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Results of the Accreditation Process to Guide Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Institution Improvement

Sherri E. Nash

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**RESULTS OF THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS TO GUIDE
POSTSECONDARY CERTIFICATE-GRANTING INSTITUTION
IMPROVEMENT**

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in
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ABSTRACT

Research gaps exist in knowledge about postsecondary certificate-granting institutions, as well as results of accreditation processes. This qualitative study focuses on national accreditation results that can: 1) define strengths and improvement areas in these institutions; 2) determine why action is taken or not taken on accreditation recommendations; and 3) identify results, strengths, and challenges of accreditation. This research base can guide improvements in these institutions and the North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) process. The population was 125 accredited schools in ten states, representing 96% of all NCA CASI accredited public, postsecondary institutions. Methods included: document analysis, interviews, and peer review validation. All commendations and recommendations in the 125 school NCA CASI accreditation reports were coded. Interview participants were selected using a maximum variance sampling with completion and licensure/certification passage averages as the variance component. Interviews were conducted with selected 15 NCA CASI school coordinators, one State Department Coordinator and one AdvancED/NCA CASI representative. Seven school personnel from five states participated in a peer-review validation process. Results indicate: 1) the accreditation report documentation shows the highest percentage of schools receive commendations related to: business, industry and community involvement; pupil personnel services; positive school culture and relationships; safety and space considerations, and data collection processes. Highest percentage of schools recommendations focused on: data analysis and decisions; lack of space; student support service strategies; business, industry, and community support strategies; and increased documentation. 2) Interviews identified themes of action taken on accreditation report recommendations: documentation, compliance, performance measures, and process improvements. Actions not taken related to: resource costs or philosophical differences. 3) Accreditation process strengths are: financial aid access; credibility; continuous improvement framework; critical analysis of self study using internal teams; and gaining external peer-review team perspectives. Accreditation challenges or areas in need of improvement are: accountability duplication; resource constraints; subjectivity/philosophical differences; and suggestions for process improvements. These NCA CASI accredited institutions show an average of 84.5% completion, 87.9% placement, and 89.7% licensure/certification performance rates.

DEDICATION

My dissertation and accomplishment of the doctoral degree are dedicated, with love, to my family and friends. The first dedication is in memory of my Daddy, John “Jack” Rowsey; and honor of my Mother, Linda Brady. They instilled a spirit of independence, creativity, energy, and persistence. I could not have accomplished this journey without my Mother’s assistance. My husband, Don Nash, deserves credit for tolerating my continuous professional self-improvement, and “all about me” attitude. During the doctoral pursuit, we built a house and changed jobs, while I spent all my time on the computer. In addition to my doctoral graduation, our 30th anniversary is May 27th, 2008.

My precious son, Scott Nash; and daughter-in-law, Jenny Nash, provided me with daily encouragement, insight, love, and support. I am so proud of their educational master degree accomplishments, commitment to student success, and their new role as parents. Shellyn Nash, my four-month old grand-daughter, is the new sunshine in our lives. She will obviously be committed to lifelong learning and have a love for people based on her early inquisitive personality and babbling, positive nature. Sisters, Denise Juan and Jeanette Rowsey, were reluctantly my first students as little girls playing school. They let this bossy sister try to teach them to read in the 1960’s, and I was able to convince them to enter dissertation data in 2008. Brother-in-law, Chuck Minsker, nephews Justin and Evan Minsker, Akila Juan also provided support. One of my best friends, Betty Sias, made my bachelor, master, and now doctoral degrees realities. She would not let me quit, even when I would “hit the wall”. I am so proud of her for achieving her educational doctorate. Friends, Brenda Mason, Rhonda Mills, Pam Varney, and Betty Sias, have been like sisters these past twenty+ years. I have observed their growth through the

empowerment of education. Pam officially earns one of my Ed. D. dots for her words of encouragement. I must not forget Fred, my 16 year old miniature dachshund.

Thanks to the support from my Brady family: Aunt Margie Brady, Cousins Jeff and Michael Seager, Uncle Paul Brady, Uncle Scott and Aunt Janine, Cristina, Patrick, and Shannon Brady. Their wisdom, determination, drive, and strength equates to a doctorate in life and common sense. The love for education and people was inspired by my Rowsey family: Aunt Pat and Uncle Bob Schultz, Suzanne Wilson, Kathi Stafford, and Dr. Robert (Uncle Buzzy) and Aunt Luella Rowsey, Lisa and Robbie Rowsey. My inlaws, Buzzy and Norma Nash, and families have always provided encouragement. Best wishes to nephews and nieces Jordan and Amy Nash on their doctoral quests and Cristina Brady, Chaz Yingling, and Shawna Thompson with their masters' work. A special thanks to David and Pam Gerlach. I will always treasure the memories of Ellis and Mary Rowsey, George and Margaret Brady, Phyllis Pollard, Norie Kaiser, Chet Seager, and Christy Mills Holland.

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I am thankful for my NCA CASI school coordinators employed at accredited post-secondary schools and the State Department of Education representative interview participants. They were very professional and provided me with honest, open responses

and dialogue to learn about the accreditation process. I hope to use these results to benefit these schools and students through continuous improvement efforts.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Educational attainment of postsecondary degrees and/or credentials is imperative to achieve a minimum of middle class status in the 21st century (Carnevale, 2008; Pennington & Vargas, 2004; United States Department of Education, 2006). The United States Department of Education (USDE, n.d.) defines higher education institutions as degree-granting colleges and universities, or postsecondary certificate-granting institutions (USDE, n.d.). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), there are approximately 250 public postsecondary certificate-granting institutions in the United States. These institutions provide career and technical education often times leading to an industry credential or license for completion in less than two academic years (Visger, 2007). Career and technical education fields of study include: agriculture, business support, computer and information sciences, health sciences, personal services, protective services, and trade and industry (National Center for Education Statistics - NCES, 2004). Limited research exists on postsecondary certificate-granting institutions (Castellano, Stringfield, & Stone, 2001; Farmer & O'Lawrence, 2000; USDE, 2004).

Many postsecondary certificate-granting institutions, as well as all higher education institutions, engage in an accreditation process. Accreditation evaluates quality assurance standards through External Peer-Review teams in business, industry, and commerce, as well as in educational institutions, to guide continuous improvement (Akduman, Ozkale, & Ekinci, 2001). The USDE's (n.d.) goal of accreditation is to ensure higher education institutions provide students with a quality education. Students as consumers expect and should be assured a quality education. The accreditation process and results can assure postsecondary certificate-granting institutions provide quality

education and ongoing continuous improvement (Miller & Millandra, 2006; Wonacott, 2002).

The USDE does not accredit schools, colleges, or universities, but approves non-governmental accrediting agencies. “The federal government is precluded by law from direct involvement in the determination of academic quality in education” (Eaton, 2003). The USDE focuses on two central purposes of accreditation: accountability and assuring a quality education for students. Literature exists addressing the accountability aspect of accreditation (Council for Higher Education Accreditation - CHEA, 2006). Research is published defining the accreditation process, providing preparation strategies, and discussing the changes in the accreditation focus (Tamir & Wilson, 2005). Accountability for accreditation shifted during the 1990s from reviewing an institution’s processes and costs to a focus on quality assurance and results (Burke, 2001; USDE, 2006). Generally, the public and legislators, as well as some educational leaders, have a limited understanding of the focus on quality and effectiveness of accreditation (CHEA, 2006). There is limited research on institutions addressing standards to reflect quality educational programs, and establishing institutional improvement goals to increase institutional effectiveness (Eaton, 2006; Friedlander & Serban, 2004).

The Accreditation Process

Accreditation status indicates the institution has completed the accreditation procedures and complies with all of the standards and requirements of the recognized accrediting agency. Commendations and recommendations are identified through the external peer-review process and documented on a final report given to the individual institution to guide action for continuous improvement.

The accreditation process serves multiple purposes that focus on providing an accountability system for students, institutions, and employers; as well as for the use of public and private funds, and assuring students receive a quality education. Accreditation should analyze “results and quality” versus “process, inputs, and governance” (USDE, 2006, section 1:20). The USDE (2006) purposes related to process, inputs, and governance accountability are:

- Conducting institutional critical evaluation and planning through faculty and staff involvement.
- Providing student awareness by identifying institutions with accredited status.
- Protecting institutions from internal and external pressure.
- Recognizing institutions for public and private investments.
- Using accreditation status as one consideration for providing federal financial access.
- Assisting in determining acceptance for credit transfer from institution to institution.
- Determining professional certification and licensure criteria.

The accreditation purpose of providing a results-based, quality education includes:

- Verifying institutions address standards to reflect quality educational programs.
- Developing institutional improvement goals to increase institutional effectiveness.

Institutional and program accrediting agencies develop standards and criteria approved by the USDE. The National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and

Integrity (NACIQI) and the United States Department of Education review accrediting agencies through submitted policies and standards petition work. The NACIQI makes the formal recommendation concerning approval to the Secretary of Education (USDE, 2007). The standards must analyze the “major functions of an institution or program” (Eaton, 2003, p. 1). Standards are categorized as input with required documented policies and outcomes with measurable results identifying improvement strategies (McCrel, 1998). The USDE requires accreditation standards to address all of these areas:

- Student achievement: success of course completion, licensing examination and job placement rates related to the institution’s mission
- Curricula
- Faculty
- Facilities, equipment and supplies
- Fiscal and administrative management
- Pupil personnel services
- Recruitment and admission practices
- Program length and objective measures
- Student complaint records
- Student loan default rates, financial or compliance audits and financial program reviews

The USDE (2007) requires accrediting agencies to evaluate standards used by institutions through analysis, reporting, and monitoring procedures to assure they meet student needs and continuously improve institutional effectiveness. All educational

institutions or programs seeking accreditation or re-accreditation status have the same sequential, procedural, steps. The accreditation procedures include:

1. Developing an institutional or program self-study analyzing performance measures against the established accrediting agency standards and criteria.
2. Conducting an on-site evaluation to validate the evidence of the standards by an external team review team selected by the accrediting agency. Peer-Review teams are comprised of educators and public participants similar to the institution or program.
3. Publicizing the awarding of accreditation after the accrediting agency grants the status through the appropriate review and approval process.
4. Conducting ongoing monitoring throughout the accreditation period to verify continuation and compliance of agency standards and re-evaluation process (USDE, n.d., p. 2).

The accreditation self study and external peer-review procedures analyze an institution's documentation and processes to validate standards and criteria compliance. These accrediting agency standards "address all aspects of the condition and operation of a school that are likely to influence the quality of the education and training provided" (Lewis, 1999, p. 67). A documented accreditation report is produced by the external peer-review team members to identify commendations and provide recommendation goals to raise standards for educational improvement at the institution (USDE, 2007. p. 2). Action taken on these recommended results is important for institutional improvement (Scheele, 2004).

Some individual institutions and accrediting organizations publish summaries of individual institutional accreditation results. Commendations and recommendations identified in accreditation reports by the external peer-review teams are not disseminated to other institutions by accrediting organizations. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is an association of degree-granting institutions and institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. CHEA conducted research to determine accreditation information provided to the public. An online survey was distributed to eighty-one national, regional, and programmatic accrediting organizations with an 81% response rate. One-hundred percent (100%) of the 66 accrediting organizations indicated they provided information on the current accreditation status of the institutions, with 95% communicating on the website and 80% providing printed information. Response to the question, “If you provide information to the public on the results of an individual review of an institution or program beyond its accredited status, what is its general form?” included:

Table 1

Information Provided to the Public by Accreditation Organizations (Degree-granting)

Type of Information	National	Regional	Programmatic
Results in reference to specific accreditation standards or criteria are provided	27.3%	12.5%	4.3%
Descriptive summaries of strengths or good practices are provided	0%	0%	2.1%

Descriptive summaries of weaknesses or deficiencies are provided	18.2%	12.5%	4.3%
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Note. From page 6 of *CHEA survey of recognized accrediting organizations: providing information to the public*, by Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). (2006). *May-June, 2005*. Washington, DC. Retrieved October 18, 2007 from http://www.chea.org/pdf/CHEA_OP_Apr06.pdf

Eighteen percent (18%) of the national, fifty percent (50%) of the regional, and fifteen percent (15%) of the programmatic accrediting organizations indicated they would make future changes in the types of information reported to the public. Conclusions of the study identify that although accreditation action is reported, there is limited information disseminated describing the accreditation review results. The study recommends expanding communication and descriptions of the institutional and program review results including “reference to specific accreditation standards, summaries of strengths or good practices, summaries of weaknesses and deficiencies, extracts of external team review reports...and institutional or program responses” (CHEA, 2006, p. 1). According to the accrediting organizations, a “delicate balance” of communication is needed. Disseminating information can risk “distorting candor...essential for the accreditation process to operate effectively” (CHEA, p. 7). Yet, reporting merely the accreditation status “runs the risk of sidelining accreditation as a credible national accountability mechanism and...increase[s] public perceptions of the process as “secretive” (CHEA, p. 11).

Results of accreditation external team reviews should be disseminated to the public (USDE, 2006; Zions, Shellady, & Zions, 2006). United States Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, appointed a commission comprised of higher education, business, and industry representatives. The commission's report, *A Test of Leadership – Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* (2006), states “Accreditation reviews are typically kept private, and those that are made public still focus on process reviews more than bottom-line results for learning or costs” (USDE, 2006, Section 1:15).

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission on Higher Education (NCA-HLC) task force committee conducted research in 1996 on degree-granting NCA-HLC accredited institutions to analyze the accreditation process and determine benchmark practices. Of the 900 chief executive officers who were respondents at NCA-HLC colleges and universities, eighty percent (80%) agreed that accreditation assures an institution meets minimum standards. This task force also surveyed 300 higher education presidents who had served on external accreditation teams as consultant-evaluators. Ninety-two percent (92%) agreed that the accreditation process identifies important issues for improvement (Lee & Crow, 1998).

The USDE commission report (2006) identifies a need for a framework to compare institutional learning outcomes and performance measures, promote continuous improvement through innovation, and focus on quality. The accreditation process could address this need by identifying and disseminating postsecondary certificate-granting institutional commendations and recommendations. Several best practices exist, but many postsecondary institutions “have not embraced opportunities for innovation, from new

methods of teaching and content delivery to technological advances to meeting the increasing demand for lifelong learning" (Section 1:16).

Institutional effectiveness activities are an important and expanding cornerstone of accreditation. Eaton (2006) suggests accrediting organizations need to communicate an expanded, descriptive meaning of accreditation decisions rather than merely identify accredited or not accredited institutional status. Sharing practices promotes ongoing innovativeness and continuous improvement in institutions (Callaway, Ballinger, Donley, & Wright, 2003; CHEA, 2006; Ruhland & Brewer, 2001).

Problem Statement

Research identifying themes of accreditation commendations and recommendations to guide quality educational and institutional improvement does not exist for postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. "Comprehensive benchmarking studies in postsecondary technical education are rare and the need for more data, both quantitative and qualitative, cannot be over-emphasized" (Farmer, et. al., 2000). The accreditation process is the "primary quality control process for postsecondary education" (Miller & Malandra, 2006, p. 4). Although individual accredited institutions' commendations and recommendations are identified during the External Peer-Review process and documented in External Peer-Review report, limited empirical research exists on this documentation to validate the use of accrediting standards (Zionts, Shellady, & Zionts, 2006, p. 5). Research indicates the accreditation process identifies important issues for improvement (Lee & Crow, 1998). Analysis of the action-taken on the recommendations is not available (Scheele, 2004). Tamir, et. al. (2005) states, "The lack of substantial research on accreditation makes it impossible to make empirically-

based claims about the value-added of such processes... there is limited empirical research on the impact of accreditation” (pp. 332-333). There is a need for descriptive, empirical research of the value of accreditation, as well as dissemination of the results (Callaway, et. al., 2003; CHEA, 2006; Friedlander & Serban, 2004; Lee & Crow, 1998; Lopez, 1996; and USDE, 2006).

Purpose

My research focused on the results of the accreditation process that can guide postsecondary certificate-granting institutional improvement. Results of my research can assist: 1) postsecondary certificate-granting institutions; and 2) AdvancED/North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) accreditation processes. First, this research can define NCA CASI public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions; and provide insight into strengths and areas for improvement for these schools. Second, the perceptions of the benefits and challenges of undergoing accreditation were identified, which can target process improvement strategies.

This research identified emerging themes to guide quality improvement of education in postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Commendation practices, improvement recommendations, and action taken on these recommendations were identified through the accreditation process. The intent of the research was to assist in improving quality of postsecondary certificate-granting education by building a research base to: disseminate best practices found in institutional accreditation report commendations; identify themes of suggested recommendations for improvement; determine extent of action taken on recommendations and types of recommendations that are not acted upon to determine

assistive strategies. These themes can provide guidance for professional development needs in accredited postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. The research can also provide strategies for improving the accreditation process through identified commendations, (strengths); and recommendations, (areas of improvement, challenges of) the accreditation process.

Research Questions

The focus of this research was determining the results of the NCA CASI accreditation process to guide public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. For the purpose of the study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What commendations (strengths) of postsecondary certificate-granting schools are identified through the accreditation process?
2. What recommendations (areas of improvement) of postsecondary certificate-granting schools are identified through the accreditation process?
3. What actions are taken by the schools on identified recommendations?
4. If action is not taken on specific recommendations, why?
5. What are the commendations (strengths) of the NCA CASI accreditation process?
6. What are the recommendations (challenges, areas for improvement) of the NCA CASI accreditation process?
7. What results of the accreditation process guide postsecondary certificate-granting institution improvement?

Overview of Method

This qualitative research design included a collective case study using document analysis and maximum variation interview sampling strategies. A peer review facilitation process was used to validate the data coding themes. This research used processes to assure reliability and research design validity. I followed the following sequence to complete this research.

The research population for this collective case study was 125 postsecondary certificate-granting public institutions accredited by North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI). NCA CASI is the accrediting agency recognized by the USDE for granting accreditation status to postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Permission was granted to use the NCA CASI data by NCA CASI (Appendix A).

Extensive document analysis was conducted examining the most recent NCA CASI accreditation report documentation from the external peer-review process for each of the 125 institutions. The accreditation cycle spans five years; therefore, the time frame of the development of these reports was from 2002 to present. This documentation details commendations and recommendations identified by external peer-reviewer team members during the institution's NCA CASI accreditation review process. Every commendation and recommendation statement written by external team review teams on the final External Peer-Review Team Reports was recorded in the documentation analysis database. Due to the vast number of commendations and recommendations, statements were first coded using an a priori strategy with one of the five NCA CASI standard areas as initial codes. The NCA CASI standard areas are: 1) school improvement plan, 2)

information systems, 3) process of schooling, 4) vision, leadership-governance, and school community, and 5) resources and allocation (Appendix B). I used the NCA CASI Documentation Standards Matrix (Appendix C) to look up key words in the commendation or recommendation statement to assign one of the five standard codes. Other themes emerged through this analysis for text that does not clearly fit within the NCA CASI standard areas. Each commendation and recommendation statement is coded using an inductive thematic approach. The purposes of using an inductive analysis approach to code data are: summarizing the vast amount of data into a usable format; establishing links and patterns between the data and the research objectives; and developing a structure or model to understand the meaning of the raw data (Thomas, 2003). An inductive coding process involves: formatting the data file into a common format; thorough reading of the text; defining themes; sub-coding and analyzing research relevance; and continuous refinement and analysis (Thomas, 2003). Sub-coding categories or themes emerged from within the five standard categories and the “other” category as the data were further analyzed.

Peer reviewers validated my coding from the content analysis documentation, periodically reviewed the interpretation of the interview data, and provided feedback on the results and conclusion chapters of this research coding. I discussed the results with the peer reviewers and acquired feedback on the coding process and emerging themes.

I used a maximum variation strategy for selecting a sampling of interview participants representing a range of institutional variations as discussed by Maykut & Morehouse (1994). Applying this approach, I selected 15 NCA CASI coordinators from postsecondary certificate-granting institutions using the average of the school’s 2007

completion and licensure/certification passage rate as the variation component. These performance rates for each institution are identified on the 2007 NCA CASI Annual Report data (Appendix D). The sampling includes a mix of the highest, mean, and lowest rates in order to identify institutions to interview the accreditation coordinator. After identifying the sampling, I interviewed the selected NCA CASI coordinators to understand action-taken on recommendations made on the institution's accreditation report, and their perception of the NCA CASI accreditation process.

Phenomenology is the theoretical influence related to this qualitative research design. Phenomenology "attempt[s] to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003 p. 23). Insight is important in discovering meaning of the commendations, recommendations, and actions taken from the official institution's accreditation report documentation and the perception of the sampling of the NCA CASI contact consultants at the 125 accredited institutions. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) noted the methods of this research relate to five defining qualitative features: 1) naturalistic, 2) use of descriptive data, 3) focus on process, 4) inductive, and 5) interest in consultants' perspectives to derive meaning. I used a holistic approach by studying ninety-six percent (96%) of the NCA CASI accredited public postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Patton (2002) defines holistic analysis as, "assembl(ing) a comprehensive and complete picture of the social dynamic of the particular situation or program" (pp. 59-60). Descriptive textual data are examined through the documentation analysis of the accreditation External Peer-Review Team Reports. The inductive design of this research allowed for emergent understanding of post-secondary certificate granting institutions and the NCA CASI accreditation process.

Significance of the Study

The research expands the knowledge base to guide continuous improvement of postsecondary certificate-granting institutions and the NCA CASI accreditation process. The research can benefit three target audiences: administration and staff in postsecondary certificate-granting institutions, accrediting agency personnel, and students enrolled in these institutions. Administration and staff in these institutions can benefit from identified and disseminated resources and strategies for continuous improvement through the accreditation process. Sharing practices promotes ongoing innovativeness and continuous improvement in institutions (Callaway, et. al., 2003; CHEA, 2006; Ruhland & Brewer, 2001). There is a need for guidance from accrediting agencies regarding student learning outcomes with suggested strategies, training materials, tools and models, professional development workshops, and identification of qualified individuals for assistance. A variety of methods should be used to develop training materials and disseminate best practices (Friedlander & Serban, 2004). The research identifies emergent categories for developing professional development data-driven strategies to assist post-secondary certificate granting institutions in implementing recommendations for school improvement.

Accrediting agencies will have research to guide improvements in the procedures and to develop assistive services, professional development, and research needs to improve the field of postsecondary certificate-granting education. Research will provide AdvancED/NCA CASI, as the accrediting agency of these institutions, with knowledge, as well as a database of commendations, recommendations, and action taken on the

recommendations. The results will be disseminated to the field of postsecondary certificate-granting educational institutions, State Departments of Education, and other regional accrediting agencies. AdvancED/NCA CASI can communicate the outcomes of the research to support scope expansion and alignment of standards for the benefit of postsecondary certificate-granting institutions through the USDE approval process. Most importantly, the students enrolled in postsecondary certificate-granting institutions can benefit from action taken on improvements in the quality assurance accreditation process.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Validity

The following assumptions and limitations are noted for this study.

Generalizability and validity pertaining to this qualitative research are also discussed.

Assumptions

The following assumptions are made for this study:

- All NCA CASI accredited postsecondary certificate-granting institutions follow the same accreditation process.
- All institutions involved in this study have achieved NCA CASI accreditation status.
- The NCA CASI school contact coordinates the accreditation process at the institution.

Limitations

Limitations recognized in this study are:

- All 125 institutions offer programs for adult students over age 18. Some of these institutions also serve high school students either in programs with the adult students or in isolated similar programs in Missouri, Oklahoma, and West

Virginia. The institutions that serve both adult and high school students may have commendations and recommendations addressing the secondary students and not pertaining to adult students. These statements are available in the database, but not included in the analysis.

- The NCA CASI institution coordinators have various experience and training in their role as internal NCA CASI coordinators, as well as an external peer member or team chair at other institutions.
- NCA CASI external chairs who drafted the external team review external team review reports have various experience, training, and expertise in writing commendations and recommendations.
- Pursuing institutional accreditation status is a voluntary choice. The research population of this study is NCA CASI accredited institutions; therefore non-accredited postsecondary certificate-granting institutions are not included.
- Degree granting institutions may also offer certificates; are not accredited by NCA CASI, and are not included in this research.
- Postsecondary certificate-granting institutions located in the ten states may also choose to pursue national accreditation through the Council on Occupational Education (COE). The COE accredited institutions are not included in the study.
- My role as a researcher and experience with the accreditation process from the previous administrator position and currently as an employee with the accrediting agency could be perceived as a limitation. I have no authority over the institutional NCA CASI coordinators or influence in the accreditation decision-making process. This employment relationship does not serve as a threat to the

institutions or employees. Ninety-two percent (92%) of the team review accreditation visits were conducted and the accreditation External Peer-Review Team Reports were written prior to my employment date with the accrediting agency. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the NCA CASI coordinators for this research were designated as the NCA CASI coordinators at their respective institution prior to my employment date. Research indicates that this experience can strengthen the study. Patton (2002) states, “The researcher’s personal experiences and insight are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon.” (p. 40).

Qualitative research is not specifically designed for generalizability, “Sampling is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample to a population” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). The purpose of using the qualitative design is to acquire an in-depth knowledge through documentation analysis and research participants’ perception gained through the interview approach (Merriam, 1995; & Patton, 2002). The research design model can be replicated for other certificate and degree-granting regional accrediting agencies, and individual programmatic accrediting agencies. As a result, educators in these schools and accrediting agency personnel can understand the results of their processes on educational institutions.

Validity

I aligned Creswell’s verification considerations with elements of this research design to increase validity. These recommendations include: prolonged engagement; triangulation; peer-review and debriefing; external audit; clarification of researcher bias; and rich, thick description (Glesne, 2006). Research methods used in this study, including

peer review validation processes and the maximum variation sampling of interviews assist in increasing the validity of my research. Interviews provide the NCA CASI school coordinators' perspective for understanding meaning. The peer review validation process helps assure accuracy of the researcher's interpretation (Merriam, 1995).

Operational Definitions

Operational definitions pertinent to the understanding of accreditation and relationship to this research are:

1. **Accreditation:** is a voluntary critical review process consisting of self study development, peer-review evaluation, and ongoing accountability. Educational institutions undergo accreditation to assure specific standards and criteria are met. The accreditation process has been in existence in the United States since 1895 for both private and public schools including: kindergarten through twelfth grade schools, post-secondary certificate-granting institutions, and higher education degree-granting institutions (Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory, 1998).
2. **United States Department of Education accreditation role:** does not accredit schools, colleges, or universities, but approves non-governmental accrediting agencies. There are required standards that all institutional and program accrediting agencies, whether certificate-granting, degree-granting institutional accreditation, or programmatic accreditation, must ask their members seeking accreditation or re-accreditation. They must examine the "major functions of an institution or program" (Eaton, 2003, p. 1).

3. **Accrediting agencies:** are recognized by the USDE Secretary upon application and completion of a prescribed process. All agencies, regardless of certificate or degree-granting scope, must follow specific requirements including: managing administrative and fiscal responsibilities; approving standards and applications; decision-making processes to assure consistency; monitoring and reevaluation guidelines; ongoing enforcing and reviewing of standards, operating and communicating processes; and identifying due process systems. Accrediting agencies must obtain approval and ongoing reauthorization in order to grant or deny institution or program accreditation (USDE, n.d.).
4. **Regional accrediting agencies:** are approved by the USDE with the principal purpose of accrediting institutions in a particular geographic region. The six regional institutional accrediting associations are:
 - North Central Association with a) Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (degree-granting) and b) Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) (certificate-granting)
 - Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Higher Education
 - New England Association with a) Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, (degree-granting) and b) Commission on Technical and Career Institutions (certificate-granting)
 - Northwest Association Commission on Colleges
 - Southern Association Commission on Colleges

- Western Association with a) Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, b) Commission for Schools, and c) Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities

(USDE, n.d., p. 6).

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) oversees accreditation agencies for colleges and universities (Lederman, 2006). There are in excess of 19 institutional accrediting agencies accrediting approximately 6,300 institutions and 60 program accrediting agencies accrediting approximately 17,500 programs” (Eaton, 2003, p. 1).

This research will focus on AdvancED/North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI).

5. **Institutional versus programmatic accreditation:** are types of accreditation.

Institutional agencies accredit the entire educational institution. Program specific accrediting agencies accredit specific programs within an institution. Licensing agencies are “in the professional or vocational fields for which the educational institutions or programs within the agency’s jurisdiction prepare their students” (USDE, n.d., page 2). An example of program accreditation is the Joint Review Commission on Education of Radiological Technologists (JRCERT), accreditor for the Radiology Program, which can be found in a postsecondary certificate-granting institution (USDE, n.d.). Program accreditation is not addressed in this study. Institutional accreditation is the focus of this research.

6. **Institutional effectiveness:** is synonymous with continuous improvement, quality assurance and quality enhancement.

7. **Higher education institutions:** are defined by the USDE for Title IV financial aid purposes as 1) degree-granting colleges and universities and 2) postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Degree-granting colleges and universities are not included in this study. This research will focus on NCA CASI accredited postsecondary certificate-granting institutions.
8. **Postsecondary institutions:** are exclusively public certificate-granting career and technical education schools for adult students for this research. Types of institutions include schools that do not offer degrees, which are area career and technical centers, public two-year career and technical schools, and adult learning centers (USDE, n.d.). The terms “postsecondary” and “higher education” are often interchanged in the research and refer to colleges and universities in some cases.
9. **Career and technical education (CTE):** is defined as education for occupational preparation and/or work skills upgrading provided by high schools, post-secondary institutions, and colleges according to the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) professional organization. Completion of CTE leads to industry certifications, certificates and/or degrees for the purpose of entry into the workforce, continuing education, skill upgrading, and/or career advancement.
10. **Certificate-granting versus degree-granting:** are two separate entities and governance structures. Degree-granting agencies grant and monitor accreditation for higher education institutions that have legal authority to grant degrees. Certificate-granting agencies accredit kindergarten through twelfth (K-12) grade schools and post-secondary certificate-granting institutions. Due to the USDE

recognition and approval system for these agencies, the process is similar to other accrediting agencies for degree-granting institutions, certificate-granting, and programmatic accreditation. This study will focus on certificate-granting, postsecondary institutions.

11. **AdvancED**: is the unified organization of North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Southern Accreditation on Colleges and Schools – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS-CASI), and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE). AdvancED was formally organized in the spring of 2006 for purposes of unification. NCA CASI and SAC-CASI retained their accreditation role. The accreditation departments in the organization include kindergarten through twelfth grade, post-secondary, adult/vocational (non-financial aid granting schools, ie: GED preparation), Department of Defense schools, and Commission on International and Trans-Atlantic Accreditation – CITA (AdvancED, 2007).

12. **North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI)**: is a division of AdvancED and an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the USDE to accredit postsecondary certificate-granting institutions in a nineteen (19) state region. There are postsecondary certificate-granting institutions in ten of the states. AdvancED/NCA CASI also accredits granting kindergarten through twelfth grade schools. The research population will include all of the 125 NCA CASI accredited postsecondary institutions.

13. **NCA CASI Coordinators at Postsecondary Institutions:** are administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, financial aid officers, customized training coordinators, or other postsecondary personnel who are responsible for coordinating the accreditation process at their postsecondary institution. .
14. **Peer Review Participants:** have experience with the NCA CASI post-secondary certificate-granting accreditation process. These participants will validate the coding, periodically review the interpretation of the interview data, and provide feedback on the results and conclusion chapters of this research.
15. **Accreditation Team Report:** is written by the external peer review team Chair. It includes the “degree...the school meets each criterion; a section which reviews, evaluates, analyzes and draws conclusions regarding student achievement; school strengths and weaknesses; areas in need of improvement; the school improvement plan; and an accreditation recommendation”(AdvancED/NCA CASI Policy Manual, 2007, p. 12).
16. **Commendations:** are specific strengths identified by external peer team reviewers during the accreditation visit. These are documented on the institution’s external peer team review report, which is an official document for NCA CASI.
17. **Recommendations:** are specific areas of improvements identified by external peer team reviewers during the accreditation visit. These are documented on the institution’s External Peer-Review report, which is an official document for NCA CASI.

Chapter two will discuss the literature review process and findings to identify specific research on the topic of results of the accreditation process to guide postsecondary certificate-granting institutional improvement.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter two explores the existing literature related to specific components of this study that analyzes the results of the accreditation process to guide postsecondary certificate-granting institutional improvement. The research questions focus on postsecondary certificate-granting institutions' commendations and recommendations identified through the accreditation process as documented on the individual institution's final report developed by External Peer-Reviewers. Additionally, action taken on these identified recommendations, and reasons if action is not taken was examined. The related components of this research are organized into six sections for the literature exploration and analysis. The first section defines postsecondary certificate-granting institutions, which is the population of the study, and describes existing research related to these types of institutions. The purpose of this research was to identify emerging themes to guide quality improvement of education in postsecondary certificate-granting institutions; therefore, literature on continuous improvement is important. In examining quality aspects, research was first explored in a broad spectrum as related to the global perspective of business and industry, as well as to the specific field of education. Therefore, the second section focuses on quality assurance processes in business and industry, with relationships of these models applied to educational systems.

