from the Ohio Attorney General's office. A copy of the signed agreement between EGCC and HEP was provided. The agreement details the obligations and responsibilities of both partners. Both facilities have room for growth, and additional phases are planned.

The Agreement with HEP is unique in that it greatly protects EGCC financially. The institution did not incur debt for construction of the facilities, nor for on-going operations. EGCC is responsible for the direct instructional costs and the operating agreement details payments to HEP for their direct facilities costs, if EGCC has additional funds remaining after payment of direct instructional costs.

The two locations are considered in the college's comprehensive budget planning. With the HEP partnership assuming the burden of the facilities cost, the college's revenue and direct instructional expenses are expected to show a net profit. HEP is reimbursed for direct facilities expenses from the net profit. If funds remain beyond the direct expenses, the college then keeps 85% and turns over 15% to HEP. If the college does not have a net profit, no funds are turned over to HEP. This agreement protects the college during this important start-up phase of operations.

Oversight of marketing and promotional materials for the two locations is under the direction of the Deans and Director of Public Information. This maintains the consistency and integrity of materials. HEP has also supplied marketing expertise and some funding to support efforts for the two locations, as it in their best interest to have sustained growth at both sites. Review of the website and materials supplied during the visit demonstrated consistent messages and information.

**Facilities.** What evidence demonstrates that the facilities at the additional locations meet the needs of the students and the curriculum? Consider, in particular, classrooms and laboratories (size, maintenance, temperature, etc.); faculty and administrative offices (site, visibility, privacy for meetings, etc.); parking or access to public transit; bookstore or text purchasing services; security; handicapped access; and other (food or snack services, study and meeting areas, etc.)

**Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:**     adequate                       attention needed

**Comments:** Visits were made to both of the locations, and prior to the actual site visits floor plans were provided for each site. The Valley Center is located in a former office building in a commercial part of town. A parking garage with readily visible security personnel is attached to the facility. There is an elevator from the parking area which opens directly into the facility. A bookstore is located directly across from the elevator, and vending machines are also readily accessible. In addition to the vending machines, restaurants are in the immediate vicinity of the building.

This is an impressive instructional site which has state of the art instructional facilities. Most of the twenty-one classrooms are equipped with smart boards and computers. Of particular note, the instructional labs are very impressive and equipped with the latest technology. Conversations with faculty confirmed their pride and satisfaction with the facilities. The rooms are well lit, and have comfortable, modern furniture.

There is an information commons-library area with 20+ computers for student use. This area is staffed with 3 information specialists. This is a busy area, and students were observed working on a number of different things. Staff members were readily available to provide assistance.

A Math Emporium is equipped with over 40 computers, and an area for small group work or individual meetings is also incorporated into the space. This area was also extremely busy, and staff members were readily available to provide support.

While there, a meeting was held with Dante Zambrini, Interim Vice President, HEP Mahoning Valley. Mr. Zambrini provided extensive information about the facilities, additional details of the HEP agreement, and additional information about community partnerships. While much of the

community involvement is planned, he is readily available for meetings with partners which may come up on short notice. He also addressed the Valley Center offices, which are currently located on the 10<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Chase Building which is a block from the instructional site. With the fast growth at the Valley Center, it was decided that the priority was instructional space. The office space was leased for a year, with discussions taking place concerning options.

The Warren Center is located in a strip mall. This is in a location that is well known to residents and located at a major intersection. Parking is readily available and a security guard was posted inside the facility. Currently, this location has an enrollment of 200 students. This site just opened in January 2015. The first phase provided four well equipped classrooms, offices, and a student lounge area equipped with computers. The next phase will add additional classrooms an information-commons area, and a chemistry/biology lab. As at the Valley Center, staff members were engaged and pleased with the facilities. A conversation with a student confirmed that without the access provided by this facility, she would probably not have attended college.

These are both superior educational facilities which provide for an academic experience equal to that at the main campus.

**Instructional Oversight.** What evidence demonstrates that the institution effectively oversees instruction at the additional locations? Consider, in particular, consistency of curricular expectations and policies, availability of courses needed for program and graduation requirements, faculty qualifications, performance of instructional duties, availability of faculty to students, orientation of faculty/professional development, attention to student concerns.

**Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:**     adequate                       attention needed

**Comments:** The academic deans oversee instruction at all sites and report to the Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, who is ultimately responsible for institutional academic matters. The deans generate the academic schedules for all locations, and they spend at least one day a week at the locations. Interactive video allows for regular staff and faculty meetings, so information provided is done so in a timely, consistent fashion. Seven full time faculty members have been hired for the Valley Center, while the Warren Center is primarily staffed with adjunct faculty. Additionally, some faculty members from the main campus also teach at the location sites. This also provides for consistency in programming and learning outcomes. Adjunct faculty orientation meetings are held at the start of each semester at both the main campus and the Valley Center to ensure that consistent information is provided to all. Deans mentioned that a new phone system has provided an avenue for enhanced communication and timeliness. The new phone system automatically rolls calls if the intended person is not available.

All hiring is done through the main campus Human Resources office with consistent requirements and qualifications for positions regardless of location. Some faculty teach at all locations which also provides consistency in terms of learning outcomes. Dean and other administrative personnel spend some time each week at the other sites. Meetings are made possible through interactive video.

**Institutional Staffing and Faculty Support.** What evidence demonstrates that the institution has appropriately qualified and sufficient staff and faculty in place for the location, and that the institution supports and evaluates personnel at off-campus locations? Consider the processes in place for selecting, training, and orienting faculty at the location.

**Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:**     adequate                       attention needed

**Comments:** Hiring practices are the same for all locations, and all searches are conducted from the main campus. The academic deans are responsible for the selection and evaluation of faculty members, and requirements are standard regardless of location. The staff members at the locations also report through the deans at the main campus, so expectations and requirements are consistent.

Currently, the Valley Center is staffed with seven full-time faculty members, and six full-time staff members, while the Warren Center primarily has part-time staff.

As with main campus personnel, all employees at the locations are evaluated annually by their supervisors. To further ensure quality, students at all locations complete course evaluations, and these are reviewed by the deans.

At the start of each semester, the college provides a schedule of start-up activities and all employees are expected to participate. The same is true is of annual employee development activities.

**Student Support.** What evidence demonstrates that the institution delivers, supports, and manages necessary student services at the additional locations? Consider, in particular, the level of student access (in person, by computer, by phone, etc.) to academic advising/placement, remedial/tutorial services, and library materials/services. Also, consider the level of access to admissions, registration/student records, financial aid, and job placement services, as well as attention to student concerns.

**Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:**     adequate                       attention needed

**Comments:** In addition to personnel at each location site to provide services, the college's website and self-service module also provides access to extensive information for the benefit of students. The new phone system also greatly assists students, as the calls roll to the next available person. This has greatly increased student satisfaction.

EGCC has had a TRIO program for quite some time, and the two locations also benefit from this program which provides additional student support services.

During the location visits, conversations with several faculty members provided examples of innovative opportunities they have arranged for students to interact with the business/employer community in their individual areas of expertise.

The part-time staff members in the commons/library area are well versed, and were observed actively assisting students in requests for a variety of information.

**Evaluation and Assessment.** What evidence demonstrates that the institution measures, documents, and analyzes student academic performance sufficiently to maintain academic quality at the additional locations? How are measures and techniques employed at a location equivalent to those for assessment and evaluation on the main campus? Consider, in particular, the setting of measurable learning objectives, the actual measurement of performance, and the analysis and use of assessment data to maintain/improve quality.

**Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:**     adequate                       attention needed

**Comments:** As responsibility for all academics is through the deans, the consistency is inherent in the process. Course syllabi and learning outcomes are consistent at all locations. Deans receive grade reports from all campuses, and do extensive research on grading patterns and grade distribution. The deans are also responsible for evaluation of faculty and review of students' course evaluations.

**Continuous Improvement.** What evidence demonstrates that the institution encourages and ensures continuous quality improvement at its additional locations? Consider in particular the institution's planning and evaluation processes that ensure regular review and improvement of additional locations and ensure alignment of additional locations with the mission and goals of the institution as a whole.

**Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:**     adequate                       attention needed

**Comments:** Over the past couple of years, EGCC has engaged some external expertise to assist with overall planning and improvement. In 2012, the college entered into an agreement with Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) to provide recommendations concerning Organizational Leadership Structure and Strategic Planning. It was determined by the college leadership and board that this would assist the college in its growth from a single county campus to a multiple county institution with additional locations.

After extensive research and with considerable input from stakeholders ACCT provided a final report with a number of recommendations for the best ways for the college to manage growth. The report includes a series of immediate and future recommendations. It should be noted that the college has already moved ahead with some of these, and others are planned as enrollment growth and finances allow.

In further support of continuous improvement, EGCC also contracted with Future Think to develop a demographic and market study to drive and support planning decisions. This is an expansive report which examined a number of data elements in each of the counties in the college's service area.

The partnership with HEP certainly supports EGCC's commitment to continuous improvement. This innovative partnership allowed for the provision of superior facilities at the expansion locations, while minimizing financial risk on the part of the institution.

EGCC also has a comprehensive Strategic Plan that addresses the location sites. The development of the plan is an inclusive process. During the visit, the President also shared the dashboard document that the institution uses to document and monitor progress in meeting goals set forth in the Strategic Plan.

The willingness of EGCC to engage outside agencies to provide strategic information and support for planning certainly shows an institution engaged in continuous improvement efforts.

**Marketing and Recruiting Information.** What evidence confirms that the information presented to students in advertising, brochures, and other communications is accurate?

**Judgment of reviewer. Check appropriate box:**     adequate                       attention needed

**Comments:** The marketing department prepares materials for all locations to ensure consistency. Examination of the institution's website provided valuable information that was documented during the visit.

Additionally, as the deans have responsibility to review the academic and student support information, that is used in any marketing materials.

## SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

- X Overall, the pattern of this institution's operations at its additional locations appears to be adequate, and no further review or monitoring by the Higher Learning Commission is necessary.

At a time of remarkable growth, and with no additional financial resources, EGCC has demonstrated a commitment providing a high quality education supported with superior facilities to the residents and students in the expanded service area.

With facilities made possible through a unique public/private partnership, and the wisdom to engage outside agencies to examine the institution through an independent lens, EGCC has successfully made the transition from a single campus entity serving one county with a population of 60,000 to a multi-location campus serving a population of 600,000 in four counties.

While the current and planned facilities should more than adequately serve students, more importantly the attitudes and enthusiasm demonstrated by faculty and staff at the main campus and locations will be the driver behind future institutional success.

With the retirement of the current president planned in the next few months, a new president has already been hired, so a smooth transition is planned as the institution continues to grow and support the educational needs of the citizens in the area.