

Assurance Argument Briefing Document

This document summarizes key arguments and evidence in the "March Draft of Assurance Argument.pdf" concerning Lake Land College's compliance with HLC accreditation criteria.



Criterion 1. Mission: The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

- The mission of Lake Land College is publicly available, well-defined, and actively guides its operations.
- Mission Statement: Lake Land College creates and continuously improves an affordable, accessible, and effective learning environment for the lifelong educational needs of the diverse communities we serve.
- Vision and Values: The college established a vision statement ("Engaging minds, changing lives, through the power of learning.") and core values (Caring, Communication, Teamship, Innovation, Excellence) in 2010. These are integrated with the mission and serve as guides for daily operations.
- The college serves a large, primarily rural district of approximately 196,281 people across 15 counties in Illinois. The student body consists of both full-time and part-time students, with a significant portion enrolled in dual credit courses. The college also serves a substantial number of students within the Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC) and Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities.
- Lake Land College emphasizes affordability through low tuition, a textbook rental system, payment plans, and financial assistance. The document notes a potential savings of over \$20,000 for students completing their first two years at Lake Land College compared to a four-year public university.
- The college has adopted statements and policies to promote DEIB, including a Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement, a Neurodiversity Statement, and initiatives like the Safe Zone program to support the LGBTQIA+ community.

Criterion 2. Integrity: The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

- Lake Land College demonstrates integrity through comprehensive policies, ethical conduct, and responsible resource management. The college is committed to upholding academic standards, promoting ethical behavior, and ensuring transparency in its operations.
- A comprehensive, accessible, and regularly updated Board Policy Manual defines operations related to financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions.
- Financial matters are managed with adherence to best practices in accounting principles and are subject to an annual audit by an independent firm, with audit reports made public. The Vice President for Business Services is the Chief Financial Officer, overseeing financial affairs.
- The college has established policies for ethical behavior for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff. The Anti-Nepotism policy safeguards the integrity of the hiring process.
- Students must observe specific standards of behavior and adhere to a Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Code. Processes are in place for students to resolve grievances.

Criterion 3. Quality of Education: The institution provides quality education wherever its offerings are delivered.

- Lake Land College ensures quality education through rigorous academic offerings, adherence to higher education standards, and continuous improvement of its programs. The college is committed to providing an effective learning environment for students' lifelong educational needs.
- Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI): The college's general education curricula for associate degrees and certificates are consistent with peer institutions across the state through the IAI.

- The college maintains specialized accreditation for select programs to ensure graduates meet employment requirements.
- Program goals, course outlines, and learning outcomes are consistent across all locations, including correctional facilities.
- Laker Learning Competencies: Students are expected to develop competencies in 8 areas, including communication, critical thinking, global and cultural literacy, and information and technology literacy.
- Safe Learning Environments: The Lake Land College Police Department is a fully sworn/armed police department certified by the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board, and the Behavioral Intervention Team investigates all reports concerning behavior on campus and provides appropriate interventions for students.

Criterion 4. Institutional Effectiveness: 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.

- Lake Land College demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs and support services through regular program reviews and evaluations. The college adheres to ICCB guidelines for program reviews, which occur on a five-year cycle. The college is committed to using assessment results to improve programs and services.
- Program reviews include analysis of enrollment, labor market projections, program costs, and alignment with Perkins Programs of Study.
- Program Improvement and Enhancement (PIE): The college conducts a PIE process for CTE programs, which evaluates program aspects such as enrollment, retention, and completion.
- Data-Driven Improvement: The college uses data to reach informed decisions in the institution's and its constituents' best interests.
- The college offers summer bridge programs and corequisite math and English courses for students who need additional support.
- First-Year Experience: Departments across campus work to welcome new students and help them engage in the life of Lake Land College.
- The college's strategic plan includes retention, persistence, and completion metrics.

Criterion 5. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Structure: The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

- Lake Land College's resources, structures, processes, and planning are designed to fulfill its mission effectively. The college's leadership facilitates the mission through shared governance, involving the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students in planning and policy development.
- The Board oversees the college's policies and practices and ensures the college meets all legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
- Shared Governance: Faculty and staff are involved in setting academic requirements, policies and processes through effective collaborative structures.
- The college operates with a balanced budget and has increased its operation fund balance, further stabilizing it and positioning it for longer-term growth.
- The strategic plan's priority areas are used as benchmarks for any short- and long-term planning conducted by the college, whether for financial, fundraising, or educational purposes.
- The Facilities Master Plan examines the condition of the college's current facilities to determine the best maintenance course for those facilities, outline the college's anticipated physical growth, and create a comprehensive plan to address all issues identified.