The accreditation process is the "primary quality control process for postsecondary education" (Miller & Malandra, 2006, p. 4). The USDE (n.d.) identifies two central focuses of accreditation: accountability and assuring students receive a quality education. Research related to accreditation purposes and procedures including

self study, peer-review teams, identification of commendations and recommendations, and external peer-review accreditation report documentation are discussed in the third section. General research on accreditation indicates the accreditation process identifies important issues for educational improvement (Lee & Crow, 1998). All educational institutions or programs seeking accreditation or re-accreditation status have the same sequential, procedural, steps as required by the United States Department of Education (USDE, 2007). Accreditation research related to degree-granting educational institutions and programmatic accreditation are discussed based on the similarities of the accreditation procedures in section four. The scope of AdvancED/North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), which accredited postsecondary certificate-granting institutions, is discussed in section five. The final section analyzes literature related to the qualitative research design used for this study.

Postsecondary Certificate-granting Institutions

Postsecondary certificate-granting institutions provide career and technical education often times leading to an industry credential or license for completion in less than two academic years (Visger, 2007). This section of the literature review relates to three areas: 1) the difficulty in defining postsecondary career and technical institutions due to the variety of provider types recognized by the governance structure from state to state (Castellano, et. al., 2001; Olson, Jensrud, & McCann, 2001); 2) similarities that exist with community and technical colleges with related demographic and characteristic research (Castellano, 2001; Farmer & O’Lawrence, 2000; NCES, n.d.) and 3) the need

for additional postsecondary certificate-granting research to guide quality improvement (Castellano, 2001; Farmer & O'Lawrence, 2000; USDE, 2004).

Postsecondary career and technical education is delivered through a variety of postsecondary institutions and governed by various structures in over ninety percent (90%) of the states. These institutional types include: community colleges, technical institutes, regional centers and four-year colleges (Olson, et. al., 2001). Types of certificate-granting workforce education and training providers with national enrollment distribution percentages include: *area career and technical centers* (4.3%), community colleges (4.3%), *public two-year career and technical schools* (1.9%), four-year colleges (11.9%), proprietary schools (9.1%), *adult learning centers* (1.3%), business or industry (36.7%), professional association or labor union (10.4%), government agency and public library (11.6%), and community, religious or other organization (8.6%) (Silverberg, Warner, Fong, & Goodwin, 2004, p. 119). (Note: research design relates to types indicated by italics). The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) position paper, *Expanding Opportunities: Postsecondary Career and Technical Education and Preparing Tomorrow's Workforce* (Visger, 2007) states, "Postsecondary CTE [career and technical education] is an intricate enterprise that does not fit neatly into a simple description" (p. 5). Eighty-five percent (85%) of all postsecondary institutions report offering CTE. This includes nearly seventy-five percent (75%) of all four-year institutions and almost ninety-three percent (93%) of two-year institutions (p. 5).

States have differing governance requirements for these providers. For example, a national study on teaching certification for postsecondary technical instructors was conducted for the intent that quality of education is dependent on the quality of the staff

(Olson, et. al., 2001). All governing state departments received a descriptive survey to identify credential requirements for teaching postsecondary career and technical education. Results indicated thirty-four percent (34%) or seventeen states require teaching credentialing. Of these states, five require bachelor's degrees, two require associate degrees and ten require high school diplomas with work experience. A reoccurring theme was identified: "As with other studies of this nature...the researchers found some discrepancies regarding the definition of postsecondary technical education" (Olson, p. 13).

Many states provide postsecondary public technical education in community colleges, and do not have a separate type of institution for solely providing certificates. There are similarities of postsecondary certificate-granting career and technical institutions with community and technical colleges. Both types of institutions offer certificates, and have similar student characteristics, training, pupil personnel services and licensing (Wonacott, 2002). These institutions "carve a niche" by providing specialized training for career and technical fields (Farmer, & O'Lawrence, 2000, p. 15). Career and technical education fields of study include:

Agriculture and natural resources; business management; business support; communications and design; computer and information sciences; education; engineering, architectural, and science technologies; health sciences; marketing; personal services (e.g., cosmetology, culinary arts); protective services (e.g., fire protection, corrections); public, legal, and social services; and trade and industry (construction, mechanics and repair, precision production, and transportation) (National Center for Education Statistics - NCES, 2004, p. 1).

The NCES collects demographic institution-reported data through IPEDS, or Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (NCES, n.d.) accountability process. IPEDS identifies three categories defining “the universe of postsecondary institutions” as baccalaureate, two-year, and less-than-two year institutions (NCES, n.d.). Characteristic data reported include: “enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty, staff, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid” (NCES, n.d.). The IPEDS resource has a Dataset Cutting Tool to extract institutional characteristic data common to all types of postsecondary institutions for demographic comparative purposes.

Research on the similarities of postsecondary-certificate granting institutions and community colleges was reviewed. The Pennsylvania Department of Education-Bureau of Vocational Technical Education sponsored a benchmarking study to determine characteristic “personal, situational, and outcome” differences in community colleges and two-year proprietary institutions in the state (Farmer, et. al, 2000, p. 3). Pennsylvania community colleges encompass two-year associate degree, non-credit continuing education, remediation services, and career and technical education programs leading to certificates. Proprietary-for-profit institutions exist that solely provide certificates in less than two years. Surveys were distributed to 3,100 postsecondary technical students enrolled in 15 community colleges and 16 postsecondary propriety schools, with a thirty-four percent (34%) response rate. Farmer, et. al. (2000) discussed that results indicated similar gender, race, marital status, and grade point averages for students in both institutions. In response to the students’ educational goal, forty percent (40%) of community college and fifty-eight percent (58%) of proprietary technical students indicated the main goal for enrolling is to prepare for their first job. Transfer to a four

year college was the main goal of nineteen percent (19%) of community college and four percent (4%) of proprietary technical students (pp. 13-14).

Lohman & Dingerson (2005) also correspond to these findings with their descriptive and experimental research consisting of student record content analysis, survey implementation, and focus group interview research conducted with students who withdrew from Tidewater Community College in Portsmouth, Virginia from 1995 to 2000. The research population included certificate-seeking students (490) who dropped out of community college career and technical education programs. Twenty-two (22%) responded to the survey; which represented students previously enrolled in “heating, and refrigeration 55 (56%)...electrical: residential or commercial 12 (12%)...and welding 39 (9%)” (Lohman, et. al., p. 344). Results from the student records indicated fifty-six percent (56%) withdrew during completion of their trade courses and before enrolling in academic courses, and twenty-five percent (25%) dropped after completing all of the trade course requirements. Results indicated the reasons for dropping were to pursue their goal of entering or advancing in the workforce. Conclusions of the study indicate that the current performance measurement of completion rate should be examined due to students achieving their initial goal of preparing for the workforce. Lohman, et. al. (2005) state: “The research reported in this paper provides a much-needed alternative for community colleges and others training individuals in certificate programs to assess the effectiveness of their programs” (pp. 353-354).

Literature discusses secondary career-technical certificate-granting education that can relate to postsecondary institutions. The National Dissemination Center for Career and technical Education (NCCTE) conducted an analysis of existing career and technical

education reform research. Career and technical education is classified as secondary for high school students and community colleges for adult programs in this report, with no mention of institutions that solely provide certificates in postsecondary career and technical education. The implications of the NCCTE review of research indicates that career and technical education schools and community colleges “are seriously understudied”, and “the nature and scope of reform efforts remain relatively unknown” (Castellano, et. al., 2001, p. 73). Postsecondary career and technical education “lack[s] the strong research, development, and technical assistance infrastructure that secondary enjoys” Castellano, et. al., 2001, p. v.). Research on secondary career and technical education analyzes curriculum, instructional delivery, Tech Prep models for articulations into postsecondary, academic and career and technical integration, career academies, work-based opportunities, apprenticeships, cooperative education, and school based-enterprises (Rojewski, 2002).

Federal funding was provided for career and technical education through the Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998. The 109th United States Congress passed the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Improvement Act in 2006, Perkins IV, for continued funding for development of students’ academic and career and technical skills. Purposes of the Act include 1) developing and implementing challenging academic and technical standards; 2) linking secondary and postsecondary education; 3) providing flexible services and activities for career and technical improvement; 4) researching and disseminating best practices; 5) promoting leadership and professional development; 6) supporting partnerships with higher

education, business, industry and community; and 7) encouraging lifelong learning (United States 109th Congress, 2006).

In examining the literature for possible commendation and recommendation topics related to postsecondary certificate-granting institutional improvement, The USDE (2004) National Assessment of Vocational Education (NAVE) report identified specific focus areas. The NAVE report (Silverberg, Warner, Fong, & Goodwin, 2004) was mandated by congress to evaluate secondary and post-secondary career and technical education preliminary to the reauthorization of Carl D. Perkins legislation for funding. Perkins performance accountability data and case studies were analyzed. Focus areas identified pertaining to the Perkins legislation for these institutions include academic and technology integration; secondary and business, industry, and agency linkages; curriculum standards; and assistance to special populations.

The USDE Office of Vocational and Adult Education funded a study through the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education to discover future directions in career and technical secondary and postsecondary education. The project focused on research, policies, exemplary practices, and leading thinking in career and technical education at secondary and postsecondary levels. This research examined “mission, values, vision, goals, and performance indicators” (Copa & Wolff, 2002, p. viii). Copa and Wolff provide a framework for “designing career and technical education in high schools and community and technical colleges” (p. 35). Principles guiding the research design included using a steering group of stakeholders; thinking holistically; looking externally; and thinking long-term. The research methods included interviews, surveys, and site visits. Recommendation themes were related to “learning context,

audience, signature, expectations, process, organization, partnerships, staff, environment, accountability, celebration and finance” (Copa & Wolff, p. viii).

Jacobs and Grubb (2003) state there is “a new dominant role for community colleges and other postsecondary institutions” (p. 1). “Education consensus” recognizes the need for a better prepared, knowledge-based workforce, which transformed career and technical education can provide (Jacobs, et. al., 2003, p.1). Approximately \$1 billion is invested in postsecondary career and technical education by the federal government. Recommendations are made by Jacobs and Grubb (2003) to support funding for postsecondary innovations including: higher-order integration of academics and career and technical education programs; more effective remediation strategies; work-based learning opportunities; employer linkages including industry certification, teacher preparation, skill standards, and curriculum alignment; and resource and support services including equipment, career counseling, and placement opportunities.

An Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE) advisory committee comprised of state department of education, community colleges, career and technical education certificate-granting institutions, and CTE staff representatives identified seven recommendations for improving postsecondary success through a discussion process. These recommendations included: increasing rigor and relevant coursework for all students; aligning seamless, integrated pre-kindergarten to sixteen educational systems; developing career and life-long learning curriculum and instruction to lead to completion; ensuring transferable and portable transcribed credit; providing innovative pupil personnel services; increasing financial support for students with economic needs; and exploring innovative funding approaches (Visger, 2007).

Conclusions from the literature find that many questions about career and technical education are still unanswered, particularly in the area of educational improvement (Silverberg, et. al., 2004). Jacobs and Grubb (2003) stated that improving the quality of occupational, (which includes postsecondary certificate-granting education), is no “different from those in any other area of social policy...a recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of different institutions, governments, and practices will go a long way toward creating coherent policy and improved programs” (p. 6). The accreditation process identifies important issues for improvement (Lee & Crow, 1998). Accreditation is an approach to assure quality of education for these types of institutions. (Akduman, et. al., 2001; Miller & Millandra, 2006; Wonacott, 2002).

Quality Assurance

Accreditation evaluates quality assurance standards through External Peer-Review teams in business, industry, and commerce, as well as in educational institutions, to guide continuous improvement (Akduman, et. al., 2001). This section focuses on the quality assurance aspect of business and industry continuous improvement processes. Deming’s total quality management and Malcolm Baldrige philosophies are applied as continuous improvement models to some educational institutions. These models are similar to the accreditation procedures due to the development of institutional reflection documents and peer evaluation processes used to validate specific standards.

Educational continuous improvement can be modeled from Edward Deming’s total quality management philosophy found in manufacturing after World War II to increase productivity and quality (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The continuous improvement philosophy originated from the Japanese term kaizen, meaning change (kai)

and good (zen), which requires the entire organization's involvement in Deming's plan-do-check-act quality continuous improvement system (Minerich, 2002). Marshall, Pritchard, and Gunderson (2004) conducted research to determine the relationship of Deming's fourteen points for total quality schools to Kanter's culture of pride and climate of success for organizational health with student achievement. Deming's fourteen points as related to education are explained as: 1) constancy of purpose focusing on teacher and learning improvement; 2) continuous improvement philosophy; 3) stop dependency on mass inspection, ie: mandated testing; 4) establish trust and relationships; 5) ongoing teaching and learning improvement; 6) provide training for new staff; 7) leadership; 8) reduce fear; 9) reduce barriers between staff; 10) eliminate predetermined slogans and targets and distribute power, responsibility and rewards; 11) eliminate numerical quotas; 12) remove barriers that prohibit pride and satisfaction of work; 13) provide ongoing education and retraining; and 14) require action to result in transformation (Marshall, et. al., 2004). Marshall continued by explaining Deming's total quality management philosophy is grounded in quality improvement through collaboration and ongoing training of staff through data-driven planning and implementation strategies. Results of this research indicated leadership in high student achievement school districts empowered personnel who were actively involved in ongoing planning and implementing continuous improvement strategies. An example of low level districts was given demonstrating a lack of continuous improvement philosophy as related to the accreditation process. During a North Central Association peer-review visit, team members found that the school appeared acceptable on documentation review and through the interview process, but personnel could not identify any philosophical benefit relationships beyond

completing paperwork. Conclusions found that healthy schools' constancy of purpose centered on applying the knowledge of best practices, and in recognizing the value of interconnected networks to "revisit, refocus and redesign the change efforts as part of their operational effectiveness" (Marshall, et. al., p. 188).

The Malcolm Baldrige model is a continuous improvement framework used in educational institutions that addresses specific criteria, self study development process and external peer-team review procedures similar to the accreditation process. However, it is not designated by the USDE to grant accreditation status for postsecondary institutions (USDE, n.d.). The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), through the coordination of the American Society for Quality (ASQ), established the Malcolm Baldrige award criteria for organizations to meet to drive excellence in continuous improvement. The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act in 1987 promoted quality in manufacturing, service, and small business. Education and health care institutions were added to the scope in 1999. The purpose of the Baldrige process is to improve performance, communicate best practice information, and serve as a tool for planning, managing and guiding educational performance. The Malcolm Baldrige process entails the organization developing a critical, data-driven analysis document addressing the criteria, followed by a numerical scoring system evaluated by an External Peer-Review process. Criteria areas are: leadership; strategic planning; student, stakeholder and market focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; workforce focus; process management; and results (NIST, 2007). Research was conducted on community colleges' use of the Baldrige criteria model for institutional improvement to address accreditation requirements. Surveys were distributed to 202

community college leaders at 34 institutions that have implemented quality principles. Community college leaders recognized a value in the accrediting process as a means for improvement. Effective Baldrige strategies needed in the accreditation process include identifying opportunities for improvement, data-driven result emphasis, focus on continuous improvement, and entails a meaningful, systemic process (Faulkner, 2002).

Accreditation Purposes and Procedures

The USDE (n.d.) identifies two central focuses of accreditation: accountability and assuring students receive a quality education. Accreditation status demonstrates the educational institution or program meets required standards, identifies acceptable institutions, creates improvement goals and strategies, involves faculty and staff in a comprehensive evaluation of the institution or program, and establishes professional certification and licensure criteria through a critical review team analysis process (USDE, n.d.). The accreditation designation can assist students in identifying educational institutions to serve their needs, allow for a means of determining accessibility of transferable credits, and provide financial aid resources for access for eligible students (USDE, n.d.).

Accountability “assure[s] educational investments yield educational payoffs” (Eisner, 1985, p. 80.) National research identified a need for postsecondary educational reform due to declining quality and lack of accountability. These reports included:

- National Governors Association - *The Time for Results: The Governors’ 1991 Report on Education*
- Association of American Colleges - *Integrity in the College Curriculum: Report to the Academic Community*

- National Institute of Education’s Study Group on the Excellence in American Higher Education - *1984 Involvement in Learning* (Nettles, Cole, & Sharp, 1997).

The public and taxpayers’ “need for critical information,” resulted in accreditation and accountability alignment (Dickeson, 2006, p. 6). The USDE recognized the need for increased accountability and revised and adopted standards, criteria, and policies to address educational outcomes, assessment, quality assurance and improvements for student learning (Ewell, 2002; Kinser, 2003; Nettles, et. al., 1997). The emphasis was “a new notion of accountability for public colleges and universities” with a results-based accountability versus merely expenditures accountability (Burke, 2001, p. 2).

Accreditation provides accountability for the federal government investment of \$60 billion dollars in federal financial aid programs, including student loans. Evaluating financial aid eligibility is clear: accredited institutions may access Title IV financial aid for eligible students, non-accredited institutions may not access these funds. Literature exists addressing the accountability aspect of accreditation. Research also is published on the accreditation process, preparation strategies, and the historical changing goals of accreditation. (Tamir & Wilson, 2005). There is limited research on addressing standards to reflect quality educational programs, and establishing institutional improvement goals to increase institutional effectiveness. Research on accreditation in all disciplines should focus on “identifying, evaluating, and disseminating effective strategies for measuring and improving attainment of desired student learning outcomes” (Friedlander & Serban, 2004, p. 4).

The USDE accreditation procedure is the same for institutional or programmatic, and certificate-granting or degree-granting institutions. The procedure includes: implementing the accreditation process, understanding the standards and criteria, developing a self study through a critical analysis approach, coordinating an External Peer-Review visit, receiving accreditation status, and participating in the ongoing cycle (USDE, n.d.).

Accrediting agencies must develop and evaluate accreditation policies, standards, and criteria, and receive approval by the USDE (n.d.) The USDE requires accrediting agencies to address these areas in the development of their standards in “analyzing the major functions of an institution” (Eaton, 2003, p. 1). USDE (n.d.) standards for all institutions and programs, regardless of certificate-granting or degree-granting types, must address: student achievement success of course completion, licensing examination, and job placement rates related to the institution’s mission; curricula, faculty facilities, equipment and supplies, fiscal and administrative management, pupil personnel services, recruitment and admission practices, program length and objective measures, student complaint records, and student loan default rates, financial or compliance audits and financial program reviews.

The development of a self study document provides evidence for the accreditation agency that the institution address all the standards and criteria. Faculty/staff teams should be trained in collecting, analyzing and interpreting data for use in decision making (Gabriel, 2005). Data collection and analysis includes demographic, student-learning, perception and school process (Bernhardt, 2000). The use of collaborative faculty/staff team involvement for the purpose of making

suggestions for continuous improvement can result in systematic and sustainable outcomes (Doyle, 2007; Huffman & Kalnin, 2003).

An on-site evaluation is conducted by external peer-review teams to validate the accreditation standards through examining the self study, observations, interviews, document and policy review, and in-depth interviews (Zellman & Johnansen, 1996). Examples of activities analyzed during the accreditation process to promote institutional effectiveness include: “student outcome assessment, academic program review, strategic planning, performance scorecards, performance benchmarking, and quality measurement” (Welsh & Metcalf, 2003, p. 446). The External Peer-Review process is an advantage of the accreditation process in that it “allows ‘cross-fertilization’ of ideas as people get beyond their own campuses to serve on teams” (CHEA, 2006, p. 7). This peer dialogue provides external insight from a professional perspective (Florence, 2002). A study was conducted to determine reliability and validity of the North Central Association accreditation process and use of external peer-team reviewers. These reviewers are comprised of volunteer educators and representatives in the business/industry field. Reviewers received training in examining the appropriateness of each criterion. A multiple regression analysis of 200 reviewers with various backgrounds indicated accuracy increased with the level of outcomes assessment experience found in the reviewer’s state and reviewer’s accreditation experience. Results indicated accuracy of reviews was reflective of the understanding and use of an accreditation standard/criteria template. (Flanders & Wick, 1998).

The External Chair of the visiting team is responsible for writing the accreditation External Peer-Review report, which synthesizes the team’s findings of the school review.

A comprehensive analysis of the evaluation is critical to reflect the quality aspects and information of the institution. The report serves as one of the institution's official accreditation documents. (Scheele, 2004). Accrediting agencies provide ongoing monitoring services as a requirement of USDE (n.d.).

Accrediting agencies provide the public information on the accreditation status of institutions. The USDE maintains a database for public access of 6,900 degree and certificate-granting accredited postsecondary institutions. The United States Office of Postsecondary Education (n.d.) identifies this database as one source for information on postsecondary institutions, but recommends "additional sources of qualitative information be consulted" (p. 1). Prospective students and employers can use this searchable tool to identify accredited educational institutions. Institutional accreditation indicates to students that their educational investment should have "a reasonable assurance of quality and acceptance" (USDE, 2007, p. 4).

There is a lack of understanding of the quality focus and effectiveness of accreditation (CHEA, 2006). USDE Commission report (2006) found

With the exception of several promising practices, many of our postsecondary institutions have not embraced opportunities for innovation, from new methods of teaching and content delivery to technological advances to meeting the increasing demand for lifelong learning (Section 1:16).

Institutional improvement can be impacted by the accreditation process of recommending goals and strategies, involving faculty and staff in data analysis and strategic planning, and establishing professional development criteria (USDE, n.d.). The accreditation process can impact curriculum reform (Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory,

1998). Long- term commitment to the alignment of accreditation and performance excellence is challenging, but worthwhile. Areas for improvements are identified through the accreditation process to use for strategic planning and target improvement (Nettles, 1997). Sharing best practices is important in continuously bringing innovative strategies into institutions (Callaway, et. al., 2003).

Degree-granting and Programmatic Accreditation

Due to the limited research on postsecondary certificate-granting institutional accreditation and the similarities of the accreditation process, this section discusses degree-granting and programmatic accreditation literature. The United States Secretary of Education (USDE) requires all accrediting agencies, (whether certificate-granting, degree-granting institutional accreditation, or programmatic accreditation), to establish standards and processes to ensure that each institution “effectively address[es] the quality of the institution or program” (2007, p. 1). The USDE recognizes approximately 19 institutional accrediting organizations representing 6,300 higher education institutions, and 60 programmatic accrediting agencies representing nearly 17,500 programs (Eaton, 2003).

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) oversees accreditation agencies for colleges and universities (Lederman, 2006). The Council for Higher Education (CHEA), (2006), selected fifty college and university presidents representing a cross-section of the leadership in the country in March, 2005. Thirty presidents agreed to participate in the interview process. Participants were provided with discussion topics in advance. Phone interviews were conducted between April and June, 2005 using the discussion topics, but order and flow of the dialogue was guided by the president

interviewee. Responses were recorded, categorized and analyzed for frequency and patterns. Findings of the qualitative study indicated 73% had either served or chaired an accrediting review team, with an average of 2.8 visits (CHEA, 2006, p. 2). Presidents supported the accreditation process and believed the main benefit was the reflective participation in the process to analyze strengths and challenges and to make improvements (CHEA, 2006).

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission in Higher Education (NCA-HLC) established a task force committee to conduct a multifaceted research study in 1996 on degree-granting NCA-HLC accredited institutions. The purpose was to analyze the accreditation process and determine benchmark practices. A survey was distributed to the chief executive officers in 984 NCA-HLC accredited institutions in October 1996. Simultaneously, a similar survey was mailed to 300 selected institution presidents who had served as consultant evaluators. Telephone interviews were conducted with 34 participants who represented higher education presidents, directors, chancellors, and corporate educational center personnel. Fourteen Commissioners of NCA-HLC were interviewed on current and future accreditation activities, as well as additional staff members. A sampling of visiting external team review report and review documents was analyzed. Nine hundred chief executive officers responded from the survey for a response rate of ninety-one percent (91%). Eighty-percent (80%) of all the participants responded that accreditation assures an institution meets minimum educational quality. Consultant-Evaluator survey results found ninety-two percent (92%) agree that the accreditation process identifies important issues for improvement. Benefits and challenges, as well as suggestions for improvements were

identified through the phone interviews. Results indicated seventy-two (72%) of all of the respondents believe there is a need for more research on accreditation and the contributions. (Lee & Crow, 1998).

The National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI) conducted research to determine and assess progress on the fifty (50) states and six (6) regional degree-granting accrediting agencies policies standards and procedures, outcomes assessments, and accountability processes impacting teaching and learning. Emerging themes from the research on the benefits of outcomes assessments included the need for providing the public with: accountability for use of public funds; and concrete evidence on college and university performance (Nettles, et. al., 1997).

Accrediting organizations should recognize counterviews of the process. Institutional and program accreditation is a time, resource, and financial venture for educational institutions (Allington 2005; CHEA, 2006; Lederman, 2006; Lee & Crow, 1998; Zellman & Johansen, 1996). “The nub of the problem is that accreditation breeds new and costly bureaucracies, structures and self-styled experts” (Florence, 2002, p. 144). Concerns exist that the accreditation process can inhibit innovation (Scheele, 2004; Spelling et. al., 2006). Florence (2002) addresses concerns that the culture of accreditation has a negative effect on teaching and the institutional community. There is a need for evidence that the quality assurance aspect of accreditation impacts improvements (Harding & Taylor, 2002).

North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation & School Improvement

(NCA CASI)

USDE recognizes the following organizations accrediting postsecondary career and technical education institutions that grant certificates only: Council on Occupational Education (COE), North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and Western Association Commission for Schools. The Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET), and Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT) grant accreditation for private postsecondary career and technical institutions (USDE, n.d).

North Central Association - Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) is a recognized regional accrediting agency under the governance of AdvancED. NCA CASI accredits 125 postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Five standard areas approved by the USDE are: 1) school improvement plan (SIP); information systems (IS); process of schooling (PS); vision, leadership-governance and school community (VL); and resource and allocation (RA), (Appendix B). Specific criteria are identified under each of the standard areas that are addressed for initial and ongoing accreditation membership (NCA CASI, 2007). A correlation of the USDE standard requirements to the NCA CASI standard areas identifies the required areas: Table 2.

United States Department of Education Function with NCA CASI Related Standard
Section

United States Department of Education Function:	NCA CASI Related Standard Section
1. Student achievement success of course completion, licensing examination and job placement rates related to the institution's mission	Information Systems
2. Curricula	Process of Schooling
3. Faculty	Resource/Allocation
4. Facilities, equipment and supplies	Resource/Allocation
5. Fiscal & administrative management	Resource/Allocation & Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community/Governance
6. Pupil personnel services	Process of Schooling
7. Recruitment and admission practices	Process of Schooling
8. Program length and objective measures	Process of Schooling
9. Student complaint records	Information Systems
10. Student loan default rates, financial or compliance audits and financial program reviews	Resource/Allocation

Table 2. Interpretation by Nash

NCA CASI (2006) defines the school improvement plan (SIP) standard as the development and implementation of a strategic improvement plan to drive student learning and achievement (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007, p. 5). The five criteria areas

under the SIP standard focus on 1) an ongoing data-driven school improvement plan, 2) standing committees to initiate, plan, and coordinate school improvement plan, 3) community/business involvement and establishing goals, 4) ongoing accreditation process, and 5) assessment of student achievement and performance goals, and ongoing accreditation process. The information system (IS) standard focuses on data-driven management systems for decision-making. There are 13 criteria areas under the IS standard. Student achievement and performance measures, including program completion, placement, and industry credential/licensure pass rate are annually reported and analyzed in this standard section. The Process of Schooling (PS) standard examines 44 individual criteria areas categorized as student learning goals, curriculum, teaching/learning, staff development, assessment, and pupil personnel services. The Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL) standard examines 18 criteria centering on the school's Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community, school community relationships, and responsiveness to providing personnel to participate in NCA CASI training and External Peer-Review roles. The 67 criteria under Resource and Allocation (RA) standard analyze instructional time, space, personnel, preparation and qualifications, finances, instructional resources, and information and communication technology (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007).

The NCA CASI policy states external peer members must participate in training. The external team review team reviews the intent and capacity of the visiting school in meeting each standard and criteria. Upon completion of the visit, a written External Peer-Review report is developed to analyze the standards aligned to student achievement, identify commendations and recommendations, and make an accreditation status

recommendation. NCA CASI accreditation recommendations are: accredited for up to five years, accredited on advisement, pre-accredited candidacy status, withdrawn/discontinued, or a sanction status of accredited-warned. The accredited classification is defined as the school meets the intent of the policy, standard and criteria requirements. The NCA CASI protocol approved by the Secretary of the USDE requires four levels of material review after the Peer-Review visit: External Peer-Review, accreditation staff review, Postsecondary Review Council approval, and board ratification (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007).

Accreditation Research Design Models

The literature review identified accreditation studies using qualitative methods of documentation content analysis, coding processes, and interviews; as well as dissemination, and reliability considerations. A document review process of accreditation external team review reports, conducted by the NCA Higher Learning Commission's analysis of 120 external team review reports, discusses report review processes using consultant-evaluators. This process consists of reviewing and quoting the external team review reports, "coding and analyzing using the constant comparative method of qualitative research" to compare subject content areas, as dominant themes emerge (Lopez, 1996, p. 3).

Marshall, et. al., (2004) research on Deming's fourteen (14) points and high level of student achievement was designed using qualitative interviews combined with content analysis of student achievement writing scores. The interview transcripts from eighteen school districts were analyzed and coded according to Deming's fourteen (14) principles.

Louis & Jones (2001) advocate there is importance in disseminating school improvement strategies identified through career and technical education research. Disseminating results can: provide practitioners with applicable knowledge; promote interest in change; drive improvements; and create shared understanding. The overall literature review suggests accreditation research can identify perceptions to guide development and implementation strategies to improve institutional effectiveness (Welsh & Metcalf, 2003). There is support for qualitative, future research that “should be rich with examples and case studies drawn from our institutions’ ongoing experiences” (Lopez, 1996, p. 3).

Summary of the Literature

In summary, limited research exists on postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Literature addresses the difficulty in defining postsecondary career and technical education institutions, similarities related to community and technical colleges, and the need for additional research. Quality assurance research examined continuous improvement processes found in business, industry and education, including total quality management and Malcolm Baldrige models. The accountability and quality of education roles of accreditation are discussed, with research identified on accreditation procedures including self study and External Peer-Review processes. Degree-granting and programmatic accreditation research is examined in the areas of benefits and support for research on the quality aspect of accreditation. Literature defines North Central Association – Commission on School Improvement (NCA CASI), an accreditor of postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Qualitative design models are explored from other accreditation research studies.

The research questions for this study include:

1. What commendations (strengths) of postsecondary certificate-granting schools are identified through the accreditation process?
2. What recommendations (areas of improvement) of postsecondary certificate-granting schools are identified through the accreditation process?
3. What actions are taken by the schools on identified recommendations?
4. If action is not taken on specific recommendations, why?
5. What are the commendations (strengths) of the NCA CASI accreditation process?
6. What are the recommendations (challenges, areas for improvement) of the NCA CASI accreditation process?
7. What results of the accreditation process guide postsecondary certificate-granting institution improvement?

Although individual accredited institutions' commendations and recommendations are identified during the External Peer-Review process and documented in the External Peer-Review report, limited empirical research exists on this documentation to validate the use of accrediting standards (Zionts, 2006, p. 5). An analysis of the action-taken on the recommendations is not available (Scheele, 2004). Tamir, and Wilson (2005) stated, "The lack of substantial research on accreditation makes it impossible to make empirically based claims about the value-added of such processes... there is limited empirical research on the impact of accreditation" (pp.332-333). There is a need for descriptive, empirical research of the value of accreditation, as well as dissemination of the results (Callaway, et. al., 2003; CHEA, 2006; Friedlander & Serban, 2004; Lee & Crow, 1998;

Lopez, 1996; and USDE, 2006). Although demographic and descriptive data are available, (NCES, n.d.), limited research exists on postsecondary certificate-granting institutions (Farmer & O'Lawrence, 2000).

According to Glesne (2006), "in qualitative inquiry reviewing the literature is an ongoing process that cannot be completed before data collection and analysis...data will suggest the need to review previously unexamined literature of both substantive and theoretical nature" (p. 25). As themes emerge, literature will be examined and discussed in Chapter seven.

The overall literature review provides support for research on the accreditation process for postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Chapter three discusses the qualitative research design used to address this research gap to guide postsecondary certificate-granting educational improvement.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

The focus of this qualitative research design was to determine the emerging themes of the North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) accreditation process results to guide postsecondary certificate-granting institutional improvement and the accreditation process. For the purpose of this national study, I addressed the following research questions:

1. What commendations (strengths) of postsecondary certificate-granting schools are identified through the accreditation process?
2. What recommendations (areas of improvement) of postsecondary certificate-granting schools are identified through the accreditation process?
3. What actions are taken by the schools on identified recommendations?
4. If action is not taken on specific recommendations, why?
5. What are the commendations (strengths) of the NCA CASI accreditation process?
6. What are the recommendations (challenges, areas for improvement) of the NCA CASI accreditation process?
7. What results of the accreditation process guide postsecondary certificate-granting institution improvement?

Research Design

Phenomenology is the theoretical influence related to my qualitative research design. Phenomenology “attempt[s] to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003 p. 23). This

qualitative research design included a multi-site collective case study (Glesne, 2006). I used document analysis and maximum variation interview sampling strategies. A peer review process was facilitated to validate the data coding themes. This research makes use of processes to assure reliability and research design validity.

