

*Beginning as a “store front” operation using temporary and rented facilities, MCC enrolled 2,430 credit students in 1974-75, its first year. From those 2,430 to 25,527 credit students today, MCC is one of the fastest-growing postsecondary institutions in the region. The college offers a wide variety of credit and noncredit courses, programs, degrees, certificates, and diplomas to a diverse population within its four-county service area.*



## Chapter 1 Introduction

### Overview

**M**etropolitan Community College (MCC) is a comprehensive, full-service public community college supported, in part, by the taxpayers of Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy, and Washington counties within its service area. The college’s purpose is to provide quality educational programs and services, primarily in career preparation and general education, to students of all ages and educational backgrounds. Based on headcount enrollment, it is the third largest postsecondary institution in Nebraska, and one of six community colleges in the state.

MCC offers more than 100 one- and two-year career program options, a wide array of student support services, developmental and adult basic education, continuing and noncredit education, as well as customized training for local employers. Since its establishment in 1974, MCC has grown to be a trusted educational institution providing access to higher learning opportunities to the local community.

The college has worked hard to achieve and maintain an appropriate balance between the various components of its comprehensive mission. Partnerships through articulation with secondary and postsecondary institutions have been critical to the success of MCC’s transfer program. In addition, partnerships with local businesses have allowed the college to develop further a broad range of career programs.

The infusion of technology throughout the college has enabled MCC to provide greater and more efficient services to students as well as technologically advanced learning environments for both students and faculty.

With multiple campuses, MCC is many colleges in one. Its unique blending of subcultures and common values provides an effective learning environment for students, faculty, and staff.

This self-study process has provided the college with an opportunity to reflect collectively on the last 10 years of its growth and development. The findings described and evaluated in this document provide evidence of the many things in which the college takes pride and the challenges it faces.

### Service Area Profile

MCC’s service area consists of a diverse population not only in ethnicity but also income. The Omaha and surrounding area’s economy and growth potential contribute to making MCC a successful community college.

#### Overview of the Four-County Service Area

MCC’s service area is comprised of four counties: Douglas, Sarpy, Dodge, and Washington. The college’s local area serves 38% of Nebraska’s population. The largest city in MCC’s service area is Omaha, with a 2000 population of 390,007 (U.S. Census Bureau).

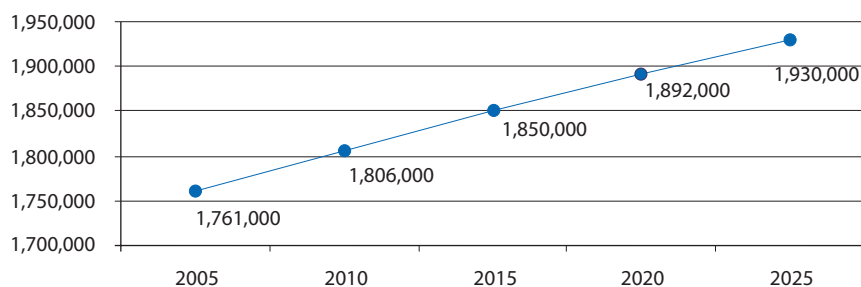
The college serves an area of 1,496.4 square miles and an estimated population of 641,120 in the four-county area (U.S. Census Bureau). In addition to Omaha, major population centers include Papillion, LaVista, and Bellevue in Sarpy County; Ralston and Valley in Douglas County; Fremont in Dodge County; and Blair in Washington County.

MCC has three campuses: the Fort Omaha campus, the South Omaha campus, and the Elkhorn Valley campus. It has two centers: the Sarpy Center and the Fremont Center. MCC also provides classes and services at Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue. In 2000-01, MCC served 25,527 credit students and 18,569 noncredit students.

#### Growth

Between 1990 and 2000, the four-county service population increased by 13% compared to a state increase of 8.4%. The total state population is projected to show a slow, steady increase in the coming decades (U.S. Census Bureau).

**Figure 1.1 Projected Nebraska Population**



## Projected High School Graduation Rates

According to the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education's report, *An Enrollment Profile of Higher Education in Nebraska*, the state is experiencing declining birthrates and will probably have a relatively small increase in high school graduates through 2011-12. In 1996-97, approximately 20,000 students graduated from high schools in Nebraska. The number of high school graduates peaked in 2001-02 at 23,000, up 14.5% from 1996-97. However, 2011-12 high school graduates will decrease to 21,159, up only 5.8% above the 1996-97 base of 20,000.

