



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Perhaps no other issue on a college campus is more important than its accreditation. With proper accreditation, colleges are eligible to award federal financial aid and students can transfer credits between institutions more easily. Without it, federal financial aid would disappear. That would be a disastrous occurrence on almost any campus with which I am familiar.

The process of achieving and maintaining our institutional accreditation centers around the production of an Assurance Argument. That argument is our demonstration of why we should have our accreditation reaffirmed. It is a very important work, and it is in the process of being written now. The Assurance Argument starts with a clear Vision and Mission for Blue Ridge. Our governing board recently approved our revised Vision and Mission which I think you will find to be much more inclusive and streamlined than prior versions.

The steering committee for the Assurance Argument is in full swing writing, revising, and editing our document for the March 2020 visit. We anticipate that our final draft will be completed sometime before Christmas break and be ready to submit the Higher Learning Commission in anticipation of our visit. It is a prodigious task and we need to be grateful for all the work that is being done for the benefit of our students and us. It is interesting to note that on the Commission's website, Blue Ridge's 2014-2015 Assurance Argument is still listed as a model for others to follow.

We all trust that the 2019-2020 will be as good if not better. We have a great story to tell, and the Assurance Argument and this newsletter are fantastic ways to tell it.

- Dr. Checkovich



## WHY IS ACCREDITATION IMPORTANT TO BRCTC?

Only accredited institutions are eligible to receive federal funds for higher education, including student financial aid. Accreditation also ensures students the ability to transfer credits between accredited schools.

**Quality Education:** Accreditation assures academic program quality through accountability to external standards

**Financial Aid:** Accreditation enables us to maintain our eligibility to receive federal funds for student financial aid

**Credit Transfer:** Accreditation is an important factor when a college or university is deciding whether to accept transfer credit from a student's previous school. Most colleges and universities will not accept transferred course credits from an institution that has not earned appropriate accreditation status from an accreditation organization.

**Success in the Workplace:** Most employers prefer to hire job applicants who have gained their education from a college or university with the appropriate accreditation status. It is also common for states to require that a college, university, or program be accredited when allowing students to acquire state professional licensure.



# THE HIGHER LEARNING CONNECTION

AUGUST 2019



*"The best view comes after the hardest climb."*

- Author Unknown

# BlueRidge

COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE



As BRCTC prepares for the HLC visit, one might compare it to preparing to climb a mountain. This newsletter will help the BRCTC community be aware each step of our journey.  
*An important step in climbing a mountain is to set your goals!*

## FORMER MISSION

### **Former Mission:**

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College is dedicated to providing a diverse student population with collaborative programs and support services to improve the quality of life and promote economic development in its service area. Its quality academic programs are learner-centered and focus on career entry, university transfer, developmental education, and workforce development.

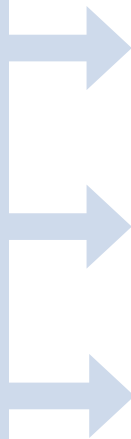
### **Former Vision:**

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College curriculum is integrated directly with the economic and workforce needs of the region. Programs of study are designed to meet the needs expressed by community members, advisory boards, employers, and workforce as reflected in an ongoing needs analysis of the region. Blue Ridge Community and Technical College faculty and staff continuously analyze and modify the curricula and programs to meet the educational needs of an increasingly complex and technological society. The College intends to meet the educational challenges of the 21st century and to provide quality educational experiences for the population of the Eastern Panhandle.

### **Former Core Values:**

With student learning as our ultimate priority, Blue Ridge Community and Technical College supports:

- Access to Higher Education.
- High Quality Programs and Services
- Institutional Effectiveness
- Academic Freedom
- Advancement and Enhancement of Current Workforce
- Community Centeredness
- Diversity
- Efficient and Accessible Transfer of Credit



## UPDATED MISSION

### **Updated Mission:**

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College provides our diverse student population with life-changing education, training, and services that drive economic development within the communities we serve.

### **Updated Vision:**

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College is the first choice for higher education that drives career growth and economic development in our region and surrounding communities.