Population

NCA CASI accredits 190 schools, which represents 171 public and 19 private postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Ten schools are in the accreditation application stages. Candidacy, or pre-accreditation status, is held by 28 schools. Reports are unavailable for five accredited schools. Three schools dropped from accreditation during the study, reducing the number of public institutions from 171 to 168. Therefore, the population for this research is the 125 public, postsecondary certificate-granting public institutions fully accredited by NCA CASI. These institutions are located in ten of the nineteen states that comprise the USDE approved NCA CASI region.

Table 3.

NCA CASI Accredited Public Certificate-granting Institutions - Distribution by State

State	Number	State	Number
Colorado	2	Michigan	2
Illinois	2	Minnesota	1
Indiana	2	Missouri	6
Kansas	3	Ohio	56
Oklahoma	33	West Virginia	18

Note. From NCA CASI Annual Report database with permission from NCA CASI (2007).

Governance structures of public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions vary by states (Visger, 2007). Public institutions of this type do not exist in other NCA CASI region states. Institutional NCA CASI coordinators are administrators, teachers or coordinators who are designated as the school NCA CASI internal chair and are responsible for coordinating the accreditation process at the institutions where they are employed.

NCA CASI postsecondary schools provide education in certificated career and technical programs. Based on the NCA CASI 2007 Annual Report data, programs offered by all schools include:

Table 4.

Top Career and Technical Programs in NCA CASI Postsecondary Schools.

Career and technical Program	# Programs	# Schools	% of Schools Offering Program
Health	556	148	86%
Mechanic/ Repair	398	117	68%
Business	227	106	62%
Precision Production	225	104	60%
Computer Information	244	99	57%
Construction	182	97	56%

Note: From Presentation Slide at AdvancED/NCA CASI Postsecondary Review Council (PRC) Meeting. (September 18, 2007 in Tempe, Arizona). Demographic data for the slide was compiled from the AdvancED/NCA CASI official program list as recorded with the United States Department of Education for individual schools

Data Collection and Analysis Process

I followed the following sequence to complete this research. Steps included:

1. **Documentation Review.** I obtained permission to access the NCA CASI database to review 125 public, postsecondary certificate-granting external peer-review team accreditation reports, the 2003 - 2007 Annual Reports, and other accreditation documents (Appendix A). The accreditation cycle spans five years; therefore, the time frame of the development of these reports was from 2003 to present. I developed a Document Analysis Database and recorded all commendation and recommendation statements identified by external peer members from the most recent NCA CASI accreditation the NCA CASI accreditation status schools. The database identifies the statement type, (in regards to whether a commendation or recommendation), records the exact wording of the statement, and identifies the specific institution's name and state. A coding and sub-coding column was inserted for the coding analysis.
2. **Content Analysis: Standard Coding.** First, each commendation and recommendation statement was analyzed and coded using an a priori coding process. This involved reading each statement, interpreting meaning, and assigning a code based on wording aligned with the five established NCA CASI standards. The NCA CASI Team Tool Document Matrix served as a guide to assign coding for commendations and recommendations relating to specific processes and documents to one of the five NCA CASI standards. (Appendix C). Due to the vast number, each commendation and recommendation statement was initially coded using one of the five NCA CASI standard areas. The NCA CASI standard areas are: 1) school improvement plan, 2) information systems, 3) process of schooling, 4) vision, leadership-governance, and school community, and 5) resources and allocation (Appendix B). For example, if "articulation agreements" is stated in a specific

commendation for an institution, I looked up “articulation agreements” from the matrix and found “process of schooling” was the related standard. The commendation statement is coded as the standard “process of schooling (PS)”. If a theme emerged that was not defined in the matrix or does not appear to relate to a specific NCA CASI standard, the coding was classified as “Other.” Sub-coding categories or themes emerged from within the five standard categories and the “other” category as the data was further analyzed. Some of the commendation and recommendation statements are previously coded by a particular standard category by the external peer Chair on the accreditation documented report. This perceived coding often did not align with the matrix, and was re-coded using the Matrix as a guideline for consistency.

3. **Content Analysis: Criteria Sub-Coding.** Second, I analyzed the list of commendations and recommendations by each of the assigned standard codes and “other” category. The criteria categories found within the five NCA CASI standards were used to assign a sub-code. The “other” code required an inductive analysis strategy to assign the emerging theme code and sub-code. The purposes of using an inductive analysis approach to code data are summarizing the vast amount of data into a usable format; establishing links and patterns between the data and the research objectives; and developing a structure or model to understand the meaning of the raw data (Thomas, 2003). The inductive coding process I used involved formatting the data file into a common format; thorough reading of the text; defining themes; sub-coding and analyzing research relevance; and continuous refinement and analysis

(Thomas, 2003). Inductive analysis examines the specifics to build patterns (Patton, 2002).

4. **Peer Review Validation Process.** To assure the accuracy of my coding, I facilitated a peer review process after completion of the content analysis code and sub-codes with a group of seven postsecondary school personnel. These peer reviewers have a minimum of two years experience with the NCA CASI accreditation process as external peer-review team members or chairs. Flanders and Wick (1998) found that accreditation team members with more than two years of standards and criteria knowledge and experience can make more reliable judgments. The use of a criteria template also increases accuracy of the review process (Flanders & Wick, 1998). Each person was given one of the five standards, one person reviewed the “other” themes, and one person spot checked all coding using the filtering technique on my database. Minor modifications were made during this facilitation. For example, we discussed preliminary results and my plans for using an inductive strategy to identify emerging themes from the sub-codes, similar to my approach with the “other” coding categories.
5. **Content Analysis: Emerging Indicator Criteria Sub-Code Themes.** I re-examined the commendation and recommendation statements by sub-codes to identify emerging indicator themes to analyze my results. These sub-codes directly related to the findings in each standard and criteria theme and ranged from three to ten sub-codes.
6. **Peer Review Validation Process: Sub Code Themes.** The AdvancED/NCA CASI Associate Vice-President of Postsecondary Education and two other school

coordinators reviewed the indicator sub-coding themes in my database. They were in agreement with my coding themes.

7. **Interviews: Sampling.** A maximum variation sampling of participants who serve as NCA CASI accreditation coordinators for their institutions was conducted. Maximum variation strategy is used to select the sample of interview participants representing a range of experiences and variations as discussed by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). The 2007 Annual Report data was used to identify performance measures for the schools. I calculated an average of each institution's completion and licensing/certification passage performance rate. The schools were sorted from high to low rates, and the mean of the average rates was calculated. My interview population was identified as the five highest average performance rates, five mean, and five lowest. Using this approach, I selected 15 coordinators from fully accredited postsecondary certificate-granting institutions (Appendix D). Selected NCA CASI school coordinators who were not willing to participate were removed from my interview list and I selected the next school coordinator.
8. **Interviewing process.** I originally piloted the interview method for this research in the spring of 2007 to determine content, analysis, and questioning techniques to guide my dissertation research and develop the interviewing process. Initially, I emailed and called each person, and then made follow-up phone calls to schedule interviews. The interview process included recorded phone or in-person interviews. Participants had a copy of their institutions' recommendations from the latest External Peer-Review report.

9. **Interview questions.** I developed an initial list of questions to begin the interview dialogue. Additional questions evolved based on exploration of specific institution recommendations and to determine specific action taken by the coordinator's staff at the institution. Emerging questions also stemmed from the content analysis to explore categories representing recommendation trends found in a high number of institutions. Due to the nature of the qualitative interview process, questions emerged from the dialogue process, which sometimes caused different sequencing of the questions. As a starting point, the following questions initiated the interview process:

- a) What actions were taken by your school on these recommendations?
- b) Why were actions not taken on particular recommendations?
- c) In your opinion, did action taken on these recommendations improve your institution?
- d) Please explain your response to the previous questions.
- e) Does the accreditation process have any effect on guiding continuous improvement at your institution?
- f) Please explain your response to the previous question.

10. **Interviews: analysis.** Interview tapes were transcribed into the Interview Analysis Database. Responses were coded based on specific NCA CASI standards and inductive "other" emergent themes. Coding categories emerged from the responses on (a) type of actions taken; b) why actions were not taken; (c) commendations of NCA CASI accreditation; d) recommendations for improvement of the NCA CASI accreditation process; and responses to how the accreditation process guides or does not guide continuous improvement. This data was used to evaluate the overlying

research questions: does the accreditation process guide postsecondary certificate-granting institutional improvement?

Reliability/Validity

Research validity is critical in accurately depicting the commendations, recommendations, and action taken on these recommendations; effectively using the results for improvements in the field of postsecondary certificate-granting education; and improving the NCA CASI accreditation process. The literature identifies procedures to assure validity, as well as recognizes the reliability issues that can apply to the research design.

Verification procedures are followed to assure research validity of the research. I use multiple means of collecting the data to allow for external reflection, input and assuring accuracy. Strategies assuring validity include: 1) conducting a thorough content analysis of postsecondary certificate-granting institutions most recent external peer visit report documentation; 2) facilitating the peer-review process to validate my coding interpretation and acquiring ongoing feedback on interview and conclusion results; and 3) using quotations from actual interview transcripts and written documentation reports. Through the maximum variation sampling interview process, I attained the NCA CASI coordinators' insight, elaboration, and interpretation and use their quotes to clarify the findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Negative and contradictory evidence for analysis was pursued and discussed with coordinators and peer-review process participants. As recommended by Glesne (2006), I was continuously aware of and recognized any bias or subjectivity. The committee chair, as well as other members of the committee and key faculty can provide external auditing assistance through ongoing feedback.

Creswell's identifies verification considerations to increase research validity (Glesne, 2006). These considerations include: prolonged engagement; triangulation; peer-review and debriefing; external audit, clarification of researcher bias; and rich, thick description (Glesne, 2006). Prolonged engagement and persistent observation allows for the researcher to develop trust, learn the culture and check hunches. My eight years of experience as a volunteer external peer-team reviewer with the NCA CASI accreditation process for postsecondary certificate-granting institutions, as well as the research design provides prolonged and persistent observation. The qualitative research design is a triangulation of multiple data-collection methods, sources, participants and perspectives through the document analysis, maximum variation sampling interviews, and peer review validation strategies. Clarification of researcher bias is discussed in the delimitations section found in Chapter one. The writing format of the results and conclusion chapters includes rich, thick descriptive data extracted from the actual wording of the commendations and recommendations found on the accreditation external team review report documentation and interview transcript data.

The "whole notion of reliability in and of itself is problematic...human behavior is never static...measurements and observations can be repeatedly wrong especially where human beings are involved" (Merriam, 1995, p.55). A study was conducted to determine reliability and validity of the North Central Association accreditation process and use of external peer-team reviewers. These reviewers are comprised of volunteer educators and representatives in the business/industry field. Reviewers received training in examining the appropriateness of each criterion. A multiple regression analysis of 200 reviewers with various backgrounds indicated accuracy increased with the level of

outcomes assessment experience found in the reviewer's state and reviewer's accreditation experience. Results indicated accuracy of reviews was reflective of the understanding and use of an accreditation standard/criteria template. (Flanders & Wick, 1998).

Chapter four identifies the results of the commendations and recommendation themes from the document analysis process for 125 NCA CASI postsecondary certificate-granting institution accreditation reports. Chapter five describes the action taken or not taken on recommendations according to the fifteen NCA CASI school coordinators selected for interviews. Chapter six presents these coordinators' perception of the strengths and benefits, and challenges and areas for improvement of the NCA CASI accreditation process. Chapter seven discusses the meaning of these results.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF DOCUMENTATION ANALYSIS OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) process includes school self-study development, on-site external peer team review, accreditation final report, accreditation approval, and ongoing annual reporting. Team members are selected from peer schools to serve on the accreditation teams. The external peer members review self-study documentation and data systems to evaluate if the school meets NCA CASI standards. The team conducts interviews with students, staff, business/industry and community members, and administrators, as well as observes teaching activities in the classroom. Team members identify commendations and recommendations, which are documented in a final external team review report for the school and accreditation office. The final external review team accreditation and annual reports, along with interviews from a sampling of NCA CASI coordinators who manage the accreditation process in their individual schools, serve as the data sources for my research. Chapter four provides the results of the documentation analysis.

NCA CASI accredits schools on a five-year cycle; therefore, external peer-review team reports are included in this research from 2003 to present. The chronological breakdown of the external peer-review team reports is identified in the table below.

Table 5.

Year of External Peer-Review Accreditation Team Visit and Report Documentation

Year of Accreditation Review	Number of Schools
2003	11
2004	64
2005	20
2006	16
2007	14

Note: The date of the accreditation review visit is identified on each of the external peer-review team reports.

I recorded and analyzed the commendation and recommendation sections of 125 external peer-review team reports for individual NCA CASI accredited public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. This represents 96% of these schools due to the unavailability of five school accreditation reports. Each commendation and recommendation statement from the individual school's most recent team final report from 2003 to present was entered into my document review analysis database. There were a total of 4,067 statements written in the external peer-team review reports, which represents sixty-one percent (61%) commendations and thirty-nine percent (39%) recommendations recorded in this database. Every statement has an identifier row number, ie: D456, which is used as the reference citing found for quoting commendations and recommendations from the reports. The commendation and recommendation statements on the external peer-review team reports were a-priori coded in the database according to a specific NCA CASI standard area using the NCA CASI Documentation

Standards Matrix as a framework (Appendix C). The NCA CASI five standards are: School Improvement Plan (SIP), Information Systems (IS), Process of Schooling (PS), Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL), and Resources/Allocation (RA), (Appendix B). In order to narrow the NCA standard coded-data into sub-categories, I used NCA CASI criteria indicators identified within these standard areas (Appendix B). Other themes emerged from these commendation and recommendation statements that were not related to a specific NCA CASI standard. These statements were coded as “other” and sub-categorized based on emergent themes, and were identified as school culture and relationships and documentation.

The results discussion is organized discussing the five highest commendations and recommendations found in the external team review reports. Schools may have a commendation for a particular standard and criteria, and this may be identified as a recommendation for improvement for other schools. Schools may have a commendation and a recommendation within the same category. The percentage of schools that received commendations and recommendations are identified in individual criteria category tables, along with exact quotes from the reports. Due to the 4,067 statements in my database, I inductively selected specific statements in the tables that, in my opinion, best define the overall indicator themes found in each standard and criteria category. This is consistent with the literature, as Thomas (2003) states:

The research findings result from multiple interpretations made from the raw data by the researchers who code the data. Inevitably, the findings are shaped by the assumptions and experiences of the researchers conducting the research and carrying out the data analyses. In order for the findings to

be usable, the researcher (data analyst) must make decisions about what is more important and less important in the data (p. 4).

My administration and accreditation experience with postsecondary certificate-granting institutions provides a prior knowledge base to analyze this data. As Patton (2002) recognizes, “The researcher’s personal experiences and insight are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon.” (p. 40). These selected commendation and recommendation statement quotes represent less than eight percent (8%) of all the commendations and recommendations found in the 125 accreditation reports.

Due to the vast amount of data collected encompassing the holistic NCA CASI accreditation standards and process, I chose to discuss the top five commendation and recommendation standard and criteria themes that the highest percentage of these schools received. A summary of identified themes and excerpt examples from this data for all of the other NCA CASI standards and criteria themes are found in Appendix E. The database of all 4,067 coded commendations and recommendations will be available for AdvancED/NCA CASI to serve as a research base for continuous improvement and further analysis. Due to the volume of data, the 816 pages of this database are not included in this published dissertation.

This chapter also discusses results of completion, placement and licensure/credential passage rates for these schools (Appendix C). Average rates are calculated on the Annual Report for NCA CASI public schools. Results for 2007 are 84.5% completion, 87.9% placement, and 89.7% licensure/certification performance rates for these accredited, public institutions.

Overview of the Commendations

An analysis of the commendations on external peer-review team reports shows the percentage of schools receiving commendations according to NCA CASI standard and criteria and other themes. These themes are ranked from highest percentage of schools receiving commendations on particular criteria and other themes to the lowest percentage.

Table 6.

Percentage of Schools Receiving Commendations by NCA CASI Standard Criteria or Theme

#	Standard	Criteria or Other Theme	Percentage (%) of Schools Receiving Commendations N=125
1	VL	Business, Industry, and Community	82%
2	PS	Pupil Personnel Services	77%
3	Other	School Culture and Relationships	75%
4	RA	Space	75%
5	IS	Data-driven Information	72%
6	RA	Finances	70%
7	SIP	Advisory Committees	69%
8	RA	Personnel, Preparation, and Qualifications	66%
9	SIP	School Improvement Plan	66%
10	VL	School Leadership and Governance	62%
11	PS	Curriculum	59%
12	IS	Student Performance Measures	57%

13	RA	Information and Communication Technologies	55%
14	PS	Professional Development	53%
15	Other	Documentation	49%
16	PS	Teaching	45%
17	SIP	Goals	41%
18	PS	Assessment	34%
19	RA	Instructional Resources	34%
20	RA	Time	34%
21	VL	Mission and Vision	31%
22	SIP	NCA CASI Ongoing Accreditation Process	22%
23	PS	Student Learning Goal	19%
24	SIP	Steering Committee	7%

Note: Standards and criteria are defined in the 2007 AdvancED/NCA CASI Standards and Criteria Manual (Appendix B).

Results will be identified in Chapter four and further discussed in Chapter seven for the top five standard/criteria or other themes based on the percentage of schools receiving commendations in the particular theme area. All other commendation theme results representing the 6th highest (finances – 70%), to the lowest percentages (steering committees – 7%), are located in Appendix E. These themes are organized according to the NCA CASI Standards and Criteria Manual (Appendix B), followed by the other emerging themes of school culture and relationships, and documentation.

Eighty-two percent (82%) of NCA CASI public, accredited schools received commendations for Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL) standard: business, industry, and community involvement criteria. The next highest

commendation themes found are: 2nd) Process of Schooling (PS): pupil personnel services (77%); 3rd) Other emerging themes: school culture and relationships (75%); 4th) Resource and Allocation (RA): space (75%); and 5th) Information Systems (IS): data driven information (72%).

Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL): Business, Industry, and Business, Industry, and Community Involvement

The highest commendation theme found in the accreditation report documentation analysis for all 125 NCA CASI schools was in business, industry, and community involvement. Eighty-two percent (82%) of NCA CASI public, accredited schools received commendations in this area. The indicators within this theme related to partnerships, community member roles, local labor market needs, continuing education services, staff community involvement, customized training, and marketing indicators.

Commendations discuss successful business, industry, and community partnerships in some of these schools. Examples of partnerships identified are with One Stops, Chambers of Commerce, housing authorities, business and industry employers, other career and technical schools, higher education institutions, school alumni, and additional community agencies. Schools use business, industry, and community personnel in various roles including assisting with program development; curriculum review and alignment with industry standards; providing clinical, internships, apprenticeships, and placement sites; and sharing resources and facilities; and offering financial support. Local labor market needs are identified for program development, placement opportunities, and rapid response times in addressing community needs. Commendations about community education and service learning themes recognize

school initiatives for senior citizens and implementation of courses based on community requests. Staff members are involved in community activities and are recognized through commendations highlighting membership, meeting attendance, and presentations at Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, One Stops, and other community organizations. Some schools provide customized training for local business and industry, and are commended for strong relationships with clients, curriculum tailored to the individual business needs, and communication of services.

Marketing commendations are also found in the business, industry, and community criteria. Commendations address marketing plans, personnel, purposes, and media strategies. Marketing plan developments commend the use of focus groups, collaboration, team-approaches, and data-driven strategies. Specific plan development strategies are commended, including using the R.A.C.E. formula, (research, analysis, communications, and evaluation), and use of Sapperstein surveys as marketing tools. Personnel are commended for planning and implementing successful marketing and for community involvement. Marketing purposes recognized in the statements include promoting programs and the school, addressing declining enrollment, retaining students, and positive imaging. Marketing strategies recognized were course catalogs, public service announcements, newspaper articles, school visits, promotional brochures, radio, television, billboards, newspaper, promotional CD's, web-sites, and school logos. As one commendation stated, "Staff and students are instrumental in recruitment efforts. Students stated that they learned about their programs through former students" (D2247).

A few excerpts from the 302 commendation statements for the VL: business, industry and community involvement criteria theme from these accreditation reports are

found in the following table. The identified number in the first column is the statement number located in the document analysis database.

Table 7.

Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL) Standard: Business, Industry and Community Commendations.

			<u>82%</u> of Schools
#	Indicator	Commendation	
D750	Partnerships	Strong working relationship with the state Jobs and Family Services agency. (30% of students come to the school from this agency).	
D3058	Partnerships	Relationships/partnerships with higher education institutions strengthen the curriculum and opportunities available to students.	
D3215	Role	The center thrives on strong community support demonstrated by the availability and utilization of student internships, project-based learning, hands-on educational experiences within local businesses, numerous contractual agreements for student affiliation, and active participation of business and industry in program area advisory committees.	
D2393	Role	Evidence was presented which shows that internal and external partners at all levels are afforded the opportunity to give input regarding programming, facilities, and operational decisions of the administration. It is also evident that the input has been effectively used.	
D507	Labor market needs	A positive strength is the school's ability to develop, implement, analyze, and react quickly in identifying community program needs.	
D1158	Labor market needs	The school provides the community with much-needed Licensed Practical Nurses and Surgical Technologists.	
D2818	Labor market needs	The Manufacturing Alliance is doing a great job showing results of economic impact of training and services.	
D3114	Involvement	Community involvement includes collaboration with the Commission on Aging. One hour per day is allotted to assist senior citizens with basic computers, the Internet, etc., at no charge.	

D2816	Involvement	The group involvement includes participation in eight Chamber of Commerce and various service organizations. They hold 20 community memberships and participate in 21 community sponsored events.
D3523	Involvement	It is evident that the school is very involved with the community. Advisory councils, the local Chamber of Commerce, and the county Planning and Development Council are all good resources upon which to build. These relationships are important for keeping the community involved in the center, and even more importantly, to gather feedback for program modification and improvement. One of the business partners made the statement, “[The school] fills our need, it’s not just placement.”
D3363	Customized training	The district served 128 companies last year with customized training services and 16% of those companies were companies that were not previously served by the district. The Memorandum of Understanding and the Statement of Goals used when services are provided to companies were both excellent.
D3180	Resources	An example of community support donation by Saturn of a “cut-away” car to aid the Automotive Technology class in understanding how the engines work.
D2950	Marketing	The biggest improvement that has been made since the 2002 evaluation has been the development of a comprehensive marketing plan for each campus within the district. These plans have provided focused program goals with obtainable measurements included.

Pupil Personnel Services

Pupil personnel services commendations relate to support services provided to students. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of schools received commendations in this standard and criteria theme. Emerging indicator themes recognize student service strategies, addressing diverse needs, career planning, placement assistance, orientation activities, guidance services, and remediation strategies. Service strategies for students include access to guidance counselors, vocational resource evaluators, GED services, financial aid administrators, placement personnel, and program instructors providing remediation assistance. Addressing diverse needs of student indicator commendations are

found for establishing services for non-traditional students, displaced homemakers, single parents, and displaced workers. Schools are recognized for various career planning techniques, including interest, ability, and aptitude assessments; personal career counseling; use of an individualized student career plan; use of outreach agency services; career software; industry mentoring programs; and Career Fair activities. Commendations related to placement services mention placement personnel availability, and job preparation and recruitment activities. Student orientation was another indicator theme commending structured orientation sessions.

As one commendation stated, “Guidance and remediation are integral to the process of education” (D519). Guidance services commendations include written, formalized guidance plans, communication of services, coordinated guidance efforts, and innovative delivery services. Various remediation strategies are recognized by external peer-review team members. These include assessment-based, academic integration, remediation service delivery methods, communication of remediation services, documented student follow-up, basic skills, scheduling, one-on-one assistance, online access, and referral processes. Examples of a few of the 243 commendations specific to the pupil personnel service criteria theme are identified in the following table.

Table 8.

Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Pupil Personnel Services Commendations.

#	Indicator	Commendation
D846	Student service strategies	Students have easy access for scheduling visits and appointments with Adult Division Counselor, Financial Aid Administrator, program instructors, remediation/adult basic education Coordinator and administrators.
D3418	Serving diverse needs	The district is to be highly commended for providing the Careers Unlimited program for nontraditional students and Displaced Homemakers/Single Parents and Single Pregnant Women program with special services and programs. The district is a leader in promoting diversity and establishing a district-wide diversity council with fifteen members and three elected officers.
D1304	Career planning	The school utilizes Career Scope to predict student success and provide pre- and post-tests. The school assists students in identifying students' career interests, aptitudes, abilities, and work. A counselor provides an analysis of the assessments to students in determining an appropriate educational and career path.
D3343	Placement assistance	The school continues to support activities that assist students to gain employment. The academic center staff, the counselors, and the instructors coordinate these activities to prepare students for employment and job stability. Job placement skills, such as writing resumes, interviewing and job-readiness skills are delivered through a variety of opportunities in the classrooms and workshops
D3201	Guidance services	The counselor meets with all new students individually to assist them in developing and recording their short and long term goals. Discussion during this process focuses on how the career and technology center can assist them in reaching their goals
D3335	Guidance services	The counselors make good use of the electronic database by recording any meetings with or assistance given to students so an accurate picture may be formed of the student no matter who is assisting him/her.
D140	Remediation	The intensive training program demonstrates the commitment to developing all aspects of their students. A good example is those students who are deficient in Work Keys scores are given remediation through Key Train.

D1193 Remediation	Special needs forms located in the LPN handbook are available for students requesting specialized educational programs. Verification was provided that the QUEST program offers remediation sessions for individuals in basic academic classes. Additional evidence was documented to indicate that instructors were available one day a week and by appointment for remediation assistance to students within the LPN program.
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School Culture and Relationships

The school culture and relationships theme emerged from the accreditation report analysis and did not clearly fit within any specific NCA CASI standard. Seventy-five percent (75%) of schools received commendations for positive school culture and relationships. External peer-review team members identified commendations on the school accreditation reports through the self study document review; interviews with staff, students, and business, industry, and community members; and observations during the accreditation visit. Many of the school culture and relationship commendations were identified through the interview and observation process, as found within commendation statements such as, "...in talking with the current and former students", "while touring the facility", and "interviews with staff, students, and community."

Indicator themes that emerged in reviewing the commendation statements recognize a school culture with a caring environment, commitment, positive morale, good communication, collaboration and team work. Commendations also focus on student, staff, and community relationships that contribute to a positive school environment. The word "caring" was found to describe teachers and administration in some statements regarding student success, the school, and learning. Several commendations provided examples where graduates of the institution were now teachers in the schools, the staff

were the greatest strengths of the school, and the commitment was to student success and quality education. One commendation stated, “The school has clear expectations for the students regarding attendance, attitude, teamwork, safety, responsibility, and quality” (D1337). Most programs operate with students organized in cohort groups, taking the same courses together from the beginning of the program to completion. This can create a culture of student collaboration. A few statements recognized positive morale of the staff and good communication processes. External peer-review teams gauged this from staff perception surveys and staff interviews. Internal staff teams were prevalent in many of the schools as identified in the commendations. Staff teams participated in the institution’s self study analysis. Formalized staff teams guide professional development, curriculum decisions, and operational decisions on an ongoing basis. A few of the 199 commendations are identified on the following table.

Table 9.

Other Emergent Theme: School Culture and Relationships.

#	Indicator	Commendation
D62	Caring	The school has its strength in the faculty and staff. The employees of the career center are caring, dedicated people who are truly concerned about their programs, students, and community. The employees are the main asset of the school, in talking with current and former students. The staff involves themselves in making the learning experience a successful one. They show flexibility and team spirit in all that they do.
D1120	Caring	The external review team met with a representative group of the student body and they stated that the number one thing they liked about the school was the individualized attention they received by caring leaders. As one student said, “It feels so good here, you don’t want to leave.
D2247	Caring	Students’ love and appreciation for the school and teachers are evident as reflected in the interview process.

D267	Commitment	All program directors and many of the part-time instructors are graduates of the school's Health Care programs and have commitment to the school and to the successes of the students.
D1434	Student collaboration	There is a spirit of caring among the students to assist students to a higher level of learning and to assist those in need of remediation.
D3889	Morale	Morale at the school is excellent. The student-teacher relationship is outstanding. Instructors provide a respect and caring attitude which assists the students in vocational and interpersonal skills.
D3151	Morale	Morale at the school seems very high. This is a valuable link to the success of the students in their career program. The staff at the school is very caring and helps the students gain the vocational and interpersonal skills necessary to succeed in their chosen careers.
D1190	Communication	Faculty brainstorming sessions, weekly faculty meetings, school climate audit reports, etc., indicated strengths, detractors, discrepancies, and recommendations to aid in adapting the programs to their changing environments.
D402	Team approach	Very well organized councils, committees, and a motivated staff are in place to guide students to success in their chosen careers.

Space

Seventy-five percent (75%) of schools received commendations related to providing a safe learning environment, student record security, class size, ADA compliance, and effective use and appearance of physical space. Commendations recognize school safety plans including crisis intervention, emergency plan, other documented safety procedures; mock disasters and safety drills; and available safety equipment and provisions are available. Students are trained and assessed on safety procedures in the classrooms and labs to assure a safe learning environment. Student records are protected from fire, theft, and other damage. Small class size allows for individual student attention. Facilities are well maintained, and ten schools received commendations on their new facilities. Some statements confirmed the facilities meet the

needs of handicapped students and ADA compliant. Examples of the 171 commendation statements are found in the following table.

Table 10.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Space Commendations.

			<u>75</u> % of Schools
#	Indicator	Commendation	
D3156	Safety	Safety is a priority in all lab areas. Equipment has annual inspections. Students are provided with proper safety equipment. Safety training is provided to staff and students.	
D536	Safety	The district has developed a Crisis Intervention and Emergency Plan that addresses such concerns as mail opening procedures, bomb threats, evacuation of building, and other processes to insure the safety of staff and students.	
D1879	Safety	Health and safety of all students and staff are valued as evidenced by ongoing safety inspections from independent consultants and annual safety reviews.	
D689	Safety	The security measures at the school are impressive. The use of ID tags for all students and staff as well as visitors is exemplary. Cameras and lock-down drills are also in place.	
D901	Physical space appearance	Appearance of building and overall classroom surroundings are clean, which makes for a good learning environment and also pride in the school.	

Data-driven Information

Seventy-two percent (72%) of schools received commendations for Information Systems (IS) data criteria. The Information Systems standard and criteria require schools to use a comprehensive, data-driven information system. NCA CASI School Improvement Plan and Information System standards require schools to collect, analyze, and drive decisions based on data. The information system should continuously analyze student performance and effectiveness by collecting student and community data (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007). In further analyzing this criteria theme, I found 50% of

schools received data collection commendations, 18% received data analysis commendations, and 34% received data-driven decision-making commendations.

Commendation indicator themes for data collection include variety of types, methods, and purposes. The types of data collected are classified as demographic, student learning measurements, perception, and school processes. Schools survey students, staff, business, industry, community members, and alumni; acquire labor market data for program decisions; and use a variety of student performance results. Student performance results analyzed include grades, attendance, summative and formative assessments, placement data, and industry credential results. Several commendations address online survey collection processes.

Data analysis commendations focused on computerized analysis processes including Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, and web-based Blackboard system. Presentation of the data is recognized using trend data, graphs, control charts, and statistical analysis. Data-driven decision-making criteria theme commendations identified data uses for programmatic, financial, management, increasing student achievement success, meeting labor market needs, accountability reporting, and identifying staff needs. Examples of the 165 commendations on the accreditation reports for Information Systems data are identified in the table below.

Table 11.

Information Systems (IS) Standard: Data-driven Information Commendations.

#	Indicator	Commendation
Data Collection		
D1929	Type	The school is to be commended for having Advisory Committee surveys that add another community input dimension to their data. Through the school's advisory committees and community liaisons, school leadership and faculty can evaluate community needs and factor them into curriculum, equipment, and facilities planning
D114	Purpose	The (school) is developing a process to collect data that allows the institution to make decisions based upon information derived from data. The continued development of this process should allow for effective management of resources and the development of accurate budgets
D312	Purpose	The school has in place a data driven system that is comprehensive, current and is derived from many sources. The system is designed to track students from the application process to successful placement in a job or postsecondary education.
Data Analysis		
D306	Technology-based analysis	The use of Blackboard to analyze data collected by surveys is exceptionally presented and well-utilized.
D2769	Statistical analysis of performance	A great deal of evidence shows that statistical data are used in the analysis of departmental performance.
Data-driven Decision-making		
D842	Data-driven decisions	The use of control charts allows for the identification of trends and assists in making decisions based upon long term analysis.
D389	Data-driven decisions	The tracking tools used by the school Adult Division collected the necessary information from students to allow accurate, timely reporting to the State and allow the adult division to compile the necessary data on which to base program decisions
D1164	Data-driven decisions	The school information system is outstanding. It allows staff to monitor a wide variety of data about students, school operations, trends. There is strong evidence that decision-making at the school is based on facts furnished by the database.

The highest commendations identified from the accreditation report analysis, along with the percentage of schools receiving these commendations are: 1st) Vision,

Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL) standard: business, industry, and community involvement criteria (82%); 2nd) Process of Schooling (PS): pupil personnel services (77%); 3rd) Other: school culture and relationships (75%); 4th) Resource and Allocation (RA): space (75%); and 5th) Information Systems (IS): data driven information (72%).