## Ethnicity

Ethnic minorities represent approximately 17% of the total population of the four-county service area, with the largest minority population located in the Omaha metropolitan area. MCC's minority enrollment in the fall 2001 was 21.4%. MCC's percentage of minority students, overall, is larger than the metropolitan area's and in three out of five ethnic categories exceeds the service area's percentages.

**Table 1.2 Percentage of Ethnicity\***

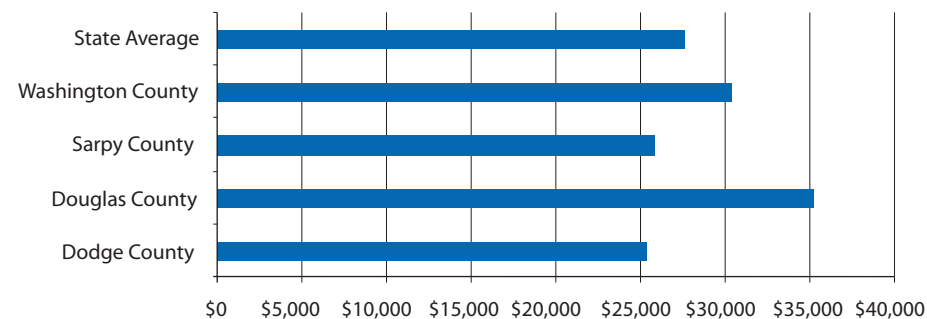
Ethnicity	Service Area Population	Student Population
Asian	1.6%	3.7%
Black	9.1%	12.2%
Caucasian	83.2%	74.2%
Hispanic	5.9%	4.3%
Native American	0.5%	0.9%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau and MCC 2000-01 Annual Data Notebook.  
\*Some minorities self-identify as more than one ethnic category.

## Four Counties Per Capita Personal Income

According to the *Nebraska Data Notebook*, of the four counties in MCC's service area, Douglas has the highest per capita income with \$35,186 per year and Dodge has the lowest with \$25,370. The state average for 2002 is \$27,630.

**Figure 1.3 Per Capita Personal Income**



## Omaha Economy

The largest employment sector of Omaha is the service sector, which accounts for 34% of the city's total employment. Combined, services and trade (24%) comprise 58% of metro area employment, reflecting Omaha's status as a regional services and trade center.

One indicator most often used to gauge the health of a local economy is employment. Total employment in Omaha grew more than 28% between 1990 and 2001, compared to 18% at the national level. Omaha's well-diversified economy has kept the unemployment rate low. In April 2002, the Omaha unemployment rate was 3.7%, compared to the national average of 6%.

According to the U. S. Department of Commerce business survey, over 18,800 businesses are located in the Omaha metropolitan area. From 1990 through 2001, the area added over 93,630 jobs, an increase of 28.3%. Omaha is home to five Fortune 500 companies: ConAgra, Mutual of Omaha, Union Pacific, Berkshire Hathaway, and Peter Kiewit and Sons. Thirty-five other Fortune 500 companies have manufacturing plants or service centers in the metropolitan area. Almost 30 insurance companies, two dozen direct response/telemarketing centers, and a number of other national and international firms are located in Omaha.

## Employment Trends in Nebraska: 1996-2006

According to the Nebraska Department of Labor, industry employment projections for regions within Nebraska indicate employment should grow at an average annual rate of 1.3% between 1996 and 2006. Most of this growth will take place in metropolitan areas, particularly Lincoln and Omaha. Of the seven Nebraska regions, only the Omaha, Lincoln, and northeast regions will have an annual employment growth greater than 1%.

By the year 2006, the industry projected to lead job growth in the Omaha region is miscellaneous business services (5.5%). Also contributing significantly are computer and data processing services (4.5%), trucking and courier services (3.6%), and eating and drinking establishments (1.7%).

## History of Metropolitan Community College

The current Nebraska community college system was created in 1971 when the Nebraska legislature created eight "technical community college areas" across the state. One of the areas was called the Eastern Nebraska Technical Community College Area, which encompassed Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy, and Washington counties. An area vocational technical school operated by the Omaha Board of Education already served part of this area.