### **Updated Core Values:**

Stewardship:

- Put student access, learning, and success first
- Support a safe, collaborating, and engaging environment for employees and students
- Provide an optimum learning environment for students
- Use College resources responsibly
- Demonstrate care for facilities

Civility:

- Communicate with respect, trust, and care
- Respect differences
- Listen actively
- Be aware of your impact on others
- Discuss differences and resolve conflicts

Integrity:

- Engage and actively contribute to the overall success of the College
- Think creatively and develop solutions
- Act honestly and ethically
- Provide accurate and thorough information
- Be courageous to be even better

Entrepreneurship:

- Embrace our business partners
- Think proactively and innovatively
- Be adaptable and flexible for shifting priorities
- Identify areas for continuous improvement
- OWN enrollment
- Take calculated risks wisely

## ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH HLC TERMINOLOGY?

### **Assurance Argument**

A narrative in which the institution explains how it meets HLC's Criteria for Accreditation, which is supported by linked documents in the Evidence File.

### **Assurance Filing**

Created and submitted by the institution, the filing includes the Assurance Argument with embedded links to documents in the Evidence File.

### **Assurance Review**

The peer review evaluation of the Assurance Filing.

### **Assurance System**

An online system used by institutions to provide an Assurance Argument or Systems Portfolio and evidentiary materials and used by peer reviewers to complete the Assurance Review or Comprehensive Quality Review.

### **Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)**

An individual identified by the chief executive officer of the institution to be second in the line of communication (behind the CEO) with HLC regarding policies, practices and other accreditation matters.

### **Accredited Status**

Status that indicates an institution meets HLC's Criteria for Accreditation.

### **Dual Credit Courses**

Courses taught to high school students for which the students receive both high school credit and college credit.

### **Maintain Accreditation**

Actively participate, as an institution, in HLC's accreditation processes to ensure the institution meets the Criteria for Accreditation.

### **Notice**

A sanction signifying an institution is pursuing a course of action that could result in its being unable to meet one or more of the Criteria for Accreditation.

### **Student Opinion Survey**

An online survey conducted by HLC as part of comprehensive evaluations. The opinions and data gathered assist peer reviewers in developing questions for their meetings during the on-site visit

### **Additional terms may be found at:**

<https://www.hlcommission.org/General/glossary.html>

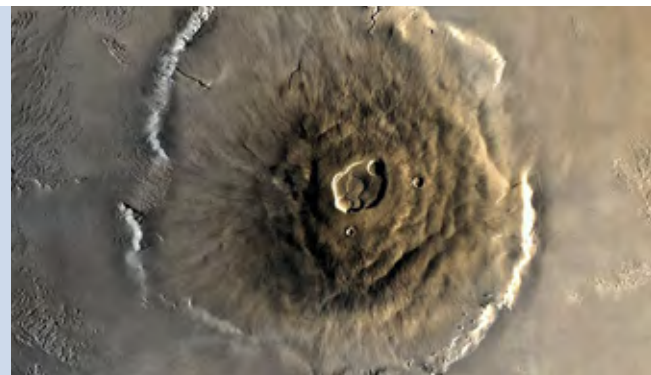
## 16 COMMON ASSESSMENT CRITERIA MISTAKES

**While BRCTC was not cited for these citations, understanding the common ones will help us to aware of possible pitfalls! If you think you may be weak in these areas, please reach out to your supervisor or Laura Busey.**

1. Most cited reason: Absence of systematic process to inform or improve student
2. Lack of assessment of co-curricular activities
3. Having a new plan in place with no data
4. No assessment of program learning outcomes
5. Incomplete submission of program assessment reports
6. No assessment of institutional data on general education outcomes
7. Lack of direct measures for assessment reports
8. No assessment plan
9. No process in place to collect and store data; no centralized data collection with accessibility
10. Lack of infrastructure or oversight of assessment
11. General Education assessment non-existent
12. Not all programs have learning outcomes, making sure they are measurable
13. Faculty could not articulate how program and general outcomes are linked
14. Assurance argument is consistent with practice
15. Outcomes for courses or program are not publicly available.

## DID YOU KNOW...? FUN MOUNTAIN FACT!

The highest mountain and volcano in the Solar System is on the planet Mars. It is called **Olympus Mons** and is 16 miles (24 kilometers) high which makes it about three times higher than Mt. Everest! Olympus Mons is a very flat mountain which slopes by only 2 to 5 degrees. It is a shield volcano built up by eruptions of lava.



# HOW DO YOU MEET THE MISSION?

**Every employee at BRCTC is important to fulfilling the mission statement!**

**Just like every piece is important to make a puzzle complete, every person is important to the mission:**

*Blue Ridge Community and Technical College provides our diverse student population with life-changing education, training, and services that drive economic development within the communities we serve.*

"In my position as Program Assistant for the School of Professional Studies and University Transfer, I help fulfill the mission by collaborating with area public schools (K-12) to arrange classroom observations for students in the A.S. Education degree program. These job shadow placements provide our students with essential, real-world experience to prepare them for a successful teaching career."