Schools may receive multiple commendations and recommendations in standard and criteria themes. Schools could also receive both a commendation and recommendation in the same area. An example would be if a school receives an IS: data commendation recognizing the school collects a broad range of perceptual data from staff, student, and community members; student performance data; and labor market information. A recommendation, in this instance, may be made for IS: data to make improvements in analyzing these surveys using a computerized process versus paper/pencil tabulation. This example addresses the continuous improvement aspect of accreditation (USDE, n.d.).

Overview of the Standard Recommendations

Recommendations categorized by standard, criteria, and other themes are identified from the external peer-review team accreditation reports. These themes are ranked in order from highest percentage of schools receiving recommendations to lowest percentage.

Table 12.

Percentage of Schools Receiving Recommendations by NCA CASI Standard Criteria or Theme.

#	Standard	Criteria or Other Theme	Percentage (%) of Schools Receiving Recommendations N=125
1	IS	Data-Driven Decision-Making	75%
2	RA	Space	70%
3	PS	Pupil Personnel Services	59%
4	VL	Business, Industry, and Community	54%
5	Other	Documentation	54%
6	SIP	Advisory Committees	53%
7	PS	Professional Development	51%
8	RA	Information and Communication Technologies	45%
9	RA	Finances	44%
10	RA	Personnel, Preparation, and Qualifications	42%
11	SIP	School Improvement Plan	41%
12	IS	Student Performance Measures	38%
13	PS	Curriculum	36%
14	PS	Assessment	34%
15	PS	Teaching	30%
16	VL	Mission	29%
17	VL	School Leadership and Governance	26%
18	RA	Instructional Resources	23%
19	SIP	Goals	19%
20	RA	Time	18%
21	SIP	NCA CASI Ongoing Accreditation Process	13%

22	PS	Student Learning Goal	9%
23	Other	Other – Culture	6%
24	SIP	Steering Committee	5%

The highest recommendations identified from the accreditation report analysis, along with the percentage of schools receiving these recommendations are: 1st) Information Systems (IS): data driven information (75%); 2nd) Resource and Allocation (RA): space (70%); 3rd) Process of Schooling (PS): pupil personnel services (59%); 4th) Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL) standard: business, industry, and community involvement criteria (54%). The fifth highest theme is documentation (54%), which is the only recommendation theme not found in the top five commendations. The only one of the highest five commendation themes that did not appear as a high recommendation theme was school culture and relationships. Only 6% of schools received recommendations in the school culture and relationships theme.

Recommendation results are identified in the following section and further discussed in Chapter seven for the top five standard/criteria or other themes based on the percentage of schools receiving recommendations in the particular theme area. All other recommendation theme results representing the 6th highest (advisory committees – 53%), to the lowest percentages (steering committees – 5%), are located in Appendix E. These themes are organized according to the NCA CASI Standards and Criteria Manual (Appendix B), followed by the other emerging themes of school culture and relationships and documentation.

Data-driven Information

Seventy-five percent (75%) of schools received recommendations for improving the Information Systems (IS): data-driven information criteria. In further analyzing this criteria theme, I found 62% of schools received data collection recommendations, 33% received data analysis recommendations, and 43% received data-driven decision-making recommendations.

Data collections improvements suggest data collection sources, methods, consistency of data, and need for centralized data management system. Schools collect a variety of data from various stakeholders, as identified in the data commendations in the previous section. Some schools received suggestions to implement entrance and exit surveys, and assess the labor market needs of the community. Recommendations were made to improve data collection methods by increasing frequency of survey implementation, involving input of staff, developing or implementing existing online survey processes, reducing duplication of data input, expanding scope of labor market data, establishing centralized collection systems, and increasing survey response rates.

Data analysis recommendations focus on needs, efficiently analyzing survey data, using assistive technology, and conducting performance analysis and trend analysis processes. Analysis needs include student and program performance and overall educational improvement. Data exists, but some schools do not analyze or organize the data into useable formats. Suggestions for using control charts, graphs, spreadsheet tabulation, and use of online Survey Monkey or Blackboard capabilities are identified in the recommendations. Recommendations for data-driven decision-making focus on implementing data-driven planning processes; using existing data; providing staff

training on data use; aligning data-driven strategies with the school improvement plans; and acquiring a centralized, computerized database management system. Some examples of the 173 recommendation statements are identified in the following table.

Table 13.

Information Systems (IS) Standard: Data-driven Information Recommendations.

<u>75%</u> of Schools		
#	Indicator	Recommendation
Data Collection		
D1764	Sources	The team recommends the development of and inclusion of a school profile that specific data for individual programs such as, but not limited to, completion rates, pass/fail rates, credentialing rates, drop out rates, and placement rates.
D193	Sources	Lack of surveys (staff, student, and community) collection and review of surveys could be used as a valuable tool in curriculum development/tweaking. Suggestions might be an entrance survey, (What do I expect to learn in this program), a mid-year survey, (Am I satisfied with the training I have received to date?), and a completion survey, (Did the program meet my expectations?). Employer surveys would provide customer satisfaction levels and could provide valuable information on an ongoing basis as industry needs change. Surveys should be a large part of our continuous improvement plan.
D462	Sources	Continue to work on internship surveys for employers and for student completion to ensure these are valuable experiences, expectations are being met and the course curriculum is covering the needed job skills (D462).
D4510	Sources	The instructors have expressed a desire to rewrite the student satisfaction survey. This is recommended. More areas could be included for student comment. Staff recognizes that students are their customers and they are desirous of their input.
D291	Consistency	Increase communication between directors/instructors of the various programs and develop consistency of data collection forms, such as evaluations.
D410	Methods	Ensure that students are completing the Customer Satisfaction surveys in class when possible (in lieu of mailing) to increase response rate and giving more data that can be assessed and evaluated.

Data Analysis		
D1789	Technology	We recommend that the school computerize, at minimum, the tabulation process using an Excel spreadsheet to enter survey data. This will allow for measuring improvements versus anecdotal comments. Ideally, surveys could be conducted online (ie: Survey Monkey).
D3496	Performance Analysis	Better analysis of drop-out information is needed.
D1928	Trend Analysis	All data presented for document review should be multi-year, so trends can be analyzed. Data should be analyzed and linked to programmatic changes, instructional improvement efforts, student achievement and professional development provided.
D496	Trend Analysis	Consider developing methods of better identifying trends. One method might be the use of control charts to identify such trends and to establish criterion to verify that the data are valid to provide for systematic improvement.
Data-driven Decision-making		
D1849	Implement	Surveys completed by teachers should be reviewed with staff and actions taken based on data received should be shared, especially if concerns had been expressed.
D84	Utilization	(The School) has a lot of good data that is captured and used by the center for continuous improvement. The Adult Education Department should continue to utilize their survey data from students, faculty, and community partners in order to continually improve their educational delivery process.
D1930	Utilization	The team recommends that data be multi-year and presented in both aggregated and disaggregated form. Summaries might be written to fully explain how data are used to make decisions on instruction, curriculum, learner outcomes, and professional development needs.
D2144	Staff training	The administration might consider future training for staff in using more data to make instructional decision when establishing individualized goals.
D2688	Alignment	The Director and Superintendent are keenly aware of the challenges of aligning data collection with the Strategic Plan. Efforts to continue in this direction will support new initiatives and changes that are responsive to needs.
D327	Centralized data management system	Find a solution to the school information system (software package) that will allow for growth and the ability to gather data and report necessary local, state, and federal reports.

Space Considerations

Seventy percent (70%) of schools received recommendations in Resource and Allocation (RA) standard space criteria theme. The indicator themes were consistent: safety, security, ADA compliance, and facility maintenance. The need for additional classroom, laboratory and storage space, including facility expansion or renovations, is also suggested in these recommendations. Issues noted in these recommendations included increasing safety training and assessment for students and identifying specific protective resources. Suggestions included specific measures to address handicap accessibility and ADA compliance. For example, one recommendation suggested installing automated door mechanisms for handicap accessibility. Facility maintenance suggested inspecting, repairing, and cleaning specific places in the school. Eighteen percent (18%) of schools received recommendations suggesting increased space and new facilities are needed. A few recommendation statements addressing space concerns are identified from the 154 total statements in the following table.

Table 14.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Space Recommendations.

<u>70%</u> of Schools		
#	Indicator	Recommendation
D2656	Safety	Several of the programs need to strengthen their safety instruction and testing. The State Department provides online safety training and testing. The school safety coordinator should be able to assist in obtaining this safety training for the programs that need it.
D2813	ADA Non-compliance	The current facility is not accessible and therefore is in violation of federal law relating to individuals with disabilities. In addition, it is too small and cramped to accommodate an appropriate number of students, in not in

		good repair or overall condition, and is arranged in a manner that makes it difficult for students to stay on task or to focus on assigned activities.
D3193	Maintenance of facility	While the overall condition of the building and grounds is well maintained, there are several areas that need attention. The men's restroom needs some tile replaced and the entrance should not be used for storage. One can contained corrosive material.
D1253	Additional space	Many classes are small and labs are cramped for the size of classes. Additional space would benefit the growth of existing programs and all for the development of new program offerings to meet the needs of the community. The team recommends the district consider additional space. All current space is being utilized to meet the needs of the students.

Pupil Personnel Services

Fifty-nine percent (59%) of schools received recommendations in pupil personnel services criteria theme. Recommendations indicate a need for guidance counselors at some schools; establishing formalized student service and evaluation processes; and implementing remediation strategies. Staffing for student services is suggested in some recommendations, including hiring additional staff or re-assigning tasks to other personnel. Recommendations that focus on improvements for student services include pre-assessment and entrance requirements, admissions, orientation, career planning, counseling and guidance, placement, remediation, and grievance processes. Clear, written policies, communication of services, and evaluation of effectiveness are suggested for the varied services. Admission policies with established criteria and structured orientation sessions should be communicated. Career planning recommendations include career assessments, counseling, career exploration activities, and student development of individual career plans. Counseling strategies suggested include student assessments, communication of services, and formalized written counseling plans. Recommendations

to increase placement include providing placement support personnel, communicating job referrals and placement services, support for industry credentials, promote non-traditional opportunities, and use of job assistive software. Remediation recommendations focused on the importance of using a pre-screening, formalized tool; developing remediation plans; providing remediation opportunities for multiple schedule needs of students; acquiring online resources; and determining and implementing accommodations to address individual student learning needs. Examples of the 146 pupil personnel service recommendations are found in the following table.

Table 15.

Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Pupil Personnel Services Recommendations.

<u>59%</u> of Schools		
#	Indicator	Recommendation
D3110	Guidance counselor	It is recommended that the school explore ways in which a guidance counselor be employed. NCA recommends that no school have less than a half-time position for counseling services.
D2406	Student service processes	Develop systematic student admission procedure from start to finish including pre-testing, student intervention, student remediation.
D3213	Student service processes	It is recommended that a formal, written plan be established as an on-going guide for the performance of those working to fulfill the counseling and guidance needs of the center. This would be especially beneficial given the fact that the present counselor is being transferred from the career center after the current school year
D463	Evaluation	Have a more formalized screening tool to identify potential barriers and develop action plans to overcome those barrier. Along with this, an assessment tool should be implemented to identify remedial need in a more timely fashion and those needs should be addressed
D1916	Remediation	Postsecondary students expressed concerns with regard to getting extra help in understanding materials in class. This may simply be due to the rigor of course content, but efforts to provide help should be addressed.

D3320	Remediation	It is recommended that the occupational instructors be encouraged to utilize the Applied Technology, Writing, Business Writing, Listening, and Observation instructional components of Key Train to augment their programmatic instruction. These lessons incorporate career-specific skills, reinforce content presented in other formats, and incidentally improve written, oral, and auditory communication skills.
D184	Remediation	Develop remediation programs to support student achievement-based on Work Keys data.

Business, Industry, and Community Involvement

Fifty-four percent (54%) of schools received recommendations for business, industry, and community involvement. The majority of the recommendations suggest the need for formalized marketing plans and improvements in marketing strategies, as evidenced by 37% of schools receiving specific marketing recommendations. These suggestions involved conducting marketing needs analysis, increasing awareness of program offerings, developing formalized plan, describing marketing strategies, assuring equity, and implementing marketing evaluation processes to determine effectiveness of the strategies. Other recommendations focus on increasing community involvement, customized training contracts, and improving partnerships. One recommendation cautioned a school, “overdevelopment of too many partnerships may be counterproductive...over commitment of the facilities to outside groups may cause a shortage of facilities available for future program growth” (Database, D3134). Examples of the 168 recommendations for improving business, industry, and community involvement are identified in the following table.

Table 16.

Vision Leadership (VL) Standard: Business, Industry and Community Recommendations

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D2736	Marketing Plan	On several occasions during the team visit, it was stated by faculty, administration, and advisory members that the school is one of the best kept secrets in the community. As a team we recommend that the school develop a formal marketing plan that is in place year-round with a chairperson and individual marketing activity leaders.
D2138	Marketing Plan	Current marketing practices seem to be random and fragmented. The development of a comprehensive marketing plan of action (using RACE) with mini action plans that outline activities, strategies, responsible persons, timelines, budget, and evaluation components for major initiatives like recruitment, business and industry services, etc., will all the marketing of the technology center to be more cost-efficient and proactive rather than reactive. The plan will serve as an active, ongoing guide and roadmap for the coordinator and staff.
D1131	Marketing Strategies	We realize the school is in a rural setting and the student community is quite difficult to reach; therefore, it is increasingly important that quality marketing materials be developed and disseminated throughout the service area.
D2858	Equity	The program recruitment brochures, media, and team composition should continue to be reviewed annually to ensure that stereotyping is not modeled to the prospective students in the areas of race, color, national origin, gender, or disability.
D3424	Community involvement	It is suggested that additional staff members periodically attend meetings of civic organizations in the town, as well as in surrounding areas within the technology center district. This involvement will help ensure increased communications with local and regional business and industries and create a larger framework for recruitment.
D741	Partnerships	Continue to develop relationships with local/state government and businesses to identify future growth in labor markets.

Documentation

Documentation evolved as an additional category, and 54% of schools received recommendations. The indicator themes address consistency, compliance, organization

processes, centralization of documentation, and meeting minutes. Recommendations identified specific documentation with inconsistency of information. Compliance statements, including EEO and NCA CASI accreditation, should be printed on communication materials. Although processes existed in schools, external peer-review team members did not find some of them documented, or easily accessible. Recommendations indicated that some of these documents were kept in individual programs, but should be compiled in a central location or system. Suggestions were made to record staff, administration, and advisory meeting minutes. Some examples of the 114 documentation related recommendations are found in the following table.

Table 17.

Other: Documentation-related Recommendations.

<u>54%</u> of Schools		
#	Indicator	Recommendation
D867	Consistency	Be consistent in all publications with NCA accreditation statement language, EEO, mission statements, and ISO quality policy. Good example of complete language is in the Adult Division Handbook. Missing EEO and NCA statements in 2004-2005 course catalog. Nursing section of website and brochure should reflect OBN accreditation as well, but it is noted in individual nursing program brochure.
D373	Compliance	Formally address how ADA issues are addressed. Literature should reflect that accommodations can be provided and how to go about receiving them. Provide a written description of how to access ADA in student literature.
D2377	Compliance	Place a concise grievance policy procedure in adult handbook.
D791	Organization	The school has necessary information and collects records; however, the information is scattered and needs to be relocated in a central location or in a more accessible manner.

D2002	Document processes	Many good things are happening in the classrooms, but these successful procedures and outcomes aren't well documented in the files. Written processes should more clearly reflect teachers' instructional techniques, systematic planning by staff, adapting instructional procedures to meet individual student needs, and the use of varied evaluation instruments.
D694	Centralized	Recordkeeping area and files need to be in a central location. This would prevent several people from maintaining different sections of each student's file. Suggestions would be to use digital imaging and files could also be transferred to CD. The contents of each individual file should also be put in a standardized order.
D325	Meeting minutes	More formal note taking and documentation regarding committee meetings.
D361	Meeting minutes	Work to develop a procedure for documentation of even informal decision making meetings and conversations.

Performance Measures

In addition to analyzing 125 NCA CASI public institution accreditation reports, I reviewed the AdvancED/NCA CASI Annual Report data. Results from the 2007 report shows 84.5% completion, 87.9% placement, and 89.7% licensure/certification performance rates for these accredited, public institutions. Performance rates for these NCA CASI schools for the prior three years are:

Table 18.

NCA CASI Annual Performance Report for Accredited Public Institutions

NCA CASI Performance	2004	2005	2006	2007
Completion	77.6%	80.1%	81.2%	84.5%
Placement	83.6%	84.9%	84.9%	87.9%
Licensure/ Certification	85.0%	87.2%	86.7%	89.7%

To increase the validity of the performance data, I conducted a triangulation using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) College Navigator and Ohio Department of Education (ODE) performance data (NCES, 2008; ODE, 2008). I found the NCA CASI Annual Report data rates to be close to both of these data results. Ohio school performance was analyzed because Ohio schools represent 45% of the 125 school population in my research. Ninety-two percent (92%) of ODE postsecondary schools are accredited through NCA CASI and eight percent (8%) are non-accredited schools. ODE data performance indicators for all schools identify an average of 82.9% completion, 92.9% placement, and 91.9% license/credential (technical skills) passage rates (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). Placement and license/credential passage rates are slightly higher than the average rates of the NCA CASI schools in other states.

Results of the themes from the top five percentages of commendations and recommendations identified from the accreditation report analysis and the NCA CASI schools performance measures are discussed in Chapter seven. Following the accreditation visit, schools receive the accreditation report with the commendations and recommendations. The action taken by these schools in addressing the recommendations was explored through the NCA CASI school coordinator interviews. These results are detailed in Chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE – RESULTS OF ACTION TAKEN OR NOT TAKEN ON ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATIONS

I conducted interviews with fifteen NCA CASI internal school coordinators and one State Department of Education coordinator determine 1) what action was taken on recommendations; and 2) why were actions not taken on particular recommendations. Some of the action taken on North Central Association – Commission on School Improvement (NCA CASI) recommendations was also identified through particular statements found on the final external team review reports. All interview transcript dialogue was recorded in the interview analysis database and inductively coded based on emerging themes. All interviewees remain confidential.

Perception of Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Institution Commendations

The schools received the external peer-review team report after the visit. The report identified commendations and recommendations for improvements for the schools. Interviews with NCA CASI coordinators indicated the external peer-review team members portrayed an accurate assessment of the school through the accreditation report commendations and recommendations. During the interview process, the NCA CASI coordinators first discussed the commendations and recommendations. School culture and relationships themes were prevalent in the interviews and the accreditation report analysis. Second, we explored the action taken on these recommendations, and why action was not taken.

Accurate Assessment by External Peer-Review Team

Most of the NCA CASI coordinators stated their external peer-review team members provided an accurate snapshot of their schools during the three day accreditation visit. The commendations and recommendations from their school accreditation visit that were identified by external teams were also consistent with the findings from the document analysis, as should be expected. Throughout the interviews, coordinators discussed their positive school cultures and relationships.

School Culture and Relationships

NCA CASI school coordinator interviews were consistent with the external peer-review team report results that indicate positive school culture and strong relationships are prevalent in public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Interviews recognize teacher, student, and peer relationships are strengths to student success in these schools. In analyzing the fifteen interviewee schools' commendation and recommendation themes from their reports based on maximum, minimum, and mean percentages, there were few thematic differences. All five high performing schools, as well as three of the five mean schools received commendations relating to positive school culture. One of the minimum performing schools received a commendation; however, two schools in the minimum performance sampling received recommendations specific to improving school culture.

Table 19.

Interview Quotes on Perception of Postsecondary Certificate-granting Institutions

Commendations: School Culture and Relationships.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Peer relationships/Self Esteem	As a program, they [students] become very cohesive...I think one of the things you look at is that our students are together every day for numerous days in a row. They are really bonding in that capacity...Every program has its own form of completion [ceremony]... when a lot of these people come [to the school], they have never succeeded in anything: grade school, high school...they have never truly succeeded. When they get to that point and go through that ceremony...their family is there, people are there and they are being recognized.
Student and teacher relationships	We had instructors who were very committed to the success of their students, really close relationships between instructors and their students...I think postsecondary...career and technical has a tendency to be very teacher-student oriented.
Student and teacher relationships	When I started...I said what I would like to do is find the best person in this area, the best person in that area and start a school I was at the Board Office one day and told them that I have that now because I have been able to hire the people to do the jobs that I felt. It's not just the expertise. It is the want. It is the love for students, love to convey knowledge, love to see people improve. That's what it takes. It has to come from your heart.
Faculty	Our faculty is strong, a lot of longevity...it is a wonderful place in which to work.

Action Taken on Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Institution Recommendations

All of the NCA CASI schools in this research population have achieved accreditation status indicating compliance with the standards. The AdvancED/NCA CASI representative stated during an interview that recommendations are suggestions for improvement versus violations that effect the accreditation decision for these schools. NCA CASI coordinators discussed the overall accreditation process and actions taken by their institutions during my interviews. Actions taken on recommendations focus on: 1) documentation; 2) compliance issues; 3) performance measures; and 4) process improvements.

Documentation

As identified in the external report analysis, documentation is a key area where schools receive recommendations. Interviewees discussed action their institution took on these recommendations relating to document development, suggestions of specific corrections to existing documents, and providing staff and advisory committee meeting minutes and agendas. NCA CASI coordinators indicated action was taken on these types of recommendations. One coordinator said her school has addressed a particular publication change, but the school is waiting for the next production time to distribute the publication with the corrections.

Compliance Issues

Interviews with the NCA CASI coordinators indicated staff took immediate action on compliance recommendations. Compliance indicator themes included ADA documentation, facility compliance, and state and Perkins accountability. One coordinator discussed major non-compliance issues the external team uncovered during the accreditation visit. The team communicated these findings and the staff immediately responded. There have been a number of meetings and action taken to correct these deficiencies.

Table 20.

Interview Quotes on Action Taken on Recommendations: Compliance Issues.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
ADA documentation	Some of the things they [external team members] incorporated the language in grievance and ADA in the handbook. That is already done.

ADA Facility compliance	We didn't have enough disability parking spaces outside one of our buildings. They already painted a new spot. That building is difficult to get into. Eventually, they will knock it down, but we added a parking place so it is more accessible.
State and Perkins compliance	Professional development plans, we talked about those and are going to toward that and the program of study. Those are two things that we have targeted...because of the new goal in our state plan and Perkins [requirements] that we have to have.

Performance Measures

According to the AdvancED/NCA CASI representative, a school can jeopardize their accreditation status if the student performance measures fall below a minimum level. The 2007 NCA CASI Annual Report minimum performance rates are: 66% completion, 69% placement, and 55% licensing/certification pass rates (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007). The postsecondary certificate-granting institution 2007 average performance rates exceeded the minimum performance percentage: 84.5% completion, 87.9% placement, and 89.7% licensure/certification performance. Several of the school coordinators discussed action on recommendations that relate to high performance measures, industry credentials, remediation, and follow-up data.

Table 21.

Interview Quotes on Action Taken on Recommendations: Performance Measures.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Industry credentials	Every program that we have available for [national program accreditation] we have. Practical Nursing, Respiratory is nationally accredited, so is our Medical Assisting, Dental Assisting, Graphics, auto Programs with ASE...From a broad perspective and the industry's perspective. We support third party certifications. It gives us a measure as well of how students are doing. If they can't pass those third party exams from national agency, maybe we are not teaching them the right stuff. We have Microsoft, Cisco, all areas IT across the board. It is in every program.
Industry credentials	A general suggestion was we didn't have enough tie in with our full time programs and short term programs, recognizing the national certification was hard to push for short term classes - the reporting of [the results]. They are passing and usually it means a raise at their job or a promotion. They are pretty serious about it.
Follow up data	We also had some difficulty with the follow-up of students. It is required by the state system. We have a very transient population. We serve upwards of 10,000 students in a given year. Frequently, we were not able to contact them for follow up. We've since implemented an email system whereby students are required to open an email account so that we are able to contact them that way. It is much more effective. That was already in process at the time of our visit.
Follow up data	I guess we have to invest in micro-chipping that will automatically say 'we are employed.'. It is something everyone struggles with [tracking follow-up data].

Process Improvements

NCA CASI coordinators acted on process improvement recommendations at their institutions. According to the interviews, improvements were made on data analysis and decision-making, advisory committee meeting improvements, consistency of lesson plans, professional development, marketing, and remediation. Some coordinators with experience serving on external teams commented on the perception of action taken on previous visit recommendations by other schools.

Table 22.

Interview Quotes on Action Taken on Recommendations: Process Improvements.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Data analysis and decision-making	I remember at the time we didn't have enough surveys. We are now following through and taking them into more consideration.
Data analysis and decision-making	Information systems was probably one of our weaker areas. We had the database but we didn't really have a way to integrate the data and be able to use it for decision making... We are working on our data system. We've formalized the assessment process a little bit better and managed to get all of that information into a better record so we can pull it up on individual students and on individual programs. Now we can pull up individual student data, pretty comprehensive individual student data.
Advisory committee improvements	One of the recommendations is the advisory committee member input in the [school] improvement plan. We have added an additional meeting once a year with our stakeholders and we've reviewed that [school improvement plan] with them. That's the evaluation we do with the advisory members and this is the stakeholders [showed the advisory survey form and stakeholder member listing].
Lesson plan consistency	Consistency of lesson plans was something we recognized already. Everybody is doing lesson plans, but there is not really a consistent form or location where they are being placed... We've made one place for lesson plans, and a consistent format... Someone is checking on a regular basis.
Perception of action taken by other schools	We tend to forget and all of a sudden it's (accreditation) coming up. Now we have to do what we say, we did the last time, I think some schools don't look at the recommendations of the last time until it gets critical when the next evaluation is coming.
Marketing	We have a formalized marketing plan, and are working with an external consultant and changing that.
Professional development	I really look for us to use different measures to support professional development. I would like for teachers to work closely and align what they plan to do with their needs as a professional. Without that plan, sometimes we just randomize professional development and it's not to target areas of growth or areas of potential.

Remediation	Another strength was our student support system. We currently have what is called the Student Success Center. At that time it was called the Learning Center. We use that center to help students attain their progress they need to in the class.
Remediation	Remediation and student support for success should be addressed. This is definitely something we have been working on. We have implemented Key Train. We also implemented Work Keys testing prior to enrolling students so we can address deficiencies prior to them coming into the program...I believe all the programs are implementing the mid-term. They have a conference with the students and go over...areas of improvement, where they are suffering...give them some kind of a program to improve in some ways. Things they can do to enhance their training.
Action Plan to address recommendations	A year after the visit, each program and each standard, we looked through...to see we did to address this. I have a whole notebook here of things they did to address the recommendations. I can talk to you for days about that.

Action Not Taken on Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Institution

Recommendations

Financial constraints and philosophical differences are the main reasons NCA CASI coordinators do not act on recommendations identified in their accreditation reports. These themes emerged through the interviews with NCA CASI coordinators.

Financial Constraints

Action taken on recommendations requiring funding expenditures may not occur. The NCA CASI coordinators discussed a few recommendations made by their team members that were not possible because of finances, including additional space, hiring more staff members, or requesting more resources from the district.

Table 23.

Interview Quotes on Action Not Taken on Recommendations: Financial Constraints.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Hiring staff	We took action on all NCA CASI recommendations... We had a recommendation from the Board of Nursing... for our nursing department to increase our clerical staffing. We chose not to pursue that recommendation based on availability of clerical personnel.
Hiring staff	A computer technician for the career center? I don't think that is going to happen!
Hiring staff	It gets to the point that is not the most effective use of tax payer dollars.
Additional space	There are some things we can't do, like within the building. We are part of the school and are at the mercy of the career center high school.
District resources	It was recommended that the district provide more financial support. Until the total philosophy and distance is revised, I don't look for that to change.
District resources	Innovative program [recommendation] – we need to look for additional funding. I don't know what our central administration's response to that will be. We have adequate funding. We are discouraged from using outside sources. I think we just need to get on the bandwagon and do more innovative things. I don't know if central office will approve.

Subjectivity/Philosophical Differences

There are aspects of subjectivity and philosophy differences in the NCA CASI accreditation team review process that effect the external peer-review team findings. Internal and external team members have unique experiences, expertise, and philosophies that can influence their perception in validating evidence of the standards and criteria. School personnel also have mindsets that may prohibit implementation of recommended strategies. Recommendations may not align with district policies.

Table 24.

Interview Quotes on Action Taken on Recommendations: Subjectivity/Philosophical Differences.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Philosophical difference	Corrective actions were taken on all recommendations. Only one recommendation did I come back with a letter of justification of why we [used] a smaller classroom...[the letter] was sent from the university that the classroom size was much more appropriate because of the close proximity of the instructor with the students and with each other led to better educational settings.
Paradigm	That is not going to change until people shift their paradigms.
Mindset	We have data projectors and technology available, but my instructors just don't use or know how to implement them in their classroom. They don't perceive there is a need for it. They tell me they taught all these years...haven't had it, therefore I don't need it. The two Smartboards that we have, I don't see anyone using them...I think it take actual walking through the process or getting an idea of it before they can actually do it or will choose to do it.
District policies	Teachers...would love to have planning time, which is great in concept...but the contract has a negotiated work day..7 ¼ hours per day.

The interviews with the NCA CASI school coordinators provided insight into what types of action are taken on recommendations, as well as why action is not taken. School personnel act on recommendations that require documentation development or modification, address compliance concerns, focus on student performance, and suggest strategies to improve processes. Financial constraints and subjectivity and/or philosophical differences sometimes prohibit schools from taking action on specific recommendations found in the accreditation report.

Chapter six identifies the interviewed school coordinator's perception of benefits and strengths; as well as challenges and areas for improvement of the NCA CASI accreditation process. These results are further discussed in Chapter seven.

CHAPTER SIX – PERCEPTION OF THE NCA CASI ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Fifteen NCA CASI school coordinators and one State Department coordinator discussed the overall NCA CASI accreditation process. Research questions included 1) what commendations could be identified with the NCA CASI accreditation process; 2) what challenges or areas of improvement are recommended for the NCA CASI accreditation process; and 3) does the accreditation process have any effect on guiding continuous improvement at the institution.

Perception of the NCA CASI Accreditation Process – Commendations

The NCA CASI coordinators identified strengths of the NCA CASI accreditation process during the interviews. These themes include: 1) access to federal financial aid; 2) credibility; 3) continuous improvement framework; 4) critical analysis self study process conducted by internal staff teams; and 5) fresh perspective of improvement strategies from external peer team members. Eighty-percent (80%) of the coordinators have experience as NCA CASI external peer review team members and/or Chairs. The school coordinators also commended NCA CASI for implementing improvements in the accreditation process.

Access to Federal Financial Aid

Postsecondary institutions must be accredited in order for students to access Title IV financial aid, Pell grants, or federal loans (USDE, n.d.). One of the interviews stated providing financial aid for students was a benefit of the accreditation process. The AdvancED/NCA-/CASI representative said, “When a school decides they have a need to

be accredited as a postsecondary institution that is normally driven by the want to pursue accreditation.”

Credibility

Interviewees recognized the credibility aspect of NCA CASI accreditation. Accreditation provides students assurance they will receive a quality education from the institution. NCA CASI has a history and a national reputation. Credibility of postsecondary certificate-granting schools as a viable educational option is also identified.

Table 25.

Interview Quotes on Perceptions of the Accreditation Process – Commendations: NCA CASI Credibility.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Assurance	Being accredited provides an opportunity for our students to be assured to they are attending a school that is accredited by a national accrediting body...then they are assured they are getting what they need from their education and we are doing things properly.
History	The NCA organization has a history and is more credible in the eyes of everyone out there.

Reputable	<p>The benefits are that we are able to demonstrate to our community that we not only meet local standards, but also regional standards and national standards. It lends credence to us as a non-degree granting institution. That is one of the obstacles that all certificate based programs face is that you must be less reputable because you don't get a degree, you just get a certificate. Because of this external endorsement, NCA or any other association, we get more credibility in the community, our students feel more comfortable that they are getting a quality education. Eighty percent (80%) of jobs require some type of postsecondary education, not necessarily a degree. Therefore, it is either lengthy on the job training or technical training at a technical school. Like everywhere else there is a huge push for everyone to go to college, but we get many college graduates who can't get employment in their field for which they are trained...They come to us for something more marketable. We have probably a good 20% of our adults come in with an associate degree or above. We have four or five a year who come in with a masters degree and no job.</p>
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Continuous Improvement Framework

The NCA CASI coordinators believed the NCA CASI accreditation serves as a framework for continuous improvement. This framework provides value, objectivity, alignment with other continuous improvement models, flexibility, and provides a holistic view of the school and learning process.

Table 26.

Interview Quotes on Perceptions of the Accreditation Process – Commendations:

Continuous Improvement Framework.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Value	I thought that [the overall process] was a lot of value because it gave us the opportunity to really look at ourselves from the outside, looking at the big picture...We've been able to implement a number of those recommendations...but also look at some of the things [where] we were strong in and improve upon them. Even when they considered a strength, it still gave us the opportunity to look at it a little further in depth.
Objectivity	I certainly think [accreditation is an objective process]...standards are set as this is what we'd like you to do. There is not a specific way that you have or are required to do it, so you can bring in your own thoughts to do what works best for your school.
Alignment with other models	I got involved because we were coming up for our recertification. I also got involved because when I was looking at it, I felt it would help us in some other areas if we decided to go an ISO route or a Baldrige route. I saw a lot of similarities, so with data collection I felt that it would be beneficial.
Flexibility	[NCA CASI accreditation is] more of a method or process that is structured enough, but flexible enough for us. We can look at certain things, but it is flexible enough to adapt to what we need...and work in any certificate-granting institution.
Validation	The NCA process is very important for our school because we can validate the processes we have in place. The accreditation process also allows us to recognize the areas in which we need to improve...The process made us take a look at our overall operations. Instructors who were narrowly focused on successful programs become more global and more aware of the need for accurate documentation. The self-study process was also a great team building endeavor.
Validation	The NCA process is very important for our school because we can validate the processes we have in place. The accreditation process also allows us to recognize the areas in which we need to improve.