In 1974, the legislature consolidated the original eight technical community college areas into six, and Metropolitan Community College was created. The same year, the programs, personnel, assets and liabilities of the former Omaha Nebraska Technical Community College Area merged with the Eastern Nebraska Technical Community College Area under a new title, the Metropolitan Technical Community College Area. In 1992, the state legislature changed the title to the Metropolitan Community College Area.

Beginning as a “store front” operation using temporary and rented facilities, MCC enrolled 2,430 credit students in 1974-75, its first year. From those 2,430 to 25,527 credit students today, MCC is one of the fastest-growing postsecondary institutions in the region. The college offers a wide variety of credit and noncredit courses, programs, degrees, certificates, and diplomas to a diverse population within its service area.

## Accreditation History

During MCC’s accreditation history, evaluation teams have visited the college seven times, and MCC has submitted three special reports since it applied for candidacy in 1974.

- MCC had its first evaluation visit in December 1974, which resulted in candidacy status approval in April 1975.
- In November 1976, the college hosted a biennial visit and was approved for continuing candidacy status and for moving toward accreditation.
- After the initial accreditation visit in November 1978, MCC was granted accreditation for five years in April 1979. However, a mandated focused visit was scheduled in 1980-81 to fulfill the requirements of initial accreditation.
- Based on the April 1981 mandatory focused visit, the visiting team thought the college had not yet resolved issues raised earlier: developing a long-range master plan and reducing the Board of Governors’ involvement in administrative matters. A follow-up focused visit was scheduled for the following year.
- In March 1982, the visiting team conducted a focused visit and concluded that the college had addressed the master planning concern but had not fully addressed the concern about board involvement in administrative matters. Because of this, the next comprehensive visit was moved forward one academic year to Spring 1983.
- In March 1983, the first evaluation visit for continued accreditation occurred. The commission stipulated that the college submit a five-year status report in 1987-88.
- In October 1992, a second evaluation visit for continued accreditation occurred. The visiting team recommended a 10-year continuing accreditation status with the next scheduled visit occurring in 2002-03. However, the college was required to provide a detailed description of its institutional program for the assessment of student academic achievement during 1995-96. In May 1996, the college submitted the requested report, which was subsequently approved. Information about previous visits and reports is available in the Resource Room.

## Significant Institutional Changes Since 1992

Major changes since the 1992 self-study are summarized below and addressed in appropriate chapters.

- 1993** The transfer program was expanded to the South Omaha and Elkhorn Valley campuses.

- 1994** The Student Services division was restructured to enhance services to students.
- 1995** MCC's 1995 master facilities plan was completed. The structure of the Executive Team was expanded.
- 1997** Dual credit hour offerings at area high schools were initiated.
- 1998** Computer access for students, faculty, and staff significantly increased due to the 1995 Information Technology master plan. The college implemented a "one-stop" approach for student services at all locations.
- 1999** The Educational Services division was restructured. Online courses were launched. In partnership with the City of LaVista, the Sarpy Center was built as a shared facility.
- 2000** MCC began an institutional effectiveness process. The second president of the college retired after 20 years of service.
- 2001** The Board of Governors appointed a new president. Enrollment Management launched an online registration process and a comprehensive student services Web site. MCC's acquisition of lands for potential development in Fremont and of property adjacent to the South Omaha and the Fort Omaha campuses positioned the college for growth. Due to tremendous growth of articulation agreements with other postsecondary institutions, MCC hired its first articulation coordinator. MCC acquired a land option site from the Bellevue Public Schools for potential growth in Sarpy County. The college initiated a facilities master plan to provide direction.

### Responses to the 1992 Self-Study Concerns

The 1972 self-study resulted in a 10-year continuing accreditation. The 1992 evaluation team identified seven concerns (listed in blue) that the college has addressed (in black) over the last 10 years.

**1**

**The college currently has authority to offer the transfer program at the Fort Omaha campus only. Every effort should be extended to expand the authority of the college to offer the transfer program throughout the college's service area.**

Nebraska Statute 85-963 governs community college transfer programs. Within this statute, the legislature gives the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE), a state higher learning agency, the authority to allow the college to offer transfer programs at other campuses.

At the time of the 1992 site visit, the statute allowed MCC to offer transfer programs only at the Fort Omaha campus. In March and April of 1993, the CCPE approved the expansion of MCC's academic transfer program to the Elkhorn Valley and South Omaha campuses but placed conditions on the college.