**- Kelly Shurnitski, Program Asst., School of Professional Studies & University Transfer"**

"I develop partnerships with business and industry to deliver workforce training."

**- Kim Moss, Director, Customized Training and Workforce Development**

"I feel like I am an extension of the college. I try to help keep the college looking nice and clean, and I try to have something uplifting to tell the students when I pass them."

**- Kenny Smith, Campus Service Worker**



"My role as Director of Prior Learning supports the mission in that students are able to apply learning that occurred outside of the traditional classroom toward a specific degree program. This allows for faster transition into the workforce. It gives confidence to our students to know they are spending time here learning what is needed and not wasting time in redundancy."

**- Apryl McDonough, Director of Prior Learning**



"My job is about helping current students by making sure they have the best experience here and showing perspective students all the advantages they will have by attending Blue Ridge. By 'thinking proactively and innovatively,' I assist in providing the best resources available by making sure the equipment is in good working order."

**- Alberto Torres, Mechatronics Lab Asst.**

"I work with students to help them find life-long career jobs by helping them write resumes and prepare for interviews."

**- Siona Escoto, Outreach and Placement Specialist**

"At the Welcome Desk, I operate with transparency to encourage trust and open dialogue with each visitor."

**-Amanda Alford, Records Assistant I**





# HLC INTERNAL COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**The HLC Internal Communications Committee serves as ambassadors to the college. If you have any questions you can reach out to members of this committee for assistance!**

Amber Butcher

Amanda Burnell

Alexis Dixon

Apryl McDonough

Christopher Cobian

Diana Crouse

Elizabeth Brautigan

Janet Branch

Jennifer Barrett Smith

Jessica Leake

Kathryn Moore

Lisha Burks

Sara Gordon

## **Committee Advisors**

Laura Busey

Dr. Ann Shipway

"As a way to improve the services that we provide to our students, we are changing the format of our billing so that it is easier to obtain as well as understand. We are providing text reminders as financial information becomes available and walk through the process with them every step of the way."

**- Beth Jones, Accounting Manager**



"The Blue Ridge Community and Technical College Foundation assists the College in its mission by increasing financial resources and expanding educational opportunities through community advocacy, teamwork and innovation. Over the past year the Foundation has supported over 140 students, awarding over \$150,000 in scholarships. Our students are working full and part-time jobs in the community, while attending Blue Ridge CTC. Their first goal is to improve their lives and the lives of their families through training for high paying jobs in, in-demand occupations."

**- Anne Myers, Foundation Director**

"The Culinary Department reflects Blue Ridge's new Mission Statement by reaching out to our community in various forms. This is accomplished through classes offered to full-time students seeking degrees as well as Master Chef Classes and skill development for our community and business partners. Our programs offer an opportunity for growth and sustainability."

**- Steve Weiss, Culinary Instructor and Program Coordinator**



"As SGA President, I plan to encourage students to be more active and engaged in clubs to gain leadership and communication skills that can help them secure a job after graduation."

**- Jared Kuse, Student Government Association President**

"As a security officer the number 1 priority of my mission is to ensure the safety and well-being of each student, which "provides an optimum learning environment for students" and enables them to perform at their highest level."

**- Peggy Unger, Security Officer**

## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HLC PROCESS?

**For more information,  
please email:  
accreditation@blueridgectc.edu**

# UNDERSTANDING THE CORE COMPONENTS OF CRITERION 1

## A) The mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations

1. Developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is governed by the governing board.
2. Academics, support services and enrollment profile are consistent with the mission
3. Planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.

DISCUSSED AND APPROVED BY BOARD

DIVERSE SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENT BODY

MISSION GUIDES THE BUDGET

## B) The mission is articulated publicly.

1. Shared through one or more public documents
2. Current and explains the extent of the institutions emphasis on the various aspects of its mission
3. Identifies the nature, scope, and intended constituents

AVAILABLE ON WEBSITE, BLACKBOARD, BANNERS, & MORE!

REVISED AUGUST 7, 2019

CONTINUOUSLY MONITORED

## C) The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society

1. Addresses its role in multicultural society
2. Processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

VETERAN PROGRAM

CULTURAL & HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES

## D) The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization or supporting external interests.
3. Engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

TRAINING FOR LOCAL BUSINESS NEEDS

AFFORDABLE TUITION!

LOCAL BUSINESSES ON ADVISORY BOARDS

*\*Examples from 2015 Assurance Argument.  
For more examples go to Accreditation 2020 on TUNA!*