Critical Analysis Self Study Process Conducted by Internal Staff-driven Teams

Development of a self study is a requirement of the accreditation process. Internal staff teams analyze and document how their institution meets each standard and criteria. My interviews with NCA CASI coordinators revealed that although this is time

consuming, they recognized value in this requirement. All of those interviewed have internal school staff teams involved in the self study and ongoing continuous improvement process. Themes focused on value, online self study process, critical analysis, time commitment, internal team approach, and benefits of documented processes for new staff.

Table 27.

Interview Quotes on Perceptions of the Accreditation Process – Commendations: Self Study Development and Internal Team Approach.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Value	I think it gives us an opportunity to do a real self evaluation and that is always valuable. I think that was probably the best product of the accreditation process ...causing us to stop and really look at what we have, really look at ourselves, and not just say “yes we do it” but prove it...we [learned] we do some things well and we say we do this, but we really don’t.
Online Self Study	We put all of the NCA forms...able to link some of those together. What we did was instead of doing hard copy notebooks and having all those copies, we just did everything electronically. When you went in you didn’t have those huge notebooks. We had some supplementary materials, but most of it we could link online. The intent was, and we got it to the team two to three weeks ahead. Instead of spending all of that time reviewing those big notebooks, they could spend time with the instructors and students. It worked beautifully for some, and for some they printed it off and brought it with them (Laughter).We provided laptops so they could at least review what it was. ..There wasn’t that last minute rush at the end that you find. It worked well.
Critical analysis	I think it...encourages us to involve others outside of our comfort zone. We ask students about things and sometimes it’s hard to ask the hard questions when you think you might not get the answer you want. But it’s a helpful situation and this gives us the nudge to do those things that we might not go ahead and do.
Time commitment	I think it gives us an opportunity to do a real self evaluation. That is always valuable and rarely used because you don’t have time.

Team process	The biggest change takes place when all [staff] works on self study and they realize what they need to do
Team process	Internal teams – team for every standard area. Focus team and a safety team (Joan Smith)
Team process	Committees are standing ongoing, although members do rotate on and off...I use the committees to identify opportunities to gather data that we need in order to make decisions and the processes by which we collect that data. Once data are collected and analyzed, they make recommendations to the administrative team and look at other external data sources.
Team process	All faculty and staff serve on goal committees. Those committees meet regularly throughout the course of the year. Some of those goal committees resulted in putting up electronic signs...for recruitment purposes, enhancing our learning center to a Student Success Center, almost like a student union.
New Staff	The self study process benefits new staff and those less involved. They talk to each other and find out what we're trying to do and touch base with everyone. They see what we are doing and had never thought about.

Fresh Perspective from External Peer-Review Teams

The NCA CASI coordinators identified benefits of the external peer-review team process to their schools. Gaining an external perspective, particularly from peer teachers is beneficial. Recommendations made by external teams can serve as leverage to support the need for action; whereas someone besides an internal administrator or other staff member is recognizing areas of improvement. Staff receives affirmation of their practices from an external source.

Table 28.

Interview Quotes on Perceptions of the Accreditation Process – Commendations: Fresh Perspective from External Team-Review Teams.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
External perspective	Good to have a second set of eyes observing what is going on and getting a perspective that you are centering your thoughts and actions on – might be neglectful of an area.
External perspective	[Accreditation] keeps us on track and aware of where we are in the continuous improvement cycle. I think that is the biggest benefit. Having someone from the outside look at what you look at everyday is so beneficial.
Peer teacher perspective	It is always good to have a pair of fresh eyes. We have advisory committees and they tell us, and we think we know what we are doing right. It is good to have fresh eyes to come in. Our teams are made up from teachers from another school, and a person from the state department...The real benefit is getting a person from another school. They can see things from a teacher perspective. They are always good at giving suggestions. We learn a lot from them, they learn from us. It's a real plus, plus.
Leverage	Felt team was very much on target with the recommendations, particularly in getting more staff input into the process.
Leverage	It is helpful to have it [recommendation] printed. It is more than our opinion.
Affirmation	Team comes in and solidifies what the staff has done.

Interviewees' Experience on External Peer-Review Teams

NCA CASI Vision and Leadership (VL) standard VL 29 requires schools to provide trained members to serve on external teams. Interviewees who coordinate school internal NCA CASI accreditation processes and served as a team member and/or Chair on several team visits reflected on their experiences. Serving on an external peer-review team can be mutually beneficial to the individual member as he/she shares experience and expertise during the school's accreditation review process. The team review experience can provide insight into practices that could be applied at the team member's institution, as well as reaffirm positive strategies found in their schools. They identified strengths of serving on external teams as learning improvement processes; and affirming positive practices at their schools. NCA CASI coordinators also believed the

recommendations and strategies they shared on accreditation reports for schools during their role of external peer-review team member were beneficial.

Table 29.

Interview Quotes on Perceptions of the Accreditation Process – Commendations:

Perspective from Interviewees’ Experience on External Team-Review Teams.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Learning improvement processes	You can get very narrowly focused and keep doing the same things the same way unless you go and see how other people are handling things. It gives you new ideas...We were looking at ways to integrate academics into our career and technical programs and [learned] some ideas. Also, some ways to identify needs in your community, doing community surveys, less burdensome ways than we were doing. We were doing it the hard way (Interview 1, 2007).
Learning improvement processes	When I was at [school as a team member] I really spent a lot of time with their Practical Nursing program and was impressed with the instructors, their lesson plans, their outcomes. I was able to take that back to our school...make sure our lesson plans are formal. [Currently] they are online so people have access (Interview 2, 2007).
Affirming positive processes	When I participated [on an external team], it allowed me to realize what good processes we have [at our school]...The school that I visited was a small school...It did allow me to see improvements we might want to make along the lines of what they were doing at their school. (Interview 6, 2007).
Sharing improvement processes – lesson plans	Everybody is doing lesson plans but there is not a really a consistent form or location that they are being placed in...[as an external peer-review team member] that was one of the recommendations we made (Interview 1, 2007).
Sharing improvement processes – advisory committees and completion	We made recommendations to a school...to formalize their advisory committees. We made pretty extensive recommendations. At some of the other places...we talked about different ways to increase retention in some programs...[identified] things they could add to increase some retention issues” (Interview 1, 2007).

Sharing improvement processes – data collection, analysis, and decision-making	As far as surveying the community to see what programs they might need to start or the needs of the community, they didn't have...Other [areas] were surveys. They were developing surveys, but it was in the very beginning stages...they needed to do that better...I shared our needs assessment that we do. The first thing we do before we start a program is to make sure there is a need for it. We are so advanced with technology. I talked with them about [how we use] Blackboard for [developing and implementing] surveys and making that available to employers (Interview 6, 2007).
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NCA CASI Accreditation Process Improvements Implemented

Interviewees recognized action taken by NCA CASI to improve the accreditation process during the past few years. The computerized accreditation system for self study development and external team review evaluation was commended.

Table 30.

Interview Quotes on Perceptions of the Accreditation Process – Commendations:

NCA CASI Accreditation Process Improvements Implemented.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Computerized accreditation system	I've watched it go from a paper pencil to computer based system. Awesome! It is easier to work with and now it is moving to AdvancED. This is really exciting because it is not a stagnant organization. They go with what needs to be done to be bigger and better. I am glad to be involved. I have learned a lot visiting other places.
Computerized accreditation system	The process has been greatly improved with the addition of the Team Tool [computerized accreditation system]. The tool allows the team to look at specific criteria to determine if a school is meeting the standard. Adding the tool has been beneficial to the process. It also allows the school the opportunity to organize information and have it available for the visit.
Computerized accreditation system	I think NCA is streamlined a lot better than it was before.

Perception of the NCA CASI Accreditation Process - Recommendations

The NCA CASI coordinators identified challenges, or areas of improvements in the current accreditation process. These themes include 1) duplication in accountability processes; 2) time commitment of self study analysis and documentation preparation; 3) financial constraints; 4) subjectivity and philosophical differences of external peer-review teams; and 5) improvement suggestions for the NCA CASI accreditation process.

Reduce Duplication in Accountability Processes

School coordinators indicated in the interviews NCA CASI should address the multiple accountability processes that schools undertake. Postsecondary certificate-granting institutions must comply with accreditation requirements, state reporting, and Perkins accountability. NCA CASI accredits the institution, and some schools pursue individual, specialized program accreditation. A few of the schools are ISO 9000/Z.11 registered, or follow Baldrige criteria continuous improvement models.

State level issues also exist. Ohio is currently changing the governance of postsecondary certificate-granting institutions from the state Department of Education to the Board of Regents. According to an Ohio NCA CASI coordinator, during this transition, actions on some recommendations are pending due to the early development stages and requirements of this new structure. Oklahoma is one of three states in the nation with approval and recognition from the USDE to accredit schools (USDE, n.d.). Schools participate in NCA CASI through a co-accreditation process but follow the state policies pertaining to external peer team reviews and performance measure requirements, according to one interviewee.

In order to explore more on the duplication theme, I interviewed a State Department of Education Coordinator. She provided insight into the accountability processes from her perspective at the state level coupled with her experiences as an NCA CASI team member and Chair. Perkins, state designation, and NCA CASI accreditation have similarities. Examples are the program review, courses of study, professional development, staff certifications, teacher evaluations, and student services. Performance measures are reported for placement and licensure and certification passage rates. Differences are in the regulatory and financial consequences of the processes. In the past, money was not taken away for Perkins noncompliance, but the new Perkins will have consequences. State department staff conducts the Perkins and state designation reviews documents in a half day. They do not talk to staff or make any observations. The NCA CASI is a peer-review process over three days that includes document review, observations, and interviews. The accreditation process encompasses more comprehensive standards.

Deming's total quality management and Malcolm Baldrige philosophies are used as continuous improvement models in some educational institutions. These models are similar to the accreditation procedures due to the development of institutional reflection documents and peer evaluation processes used to validate specific standards. Aligning the NCA CASI standards and criteria with ISO standards and Baldrige criteria was suggested during an interview.

Table 31.

Interview Quotes on Perceptions of the Accreditation Process –
Recommendations: Duplication in Accountability Processes

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
State	This year there is going to be a lot more accountability. It is [duplication with] a slightly different time cycle. They also have to approve new programs and program changes. We have to prove there are jobs. It is good for us to know, too.
Perkins	Align [NCA CASI] with Perkins so that when you do one, you don't have to keep doing for everything. You have Perkins and continuous improvement that we use more than NCA, which is helpful.
Other continuous improvement models	ISO has a whole other set of processes.
Other continuous improvement models	Show how it does align with Baldrige criteria, with ISO, and how this [NCA CASI] could be their base tool for those other two. I think they would definitely see the immediate value.
Program accreditation	It can be improved by looking at all the accreditations that we go through and see where the duplications are. Often times we are duplicating document after document after document. We kill forests to provide all the external accreditors. If I have an Auto Service program, Auto Collision program, and Medium and Heavy Duty program. All three carry NATEF/ASE certification. All of that should carry some kind of relevance in other external areas. If it is already accredited by a national body, how much do we have to duplicate. If all the agencies would work closely together, it would make my job easier.
Multiple needs	You are so busy taking care of what you need to take care of at the time from state, federal government, board office, every teacher, that they think is important. Life is busy.

Time Commitment of Self Study Analysis and Documentation Preparation

Although a few of the interviewees indicated the accreditation process involves many hours of staff time to complete the self study and organize the documentation, the interviewees indicated that the time was a good investment for their schools.

Table 32.

Interview Quotes on Perceptions of the Accreditation Process –

Recommendations: Time Commitment and Documentation Preparation.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Time	Everybody gripes about accreditation: time, documents; but in reality it gives you a good opportunity to stop and say, ‘Wait a minute, we do some things really well,’ and ‘You know we say we do this, but we really don’t.’
Time	[The staff] likes the evaluation process. It gives them a chance to brag. It’s a lot of work, but if they keep up along the way it is not so much work. We have 11 month contracts and a month that they do not have students, a majority of them. This is one of the things they will be asked to do during that month to go back and update their evaluation. Look at things that need to be changed.

Financial Constraints

There is a financial commitment in pursuing and maintaining accreditation. Two interviewees discussed accreditation costs and the level of commitment.

Table 33.

Interview Quotes on Perceptions of the Accreditation Process –

Recommendations: Financial Constraints

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Accreditation costs	The only thing [recommendation] I can think of is the cost, but everything comes with a cost.
Level of commitment	When I was on one candidacy team, I felt like that school just wanted a rubber stamp. They weren’t really interested in the recommendations or improving. That is a waste of my time and their money. We gave them an action plan to follow before they tried for accreditation. When I visited another school, they genuinely were interested in finding areas of improvement. They still call me and email me six months later for ideas and are continuing the improvement process. They didn’t let it end. (Interview 6, 2007).

Subjectivity and Philosophical Differences of External Peer-Review Teams.

Individual external peer team review members have different areas of expertise, experiences, and philosophies. Sometimes recommendations are more philosophical differences, subjective, and not meant to be personal, according to one interviewee. He advocated using an out of state external team member to reduce personal bias.

Table 34.

Interview Quotes on Perceptions of the Accreditation Process –

Recommendations: Subjectivity and Philosophical Differences of External Peer-Review Teams.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Philosophical difference	We received a recommendation four years ago suggesting we provide [postsecondary] student activities that would add interest, pride and self esteem...The majority of our clientele...are people who are working and trying to come to school...If they have activities, they are doing them with their family...They don't always necessarily have time to do that with their program...To me, pride and self esteem [building] as an institution – we are doing in the fact of giving them a solid education...a skill and certification, that will add to that, not activities.
Subjectivity	I think the ability to make the process more objective and there will always be a flavor based on the team members because it is indeed peer review, so people come in with different experiences and different levels of comfort based on their own educational opportunities and their own experience. While that flavor is often good to assist as you move through the process, it can at times create a level of subjectivity that is not beneficial. Unlike other accreditors, AdvancED/NCA CASI has a two-fold mission during an accreditation visit. The first is to assess the school's ability to meet the standard and criteria. The other part of the mission is to offer suggestions and recommendations that will assist the school in their continuous improvement efforts.
Recognize it is not personal	Nothing is personal when someone writes something down [recommendation]. I might think everything is good, but if they [external team members] don't, we need to improve.

Personal bias	The return on your investment is much more by bringing someone from out of state...It brings fresh ideas in...Whatever state you are in, you establish friends that you want to help... You are not doing a valid evaluation and you are not helping that school. I strongly believe and hope that people would do a different state.
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Improvement Suggestions for the NCA CASI Accreditation Process

The NCA CASI coordinators recommended improvement in reducing accountability duplication, assuring a more objective process, and controlling for philosophical differences. They also identified communication, and clarity in writing report commendations and recommendations, as areas of improvement.

Table 35.

Interview Quotes on Perceptions of the Accreditation Process –

Recommendations: Improvement Suggestions for the NCA CASI Accreditation Process

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
Communication	Over the years, there have been so many [accreditation] changes, it’s hard to say where exactly we are...Sometimes there is so much new going on that it is a little scary to realize that maybe we’re going to get caught up in this, or maybe we’re not.
Report clarity	I would personally question what would be the value of that particular recommendation. If as a new person coming in, I would sit here, read this, and wonder.

Perception that NCA CASI Accreditation Guides Institutional Improvement

During the interviews, I asked the school coordinators, “Does the NCA CASI accreditation process have any effect on institutional improvement?” One hundred percent (100%) of the interviewed NCA CASI coordinators responded “yes”. New

perspectives are gained through the accreditation process; it provides a holistic picture of the institution and promotes networking with peers from other schools. Two interviewees indicated NCA CASI serves as a guide, but they are committed to continuous improvement regardless of accreditation.

Table 36.

Interview Quotes on NCA CASI Accreditation Guides Institutional Improvement.

Indicator	NCA CASI School Contact Interview Quote
New perspective	I believe it does. I think we are better as a result of the accreditation process. I think we will become better. It [accreditation] makes us think of things that we have not thought of before...or considered how to communicate we have always done this.
NCA serves as a guide, but continuous improvement would still occur without NCA CASI	It seems like North Central helps guide what we're doing, but it's still the right thing. To be honest with you, would I do these things without North Central? Probably, because it's the right thing to do. But North Central does help as a guiding factor...An example being articulations. Would I be doing that without Perkins...and without North Central telling me to do it? Yes, because it is the right thing to do.
NCA serves as a guide, but continuous improvement would still occur without NCA CASI	Yes, but not a great amount.
Ongoing process	It is such a great thing to make us look long and hard at ourselves. We met in February and what we are going to try to do is go back and fix the recommendation suggestions...Then ask everybody to fill out the evaluation instrument next year. We have it online and we would go through it and review it. We will try to do our own mini evaluation every year...We will have a procedure in place to make it a more required annual event.

Data-driven	It forces us to collect and evaluate data from a number of sources through advisory, students, our own internal staff. We are constantly forced to seek that data. Once you have data in front of you, you have a decision-making tool. With that decision-making tool before us, we have a more organized effort. We have made changes to programs based on this input...dropped programs...increased hours, decreased hours, or pursued certifications based on this. I think it is very helpful.
Holistic	I thought that it was a lot of value because it gave us the opportunity to really look at ourselves from the outside, looking at the big picture.
Networking	NCA puts the teams together, I never would have met these people, otherwise. This allowed networking and exchanging of ideas for both groups.

This concludes the reporting of the results of my research. Chapter 4 identifies the strengths and areas of improvement for public, postsecondary certificate granting institutions through the analysis of commendations and recommendations on 125 school reports. Chapter 5 provides knowledge of action taken or not taken results on these recommendations that were discovered through interviews with NCA CASI coordinators are presented. Chapter 6 presents the results of school coordinators' perceptions of the NCA CASI accreditation process. Chapter seven discusses the results and conclusions aligned with existing research. I also identify the implications for postsecondary certificate-granting institutions and for AdvancED/NCA CASI accreditation. Future research needs are recommended.

CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

My research focuses on the results of the accreditation process that can guide postsecondary certificate-granting institutional improvement. Results of my research can assist: 1) postsecondary certificate-granting institutions and 2) AdvancED/North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) accreditation processes. First, this research can define NCA CASI public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions and provide insight into strengths and areas for improvement for these schools. Second, the perceptions of the benefits and challenges of undergoing accreditation are identified, which can target process improvement strategies.

Chapter seven summarizes the previous chapters, analyzes the results identified in Chapters four through six, and connects the results to research. This chapter is organized according to my research questions:

1. What commendations (strengths) of postsecondary certificate-granting schools are identified through the accreditation process?
2. What recommendations (areas of improvement) of postsecondary certificate-granting schools are identified through the accreditation process?
3. What actions are taken by the schools on identified recommendations?
4. If action is not taken on specific recommendations, why?
5. What is the perception of commendations (strengths) of the NCA CASI accreditation process?

6. What is the perception of recommendations (challenges, areas for improvement) of the NCA CASI accreditation process?
7. What results of the accreditation process guide postsecondary certificate-granting institution improvement?

Summary of Previous Chapters

Chapter one discusses my preliminary literature review and problem statement indicating there is limited research on postsecondary certificate-granting institutions or results of accreditation processes. The literature identifies “comprehensive benchmarking studies in postsecondary technical education are rare and the need for more data, both quantitative and qualitative, cannot be over-emphasized” (Farmer & O’Lawrence, 2000). The accreditation process is the “primary quality control process for postsecondary education” (Miller & Malandra, 2006, p. 4). The accreditation process identifies important issues for improvement (Lee & Crow, 1998). There is a need for descriptive, empirical research of the value of accreditation, as well as dissemination of the results (Callaway, et. al., 2003; CHEA, 2006; Friedlander & Serban, 2004; Lee & Crow, 1998; Lopez, 1996; Tamir & Wilson, 2005; and USDE, 2006). Research results from 66 accrediting organizations indicated 18.2% national, 12.5% regional 12.5%, and 4.3% program accreditors provided descriptive summaries of recommendations to the public. Commendation descriptions were publicly disseminated from only 2.1% program and 0% national and regional accreditors (CHEA, 2006). There is a need for research and dissemination of institutional and program accreditation results including, “reference to specific accreditation standards, summaries of strengths or good practices, summaries of

weaknesses and deficiencies, extracts of external team review reports...and institutional or program responses” (CHEA, 2006, p. 1).

My literature review in Chapter two focuses on 1) postsecondary certificate-granting institutions, which is the population of the study; 2) quality and continuous improvement; 3) accreditation processes; 4) degree-granting educational institutions and programmatic accreditation, which is similar to accreditation of my research population; 5) North Central Association – Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI); and 6) research design models.

Chapter three discusses the qualitative research methods consisting of reviewing 125 NCA CASI external peer-review accreditation team reports; analyzing the 2007 AdvancED NCA CASI Annual Report performance data; and conducting interviews with 15 NCA accreditation coordinators at public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. As accreditation process and state department accountability themes emerged, I conducted interviews with the Associate Vice President of Postsecondary Education at AdvancED/NCA CASI, and one State Department of Education Coordinator for clarification. All commendation and recommendation statements on external peer-review accreditation team reports are entered, coded, and analyzed. Three levels of coding were conducted. First, I coded each statement according to one of the five NCA CASI standards using the NCA CASI Self Study Team Tool Matrix (Appendix C) as an a priori guide. This matrix is used as a crosswalk for documents and procedures to demonstrate compliance with specific accreditation standards. Second, this primary standard coding was further analyzed to assign a sub-coding related to the NCA CASI criteria within the standard. I found two other categories existed in the codes that did not directly relate to

NCA CASI standards or criteria: school culture/relationships and documentation. To validate my coding, I facilitated a session with seven NCA CASI coordinators who served on a minimum of two external peer review teams. This validating process assured the accuracy of my coding. Finally, I analyzed my database for each sub-category to inductively identify an additional level of sub-codes, or indicators, of emerging themes within each criteria area. I conducted phone and/or face-to-face interviews with 15 NCA CASI coordinators to determine 1) action taken on their recommendations; 2) reasons if action was not taken; 3) commendations (strengths) of the NCA CASI accreditation process; and 4) recommendations (areas of improvement) for the NCA CASI accreditation process. Inductive categories emerged from the interview data, which are coded in the Interview Analysis database.

The results of the research are identified in Chapters four through six. Chapter four provides a brief summary of the results of the commendations and recommendations for all NCA CASI standards and criteria, and other emergent themes and discusses the results of the highest five commendations and five recommendations. Chapter five identifies the data for action taken on recommendations. Chapter six provides results of the perceptions of the accreditation process as discussed through the interview data.

These results are discussed in the following sections through the six research questions.

1. What Commendations Of Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Schools Are Identified Through The Accreditation Process?

The United States Secretary of Education (USDE) requires all institutional certificate-granting and degree-granting accrediting agencies, as well as programmatic accreditors, to establish standards and processes to ensure that each institution

“effectively address[es] the quality of the institution or program” (2007, p. 1).

Accrediting agency standards “address all aspects of the condition and operation of a school that are likely to influence the quality of the education and training provided” (Lewis, 1999, p. 67). The external peer-review teams examine documentation and processes, conduct interviews, and observe the educational process at the schools during the accreditation visit. Team members identify commendations and recommendations related to the specific standard and criteria areas on the school’s accreditation report. The accreditation team report is written by the external peer-review team chair. According to the AdvancED/NCA CASI Policy Manual, the accreditation report includes the “degree...the school meets each criterion; a section which reviews, evaluates, analyzes and draws conclusions regarding student achievement; school strengths and weaknesses; areas in need of improvement; the school improvement plan; and an accreditation recommendation” (2007, p. 12).

My research examined all 4,067 of the commendations and recommendations from the accreditation reports for the 125 public, NCA CASI accredited schools. These statements were coded according to one of the five NCA CASI standards, sub-coded by criteria within these standards, and emerging theme indicators were further identified within these criteria areas. Due to the vast amount of data collected encompassing the holistic NCA CASI accreditation standards and process, I chose to discuss the top five commendation and recommendation standard and criteria themes that the highest percentage of the schools received. Identified themes and excerpt examples from this data for all other NCA CASI standards and criteria themes are identified in Appendix E. The database of all coded commendations and recommendations will be available for

AdvancED/NCA CASI to serve as a research base for continuous improvement and further analysis.

Commendation themes can define the strengths of NCA CASI public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. The five most prevalent commendation themes, with the percentages of schools receiving these commendations according to the accreditation report analysis, are 1) business, industry, and community involvement (82%); 2) student services (77%); 3) school culture and relationships (75%); 4) space considerations (75%); and 6) data-driven information (72%).

Business, Industry and Community Involvement

Eighty-two percent (82%) of the schools received commendations for their learning partnerships and active involvement with business, industry, and community members. The indicators within this theme related to partnerships, community member roles, local labor market needs, continuing education services, staff community involvement, customized training, and marketing indicators. Additionally related to business, industry, and community involvement is the School Improvement Plan (SIP): advisory committee criteria. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of schools also received commendations for advisory committee involvement. All schools have program advisory committees, which is ultimately comprised of business, industry, community members; current and alumni students; staff and administration; and higher education representatives, according to commendation statements. Advisory committee member roles include: identifying community labor market needs; identifying clinical and internship sites, and employment opportunities; assisting in program development; analyzing curriculum, monitoring student achievement; serving as mentors for

instructors; and recommending resources. The average placement rate for the NCA CASI schools according to the 2007 Annual Report is 87.59%, which could indicate strong business, industry, and community involvement may attribute to student success in attaining this performance measure.

Literature discusses the value of learning partnerships as “making the learning organization and learning process work to achieve the learning expectations...This sharing of resources is a two-way process that includes not only external partners providing resources and services to the institution, but also the school or college providing resources and services to the external partners” (Copa & Wolff, 2002, p. 10). Perkins legislation advocates that schools involve employers in providing input into the curriculum and identify workplace opportunities (United States 109th Congress, 2006). The results of the National Assessment of Vocational Education (NAVE): Final Report to Congress evaluating career and technical education in community colleges and Perkins funding indicates 25% or fewer of teachers receive employer input (Silverberg, et. al, 2004). My research finds a strong percentage (82%) of NCA CASI schools receiving commendations in business, industry, and community involvement criteria themes.

Person and Rosenbaum (2006) research on labor market linkages and job placement finds occupational colleges have more “frequent and meaningful” involvement with employers through structured processes, including advisory committees, than community colleges (p. 418). NCA CASI postsecondary institutions are similar to the definition of occupational colleges based on the program offerings and structure. Person and Rosenbaum’s study reports 46% of

community college instructors had high levels of business and industry linkage participation, versus 60% at occupationally specific colleges (2006). Furthermore, linkages to employers by faculty can impact positive student outcomes and improve educational success. Faculty is aware of job information, internship availability, and services business and industry personnel can provide in occupational colleges than community colleges in general (Person & Rosenbaum, 2006).

Pupil Personnel Services

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the schools received commendations for the pupil personnel services criteria in the Process of Schooling (PS) standard. Career planning, placement, guidance, and remediation services were recognized strengths. A variety of guidance and remediation strategies were also commended, which could impact the positive average 84.52% completion and 89.7% licensure/certification passage rates of these schools.

The NAVE Report identifies a need for support services for postsecondary career and technical students. Suggested strategies include academic tutoring, counseling services, and special population assistance (Silverberg, et. al., 2004). This is consistent with my research results as evidenced by the high percentage of schools receiving commendations. More effective, innovative remediation strategies are needed according to the research (Jacobs & Grubb, 2003; Visger, 2007).

Pupil personnel services criteria theme is also the third highest percentage of recommendations, with 59% of schools receiving improvement suggestions. Recommendations will be discussed in the section under research question number two.

School Culture and Relationships

The school culture and relationships category emerged from the commendations at 75% of the NCA CASI schools. Commendations recognize student, staff, and community relationships contribute to a positive school environment. External peer review team members learned through student, teacher, and administrator interviews and observations students believed they had caring, motivating, committed staff. Staff had positive morale, community relationships, good communication processes, and worked in teams. Only 6% of the recommendations addressed school culture and relationships, which represents 7 of the 125 schools. Two of the lowest performing schools identified in the maximum variance interview sampling using completion and licensure/certification passage average rates received recommendations in this area.

The NCA CASI school coordinator interviews supported positive school culture and relationships as strengths in postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Interviews discussed the impact of positive relationships on student success and self esteem and importance of hiring caring teachers.

Teachers can create a positive learning environment that increases student motivation and learning according to research. These conditions include creating a sense of belonging, recognizing student accomplishments, making learning fun, and assuring a safe learning environment (Quay & Quaglia, 2004). Learning community relationships lead to positive completion rates (Bailey, Alfonso, Calcagno, Jenkins, Kienzl, & Leinbach, 2004).

Space

Seventy-five percent (75%) of postsecondary certificate-granting institutions received commendations relating to criteria in the Resource and Allocations (RA) standard. These commendation indicators focus on safety, student record security, class size, compliance with ADA requirements, and physical space. Safety statements recognize school safety plans, security measures, and assure students are trained in safety procedures. Student records are protected from fire, theft, and other damage. Small class size allows for individual student attention. Facilities are well maintained and meet ADA requirements.

Research indicates that smaller class size increases the completion rate or graduation percentages (Horn, 2006). Small schools can enhance student achievement and studies indicate a link between quality facilities and student achievement (Schneider, 2002). Space is the second highest percentage (70%) theme for schools receiving recommendations in this area. Indicator themes will be discussed in the following section on recommendations.

Data-driven Information

Seventy-two percent (72%) of schools received commendations in the data-driven information criteria theme. Seventy-five percent (75%) of schools also received recommendations for improvement, which is discussed in the recommendation section. The results of my research indicate data-collection processes are very strong in the NCA CASI institutions; however data analysis and data-driven decision making processes are areas of improvement for some institutions, according to the recommendation results. NCA CASI School Improvement Plan and Information System standards require schools

to collect, analyze, and drive decisions based on data. Commendation indicator themes include variety of data collection types, survey population, computerized analysis process, trend data, data-driven decision processes. The types of data collected are classified as demographic, student learning measurements, perception, and school processes. Schools survey students, staff, business, industry, and community members; acquire labor market data for program decisions; and use a variety of student performance results. Several commendations address implementation of online survey processes and statistical and trend analysis processes.

The literature identifies the need for educators to understand and recognize ways to improve outcome data. “Colleges and community college organizations need to provide more opportunities for faculty and administrators to exploit the richness of quantitative and institutional data that are available to them...Colleges must be more ‘data driven,’ and shift from a ‘culture of anecdote’ to a culture of evidence” (Bailey, et. al., 2004, p. 61). Bernhardt (2003) said,

Looking at student achievement results in conjunction with the context of the school and the processes that create the results gives teachers and administrators important information about what they need to do to improve learning for all students versus focusing only on student learning measures (p. 30).

Zmuda, Kuklis, and Kline (2004) recommended collecting and analyzing data that defines where the school is now, and determine gaps between the current reality and the future vision.

2. What Recommendations, Or Areas Of Improvement, Of Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Schools Are Identified Through The Accreditation Process?

Recommendation themes can define the strengths of NCA CASI public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. The major indicator themes with percentage of schools receiving recommendations are 1) data-driven decision-making focusing on data analysis and using data for decision-making (75%); 2) space concerns (70%); 3) student support service strategies (59%); 4) business, industry, and community involvement (54%); and 5) documentation (54%).

Data-analysis and Data-driven Decisions

Seventy-two percent (72%) of schools received commendations and seventy-five percent (75%) of schools received recommendations for improvements in data collection, analysis, and decision-making criteria in the Information Systems (IS) standard. Data collection improvements suggest data collection methods; consistency of data; and need for a centralized data management system. Data analysis recommendations focus on assistive technology, performance analysis, and trend analysis needs. Implementation, utilization, staff training, and alignment with the school improvement plans are suggestions for improving data-driven decision-making. As evidenced in the accreditation report recommendations and additionally through the NCA CASI school coordinator interviews, there is a need for a centralized student database management system that addresses the postsecondary certificate-granting institution clock hour needs.

Space

The space criteria of the Resource and Allocation (RA) standard received both high percentages of school commendations (75%) and recommendations (70%). The indicator themes for recommendations were similar to the commendations some schools received. These indicators were safety, student record security, class size, compliance with ADA requirements, and physical space. The need for additional classrooms, laboratories, and storage space; and new facilities, are additional recommendation themes. Interviews with the NCA CASI coordinators indicated that sometimes action is not taken on a recommendation due to financial reasons. Building additional classrooms or new facilities often times requires passing of bond levies and/or making other investments that administrators or boards of education may not immediately pursue.