The college was requested to report annually for five years on the following:

- Student enrollment in the academic transfer program;
- Additional faculty, administrators, and support staff to accommodate the academic transfer program expansion;
- Additional expenditures for telecommunications support of its academic transfer program; and
- Affirmative actions taken so that minority representation in the academic transfer program was equivalent to the representation of minorities in the MCC service area.

The college submitted annual reports for five years addressing those requested areas, which subsequently were approved by Nebraska's CCPE. Currently, the college has formal articulation agreements with 13 institutions, and enrollment in transfer-oriented offerings is growing at the Fort Omaha, South Omaha, and Elkhorn Valley campuses.

## 2

**The institution has in place a number of elements relating to student academic achievement, but has not yet conceived a process to bring the elements together into a comprehensive, systematic program producing information that leads to continual educational improvement.**

Because of the 1992 site visit, the college was required to provide a special report with a detailed description of its institutional program for the assessment of student academic achievement. In 1996, the college submitted an assessment plan that outlined its working program of assessment and, subsequently, was approved.

Since submitting the plan in 1996, Educational Services has gone through numerous leadership changes and restructurings that have created institutional challenges in implementing the plan. With increased understanding, a faculty-driven Outcomes Committee, under the direction of the vice president of Educational Services, has developed and made significant progress in implementing an assessment program for all academic areas. MCC's outcomes assessment program is addressed in Chapter 10: Criterion 3–Outcomes Assessment with documentation available in the Resource Room.

## 3

**The college needs to work on making its internal communication more timely and effective. Communication with both students and employees needs to be strengthened. Not only do people need to be continuously apprised of happenings at the institution, but they also need to feel more a part of deliberations on issues and change.**

Since 1992, the college has implemented a variety of strategies to enhance communication with employees and has increased opportunities for employee participation in discussions addressing institutional issues and change. Some of these strategies have included:

- Communication roundtable sessions facilitated by the Educational and Community Services Council were offered to all employees during 1999-01. During these sessions,

employees voiced concerns about communication issues and offered possible solutions. The results of the sessions were then forwarded to appropriate personnel. The final report is available in the Resource Room.

- The college has significantly increased its ability to disseminate information in a timely manner throughout the institution. In the last 10 years, the college has launched an Intranet Web site, established a help desk to assist employees and students with electronic equipment, implemented e-mail and voice mail systems throughout the organization, created “public folders” access via the college’s e-mail system, and converted the weekly employee newsletter, *Inside Story*, to a twice-weekly electronic format.
- The revision of the College Action Committees, along with the creation of College Councils in 1996, has not only increased MCC’s ability to provide more timely and effective communication with staff but has also served as an avenue for employee empowerment and shared decision-making. In an effort to further strengthen communication, the College Action Committees and College Councils will undergo extensive revision in 2002-03.

Communication with students has increased in quantity and quality. The college recently filled a new student communication specialist position to create a comprehensive student communication plan. Additional steps taken to improve student communication include:

- Student focus groups to gather student input addressing communication issues;
- Welcome letters to new students each quarter;
- Examination of the need for student government;
- Student organizations Web site;
- Student e-mail accounts;
- Ex officio student membership on the Board of Governors;
- MCC Web page/transcript request feature; and
- Student Services Web page.

Communication efforts are further discussed in Chapter 5: Criterion 2–Governance.

#### 4

**The issue of diversity is of major importance to the college. Certain segments of the college community, however, need to be more actively involved and more closely connected to the implementation process, particularly as it relates to hiring practices.**

MCC has implemented numerous strategies to address this issue. In 1992, the college formed the Diversity Steering Panel as part of a strategic goal. Chapter 12: Criterion 5–Integrity provides additional information. MCC’s screening committee process (see Chapter 5: Criterion 2–Human Resources for more information) helps to ensure minority

representation during MCC's hiring procedures. The college also filled a newly created position of the diversity and equity officer, whose function is to develop additional strategies for hiring a more diverse employee population. This position and its responsibilities are further addressed in Chapter 12: Criterion 5–Integrity.

The college has been somewhat successful in increasing minority employee representation as evidenced in Chapter 5: Criterion 2–Human Resources, especially among faculty. In 1992, 3% of full-time faculty members were minorities. In 2002, minorities comprised 10% of the total number of full-time instructors. Compared to the metropolitan minority population of approximately 17%, MCC has room for growth in faculty representation, however, the college has taken positive steps in attracting and retaining qualified minority employees. See Chapter 8: Criterion 3–Instructional Services for some of those approaches.

**5**

**Although, for the most part, classroom and laboratory space seem fairly adequate for the institutional needs of today, the team is concerned that the demands of future enrollments and programming may soon lead to a situation where the lack of adequate instructional space may negatively affect the quality of the college's offerings. The college needs to develop detailed plans to address these needs and then find ways to implement them systematically.**

Because of MCC's growth in the last 10 years, this concern identified a real need the college pursued. A facilities master planning study was initiated in 1992 and completed in 1995. Study results provided the college with a clearer direction in its remodeling but were limited in identifying priorities for expansion. A number of large projects were completed based on this study. See Chapter 6: Criterion 2–Physical Resources for a listing.

One significant result of the 1995 facilities study was the creation of technology classrooms distributed throughout the college's campuses. In addition, a permanent facility, the Sarpy Center, was opened in 1999. The Sarpy Center is addressed in Chapter 6: Criterion 2–Physical Resources. MCC is currently conducting a 2003 facilities master planning study to move the college forward in determining and prioritizing the best use of its current and potential space. Chapter 6: Criterion 2–Physical Resources addresses these issues.

**6**

**Record keeping and reporting, at all levels from divisional to institutional, require attention. Faculty, staff, and administrators must know how and where to locate reliable data concerning institutional activities and resources as a basis for evaluation, planning, and discussion of common concerns.**

MCC has taken strides in addressing this concern. In 1995, the college created an Information Technology Services (ITS) department to address its technology infrastructure. The computer services department was transformed into Management Information Systems (MIS), which focuses on the college's application of electronic data collection. MIS has been a vehicle for formalizing and documenting workflow along with making data more accessible to employees. In January 2000, MIS launched Release 16 of Colleague, the

college's administrative software from Datatel, Inc. (In 1983, the college was among Datatel's 13 first clients and the first community college nationwide to use Colleague.) Release 16 is the most comprehensive release of Colleague since its inception.

To formalize MCC's documentation workflow process and as part of the Release 16, almost all administrative department workflows were identified, diagramed, and reworked to fit the new workflows of Release 16. Registration, accounts payable, cashiering, grading, student records, advising, and curriculum management substantially changed as part of the conversion. In many ways, it was equivalent to purchasing a brand new administrative software system. Not only did existing workflows change, but also new workflows were created. See the Resource Room for a listing of new workflows.

MIS also created a Web site to provide employees easier access to pertinent college data (<http://metroweb.mccneb.edu/mis>). In conjunction with the Office of Institutional Research, MIS provides quarterly and yearly data summaries and survey results on its Web site (<http://metroweb.mccneb.edu/ir/default.htm>). These activities have enabled employees to better locate college data in more usable formats using minimal effort.

## **7** There is no systematic involvement of the faculty in the selection of library materials.

The library staff have developed a variety of techniques to keep faculty involved in material selection. Library supervisors communicate regularly with instructors regarding resources for students. Faculty members are always encouraged to suggest additions to the library collection. As online databases are considered for the library, instructors receive login information and are encouraged to provide feedback to library staff. Steps to involve faculty in the library selection of materials process include:

- Faculty in specific program areas are invited on a quarterly basis to review the library collection and discuss improvements;
- Library staff attend meetings of the Teaching and Curriculum Committee to discuss library materials and issues;
- Library staff prepare and present orientation to new faculty and emphasize faculty selection of materials;
- Library staff attend Educational Services meetings to discuss the selection of materials and other issues with program faculty;
- An online acquisition form for new materials is available for faculty use at the library's Web page (<http://www.mccneb.edu/library/purchrequest.htm>);
- Library staff developed a faculty handbook that stresses reliance on faculty input; and
- Library staff distribute notices about new materials to faculty.

Further support is presented in Chapter 8: Criterion 3–Instructional Services. All documentation relating to the seven concerns identified in 1992 is located in the Resource Room.

## Purposes of the Self-Study

MCC's self-study process was a learning experience for all-employees, students, and the community. To ensure this learning experience, the Self-Study Steering Committee defined the institution's self-study purpose as threefold:

- **Inclusive.** To create an inclusive environment by making the self-study process available to 100% of MCC's employees by actively communicating throughout the college;
- **Integrated.** To take advantage of MCC's existing systems by integrating the self-study process within the college's overall system of continuous improvement; and
- **Accurate.** To ensure that the self-study report accurately reflects both MCC's strengths and challenges in guiding it to become a better institution.