Dindo (2007) states educational space and facilities can impact student learning. “The change from teacher-centered to student-oriented modes of instruction require new spatial concepts for schools, as does the resulting replacement of the traditional classroom identity with other socially cohesive forms” (Dindo, 2007, p.150).

Recommendations focusing on ADA addresses compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), where schools must make accommodations for disabled students (Cope, 2005).

Pupil personnel services

Pupil personnel services criteria in the Process of Schooling (PS) standard is also identified in the top commendations (77%) and recommendations (59%).

Recommendations indicate a need for guidance counselors at some schools; establishing

formalized student service and evaluation processes; and implementing remediation strategies. Staffing for student services is suggested in some recommendations, including hiring additional staff or re-assigning tasks to other personnel. Recommendations focus on improvements for student services including pre-assessment and entrance requirements, admissions, orientation, career planning, counseling and guidance, placement, remediation, and grievance processes.

Business, Industry and Community Involvement

Fifty-four percent (54%) of schools received recommendations and eighty-two percent (82%) received commendations in this criteria theme. Marketing was a central indicator theme in the criteria, with suggestions for more formalized marketing plan, public relations, and other strategies to promote the image and success of certificate-granting, career and technical schools. Other indicators focused on increasing partnerships, community involvement, and placement opportunities.

Goenner and Pauls (2006) discuss the importance of marketing in recruiting students who “are less likely to know about the academic quality and program offerings” (p.953). Palmer (2007) supports conducting a needs analysis to identify how students obtain information on career and technical programs through surveys and focus groups. In examining the future labor market needs, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics projects “18 to 20 of the fastest growing occupations in the next decade will require career and technical education” (Palmer, 2007, p. 27). The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) is a professional organization comprised of 35,000 members including educators, business and industry partners, and students. ACTE service offerings include professional development, program improvement, national

policy work, and external marketing of career and technical education (ACTE, n.d.). Schools conduct marketing strategies within their local communities to provide program awareness. Targeted marketing to student customers provides awareness of available educational options and can “differentiate in a positive manner the product from those of competitors” (Goenner and Pauls, 2006, p. 935).

Business, industry and community involvement recommendations identify the importance of partnerships. As Person and Rosenbaum (2006) indicate, linkages to employers by faculty can impact positive student outcomes and improve educational success.

Documentation

Documentation evolved as an additional category, and 54% of schools received recommendations. The indicator themes address consistency, compliance, organization, processes, centralization of documents, and meeting minutes. Paunescu & Fok (2005) identify the benefits of documentation through their discussion of the ISO 9001:2000 continuous improvement model for higher education. Documentation guides understanding, communication, responsibilities, predictability, expectations, and consistency of implementing processes for staff and students and lack of meeting minutes. Documentation is also identified as a recommendation where action is quickly taken; as well as a challenge of the accreditation process from the NCA CASI coordinators’ interview data.

Kerka (2002) advocates documenting meeting recommendations and actions for efficient advisory committee involvement. Advisory committee functions focus on curriculum, program review, job placement, staff development, community relations,

resources, and legislation (Kerka, 2002). These functions identified in the literature are consistent with my recommendation results relating to advisory committee tasks, with the exception of legislation.

Interviews with the NCA CASI school coordinators indicated the accreditation external peer-review process provided an accurate snapshot of their individual schools in terms of meeting accreditation standards. The interview results identifying commendations and recommendations at their schools were consistent with the accreditation report analysis of commendations and recommendations. In addition to highlighting some of these statements relating to standards, interviewees discussed positive school culture.

Specific themes emerged as to the reasons or types of recommendations that were addressed. These included improvements in documentation, addressing compliance issues, implementing strategies to improve student performance, and implementing or enhancing processes. Emerging themes as to why recommendations were not acted upon related to financial constraints or subjectivity and philosophical differences.

These NCA CASI coordinators and the State Department coordinator also identified perceptions of the accreditation process. They discussed the benefits and strengths, or commendations, of NCA CASI accreditation. Challenges and areas in need of improvement were also identified through the interviews. Chapter six presents the results of this knowledge.

3. What Action Is Taken by the Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Institution on Recommendations?

Current research indicates analysis of action-taken on accreditation recommendations is not available (Scheele, 2004). My research builds this needed knowledge base. The interviews indicated that action was taken on recommendations that involved documentation and implementation of processes, unless there was a financial constraint or a philosophical difference. According to the interviews, action is taken on recommendations focused on 1) documentation, 2) compliance, 3) performance measures, and 4) process improvements.

Documentation

Documentation is one of the major recommendations made by external peer-review teams as evidenced in the previous section. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the schools receive improvement suggestions. School coordinators received recommendations addressing corrections, additions, and deletions in school policy, procedure, and marketing documents. Suggestions were identified for documentation of staff and advisory meeting minutes and agendas.

Compliance Issues

Compliance issues are priorities when schools receive recommendations in this area. Compliance themes include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and grievance policy documentation and financial aid processes. A NCA CASI school coordinator discussed the external peer-review team discovered non-compliances in financial aid during the accreditation review. This enabled the school to take immediate action on discrepancies that may not have been identified in the day-to-day operation. Schools in

non-compliance of laws or mandated procedures; for example ADA, federal financial aid requirements, and IPEDS data reporting; could be fined, drawn into litigation, or lose future funding. Failure to make accommodations for students violates the ADA and consequences can include extensive reviews and/or legal action (Cope, 2005). Non-compliances in financial aid processes could result in fines and loss of student access to federal financial aid funds. If a school does not complete the annual IPEDS survey process, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) office reports to the Office of Student Financial Aid. Action may include a warning, fine, or loss of access to future federal financial aid according to the Higher Education Act of 1965 (NCES, n.d.).

Performance Measures

The NCA CASI accredited schools must maintain minimum established performance measures. Completion, placement, and licensure/certification pass rates are reported on the Annual Report. The 2007 AdvancED/NCA CASI Annual Report shows 84.5% completion, 87.9% placement, and 89.7% licensure/certification performance. School coordinators discussed action taken on recommendations impacting these performance measures. Interview themes of action taken on recommendations were recognizing performance measures, industry credentials, remediation, and follow-up data.

Process Improvements

NCA CASI coordinators provided examples of action taken on specific recommendations. Themes were in the area of data analysis and decision-making, advisory committee meeting improvements, consistency of lesson plans, professional development, marketing, professional development, and remediation. The types of action response included meeting with staff for follow up,

establishing priorities, and developing action plans for addressing recommendations.

Institutional improvement can be impacted by the accreditation process of recommending goals and strategies, involving faculty and staff in data analysis and strategic planning, and establishing professional development criteria (USDE, n.d.). The accreditation process is a “means toward implementing curriculum reform” (McCrel, 1998, p. 10).

4. If Action is Not Taken by Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Institutions on Recommendations, Why?

The Document Review Analysis database identifies particular statements that indicate 3% of schools received recommendations stating action was not taken on specific criteria recommendations from previous reports. This lack of action did not affect their accreditation status because the reports indicate the schools meet the overall standard. These recommendations were related to documentation and process improvements including adding student service descriptions in the handbook, removing wording from an admissions application, developing a tracking system for tracking student job referrals, and redistributing some of the financial aid tasks. Additionally, some of the external team review reports indicate action was taken on the recommendations since the prior visit.

According to the NCA CASI school coordinator interviews, most of the recommendations written in their accreditation reports are completed. Interviews identified two areas that may prohibit action on recommendations. One area is the financial and time commitment costs to implement recommended strategies. The second

constraint centers on subjectivity and/or philosophical differences of external peer-review team members making particular recommendations.

Resource Cost

The NCA CASI coordinators discussed a few recommendations made by their team members that were not possible due to finances. These include additional space, hiring more staff members, or requesting more resources from the district.

Subjectivity/Philosophical Differences

Due to individual differences of internal and external team members, there is an element of subjectivity and philosophy differences that influence the interpretation of processes to meet NCA CASI accreditation standards and criteria. Controlling for subjectivity can be related to establishing criteria for student and peer review evaluations. Lattuca (2005) discusses student assessments and relates subjectivity to the research perspective, “Complete objectivity is impossible...you must find a way to tame it so that it doesn’t interfere with the ability to understand and report what is happening” (p. 248). Development and implementation of an evaluation rubric identifying specific criteria and standards can reduce subjectivity (Lattuca, 2005). Scheele (2004) states the quality of the external peer-review team is vital for the success of the accreditation process.

5. Perception of the NCA CASI Accreditation Process - Commendations

Interviews with fifteen school accreditation coordinators and the state department of education representative identified strengths of the NCA CASI accreditation process. These themes are 1) access to federal financial aid, 2) credibility, 3) continuous

improvement framework, 4) critical analysis self study process conducted by internal staff teams, and 5) fresh perspective from external peer-review teams.

Access to Federal Financial Aid

Schools pursue accreditation status in order to access USDE federal financial aid Title IV funds (USDE, n.d.). Two interviews specifically mentioned financial aid as an accreditation benefit, although it is a primary reason schools initially pursue accreditation. All interviews with NCA CASI coordinators identified additional benefits of pursuing and maintaining accreditation versus merely compliance for financial aid access.

Credibility

According to a few of the NCA CASI school coordinators and the State Coordinator, accreditation provides assurance that the school is a reputable option for students. NCA CASI is recognized by USDE and has an accreditation history dating back to 1895 (NCA CASI, 2007). Interviews expressed accreditations assure the school is a reputable option for students. Credibility was also discussed in the context of the postsecondary certificate-granting institution education by an interviewee. Eighty percent (80%) of jobs require some type of postsecondary education, not necessarily a degree. There is a perception in society that a four year college degree is necessary for labor market success; yet some graduates and non-completers have difficulty gaining employment (Boesel and Fredland, 1999). Certificates are a viable educational option, accreditation provides credibility.

Critical Analysis Self Study Process/Internal Teams

My research findings regarding the benefits of the critical analysis self study process, according to the NCA CASI school coordinator interviews, is consistent with the CHEA research results. University presidents in that study supported the accreditation process and believed the main benefit was the reflective participation in the process to analyze strengths and challenges and to make improvements (CHEA, 2006).

The accreditation report commendation and recommendation analysis and the NCA CASI school coordinator interviews provided evidence that many of these schools use internal staff teams. All schools used internal teams to develop the accreditation self study. Commendations indicate some schools have formalized, ongoing teams to drive school improvement.

The literature explains improvement teams are one of the most powerful tools an organization can use to ensure that people stay firmly focused on meeting customer needs and business goals (Doyle, 2007). Educational continuous improvement teams can be modeled from Edward Deming's total quality management philosophy to increase productivity and quality (Marzano, et al., 2005). "Continuous improvement is intended to keep organizational goals at the forefront of an evaluation process that judges effectiveness of the organization and appropriateness of the goals" (McKee & Nash, 2007, p. 2). Faculty/staff teams should be trained in collecting, analyzing and interpreting data for use in decision making (Gabriel, 2005). Data collection and analysis include demographic, student-learning, perception and school process (Bernhardt, 2003). The use of collaborative faculty/staff team involvement for the purpose of making suggestions for

continuous improvement can result in systematic and sustainable outcomes (Doyle, 2006; Huffman & Kalnin, 2003).

Fresh Perspective from External Peer-Review Teams

NCA CASI coordinators identified gaining an external perspective, particularly from peer teachers, is beneficial. Recommendations made by external teams can serve as leverage to support the need for action. Staff benefit from commendations affirming their good practices recognized by external peers. My research can identify professional development needs and implementation strategies, as well as disseminate best practices to the postsecondary certificate granting institutions for school improvement. The external peer review process is an advantage of the accreditation process in that it “allows ‘cross-fertilization’ of ideas as people get beyond their own campuses to serve on teams” (CHEA, 2006, p. 7). “Accreditation if it is found to be essential requires a dialogue between equals. It needs experts with a broad educational and professional perspective” (Florence, 2002, p. 143). Harding and Taylor (2002) indicate there is a need for evidence that the quality assurance aspect that accreditation impacts improvements. The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) advocates researching and disseminating best practices in career and technical education (United States 109th Congress, 2006).

6. Perception of the NCA CASI Accreditation Process - Recommendations

The 17 interviews identify challenges schools face in the accreditation process and suggest recommendations for improvement. These themes include: 1) duplication in accountability processes; 2) time and financial resource commitment; 3) subjectivity and philosophical differences of external peer-review team members; and 4) improvement

suggestions for the NCA CASI accreditation process. The literature identifies accreditation challenges found in degree-granting institutions, as well as through other continuous improvement models that do not lead to accreditation.

Duplication in Accountability Processes

NCA CASI coordinators identified state, national, other program accreditation and continuous improvement model duplications in accountability. National Perkins provides career and technical secondary and postsecondary institutions with funding for career and technical skills, academic integration, and strategies for completion, placement, and industry licensure/certification (Silverberg, et. al., 2004). Annual accountability requires compliance reporting of student performance measures. A state department coordinator explained that schools have compliance reporting for state designations, national Perkins accountability, and accreditation. Both the state level review and Perkins performance audit processes are comprised of state employees reviewing documentation on-site. Non-compliance can result in loss of funding. The program and institutional accreditation reviews are more comprehensive, conducted by peer-review teams, and includes observations and interviews. Some state department staff are actively involved with the NCA CASI accreditation process and serve as team members or chairs. Accreditation is not tied to actual funding consequences; however, loss of accreditation eliminates the option for students at the institution to access federal Title IV financial aid monies, according to the AdvancED/NCA CASI representative during the interview. ISO and Baldrige continuous improvement models follow similar processes as accreditation, but the outcome does not lead to accreditation.

Bureaucracy challenges found in research relate to degree-granting institutions. This research relates to the duplication in accountability processes concerns and individual state level issues discussed in several of my interviews. Institutional and program accreditation processes follow standards, develop self studies, host external peer-reviews, and conduct ongoing annual reporting (USDE, n.d.). States have different accountability requirements for schools that require reporting procedures.

The United States 109th Congress passed the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 to provide funding and services for career and technical education. The focus of the Act is on academic and technical standards to prepare graduates for employment and continuing education in “high skill, high wage, or high demand occupations in current or emerging professions”; (US Congress, 2006, S 250-2). The Act also supports services and activities to improve career and technical education; conduct and disseminate national research; and promote business, industry, community and higher education partnerships. States develop a plan to allocate funds to schools, monitor and evaluate program effectiveness and compliance, provide technical assistance, and report accountability results (US Congress, 2006). NCA CASI public, postsecondary schools use the Perkins Plan as the school improvement plan in some states to reduce creating an additional plan to meet the standard.

Resource Commitment

There are time and financial resource costs for accreditation resource costs (CHEA, 2006; Lee & Crow, 1998). Schools pay annual dues and fees to NCA CASI. Postsecondary certificate-granting schools participate in the self study and external team review process every five years. The costs for the travel, lodging, and food for the team

members are paid by the hosting school (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007). Staff time for conducting the critical-analysis self study, compiling documentations, review processes, and organizing these evidence pieces for the review, was discussed by all of the NCA CASI coordinators in the interviews. Coordinators indicated that although this was a timely process, it was beneficial to the school. Two of the fifteen interviewees specifically mentioned the financial cost, but both recognized benefits of the process. Individual institutions and programs absorb all costs of the accreditation process, including dues, team visits and accrediting agency membership fees (United States Department of Education, n.d.).

Subjectivity and Philosophical Differences of External Peer-Review Team Members

An element of subjectivity and philosophical driven-decisions is in the accreditation process according to two of the interviewees. These perception differences affect action taken by the schools on recommendations. One interviewee further researched the report's recommendation and found support to not address the statement. Subjective judgments can be valid if the recommendations address the specific criteria versus personal philosophies. Team members with more than two years of standards and criteria knowledge and experience can make more reliable judgments. The use of a criteria template also increases accuracy of the review process (Flanders & Wick, 1998).

Improvement Suggestions for NCA CASI Accreditation Process

As one of the NCA CASI coordinators indicated during the interview, she is new to the accreditation review process. In reviewing the recommendations in the team report, the intent of some of the statements is difficult to determine. After reading 4,067 commendation and recommendation statements, I would agree improvement is needed in

writing quality statements. Scheele (2004) states the written report is the critical piece to the accreditation process. The accreditation report must include information, analysis, and judgment.

Alignment of My Study to Research on Other Accreditation or Continuous

Improvement Model Challenges

Existing research discusses the challenges of the accreditation process from the degree-granting institution perspective. These accreditation obstacles are: resource costs (CHEA, 2006; Lee & Crow, 1998); bureaucracy (Florence, 2002; Lederman, 2006); and established standards stifle innovation (Scheele, 2004). Although a few of my interviewees discussed the time commitment involved in accreditation, only two of the 15 NCA CASI coordinators mentioned the financial cost.

My results are consistent with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) 2006 research report indicating national higher education leaders strongly believe in promoting quality and support the non-governmental accountability aspect of the accreditation process, even though there are considerable costs to the institutions (CHEA, 2006). The perception of stifling innovation was not found in the NCA CASI postsecondary certificate-granting institutions versus the degree granting research, as evidenced by the school coordinator interviews.

Challenges in the ISO 9001:2000 continuous improvement framework include difficulty in interpreting standards; organizational culture changes; bureaucracy and increased documentation; and staff and financial resources (Paunescu, et. al., 2005). My results agree with the increased documentation and resource cost and accountability duplication, (which to some degree relates to bureaucracy). My data suggest standard and

criteria interpretation issues pertaining to the philosophical differences of team members. Organizational cultural changes were not specifically identified as an accreditation obstacle through my interviews.

7. What Results of the Accreditation Process Guide Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Educational Improvement?

My research, through the NCA CASI accreditation report analysis and institutional coordinator interviews, provides support that NCA CASI accredited public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions are having student achievement and performance results as indicated by positive completion, placement, and licensure/certification passage rates.

Student Performance

The most compelling result is found in the 2007 NCA CASI Annual Report data. The 125 schools met all NCA CASI standards and criteria to achieve accreditation status. The USDE requires accrediting agencies to establish a review policy to examine performance indicators. “Accrediting agencies...are beginning to focus more on outcomes as a result of changed accreditation policies and demands from policymakers for greater accountability” (Bailey, et. al., 2004, p. 3). NCA CASI establishes minimum acceptable rates that are monitored through the annual reporting process. In 2007, established rates for individual schools were:

- a. Program Completion Rate: At least 66% of eligible to complete students complete their program within 150% of the time designated for completing the program.

b. Licensing Pass Rate: At least 55% of students within two years of completing their program.

c. Program Completer Placement Rate: At least 69% within two years of completion of the program (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007).

According to the policy manual, NCA CASI schools that fail to meet any of these minimum rates are designated as “accreditation warned status” and provided technical assistance from the accreditation staff to develop strategies and an action plan for performance improvement. The school has the length of the longest program, which does not exceed two years, to increase the deficiency to the acceptable rate. After this deadline, if a school fails to meet this established rate, the institution is dropped from accreditation status. Schools are designated as “accreditation on advisement status” if any of the performance measures are 10% above the minimum acceptable rates to assure action is taken prior to falling into the unacceptable range (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007).

The NCA CASI Annual Report monitors performance in all NCA CASI public, postsecondary certificate-granting schools in the ten states. The 2007 Annual Report results identify an average of 84.5% completion, 87.9% placement, and 89.7% licensure/certification performance.

Table 37.

NCA CASI Annual Performance Report for Accredited Public Institutions

Performance	2004	2005	2006	2007
Completion	77.6%	80.1%	81.2%	84.5%
Placement	83.6%	84.9%	84.9%	87.9%
Licensure/ Certification	85.0%	87.2%	86.7%	89.7%

These performance results are consistent with Ohio Department of Education (ODE) online data examining all Ohio public postsecondary certificate-granting schools. Ninety-two percent (92%) of ODE postsecondary schools are accredited through NCA CASI and eight percent (8%) are non-accredited schools. ODE data performance indicators for all schools identify an average of 82.9% completion, 92.9% placement, and 91.9% license/credential (technical skills) passage rates (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). Placement and license/credential passage rates are slightly higher than the average rates of the NCA CASI schools in other states. The completion rates are also consistent with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) College Navigator website (2008). Completion is the only one of these performance indicators identified on the NCES.

In analyzing all schools, (public/private, accredited/non-accredited, certificate and degree granting institutions), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) completion/graduation results show: “Overall graduation rates at 4-year institutions were somewhat higher than at 2-year institutions (56 percent and 33 percent, respectively); however, graduation rates were highest at less-than-2-year institutions (68 percent)” (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, Whitmore, & Miller, 2007, p. 3). Institutions classified as less-than-2-years represent all public/private, accredited/non-accredited certificate-granting schools. NCA CASI postsecondary accredited schools’ completion rates are 16% percent higher than the 68% average identified in the NCES data.

Table 38.

Completion/graduation National Averages by Institutional Type.

Type of Institution	Average Completion/Graduation Rate
4-year	56%
2-year	33%
Less than 2-year (includes private and accredited by other institutional accreditors)	68%
NCA CASI postsecondary certificate-granting	84%

The results of my study concur with research on community colleges in that similarities exist between postsecondary certificate-granting career and technical institutions with community and technical colleges. Both types of institutions offer certificates, and have similar student characteristics, training, pupil personnel services and licensing (Farmer, 2000; Wonacott, 2002). Research exists on university and community college completion, or graduation rates, particularly discussing results of specific retention programs or initiatives. Literature indicates a research need to explore “college-wide innovations and develop methods to study them and identify successful strategies” (Bailey, et. al., 2004, p. 62). Research should provide concrete evidence on college and university performance (Nettles, et. al., 1997).

The commendations in my research identify strategies implemented in NCA CASI postsecondary certificate-granting institutions that could attribute to the high completion rates. The high completion rates for the NCA CASI schools are inconsistent with the research on two-year colleges, where “degree completion rates are low....more than half leave without a credential” (Silverberg et. al., 2004, p. 294). Research also indicates the smaller the class size, the higher the percentage of completion or graduation (Horn, 2006). According to the 2007 AdvancED/NCA CASI Annual Report, the average

enrollment for the public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions is 775 students. The high percentage of schools receiving commendations for class size and positive school culture and relationships may also contribute to successful performance. The NCA CASI schools have an average of 89.7% passage rate on licensure and certification testing. The NAVE report indicates a growth in the number of students taking these assessments, but tracking of results is not taking place for non-Perkins funded schools (Silverberg, et. al., 2004).

Implications for the Field of Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Institutions

This research expands the knowledge base to guide continuous improvement of postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. This knowledge can benefit administration and staff in postsecondary certificate-granting institutions, and accrediting agency personnel. The commendation statements identify some of the best practices found for NCA CASI accredited postsecondary certificate granting schools. Recommendations also suggest improvements to move the school to a higher level. The AdvancED/NCA CASI accreditation process can serve as a continuous improvement framework

NCA CASI Continuous Improvement Framework

NCA CASI accreditation provides a continuous improvement framework for schools by aligning educational processes and documentation with standards. Successful practices found in external peer- review team reports can be disseminated for schools to access and implement for improvement. Recommendations provide a focus for schools to take action on areas to improve their schools for student learning.

The USDE commission report (2006) identifies a need for a framework to compare institutional learning outcomes and performance measures, promote continuous

improvement through innovation, and focus on quality. The NCA CASI accreditation process with the standards, criteria, and identified commendation and recommendation findings closely relates to the design model discussed in the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NCCTE) results (Copa & Wolff, 2002). Both models allow uniqueness by the individual institution in addressing the five NCA CASI standards or the twelve NCCTE features. The NCA CASI Information Systems (IS14) standard, criteria number IS14, monitors retention/completion, placement, and licensure/certification credentialing. The NCCTE does not identify placement and licensure/certification credentialing as performance indicators. Institutions receiving Perkins funding must report performance on all of these measures. The NCA CASI process can serve as a continuous improvement framework for postsecondary certificate-granting institutions, while providing institutional accreditation recognized by the USDE.

Copa and Wolff (2002) research indicates a need for a holistic framework for secondary and community college career and technical education. They recommend themes should focus on “learning context, audience, signature, expectations, process, organization, partnerships, staff, environment, accountability, celebration and finance” (Copa & Wolff, 2002, p. viii). These themes are consistent with the existing NCA CASI postsecondary certificate-granting institution accreditation standards and criteria framework.

The accreditation report can guide school improvement through the affirmation of good practices and response to recommendations for improvement. The school coordinator interviews indicated varying processes to taking action on recommendations

from informal meetings to organized internal teams analyzing, prioritizing, and creating action plans for improvement implementation.

Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Institutions Use of Results

The results of this research provide support for postsecondary certificate-granting institutions to do the following:

- Recognize and continuously improve general strengths found in these schools that include:
 - High completion, placement, and licensure/credential passage rates.
 - Active involvement with business, industry, and community.
 - Positive school culture and relationships.
 - Safety, facilities.
 - Variety of student services for career planning, placement, guidance, and remediation needs.
- Continue to achieve and improve positive student performance results.
- Capitalize on the strengths of postsecondary certificate-granting institutions in formalized marketing efforts.
- Train staff and continuously collect and analyze data to drive continuous improvement through data-driven decisions.
- Continue to build a positive school culture with relationships leading to student success.
- Approach the accreditation process in the spirit of credible, continuous improvement versus compliance stamp.

- Involve all staff members in an ongoing critical analysis, internal team-driven school improvement process.
- Encourage staff to serve on external peer-review teams as professional development opportunities.
- Create an action plan with strategies for addressing recommendations found on the accreditation reports.
- Improve documentation and data-driven decision-making processes.
- Share successful strategies and processes. Explore innovative strategies found in similar schools.

NCA CASI Accreditation Process Improvements

My research identifies recommendations for improving the AdvancED/NCA CASI accreditation process and services for postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. The deliverables developed in my research are the Document Review Analysis database and the standard and criteria tables located in Appendix E. AdvancED/NCA CASI can use this research base as a foundation for development and dissemination of continuous improvement strategies. These suggestions include:

- Reduce accountability duplication. Interviews suggested aligning or cross-walking the NCA CASI standards with Perkins requirements, program accreditors' standards, and ISO and Baldrige criteria.
- Control for subjectivity and philosophical difference. The tables found in Appendix D provide a base for developing rubrics, or criteria template. These rubrics can be used by external teams to more objectively evaluate and rate specific documentation and school process evidence to validate NCA CASI

standards. A rating system is used in the NCA CASI accreditation procedure, but does not contain rubrics for evaluating specific evidence documents or processes. Schools can use these rubrics to critically analyze and rate their processes during the initial self-study development and in ongoing efforts of continuous improvement. The accreditation peer-review teams can more effectively assign ratings. These rubrics can assist school personnel in developing and evaluating school and learning processes as well as provide guidance for external peer-review teams as to the quality of these processes. Flanders and Wick (1998) support the use of a criteria template to increase accuracy of the review process.

- Provide additional training and tools to improve self study development, external peer review processes, and accreditation reports.
- Improve the quality of the commendation and recommendation statements for future reports. Statements should identify the specific strength or need for improvement statement, supporting evidence from the review, and impact on the school or student learning (AdvancED/NCA, 2008).
- Use this research as a preliminary needs analysis to plan, develop, and implement professional development opportunities. Continue to improve timely and consistent communication.
- Disseminate continuous improvement strategies.

AdvancED/NCA CASI launched a web-based Resource Network as a tool for school access to “continuously improve student learning and school/district effectiveness” (AdvancED, 2008). Accredited schools are required to upload one peer-to-peer or best practice annually. Peer-to-peer practices are defined as: “Interventions,

strategies, programs, or activities that have been identified by a school or school system to be effective within a given set of cultural, organizational, and instructional conditions” (AdvancED, 2008). Best practices are described as “actions, processes, or interventions that are based in research or supported by results” (AdvancED, 2008). My Documentation Review Analysis database can be used as baseline research for AdvancED/NCA CASI postsecondary personnel to identify these peer-to-peer and results-based best practices stated in the peer team review commendations. Staff can contact the schools and request schools to submit specific peer team review identified practices to populate the Resource Network. Future AdvancED/NCA CASI peer external team review report recommendations could include these strategies as examples for next steps. Accredited schools will have free access to resources specifically related to these types of schools to guide continuous improvement.

The literature supports the need for guidance from accrediting agencies regarding student learning outcomes with suggested strategies, training materials, tools and models, professional development workshops, and identification of qualified individuals for assistance. A variety of methods should be used to develop training materials and disseminate best practices (Friedlander & Serban, 2004). Long term commitment to the alignment of accreditation and performance excellence is challenging, but worthwhile. “There is an importance of sharing best practices across work sectors and engaging in memberships in professional organizations that bring new ideas into the institution on an ongoing basis” (Callaway, et. al., 2003, p.2). Sharing practices promotes ongoing innovativeness and continuous improvement in institutions (Callaway, et. al., 2003; CHEA, 2006; Ruhland & Brewer, 2001).

.Limitations of the Research

My research consists of documentation analysis of the NCA CASI accreditation reports and interviews with a sampling of NCA CASI school accreditation coordinators. The accreditation external peer-review process involves a triangulation of methods in order to validate if a school is meeting the standards and criteria. These methods include reviewing documentation, conducting interviews, and making observations. Through my accreditation job duties, I provide technical assistance during accreditation visits and experience all aspects of this process. Observations and interviews with students, teachers, administrators, and community members provide valuable data and insight into further defining postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Due to time constraints, as well as not formally including these methods in my Institutional Review Board research proposal, the knowledge learned from these observations and interviews is not captured and documented in my results. I also believe that the external peer-review team members may not recognize or write a commendation on a strength that is perceived as the norm for postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. An example is the cohort arrangement of students and small class size that could attribute to the high student performance rates at these schools. Students begin and complete their programs with the same students and provide peer-support and collaboration. To an external peer-review team member, this is prevalent in the majority of these institutions.

There are a few state issues that create differences in the accreditation process or perception. Oklahoma is one of three states in the nation with approval and recognition from the USDE to accredit schools. According to the AdvancED/NCA CASI representative, schools participate in NCA CASI through a co-accreditation process, but

follow the state policies pertaining to external peer team reviews and performance measure requirements. State level issues also exist. Ohio is currently changing the governance of postsecondary certificate-granting institutions from the state Department of Education to the Board of Regents. During this transition, actions on some recent recommendations are pending due to the early development stages and requirements of this new structure. Oklahoma, Missouri, and West Virginia have secondary students in the institutional postsecondary NCA CASI accreditation process. Commendations and recommendations that solely apply to secondary students are not included in my research.

The process I used to select my NCA CASI school coordinator interview sample targeted the average of each school's completion and licensure/credential passage rates. I sorted this percentage and selected five school coordinators from each of the maximum, minimum, and mean percentages, for a total of fifteen in my sample. Fifteen schools is a small sampling (12%) of the 125 NCA CASI accredited public schools in my study. There was minimal difference in the types of commendation and recommendation themes in the interview sampling schools selected on the basis of completion and licensure/certification passage rates. I selected my NCA CASI school coordinator interview sample through a maximum variance sampling using the average of each school's completion and licensure/credential passage rates. I interviewed five school coordinators from each of the maximum, minimum, and mean percentage ranges, for a total of fifteen in my sample. In analyzing the commendation or recommendation statements from these fifteen schools, I found few differences exist in commendation and recommendation themes. All five of the highest schools in the

sampling groups had commendations on positive school culture; and three of the five mean and lowest schools also received commendations. Two of the mean schools and two of the minimum schools received recommendations for improvements in teaching criteria and learning goals while none of the highest performing schools received recommendations in these themes. One high, four mean, and three low schools had recommendations for business, industry, and community involvement. Other than these areas, there were no differences based on the commendations and recommendations. Preliminary assumptions as to the differences in maximum and minimum performance percentages could be attributed more so to socio-economic demographics of the school's enrollment population. The length of time from the last accreditation team report to the 2007 completion rates may also explain why recommendations addressing low student performance rates were not stated in the earlier reports for schools with low completion and licensure/credential passage rate averages. The highest percentage performance schools were the first to respond to my interview request. Based on the data from my interviews, it is the overlying assumption that all the schools focused on student success. More extensive research could be conducted to ascertain any additional differences beyond the scope of my study..

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research is needed on postsecondary certificate-granting institutions, accreditation, and student performance measures. The results of my research can serve as baseline research data for AdvancED/NCA CASI. As improvement strategies are developed and implemented, a comparative analysis of the commendation and

recommendation themes for future visits should be conducted. More in-depth research could be conducted on any of the individual criteria areas through a qualitative design using observations and interviews. A chronological analysis could be completed to determine the differences in commendation and recommendation themes from reports five years ago with more recent accreditation visits. More in-depth research is needed on the performance measures. Additional research could also determine how positive and effective cultures and relationships are established in the successful institutions.

Other institutional and program accrediting agencies could replicate this research design model to identify their final report commendation and recommendation themes and identify their student performance results. Comparison of student performance results with other non-accredited postsecondary schools could provide empirical results on the accreditation process.

Additional research would be beneficial to further explore the impact of school culture and relationship and class size on certificate-granting institutions and the positive performance measure results. Another area of exploration is the return on investment for graduates of postsecondary certificate-granting institutions, which could provide results for funding decision-makers.

Conclusion

The USDE commission report (2006) identifies a need for a framework to compare institutional learning outcomes and performance measures, promote continuous improvement through innovation, and focus on quality. My research supports that the NCA CASI accreditation process serves as this framework for postsecondary certificate-granting institutions. Research indicates the accreditation process identifies important

issues for improvement (Lee & Crow, 1998). Eaton (2006) suggests accrediting organizations need to communicate an expanded, descriptive meaning of accreditation decisions rather than merely identify accredited or not accredited institutional status.