The Self-Study Steering Committee established guidelines for the institution as it proceeded through the self-study process. These guidelines are available in the Resource Room.

## Self-Study Process

### Committee Structure

MCC's self-study committee structure consisted of a Steering Committee, a Coordinating Committee, nine criterion committees, and two teams (Resource Room and Site Visit Host). A communication team and an editing team were planned, however, as the process evolved, the self-study coordinator addressed all communication activities, and the Executive Team assumed editing responsibilities with input from constituents reviewing drafts.

- **Steering Committee.** This committee oversaw all aspects of the self-study and guided the process to ensure that all necessary systems were in place for the self-study to be successful. The committee also reviewed initial drafts pertaining to the criteria.
- **Coordinating Committee.** This committee, consisting of criterion chairs, co-chairs, the self-study coordinator, and members-at-large, closely monitored the day-to-day activities of all criterion committees and teams. It reviewed and evaluated all generated data.
- **Criterion Committees.** Each criterion committee was responsible for a designated criterion, one aspect of a criterion, and/or the General Institutional Requirements (GIRs). Committees collected and analyzed data, completed topic worksheets, submitted evidence to the Resource Room, and summarized materials. A member of the Steering Committee served as a liaison on each criterion committee.
- **Resource Room Team.** This team organized and managed all necessary Resource Room documentation and evidence for the site visit.
- **Site Visit Host Team.** This team managed the logistics of the self-study site visit.

Refer to the appendices for a listing of committee memberships and the self-study organizational chart.

### Criterion Committee Selection Process

The Steering Committee selected and appointed criterion chairs and co-chairs from a nomination list. Self-selection and invitation determined membership in each criterion committee and team. Each chair and co-chair also assisted in determining the selection process for his or her respective group. Representatives from the three campuses and two centers volunteered to serve on the self-study committees.



### Self-Study Report Process

The following is a systematic description of how data were gathered, analyzed, and then integrated into the self-study report. A criterion committee selected topics under study relevant to its criterion and completed topic worksheets. Data were collected on these topics and analyzed. Over 200 full-time employees contributed to the report process by collecting data, participating in interviews, and providing information. Topic worksheets with supporting evidence and a list of all employee contributors to the self-study report are available in the Resource Room.

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the topic worksheets and approved content for thoroughness or returned them to the committees for revisions. After topic worksheets were approved, the self-study coordinator incorporated the findings into the writing of the report. Each chapter was then reviewed by the Steering Committee for content, and recommendations for improvement were determined. Changes suggested by the Steering Committee were incorporated into the document. Finally, the Executive Team reviewed the comprehensive first draft and suggested additional changes, which were also incorporated. Throughout the process, drafts of each criterion were posted on the college's Intranet Web site for employee review (<http://metroweb.mccneb.edu/nca/home.htm>).

During 2001-02, all full-time employees participated in staff development sessions by discussing and reviewing each criterion's strengths and challenges, as they evolved. In addition, employees submitted written suggestions for improvement and comments pertaining to the strengths and challenges. Employee comments and the staff development core session handouts are available in the Resource Room.

### Self-Study Timeline

The self-study general timeline addressed three phases: preparation, process, and publication. From August through December 2000, the college's focus was on preparing to launch the self-study process: determining structure, identifying chairs and memberships for a variety of groups, and training key personnel in leadership positions.

In 2001, the institution's major focus was to gather, analyze, and synthesize data. These data were incorporated into the report.

During the beginning of the 2001-02 academic year, the criterion committees reconvened to gather additional data. The self-study was finalized and submitted for publication during the spring of 2002, with the final report sent to the Higher Learning Commission's visiting site team in August 2002. The self-study process/timeline is available in the Resource Room.

### **Self-Study Report**

The self-study report is organized by specific topics relating to each criterion, with additional chapters addressing the college's General Institutional Requirements and distance education. Appendices contain supporting information.

MCC's self-study process has facilitated an in-depth examination of the college's purposes, procedures, and facilities. The self-study findings and the team report will be incorporated into the college's institutional effectiveness process and be addressed by the Executive Team during the next two years following the self-study.

Metropolitan Community College meets the Higher Learning Commission's requirements and criteria for continued accreditation.