NCA CASI accreditation has been in existence since 1895. Eels stated in 1938:

The primary function of accreditation by the state or regional association should be stimulation toward continuous growth and improvement, not merely inspection and admission to membership... Stimulation of a school to become a better school makes a much more extensive body of criteria both desirable and necessary. ... In a democracy a school should not be satisfied with being good; it should strive constantly to become better (1938, p. 41).

My research on the 125 NCA CASI public, postsecondary certificate-granting institutions provide support that this philosophy exists today in these accredited schools. Identified commendation and recommendation statements, as well as action taken on these recommendations, can serve as a research base to guide continuous improvement for schools. This research also provides strategies for improvement in the NCA CASI accreditation framework. As one NCA CASI school coordinator said following a discussion on high completion, placement, and industry credential/certification passage rates, "Why aren't they using our schools as a model nationwide? The NCA CASI accreditation framework can serve as the model; however, it takes school-wide commitment to truly succeed. The importance of school commitment in following a continuous improvement framework, combined with a positive, supportive culture for students, is also vital

for increased student achievement. My interview with the NCA CASI coordinator representing the highest student performance measures of the 125 schools supports this belief. The school has 97% completion, 98% job placement, and 100% license/certification passage rates. The NCA CASI coordinator discussed accreditation and the commitment of the staff in working as at team on the self study and visit preparation. The coordinator commended the staff,

It's not just the expertise, it is the want to. It is the love for students, the love to convey knowledge, the love to see people improve. That's what it takes...it has to come from your heart...If you compare with the best, it will make you better...I definitely think it [accreditation] has impact...If nothing else, an awareness of [the school]. It challenges you to take a look at your school, and not compare it to other schools, but with the [NCA CASI] evaluation process. Look at specific things, how we are doing, what are we doing. I think it is a challenge to make your school the best you can make it. ..to make sure the whole school is improving.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Permission Letter to Use NCA CASI Data
- Appendix B: NCA CASI Standards and Criteria Manual (2007)
- Appendix C: NCA CASI Documentation Standards Matrix
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Appendix A: Permission Letter to Use NCA – CASI DATA

Postsecondary Education - NCA CASI
HC 88 Box 21
Ripley, WV 25271

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To: Jane McKee, Ed.D.
LeVene Olson, Ed.D.
Linda Spatig, Ed.D.
Donald Washburn, Ph.D.

From: Melinda Isaacs
Associate Vice President of Postsecondary Education

Date: January 16, 2008

RE: Permission to Use AdvancED/NCA Agency Information

Sherri Nash is currently working on her doctoral dissertation through Marshall University. The work of Ms. Nash, “Results of The Accreditation Process to Guide Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Institutions”, will contribute to the work of accreditors of postsecondary institutions across the nation.

The results of this study will benefit the accreditation community as a whole as it continues to push for greater results from accredited schools. A study such as this can assist with discussions with the United States Department of Education regarding the need for accountability and consistency among accrediting agencies. With these efforts, the students participating in educational programs at accredited schools will ultimately benefit.

Ms. Nash is granted permission to use the data gathered through AdvancED and North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) related to accredited postsecondary institutions. This includes achievement, programmatic, and demographic data gathered through the annual report of postsecondary institutions, manuals for schools, policies, and workshop materials developed for use by the organization.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 1-800-525-9517, extension 6976 or misaacs@ncacasi.org.

NCA CASI is an accreditation division of



www.advanc-ed.org

Appendix B: NCA CASI Standards and Criteria Manual (2007)

Used with the permission by Melinda Isaacs, associate vice-president of postsecondary education, AdvancED/NCA CASI.



**Standard and Criteria
For
Accreditation of Schools
Approved for Postsecondary
Education**

North Central Association

Commission on Accreditation and
School Improvement

*Revised December 2006
Effective June 2007*

Arizona State University
PO Box 871008
Tempe, AZ 85287-1008

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North Central Association

Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement

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NCA STANDARD

Each member school shall maximize the proportion of its promoted or graduated students who are self-directed learners and are prepared to make successful transitions from school-to-school or school-to-work.

MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

The following criteria identify conditions that must be present to meet the NCA Standard. The membership criteria are required for initial and continued membership. The five major criteria are:

School (Institutional) Improvement Plan (SIP)
Information Systems (IS)
Process of Schooling (PS)
Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Resources and Allocation (RA)

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The school is committed to developing and implementing an improvement plan that emphasizes student learning and achievement. The school community accepts that school improvement must be pursued continually and aggressively.

- SIP 1 Each school conducts a continuous improvement process that focuses on enhanced learning for all students. At all times the school is engaged actively in some phase of the school improvement process (planning, internal analysis, external team review, implementation, and documentation).
- SIP 2 The school has a standing committee that is responsible for initiating, planning, and coordinating the school's improvement efforts.
- SIP 3 The current school improvement initiative:
- Involves relevant groups in the community.
 - Addresses industry needs in the service areas served.
 - Begins with the development of a school profile drawn from the school's information system (see information system criteria).

- Identifies a challenging set of goals that focus on learning and achievement for all students.
- Develops an improvement plan that details the changes that will be made in the process of education such that improvement can be documented in those goals.
- Provides a specific assessment system designed to document student success on the goals identified.

- SIP 4 All schools host an accreditation team visit at least once every five years. The Board of Trustees monitors such review. Each school submits the appropriate documentation for accreditation. The school is prepared for an unannounced one-day visit at any time.
- SIP 5 The school is able to document, in a variety of ways that student performance goals are met.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Each school is expected to have in place an assessment-driven information system that is comprehensive and current. This system is designed to address questions relative to student performance and the school's effectiveness, as well as questions that ask for a comparison of its own students and other students. The school continually collects student and community data to analyze the performance of its students as they enter, progress, and exit.

- IS 1 The school has established a data-driven information system that is used in its instructional decision-making process.
- IS 2 Information is regularly collected from community members relative to their attitudes, expectations, and assessments of the quality of the school, its program, the climate, and the success of its students.
- IS 3 Information gathered from the community and student performance information are used to design quality programs, to establish a positive learning climate, and to continually evaluate and improve all school conditions.
- IS 4 The information system provides appropriate data for personnel to analyze. For example:
- The extent to which promoted or graduated students are prepared to be successful at the next level of education, in the world of work, and in becoming self-directed learners.

- IS 5 Each school systematically analyzes its student performance data and uses the results of this analysis as the basis for the school profile and to document program effectiveness.
- IS 6 Follow-up studies of students promoted or graduated from the school are conducted to determine the degree to which students have made successful transitions to the next level and to obtain their assessment of their preparation.
- IS 7 The school continually collects and analyzes information on students who have dropped out of the educational program. The school community uses this information to develop appropriate interventions to help students re-enter the regular educational program or seek alternative forms of education.
- IS 8 A member school maintains a verifiable assessment-driven system of information collection that will afford evidence as to the effectiveness of the school in meeting its mission and its goals over time. The following kinds of information, among others, are regarded as useful in program planning and are requisites of a continuous evaluation system.
- Student Characteristics:* A member school collects data on the relevant economic, educational, mental, physical, and social characteristics of the students served by the school.
- Admission Practices:* A member school collects data indicating the degree to which its admission practices are in accord with the admission policies of the school.
- Achievement:* An analysis is made to determine the extent to which the school's instructional objectives are being achieved over time. The assessment of achievement includes student grades and GPA, retention rates, job placement rates, program and course completion rates, scores on admissions tests or other standardized tests, percentage of graduates pursuing degrees, acceptance of graduates to professional schools, state licensing and other examination pass rates, follow-up studies of graduates, and student loan default rates.
- Student Attitudes:* Systematic inquiry is made into the perceptions held by students concerning the adequacy of their school experiences and the program.
- Faculty Attitudes:* Systematic inquiry is made into the perceptions held by the teachers regarding those factors in the school that reduce or enhance their teaching effectiveness and that of the educational program.
- Labor Markets to Be Served:* An analysis is made of current and emergent employment needs, as the basis for those program modifications in the school that will provide the trained personnel to meet changing labor market requirements.
- Individual Program Cost Effectiveness:* An analysis is made of the per student costs of each individual program. This cost when correlated with data concerning student performance is used to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the curriculum.

Surveys of On-the-Job Supervisors: If on-the-job training is provided, member schools conduct systematic surveys to evaluate the adequacy of the initial training the students have received.

Compliance with Federal Title IV Regulations. Analysis must be made of the results of financial or compliance audits, program reviews, and other information relevant to meeting the school's responsibilities under Title IV. A plan to correct areas of noncompliance must be developed.

Evaluation of All Program Aspects: Member schools conduct a systematic regular evaluation of all program aspects including course content and instructional methods. Faculty members are included in this periodic evaluation.

- IS 9 Systematic assessments of changing economic and societal conditions, the characteristics of the student body, and program objectives and operations are conducted. These assessments should take into account such factors as schedules, counseling and library services, and teaching strategies and materials and should be organized in a manner to encourage modifications needed to adapt the program to its changing environment.
- IS 10 The school conducts, on a regular basis, an inventory of the career needs and interests of its potential students.
- IS 12 A periodic determination is made of the specific course requirements needed by the students enrolled in the school for the completion of their educational program inclusive of appropriate developmental and remedial courses directed towards "ability to benefit" students.
- IS 13 The administrative head is provided with the authority necessary to stimulate the continuous assessment of changing societal conditions and student characteristics and to provide leadership in accomplishing the adaptation of the program in the light of such assessment.
- IS 14 The School's program completion rate, licensing pass rate, and job placement rate for program completers meet the established NCA CASI acceptable rates. The acceptable rate in each area shall be reviewed and revised annually to reflect the percentage rate equal to one standard deviation below the average rate calculated from the data for the most recent reporting year.

Rates for the 2007 year are:

- a. Program Completion Rate: At least 66% of eligible to complete students complete their program within 150% of the time designated for completing the program.
- b. Licensing Pass Rate: At least 55% of students within two years of completing their program.
- c. Program Completer Placement Rate: At least 69% within two years of completion of the program.

PROCESS OF SCHOOLING

The school is responsible for developing educational programs that reflect the characteristics of the community and that increase the intellectual, personal, physical, social, and career development of the students it serves. Through the teaching-learning program all students are expected to engage in rigorous and ever more challenging educational pursuits at all levels. Overall the school program is designed to "be ready" to accommodate students of varying levels of development, prepare students to be productive citizens in a democratic society, and enable students to become self-directed learners.

Student Learning Goals

As a result of analyzing information on students and the community, the school establishes learning goals to give direction to the overall program. Learning goals are designed to press all students to excellence and focus on enhancing the intellectual, personal, physical, social, and career development of students.

- PS 1 The learning goals are challenging, are appropriate in terms of rigor and diversity, meet student needs, and are consistent with the stated goals of the program.
- PS 2 Objectives are:
- identified for the specific subject areas and the various programs such as the activity program, and student personnel services;
 - expressed in terms of the specific behaviors, skills, and attitudes to be sought in each program area of the school;
 - consistent and coherent with the major purposes of the school and with the state plan for career and technical education;
 - consistent with industry standards where appropriate.
- PS 3 Where appropriate, the school's objectives should be stated in measurable behavioral and performance terms that will lend themselves to specific determination of the degree to which they are being realized in the school.

Curriculum

The curriculum reflects the needs and interests of the students and community. The curriculum is designed to increase the intellectual, personal, physical, social, and career development of the student population and engage students in rigorous and challenging educational pursuits commensurate with their level of development. The curriculum

provides a balanced program for all students and is flexible enough to permit wide variation in student development.

- PS 5 Each school provides, as a minimum, those course offerings needed to facilitate completion of skill certificate and/or specific career-technical certification requirements.
- The course schedule ensures that all courses and prerequisites are available when indicated.
 - The school follows the course schedule.
- PS 6 It is the responsibility of the school to plan its curriculum patterns to serve its students and community.
- PS 7 The school has published completion requirements that specify the total number of units, specific courses, and competencies to be achieved. Where state statute or regulations allow the school discretion in designating required courses, the school gives appropriate consideration to the diverse needs of the students served.
- PS 9 Quality programs are accessible for all students.
- PS 10 The curriculum utilizes the resources of the community.
- PS 11 The curriculum provides for equity of opportunity and diversity in learning activities to enable the school to meet student performance improvement goals.
- PS 12 The curriculum is developed, evaluated, and regularly revised by the professional staff with appropriate involvement by the school community. Student achievement data are used to improve instruction and modify curriculum.
- PS 13 Procedures that foster vertical and horizontal program articulation within the school and with affiliated schools are in place and operative.
- PS 14 The school is so organized as to foster experimentation and innovation designed to adapt the school to the changing needs of its community. Through a process of continuous assessment and innovation the school seeks to improve its capacity for serving education needs efficiently and effectively. The following areas are examples of programs that might be helpful in serving the educational needs of a community.
- Occupational Exploration:* Programs designed to familiarize students with various occupations, the special skills required for them, and the training requisites. These programs are directed towards assisting the student to make a meaningful career choice.

Skill Development (Technical and Career Preparatory): Programs designed to prepare students for AdvancED or more highly skilled postsecondary technical education or training.

Skill Development (Job Proficiency Training): Programs designed to prepare students to enter employment upon completion of the courses.

- PS 15 Schools may offer noncredit remedial work as necessary to permit successful progress by students. All such noncredit offerings are worthwhile educational experiences in a manner appropriate to the particular requirements of students.
- The courses offered are based on an analysis of the needs and interests of the student in the community.
 - The course offerings are sufficiently diverse to assure that the community's educational needs for such courses are being met.
 - The schedule for offerings is flexible, providing coursework at those hours and in those time segments most appropriate to the requirements of students.
 - The length of the various courses need not coincide with the semester or quarter organization of the school.
 - The qualifications for teachers of noncredit courses are subject to the discretion of the local governing board.
 - Reasonable fees may be charged for noncredit courses.
- PS 16 An advisory committee representative of the community is involved in the review and planning of the school's educational program. The role of the advisory committee is consistent with state and federal guidelines, including recommending professional development opportunities for staff.

Teaching-Learning

The teaching-learning program is designed to continually press students to higher levels of development. Students are expected to be actively engaged in challenging and rigorous educational activities essential to the successful functioning of an individual in a democratic society. The teaching-learning program focuses on the learning goals that have been established.

- PS 21 The teaching-learning program is organized to allow each student to progress in a manner that is flexible and in accordance with individual development.
- PS 22 The teaching-learning program emphasizes the interrelationships among curricular areas.
- PS 24 Teachers use classroom practices and methodology consistent with current research.
- PS 25 The school uses the results of instructional assessments to press for higher levels of learning for all students.

- PS 26 A total pattern of successful postsecondary and related instruction requires many important components that member schools provide. Required components are:
1. well defined instructional objectives stated in behavioral terms
 2. clearly written course syllabi for all instructional and supervised clinical components
 3. performance criteria for specific skills
 4. systematic planning by professional staff
 5. the selection and use of varied types of instructional materials and learning experiences
 6. the specific adaptation of organizational and instructional procedures to meet the needs of students
 7. the use of varied evaluation instruments and procedures.
 8. good instruction
 9. concern for student morale

Staff Development

The school has a staff development program that is responsive to the unique needs of the students and personnel, the characteristics of the educational program, and the student performance goals of the school improvement plan.

- PS 30 All personnel are provided staff development commensurate with their assignment.
- PS 31 Staff development programs are designed through needs assessments with input from personnel and a review of industry standards in planning and evaluating of the programs.
- PS 32 Orientation is provided for all personnel new to the building.
- PS 33 A staff development plan is in place, and staff development activities are connected to and supportive of the school's improvement plan.

Assessment

The school has an assessment system that is broad in scope and appropriate to document student development. The results of assessment are used to (a) establish a teaching-learning program that reflects the strengths, interests, and needs of the students and community; (b) improve student performance; and (c) determine the degree to which the school is successful in achieving its goals.

- PS 40 The school uses a variety of measures including classroom and standardized measures, and industry standards leading to credentials to document the success of its students.

- PS 41 Assessment and analysis measures are congruent with the learning goals.
- PS 42 Students receive regular and frequent feedback on their progress.
- PS 43 Assessment of student learning is the primary indicator for documenting the effectiveness of the overall program.
- PS 44 The school collects information from entering students to help establish a teaching-learning program that is ready to accommodate the learners.

Pupil Personnel Services

Pupil personnel services are comprehensive and designed to enhance the intellectual, personal, physical, social, and career development of all students.

- PS 50 Pupil personnel services include but are not limited to advisement, counseling, appraisal, staff consulting, referral, new student orientation, tutoring, learning processes, and educational and career planning.
- PS 52 The school has procedures in place for providing health services to students.
- PS 53 The school has written plans and procedures in place for providing interventions and counseling services to students in cases of traumatic events.
- PS 54 The school has the necessary professional and support pupil personnel services staff to implement the program consistent with the needs of the student population.
- PS 55 Appropriate materials, facilities, and services are available for students whose exceptional abilities, talents, or handicaps represent unique needs.
- PS 56 The school has a written description of the advisement and guidance program specifying the services performed and the personnel delivering these services.
- PS 57 Interest, aptitude, and needs inventories are used in the advisement and guidance of individual students. For those students admitted on the basis of ability to benefit, the assessment includes student aptitude that documents the potential to successfully complete the student's declared program. Note: The assessment for ability to benefit students must be a nationally recognized, standardized, or industry-developed admissions test.
- PS 58 Each member school provides organized services to aid present and prospective students in the solution of their various types of educational, occupational, social, civic, and personal problems. Ability to benefit students are closely

monitored during their initial year to ensure their capacity to complete the program to which they have been admitted.

- PS 59 The school's guidance services provide for counseling, appraisal, staff consulting, educational and occupational planning, and follow-up activities.
- PS 60 The member school provides qualified counselors/advisors at a ratio of at least one for each 450 students (full-time equivalency) with no school having less than a half-time person. Schools are encouraged to try a variety of approaches to augment such services, including individual school ratio adjustments. They may use advisors, counselors, job placement officers, supportive personnel, and teachers. Instructors with occupational backgrounds can serve in a valuable occupational advisor role. Plans for organizational variations are to be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval.
- PS 61 The school provides organized and systematic counseling and placement services for those students seeking further education and/or job placement.
- PS 62 The school has in place admission policies designed to determine if students are prepared to be successful.
- A clearly defined policy on transfer students is published in all admissions materials.
 - Recruitment and advertising materials are accurately written and include program objectives
 - Specify all charges and fees, enrollment procedures, and cancellation and refund policies.
 - Enrollment contracts clearly specify obligations for student and school.
 - Academic calendars include terms, academic years, contact hours, and projected completion timelines.
 - Grading policies and completion requirements are clearly stated in all publications.
 - Catalogs, calendars, grading policies, advertising, and other publications are made available to all students and for peer team review.
 - The school has written policies for informing students of loan availability.
 - Each school has a written student loan default management plan that is made available to students.
- PS 63 Each school has in place a procedure for dealing with student grievances and complaints. Records are kept of all such complaints and made available to the accreditation team.
- PS 64 Each school has in place a non-discrimination policy that forbids discrimination in the admission of students on the basis of race, ethnic background, sex, or handicap. Nor shall the school discriminate on the basis of religion unless the school is officially church-related and wishes to admit students mainly from communicants of that denomination. Schools that have been designed

specifically to serve a single sex or that are supported by a state or federal agency to serve a specialized group of students shall not be considered discriminatory.

- PS 65 A clearly defined written code of student conduct supports a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and is understood by students and faculty.
- PS 66 Communication with prospective students is ethical and honest. Information and promotional materials, advertising, and representations made by or on behalf of the school make only justifiable and provable claims regarding the courses, programs costs, location, instructional personnel student services, outcomes, benefits, and institutional financial stability.

**VISION, LEADERSHIP-GOVERNANCE,
AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

The school community consists of the school's faculty and staff, its students and their parents, and the other adults in the community served by that school. The school's leadership works with the school's community for the improvement of student success. The school community's vision is expressed through its statements of mission, goals, and current improvement initiatives. Such improvement initiatives require the school community to regularly assess and act upon its student performance data and to use these data to plan and implement programs that are effective in attaining the goals of the school and the NCA Standard. All members of the school community share the responsibility for improving student success.

Vision

The governing board, working with the staff and community, develops and maintains a written statement of mission and goals to be served by the educational program.

- VL 1 There is a written statement of the school's beliefs, the learning process, and the commitments of the school community in promoting student learning.
- VL 2 There is a written statement of the school's mission and goals, which is the guiding document for the school and its programs.
- VL 3 The mission and goals statement is developed through appropriate participation by the staff, parents, students, and community representatives.
- VL 4 The mission and goals statement clarifies the purpose of the school.

- VL 5 Provision is made for systematic review and, when necessary, modification of the mission and goals statement.

Leadership-Governance

- VL 10 There is an school governing board that develops policies appropriate to the needs of the school. Whether elected or appointed, representatives on the governing board represent the interests of the school community.
- VL 11 Individual board members do not engage in transactions for the school without prior and specific authorization by a majority of the governing board.
- VL 12 There is an administrator who is responsible for providing effective educational leadership and administering the schools in accordance with governing board policies.
- VL 13 The working relationships between the governing board and the administrator establish a climate for articulating and promoting the educational vision in the school community.
- VL 15 The governing board and school-level administration work to secure resources to support continued improvement initiatives in the school.
- VL 16 The school has an administrator responsible for organizing the school's program to improve student performance and has the authority and resources to accomplish this goal.
- VL 17 The working relationship between the system-level and school level administrator facilitates the effective operation of the school in pursuit of its mission.
- VL 18 The administrator, staff, and community work together to attain the mission and goals of the school.
- VL 19 The working relationships between the administrator and staff facilitate a climate that supports innovation and creativity in helping all students achieve the specified learning goals.

School Community

The school establishes meaningful relationships with its community to promote and enhance the achievement of the school's learning goals.

- VL 25 There is a planned public communications program using a variety of media to inform the school community about the goals, programs, and results of the school's improvement efforts.
- VL 26 The school and community work together to provide the highest quality education for its students.
- VL 27 There is a planned and functioning program whereby community resources are identified and utilized for the enhancement of the curricular program in achieving the goals of the school and the NCA Standard.

Visitation Teams

- VL29 Each member school with an enrollment of 500 students or less shall annually designate at least two staff members to serve on site visit teams. Schools with a student enrollment of 501 students or more shall designate three staff members to serve on site visit teams. At least one of the designees must be a practicing instructor or an individual with teaching experience in a postsecondary curricular area.
 - Designated staff must attend the required training for NCA CASI team members or have attended such training in the previous four years.
 - Designated staff must be released from their duties to serve on a minimum of one site visit team annually when so requested by the Commission.
 - Release time to serve on a required visit team shall not result in personal cost or penalty to the team member.

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RESOURCES AND ALLOCATION

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The space, facilities, and environment of the school are safe for students and of a size, configuration, and condition to properly serve the attainment of the goals of the school. Those people serving students are qualified to do so through documented training and experience. Sufficient time is organized so that the mission, goals, and current improvement initiatives can be fulfilled. A coordinated system designed to increase students' access to information and expand their knowledge base is available. Sufficient financial resources are available to provide space, people, time, materials, and instructional programs to maximize the potential for all students to make successful life transitions.

Time

- RA 1 Interruptions to instructional time are kept to a minimum, and the amount of time devoted to student learning is maximized.

- RA 2 Planning/conference time is used appropriately so that staff may effectively meet the needs of students.
- RA 3 Within the workday, each classroom teacher's schedule includes time for office hours, conferences, and instructional planning. The standard does not apply to people involved in special services such as administrators, advisors, librarians, and to people teaching fewer than 25 hours per week.
- RA 4 A member school organizes its schedule of classes in a pattern most appropriate to achieving the objectives of the program and may provide varying time periods as need arises. Time periods must conform to state requirements.
- RA 5 The length of the regular academic year for students is at least 180 days, with classes actually in session for at least 175 days. The length of the academic year is a minimum of 30 weeks.
- RA 6 A school day must be at least six clock hours. Students may be assigned for all or any portion of this time. Schools must offer classes a minimum of three hours per day for four days each week during the 30 weeks. However, alternate plans may be presented to the Board of Trustees for consideration and approval.
- RA 7 The instructional program recognizes the wide diversity of student interests and experiences, providing for independent instruction and continuous study in addition to formal classes based on daily, weekly, semester, or quarterly schedules. All programs must be measured in either credit or clock hours.

Space

- RA 10 All space and facilities utilized by the school are of appropriate size, configuration, and condition to enhance the achievement of the goals of the school.
- RA 11 The site and facilities provide a safe and healthful environment with proper provisions taken to prevent injuries. Power and electrical equipment meet state and federal standards. Personal safety equipment is provided and its use enforced.
- RA 12 Fire, police, health, or other designated officials conduct regular safety inspections. All legal safety requirements are observed.
- RA 13 Inspections of the site, building, and equipment and evaluation of the safety and emergency procedures are conducted regularly. Identified hazards and deficiencies are dealt with promptly.
- RA 14 Provisions are made for the security and safety of students. The following plans are identified, communicated, practiced and evaluated:

Evacuation plan
Shelter in place plan
Lock down plan
Abuse and harassment prevention and reporting

- RA 15 The site is readily accessible to the population; as free as possible from traffic, other hazards, and distracting noise; and of sufficient size.
- RA 16 The building is clean, attractive, in good repair, and (where required) barrier free to serve the needs of all students.
- RA 17 Recognized standards and legal requirements for heating, ventilation, and illumination are met.
- RA 18 Facilities and equipment are appropriate in size, type, and quantity for the students attending the school including students with special needs. Equipment and supplies are related to course and learning experience requirements. Appropriate space is provided for storage, materials preparation, and consultation.
- RA 19 The buildings and grounds are maintained with consideration for functional and aesthetic values.
- RA 20 Permanent records of students and staff are protected from theft, fire, or other damage.
- RA 21 Facilities are open, as necessary to accomplish the mission and goals of the school, for extended hours and days for student and public use.
- RA 22 In cases in which a secondary program and an adult program share facilities but are separately administered, the proper authority clarifies each administrator's area of responsibility.
- RA 23 The facilities are adequately supplied with equipment sufficiently modern and usable to effect sound instructional/learning programs.
- RA 24 An appropriate plan for the replacement of equipment is established and maintained.
- RA 25 Written and performance evaluations are maintained of students' demonstrated ability to use equipment and facilities according to established safety standards.

Personnel

- RA 30 The staff is of sufficient quality and number and appropriately assigned so that the school can achieve its goal, meet the needs of the students and the *Standard and Criteria*. Part-time faculty may be used to supplement full-time faculty.
- RA 31 Schools enrolling fewer than 250 students (full-time equivalency) employ an administrative head who devotes at least half time to the administration and supervision of the school. Schools enrolling 250 or more students (full-time equivalency) employ a full-time administrative head.
- RA 32 In order to permit the administrator to have sufficient time to engage in improvement of instruction, assistance is provided as follows: When, on a full-time equivalency basis, enrollment exceeds 500, at least one half-time assistant; when enrollment exceeds 1,000 students, at least one full-time assistant. Therefore, for each additional 1,000 students or major fraction thereof, at least one full-time assistant is provided. Schools may vary their approaches to administrative staffing and submit their plan to the Board of Trustees for approval.
- RA 33 The school is in compliance with state and federal laws regarding equal employment opportunities.

Preparation and Qualifications

- RA 40 All professional personnel meet the regular certification or licensure standards of the state, unions, or appropriate trade and industry associations and are assigned to teach in areas for which they are prepared. Official records for all professional staff members are on file in the school's office.
- RA 41 All teachers in schools approved for postsecondary education meet the requirements for instructors as established by the appropriate state governing body.
- RA 44 Professional staff members employed as advisors have at least 18 semester hours of graduate preparation in guidance and counseling or social work.
- RA 45 Media specialists in adult schools meet state teacher certification requirements and have earned a minimum of 18 semester hours of library/media coursework. Persons employed primarily as audio-visual specialists have at least 12 semester hours of credit in this field. Media specialists have specific educational preparation appropriate to the needs of the media program in each school.
- RA 46 Health Personnel: Members of the non-instructional professional staff providing health

services meet the health certification requirements of the state in which the school is located.

- RA 47 The administrative head of the school has earned at least 45 hours of graduate credit, inclusive of the master's degree, or has met the requirements established by the state plan for technical, and adult education and was serving as the head of a technical/adult school prior to July 1, 1999. Not less than 20 hours of graduate credit has been in administration, curriculum, supervision and related fields. The administrative head has a minimum of two years of successful teaching experience. It is desirable that the administrative head be acquainted with the field of postsecondary education through preparation or work experience. In addition, she/he must hold an appropriate supervisory (administrative) certificate when such is required by state statute or by the state plan.
- RA 48 Assistants whose responsibilities include curriculum, instruction, and general administration have at least the master's degree including training in postsecondary-level administration, supervision, curriculum, and/or guidance. Other administrative assistants have preparation or experience appropriate to their responsibilities.
- RA 49 In adult school scheduling 25 or fewer hours per week, the administrative head has at least the master's degree, including work in such areas as adult education, career-technical education, administration, supervision, and curriculum.
- RA 50 Special education. Teachers hold a valid certificate for the respective field in which they are teaching.
- RA 52 Class size is adapted to the requirements of the specific course.
- RA 53 The teaching load is such that teachers have adequate time to perform their duties.
- RA 54 The professional evaluation process provides for regular evaluation of staff and includes professional growth opportunities relevant to the area of assignment.
- RA 55 The evaluation criteria for instructional staff are based on research and best practice.

Finances

- RA 60 Sufficient financial resources are available to accomplish the mission and goals of the school.
- RA 61 All income and expenditures are safeguarded through proper budgetary procedures and are audited annually, according to GAAP by an outside agency,

or as required by law. The independent audit is submitted to NCA CASI on an annual basis.

Public Institutions

Sources of funds and revenue are identified to show evidence of fiscal stability as reported on the independent audit. The audit should indicate that the school operates within their annual budget.

Non-Public Institutions

The following conditions exist to indicate financial stability:

1. Total assets is equal to or exceeds total liabilities.
2. Positive equity as illustrated on the balance sheet.
3. Positive net income as illustrated on the income statement.

Separate income statements must be included for each branch campus.

- RA 62 The budget is based upon an assessment of resources needed to accomplish the mission and goals of the school.
- RA 63 The administrator and faculty are involved in developing the budget, in establishing expenditure allocations, and in setting priorities with the budget.
- RA 64 In analyzing the resources needed, the school makes appropriate use of community resources and community advisory groups.
- RA 65 In order to become a member school and to continue to qualify for accreditation, the school enrolls a sufficient number of students and employs an adequate number of qualified staff. Tuition and fees take into account program length, objectives, content, types and location of instructional delivery, the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve competence, and generally accepted practices.
- RA 66 All coursework required in the program is provided, even though board funds may have to be used in cases where student fees are not sufficient to make the course self-supporting.
- RA 67 The budget includes adequate funds for the necessary amortization of equipment purchases over a reasonable period of time.
- RA 68 The member school demonstrates that it assesses its financial condition at adequate intervals, not less than quarterly.
- RA 69 Processes exist for proper financial controls and supervision of financial management staff.

- RA 70 Qualified individuals administer and evaluate the effectiveness of the financial operations and practices.
- RA 71 Receipt and expenses of monies is properly recorded and tracked.
- RA 72 Tuition, payment, cancellation, and refund policies are written, consistently Administered, and comply applicable federal and state regulations.
- RA 73 The member school must provide documentation of legal authority and license to operate in the state including contact information for the administrative head and owner where applicable, and an organizational chart.
- RA 74 The member school must have been in existence for a period of at least two years prior to applying for membership to NCA.

Instructional Resources

Students have access to a broad range of information through an organized media and technology program that makes maximum use of local, state, national, and international resources.

- RA 80 Member schools employ a professionally prepared individual as learning center coordinator. Schools exceeding 500 full-time students (full-time equivalency) have a full-time professional coordinator. The professional staff provides such services as instructing students in the use of the center, assisting teachers in locating and utilizing resources, and overseeing the production of graphic and other materials. Upon approval of the Board of Trustees, an alternative staffing pattern may be used by the school if its schedule or relationship with other schools warrants such a variation.
- RA 81 A sufficient collection of materials exclusive of the adopted texts and appropriate for the school's instructional needs is provided.
- RA 82 Educational materials may be stored in a central library/resource center and/or decentralized resource area. Other resources in the community may be considered in determining the sufficiency of the materials collection, provided they are readily accessible to the students.
- RA 83 The annual expenditures for all media are adequate to meet the instructional needs of the school.
- RA 84 Ongoing instruction is provided for staff and students to ensure effective and appropriate use of all materials available through the center.

RA 85 Provision is made for equipment, basic materials, space, and instruction for the staff and students in designing and producing instructional/learning materials. Provision is made for the replacement and updating of all materials.

RA 86 Media and technology materials and equipment are available to staff and students throughout the instructional day and throughout the academic year.

Information and Communication Technology

RA 90 The school has an ongoing technology plan that addresses utilization, staff development, effectiveness, and the needs of all students and staff.

RA 91 The technology plan includes a budget that meets the needs of students.

RA 92 The school has access to current technology.

RA 93 All technology resources are conveniently accessible to all students, faculty, and staff and are integrated across the curriculum.

RA 94 Personnel with appropriate expertise are available to assist students and staff in making effective use of all technology resources.

Appendix C: NCA CASI Documentation Standards Matrix

The documents and procedures suggested on the computerized NCA CASI Self Study Team Tool institutions are used to demonstrate compliance with specific accreditation standards and criteria. These are used in this research as a NCA CASI Coding Matrix to code commendation and recommendation text. For example, if “articulation agreements” is stated in a specific commendation for an institution, the commendation statement would be coded as the standard “Process of Schooling (PS)”. If a theme emerges that is not defined in the Coding Matrix, the coding will be classified as “Other.”

Used with the permission by Melinda Isaacs, associate vice-president of postsecondary education, AdvancED/NCA CASI.

Documentation/Procedures Institutions can Use to Demonstrate Compliance with NCA CASI Standard-Criteria	Correlation to Specific Standard
Ability to benefit - student monitoring	Process of Schooling (PS)
Accreditations - programs (state & national)	Process of Schooling (PS)
Accreditation visit report (most recent)	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Administration - communication/leadership	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Administration – responsibilities	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Admission practices	Information Systems (IS)
Advisory committee meetings	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Advisory committee meeting agendas	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Advisory committee meeting minutes	Information Systems (IS)
Advisory committee member list	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Advisory committee survey analysis	Information Systems (IS)
Advisory committee survey verification of using recommendations	Process of Schooling (PS)
Adult basic education/GED preparation/remediation/ tutoring/English second language (ESL)	Process of Schooling (PS)
American disability act (ADA) compliance	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Analysis of Surveys Documentation	Information Systems (IS)
Application form/process	Information Systems (IS)
Articulation agreements	Process of Schooling (PS)
Articulation - transferable course credit	Process of Schooling (PS)
Assessment - ability to benefit students	Process of Schooling (PS)
Assessment - career assessment	Process of Schooling (PS)
Assessment - Certification State-national/Licensure	Process of Schooling (PS)
Assessment – deficiencies	Process of Schooling (PS)
Assessment - End of Course Testing	Process of Schooling (PS)
Assessment - industry credential - (see licensure/certification)	
Assessment - industry credential analysis	Process of Schooling (PS)
Assessment - item analysis	Process of Schooling (PS)
Assessment - learning styles	Process of Schooling (PS)

Documentation/Procedures Institutions can Use to Demonstrate Compliance with NCA CASI Standard-Criteria	Correlation to Specific Standard
Assessment personnel	Process of Schooling (PS)
Assessment - Pre-entrance testing	Process of Schooling (PS)
Assessment – variety	Process of Schooling (PS)
Assessment – work keys	Process of Schooling (PS)
Attendance policy	Process of Schooling (PS)
Attendance tracking	Information Systems (IS)
Board Minutes - Acknowledge accreditation	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Business, industry, community surveys	Information Systems (IS)
Calendar – academic	Process of Schooling (PS)
Career assessment inventories	Process of Schooling (PS)
Career exploration activities	Process of Schooling (PS)
Career - Individual Career Plan (See Counseling - Career)	
Certification/State-national Licensure (See Assessment)	
Civil rights compliance	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Class size/student teacher ratio	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Clinical/internship contracts	Process of Schooling (PS)
Clinicals/internships surveys/analysis	Information Systems (IS)
Clinicals/internships observations/evaluations	Process of Schooling (PS)
Clinicals/shadowing experience	Process of Schooling (PS)
Community Based Work Experience tracking	Process of Schooling (PS)
Community resources - grants (see grants)	Process of Schooling (PS)
Community resources tracking	Process of Schooling (PS)
Competency/objective check off tracking	Process of Schooling (PS)
Complaint/Grievance Procedure - Published in Student Handbook	Process of Schooling (PS)
Complaint/grievance procedure – written	Process of Schooling (PS)
Complaint/grievance – analysis	Process of Schooling (PS)
Complaint/Grievance- composite tracking	Process of Schooling (PS)
Complaint/Grievance - tracking of individual student complaints/grievance	Process of Schooling (PS)
Completion (see program completion)	
Compliance of schedule (See schedule compliance)	
Contextual learning - work orders	Process of Schooling (PS)
Continuous improvement plan	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Continuous improvement plan – budgets	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Continuous improvement faculty teams	Process of Schooling (PS)

Documentation/Procedures Institutions can Use to Demonstrate Compliance with NCA CASI Standard-Criteria	Correlation to Specific Standard
Counseling - academic – individualized	Process of Schooling (PS)
Counseling - advising - staff plan	Process of Schooling (PS)
Counseling – career - individual plan	Process of Schooling (PS)
Counseling - guidance counselor	Process of Schooling (PS)
Counseling - plan for traumatic events	Process of Schooling (PS)
Counseling - teacher advisors	Process of Schooling (PS)
Course catalog	Process of Schooling (PS)
Course syllabi (see syllabi)	
Customized training - business/industry	Process of Schooling (PS)
Diverse course offerings	Process of Schooling (PS)
Employability/job-readiness skills courses	Process of Schooling (PS)
Employee handbook	Process of Schooling (PS)
Employee mentoring program	Process of Schooling (PS)
Employee orientation (see orientation - staff)	Process of Schooling (PS)
Employee orientation evaluation	Process of Schooling (PS)
Employer follow-up survey	Information Systems (IS)
End of Course Testing (See Assessment - End of Course Test)	
Enrollment compliance	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Enrollment contracts	Process of Schooling (PS)
Enrollment data	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Equipment ammortization schedule	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Evaluations related to analysis of data	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Exit surveys	Information Systems (IS)
Facilities - capital improvements	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Facilities - clean, good repair	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Facilities - legal compliance	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Facilities - resources allocated	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Facilities – space	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Goals	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Governing board member list	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Governing Board minutes	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Governing Board purchasing policy	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Grade monitoring/reports/tracking	Information Systems (IS)
Grade policy/program completion published	Process of Schooling (PS)
Grade reports – midterm	Process of Schooling (PS)
Grading scale	Process of Schooling (PS)

Documentation/Procedures Institutions can Use to Demonstrate Compliance with NCA CASI Standard-Criteria	Correlation to Specific Standard
Grievance - (see complaints)	
Health personnel	Process of Schooling (PS)
Hiring processes	Resource & Allocation (RA)
IPEDS data	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Independent study opportunities	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Individual career plan (see counseling – career)	
Industry credential pass rate (see assessment - industry credential)	
Instructor surveys	Information Systems (IS)
Integrated academics	Process of Schooling (PS)
Integrated projects	Process of Schooling (PS)
Internships (see clinicals/internships)	
Intervention/remediation plan	Process of Schooling (PS)
Intervention/remediation tracking	Process of Schooling (PS)
Intervention/remediation specialist staff	Process of Schooling (PS)
Job descriptions	Information Systems (IS)
Job placement information & counseling	Process of Schooling (PS)
Labor market surveys - (see needs analysis)	
Learning center/media center coordinator or	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Learning center/media center board approved plan	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Legal authority for operation	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Lesson plans – reteaching	Process of Schooling (PS)
Lesson plan review	Process of Schooling (PS)
Licensure pass rate (see assessment - licensure)	
Licensure Pass/Certification Rates tracking	Information Systems (IS)
Licensure - certification - state/national (see certification)	
Linkages - Community Policy organizations	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Marketing – plan	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Marketing - public relations	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Mission statement	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
NCA - visiting team involvement – list	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
NCA - Visiting Team Involvement -	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and

Documentation/Procedures Institutions can Use to Demonstrate Compliance with NCA CASI Standard-Criteria	Correlation to Specific Standard
Participation on External peer	School Community (VL)
NCA - visiting team training	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Needs Analysis - Implementation of strategies	Process of Schooling (PS)
Needs Analysis - Community and students	Process of Schooling (PS)
Needs analysis - labor market needs	Information Systems (IS)
Objectives/competency check off tracking (see competency/objectives)	
Objectives - state/industry – approved	Process of Schooling (PS)
Objectives - States in behavioral terms	Process of Schooling (PS)
Occupational exploration (see career exploration)	
Off-site course work opportunities	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
On-the-job/clinical Supervisor Surveys	Information Systems (IS)
Organizational chart	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Orientation – students	Process of Schooling (PS)
Orientation - staff (see employee orientation)	
Pell compliance	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Perkins/other performance measure data	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Placement information/counseling services	Process of Schooling (PS)
Placement rate (program completer)	Information Systems (IS)
Placement staff	Process of Schooling (PS)
Portfolio development	Process of Schooling (PS)
Post-graduate follow up surveys	Information Systems (IS)
Pre-entrance Remediation	Process of Schooling (PS)
Pre-entrance Testing (See Assessment - Pre-entrance Testing)	
Professional development – agendas	Process of Schooling (PS)
Professional development - teacher continuous education	Process of Schooling (PS)
Professional development - evaluations	Process of Schooling (PS)
Professional development - individualized teacher plan	Process of Schooling (PS)
Professional development - school-wide plan	Process of Schooling (PS)
Professional development – technology	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Professional development - teacher industry externships	Process of Schooling (PS)
Program all aspects evaluation	Information Systems (IS)
Program approval process (state or governing	Process of Schooling (PS)

Documentation/Procedures Institutions can Use to Demonstrate Compliance with NCA CASI Standard-Criteria	Correlation to Specific Standard
board)	
Program brochures	Process of Schooling (PS)
Program completion	Information Systems (IS)
Program cost effectiveness	Information Systems (IS)
Program evaluations	Information Systems (IS)
Program of study	Process of Schooling (PS)
Program syllabi (see syllabi)	
Promotional materials	Process of Schooling (PS)
Publications	Process of Schooling (PS)
Published articulation information	Process of Schooling (PS)
Published non-discrimination policy	Process of Schooling (PS)
Published student conduct guidelines in student handbook	Process of Schooling (PS)
Published student conduct guidelines in teacher handbook	Process of Schooling (PS)
Published schedule of courses	Process of Schooling (PS)
Recommendations - reports of outcomes	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Recruitment materials	Process of Schooling (PS)
Remediation/intervention (see intervention/remediation)	
Replacement of equipment plan	Process of Schooling (PS)
Resources - board funds available	Process of Schooling (PS)
Resources - discretionary funds	Process of Schooling (PS)
Resources - financial – audit	Process of Schooling (PS)
Resources - financial – budget	Process of Schooling (PS)
Resources - financial - budget development	Process of Schooling (PS)
Resources - financial – grants	Process of Schooling (PS)
Resources - financial - officer credentials	Process of Schooling (PS)
Resources - financial – sufficient	Process of Schooling (PS)
Resource materials	Process of Schooling (PS)
Safety committee - action plan	Process of Schooling (PS)
Safety committee – minutes	Process of Schooling (PS)
Safety committee - nonconformities - tracking	Process of Schooling (PS)
Safety – drills	Process of Schooling (PS)
Safety – equipment	Process of Schooling (PS)
Safety - fire inspections	Process of Schooling (PS)
Safety - health inspections	Process of Schooling (PS)
Safety – OSHA plan	Process of Schooling (PS)
Safety - students – tracking	Process of Schooling (PS)
Schedule - clock or credit Hours	Process of Schooling (PS)

Documentation/Procedures Institutions can Use to Demonstrate Compliance with NCA CASI Standard-Criteria	Correlation to Specific Standard
Schedule – compliance	Process of Schooling (PS)
Schedule – facilities	Process of Schooling (PS)
Schedule – flexibility	Process of Schooling (PS)
Schedule – length	Process of Schooling (PS)
Schedule - limited interruptions	Process of Schooling (PS)
Schedule - listing course times and dates	Process of Schooling (PS)
Schedule - ongoing instruction	Process of Schooling (PS)
Schedule - pell requirement compliance	Process of Schooling (PS)
Schedule - student and community survey input	Process of Schooling (PS)
Schedule – teachers	Process of Schooling (PS)
School established 2 years prior to NCA accreditation request date	Process of Schooling (PS)
School nurse availability	Process of Schooling (PS)
School profile - compiling data	Information Systems (IS)
Security - permanent records	Process of Schooling (PS)
Skill development	Process of Schooling (PS)
Skill development - job proficiency (see employability/job readiness)	
Staff certification/licensure/ credentials	Process of Schooling (PS)
Staff/faculty survey/attitudes	Information Systems (IS)
Staff collaboration	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Staff evaluation process	Information Systems (IS)
Staff evaluations – instrument	Process of Schooling (PS)
Staff goal setting	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Staff meeting agendas	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Staff meeting minutes	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Staff participation in community organizations	Process of Schooling (PS)
Standing/steering committee members	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Standing/steering committee minutes	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Standing/steering committee agenda	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Standing/steering committee plan of action	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Accountability - state or agency reporting system	Information Systems (IS)
Strategic planning documentation	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Strategic planning - action plan	School Improvement Plan (SIP)

Documentation/Procedures Institutions can Use to Demonstrate Compliance with NCA CASI Standard-Criteria	Correlation to Specific Standard
Strategic planning -action plan implementation	School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Student characteristic analysis	Information Systems (IS)
Student handbook	Process of Schooling (PS)
Student loan availability published plan	Process of Schooling (PS)
Student loan default management plan	Process of Schooling (PS)
Student management system	Information Systems (IS)
Student management system (computerized)	Information Systems (IS)
Student service plan	Process of Schooling (PS)
Student service plan - interviews personnel	Process of Schooling (PS)
Student surveys/attitudes	Information Systems (IS)
Syllabi	Process of Schooling (PS)
Technology/media - availability/accessibility	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Technology/media effectiveness	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Technology/media - integration - curriculum	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Technology/media personnel - credentialed	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Technology/media – plan	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Technology/media - plan – budget	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Technology/media - up to date	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Teacher evaluations (see staff evaluations)	
Teacher planning time	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Title IV compliance	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Transfer policy	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Tuition – refund policies	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Tuition - reasonable fees	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Tuition - tracking system	Resource & Allocation (RA)
Tutoring	Process of Education (PS)
Up-to-date Programs	Information Systems (IS)
Vision statement	Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Wellness policy	Process of Education (PS)
Withdrawal action plan	Information Systems (IS)
Withdrawal tracking and data analysis	Information Systems (IS)
Work orders (See Contextual learning)	

(Extracted from NCA CASI 2007 Self Study/Team Evaluation Team Tool

Documentation).

Appendix D. NCA CASI Postsecondary Certificate-Granting Institutions – Completion Rates

FROM THE 2007 NCA CASI ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE TOTAL POPULATION OF NCA CASI INSTITUTIONS. COMPLETION RATES WILL BE USED AS THE CHARACTERISTIC FOR PURPOSIVE SAMPLING USING A MAXIMUM VARIATION STRATEGY IN ORDER TO SELECT FIFTEEN TO TWENTY NCA CASI INSTITUTION COORDINATORS FOR THE INTERVIEW PROCESS.

Used with the permission by Melinda Isaacs, Associate Vice-President of Postsecondary Education, AdvancED/NCA CASI.

School	St	Total Enrollment	Program Completion Rate	Job Placement Rate	License Exam-Pass Rate	Average Completion/License
	MO	648	100.00%	66.70%	100.00%	100.00%
	MO	691	99.00%	94.00%	100.00%	99.50%
	MO	889	97.00%	99.00%	100.00%	98.50%
	WV	580	97.00%	98.00%	100.00%	98.50%
	MO	646	99.00%	95.00%	97.00%	98.00%
	OH	2731	98.90%	95.00%	96.40%	97.65%
	OH	67	96.70%	78.30%	98.30%	97.50%
	OH	85	95.00%	85.00%	100.00%	97.50%
	MO	320	95.00%	95.79%	100.00%	97.50%
	OH	300	95.00%	93.00%	100.00%	97.50%
	IN	1100	94.61%	82.69%	98.53%	96.57%
	WV	81	93.00%	73.00%	100.00%	96.50%
	OH	42	98.00%	90.00%	95.00%	96.50%
	OH	148	94.40%	97.50%	98.40%	96.40%
	OH	165	93.94%	90.24%	98.20%	96.07%
	MO	165	93.94%	90.24%	98.20%	96.07%
	MO	583	98.70%	79.00%	91.67%	95.19%
	OH	1150	96.00%	88.00%	94.00%	95.00%
	WV	201	95.00%	90.00%	95.00%	95.00%
	OK	700	93.00%	86.00%	97.00%	95.00%
	OH	231	92.00%	92.00%	97.67%	94.84%
	CO	437	96.15%	93.75%	93.05%	94.60%
	OH	65	93.00%	89.00%	96.00%	94.50%
	OH	184	90.00%	96.00%	99.00%	94.50%
	OH	150	91.80%	97.80%	96.70%	94.25%
	OH	713	91.30%	96.30%	96.80%	94.05%
	OH	311	91.30%	96.30%	96.80%	94.05%
	WV	298	90.00%	97.00%	98.00%	94.00%
	OH	2558	90.00%	86.00%	98.00%	94.00%

School	St	Total Enrollment	Program Completion Rate	Job Placement Rate	License Exam-Pass Rate	Average Completion/License
	OH	1500	91.40%	82.20%	96.30%	93.85%
	MO	500	95.30%	99.00%	92.00%	93.65%
	OH	75	94.50%	92.90%	92.50%	93.50%
	OH	1289	91.00%	88.00%	96.00%	93.50%
	OH	15	86.70%	92.30%	100.00%	93.35%
	OH	584	93.60%	93.40%	93.00%	93.30%
	OH	410	90.30%	87.50%	96.10%	93.20%
	MO	1012	96.00%	94.00%	90.00%	93.00%
	OH	92	91.30%	94.30%	94.10%	92.70%
	MO	140	100.00%	85.10%	85.00%	92.50%
	MO	234	90.00%	90.00%	95.00%	92.50%
	OK	1131	88.30%	97.60%	96.60%	92.45%
	MO	1496	91.00%	90.00%	93.00%	92.00%
	OH	1019	89.00%	95.00%	95.00%	92.00%
	OH	2234	88.06%	93.90%	95.77%	91.92%
	OH	262	86.50%	91.70%	96.70%	91.60%
	OK	367	91.00%	92.00%	92.00%	91.50%
	OH	112	90.00%	67.00%	93.00%	91.50%
	IN	50	88.00%	100.00%	95.00%	91.50%
	WV	370	92.00%	92.28%	90.25%	91.13%
	WV	548	82.24%	85.00%	100.00%	91.12%
	WV	447	82.14%	95.00%	100.00%	91.07%
	OH	274	89.00%	96.00%	93.00%	91.00%
	MO	3591	85.00%	95.00%	97.00%	91.00%
	MO	345	87.50%	87.00%	94.44%	90.97%
	OH	670	87.50%	91.10%	94.00%	90.75%
	OH	720	84.33%	94.90%	96.80%	90.57%
	OH	1659	86.00%	93.00%	95.00%	90.50%
	WV	565	85.00%	52.00%	96.00%	90.50%
	MO	614	81.00%	71.00%	100.00%	90.50%
	OK	719	81.00%	89.20%	100.00%	90.50%

School	St	Total Enrollment	Program Completion Rate	Job Placement Rate	License Exam-Pass Rate	Average Completion/License
	OH	1384	81.00%	73.00%	100.00%	90.50%
	WV	301	85.88%	97.00%	95.00%	90.44%
	MO	19	82.00%	100.00%	98.80%	90.40%
	OK	1060	91.20%	86.20%	89.50%	90.35%
	MO	58	93.00%	86.00%	87.50%	90.25%
	OK	928	92.30%	89.40%	88.20%	90.25%
	MO	498	95.00%	95.00%	85.00%	90.00%
	OH	4416	83.80%	95.70%	96.00%	89.90%
	OK	573	86.60%	90.80%	93.00%	89.80%
	OH	1472	89.20%	92.00%	90.20%	89.70%
	OH	1302	84.40%	95.80%	94.90%	89.65%
	OK	709	89.51%	96.57%	89.50%	89.51%
	WV	619	80.00%	60.00%	99.00%	89.50%
	OH	6103	91.90%	91.20%	86.70%	89.30%
	OK	345	77.90%	91.10%	100.00%	88.95%
	OK	846	81.90%	84.60%	95.80%	88.85%
	OH	393	83.80%	91.80%	93.50%	88.65%
	MI	150	95.00%	95.00%	82.00%	88.50%
	OH	59	85.00%	92.00%	92.00%	88.50%
	MO	665	84.70%	91.40%	92.30%	88.50%
	OH	1467	87.40%	85.00%	89.50%	88.45%
	WV	317	92.00%	88.10%	84.80%	88.40%
	MO	250	76.50%	95.00%	100.00%	88.25%
	OK	233	76.00%	88.00%	100.00%	88.00%
	OH	950	77.00%	85.50%	98.90%	87.95%
	IL	420	83.00%	99.00%	92.00%	87.50%
	WV	378	79.00%	95.00%	95.45%	87.23%
	IL	141	81.00%	95.00%	93.00%	87.00%
	WV	560	80.40%	96.00%	93.60%	87.00%

School	St	Total Enrollment	Program Completion Rate	Job Placement Rate	License Exam-Pass Rate	Average Completion/License
	MI	909	92.00%	77.00%	82.00%	87.00%
	WV	454	74.00%	100.00%	100.00%	87.00%
	OK	820	90.90%	92.00%	83.00%	86.95%
	OH	140	78.40%	100.00%	95.00%	86.70%
	OK	2379	87.30%	92.30%	86.00%	86.65%
	MO	162	78.10%	65.00%	95.00%	86.55%
	OH	170	88.00%	75.00%	85.00%	86.50%
	OH	175	81.00%	98.00%	92.00%	86.50%
	MO	25	79.00%	73.00%	93.30%	86.15%
	OK	530	74.00%	84.00%	98.00%	86.00%
	MN	82	71.00%	71.00%	100.00%	85.50%
	OH	477	71.00%	86.00%	100.00%	85.50%
	OK	7380	84.30%	51.20%	86.50%	85.40%
	OK	270	83.30%	95.80%	87.50%	85.40%
	OK	161	93.00%	91.00%	77.00%	85.00%
	OH	2890	100.00%	79.00%	70.00%	85.00%
	MO	30	70.00%	96.00%	100.00%	85.00%
	WV	415	80.00%	100.00%	88.00%	84.00%
	OK	683	67.60%	81.40%	100.00%	83.80%
	OK	262	83.60%	86.30%	84.00%	83.80%
	KS	340	73.24%	89.02%	94.25%	83.75%
	MO	2270	88.00%	97.70%	79.00%	83.50%
	OH	150	76.98%	86.60%	89.80%	83.39%
	OH	226	85.00%	98.00%	81.00%	83.00%
	WV	721	79.14%	97.00%	86.63%	82.89%
	OK	239	88.00%	90.00%	77.00%	82.50%
	KS	2353	76.00%	96.00%	89.00%	82.50%
	OH	560	70.00%	65.00%	95.00%	82.50%
	OH	120	83.00%	78.00%	81.00%	82.00%
	OH	901	77.00%	87.00%	87.00%	82.00%
	WV	185	71.00%	92.00%	93.00%	82.00%

School	St	Total Enrollment	Program Completion Rate	Job Placement Rate	License Exam-Pass Rate	Average Completion/License
	OH	401	78.40%	61.70%	84.70%	81.55%
	WV	450	90.00%	89.00%	73.00%	81.50%
	CO	1930	83.00%	86.00%	80.00%	81.50%
	OH	269	72.20%	98.50%	89.20%	80.70%
	OK	891	76.10%	75.50%	85.00%	80.55%
	WV	449	65.00%	80.00%	96.00%	80.50%
	OH	3409	74.00%	91.00%	86.00%	80.00%
	CO	1443	74.00%	84.00%	85.00%	79.50%
	OH	29	76.00%	83.00%	82.00%	79.00%
	OK	310	87.00%	87.00%	70.00%	78.50%
	OK	320	83.20%	82.70%	73.00%	78.10%
	OH	208	86.00%	77.00%	70.00%	78.00%
	MO	47	62.00%	93.00%	94.00%	78.00%
	OK	1603	83.00%	84.10%	73.00%	78.00%
	OH	48	94.00%	76.00%	60.00%	77.00%
	OK	470	83.00%	95.00%	71.00%	77.00%
	OK	256	89.00%	95.00%	64.00%	76.50%
	OH	430	72.00%	97.00%	79.00%	75.50%
	MO	631	76.00%	77.70%	73.70%	74.85%
	OK	242	84.00%	96.00%	65.00%	74.50%
	OK	128	78.00%	55.00%	71.00%	74.50%
	OK	831	66.00%	92.10%	83.00%	74.50%
	CO	10572	69.00%	88.00%	79.00%	74.00%
	MO	342	66.60%	87.50%	78.90%	72.75%
	MO	361	97.00%	99.00%	48.00%	72.50%
	OK	137	81.00%	86.00%	63.00%	72.00%
	OH	185	60.50%	82.50%	81.50%	71.00%

School	St	Total Enrollment	Program Completion Rate	Job Placement Rate	License Exam-Pass Rate	Average Completion/License
	MO	355	55.00%	32.00%	83.00%	69.00%
	MN	243	65.00%	69.40%	n/a	65.00%
	OK	548	52.00%	89.00%	78.00%	65.00%
	OK	78	65.00%	89.00%	59.00%	62.00%
	OK	273	52.00%	67.00%	70.00%	61.00%
Average			84.5%	87.6%	89.9%	87.1%

APPENDIX E. – DATA SUMMARY ORGANIZED BY NCA CASI STANDARDS, CRITERIA, AND OTHER THEMES

A snapshot of the strengths and improvement areas of NCA CASI public, accredited postsecondary certificate-granting institutions was identified through the holistic documentation analysis of commendations and recommendations on the 125 accreditation team reports. My research examined all 4,067 of the commendations and recommendations for these institutions. These statements were coded according to one of the five NCA CASI standards, sub-coded by criteria within these standards, and emerging theme indicators were further identified within these criteria areas. The analysis identified emerging theme indicators for all NCA CASI standards and criteria areas, and two other themes of school culture and relationships and documentation. Completion, placement, and licensure/credential passage rate for the school receiving the particular commendation or recommendation are identified in some statement excerpts. Schools may receive a commendation and a recommendation within the same standard, criteria theme. An example would be school may receive an IS: data commendation recognizing the school collects a broad range of perceptual data from staff, student, and community members. A recommendation, in this instance, may be made for IS: data to make improvements in analyzing these surveys using a computerized process versus paper/pencil tabulation. This Appendix serves as a tool for NCA CASI postsecondary schools and AdvancED/NCA CASI to examine the emergent indicator themes arranged in the sequence according to the Standards and Criteria Manual (Appendix B).

Standard	Criteria or Other Theme	Percentage (%) of Schools Receiving Commendations	Percentage (%) of Schools Receiving Recommendations
SIP	School Improvement Plan	66%	41%
SIP	Steering Committee	7%	5%
SIP	Advisory Committees	69%	53%
SIP	NCA CASI Ongoing Accreditation Process	22%	13%
SIP	Goals	41%	19%
IS	Data-driven Information	72%	75%
IS	Student Performance Measures	57%	38%
PS	Student Learning Goal	19%	9%
PS	Curriculum	59%	36%
PS	Teaching	45%	30%
PS	Professional Development	53%	51%
PS	Assessment	34%	34%
PS	Pupil Personnel Services	77%	59%
VL	Business, Industry, and Community	82%	54%
VL	School Leadership and Governance	62%	26%
VL	Mission and Vision	31%	29%
RA	Time	34%	18%
RA	Space	75%	70%
RA	Personnel, Preparation and Qualifications	66%	59%
RA	Finances	70%	44%
RA	Instructional Resources	34%	23%
RA	Information and Communication Technologies	55%	45%
Other	School Culture and Relationships	75%	6%
Other	Documentation	49%	54%

School Improvement Plan Standard

The first NCA CASI standard is the School Improvement Plan (SIP). The five criteria areas under the SIP standard focus on 1) an ongoing data-driven school improvement plan; 2) standing committees to initiate, plan, and coordinate school improvement plan; 3) community/business involvement; 4) ongoing accreditation process; and 5) assessment of student achievement and performance goals (Appendix B).

The school is committed to developing and implementing an improvement plan that emphasizes student learning and achievement. The school community accepts that the school improvement must be pursued continually and aggressively (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007, NCA Standard/Criteria Manual, p. 5).

NCA CASI external peer-team members review the school's school improvement plan to assure it is data-driven; involves stakeholders in the development and ongoing implementation; and has measurable goals for student achievement. State Departments of Education have different names and requirements for their continuous improvement, school improvement, and/or Perkins plans. NCA CASI recognizes these state plans as the documented evidence for the school improvement plan, but review these documents and processes to assure compliance with the specific criteria (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007).

School Improvement Plan

The NCA CASI External Peer-Review Team Reports identify commendations on the school improvement plan development, implementation, and documentation. These commendations focus on formalized strategic planning processes, recognize ongoing involvement and commitment of all staff and stakeholders, address multiple aspects of the school, and establish and evaluate goals for student success. Additionally, commendations acknowledge formalized, ongoing strategic planning processes, and integration of other continuous improvement initiatives including ISO:9000 registration and Baldrige criteria.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) Standard: School Improvement Plan Commendations.

66% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D1253	Strategic planning process	The school has developed a student-centric comprehensive school improvement plan. The plan was developed from the school and community and the process was facilitated by an external consultant from [the local university]. The strategic planning process demonstrates a strong commitment to school improvement and to addressing community needs. <i>(95% completion rate, 95% placement rate, and 85% licensure/credential passage rate).</i>
D2697	Strategic planning process	The adult development team is committed to continuous improvement in both practice and processes. The carefully documented product cycle enables the team to identify and act on market needs, determine and implement best practices, and correct deficiency areas quickly. The quality processes are definitely models for other technology centers to emulate <i>(88% completion rate, 98% placement rate, and 97% licensure/credential passage rate).</i>
D1186	Framework	The external audit of the school is a valuable tool for use in the school improvement plan. <i>(94% completion rate, 98% placement rate, and 98% licensure/credential passage rate).</i>
D305	Staff commitment to school improvement	Leadership, faculty, and staff were knowledgeable about the school improvement plan and were involved in its development and implementation. The school's strategic planning meetings demonstrate a strong commitment to school improvement. <i>(78% completion rate, 97% placement rate, and 90% licensure/credential passage rate).</i>
D1026	Staff commitment to school improvement	The school improvement plan reflects the visionary leadership of the director. The continuous school improvement process clearly indicates the dedication and effort on the part of the steering committee. Administrators, faculty, and staff have taken the continuous school improvement processes very seriously and have given of their time well beyond the requirements. Classified support personnel have contributed greatly to the success of the continuous improvement process. <i>(96% completion rate, 93% placement rate, and 94% licensure/credential passage rate).</i>

D924	Addresses multiple aspects of the school	The plan addresses many of the aspects of the school improvement plan standards, including professional development, strengthening academic, career and technical skills and improving the use of technology. It is also evident that the school is committed to school improvement, indicated by the excellence of instruction observed in the classroom and the positive test results. <i>(78% completion rate, 100% placement rate, and 95% licensure/credential passage rate).</i>
D2757	Goals	The school administration and staff have done an exemplary job in developing a strategic plan, including the vision and mission statements. Goals were specifically addressed by individual work groups, and objectives were developed to meet the needs of the specific group. The revision of goals was addressed on a consistent basis. The success of the goal attainment became apparent while touring the campus and observing the accomplishments that have taken place. <i>(93% completion rate, 86% placement rate, and 97% licensure/credential passage rate).</i>
D534	Integration of other continuous improvement initiatives	The school's adult services are registered to the ISO 9000:2000 family of quality systems standards which consist of four international standards that provide guidance in the development and of an effective quality management system. Not specific to any product, these standards are applicable to manufacturing and service industries alike. These activities lead to providing the quality related expectations of customers. <i>(90% completion rate, 67% placement rate, and 93% licensure/credential passage rate).</i>

Recommendations for the school improvement plan identify the need for a more formalized planning process; promote ongoing involvement of staff in the process; data-driven; and integrate accountability processes into one comprehensive plan.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) Standard: School Improvement Plan Recommendation Statements

41% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D92	Formalized planning	It was evident that the district spent considerable time and effort in developing the strategic plan. However, action

	process	<p>items and timelines would make the plan easier to evaluate. The district is encouraged to have an annual evaluation of the individual goals and the overall strategic plan and to disseminate the annual findings to all individuals involved in the process.</p> <p><i>(88% completion rate, 97% placement rate, and 96% licensure/credential passage rate).</i></p>
D2821	Formalized planning process	<p>The school improvement committees consist of the director of career and technical education and the entire faculty. A next step in the SIP process might include developing a formal committee with a chairperson and keeping a formal set of minutes for each meeting which will help monitor the progress during the course of the year.</p> <p><i>(88% completion rate, 100% placement rate, and 95% licensure/credential passage rate).</i></p>
D1616	Formalized planning process	<p>The school should describe how the school's improvement plan correlates with the school district's plan and district goals. The team recommends continuing to work on the school improvement plan and developing a plan that addresses industry needs, works with the development of the school profile and identifies a set of goals focusing on enhanced learning for all students. This plan should provide a specific assessment system designed to document increased student success on the schools goals.</p> <p><i>(87% completion rate, 87% placement rate, and 94% licensure/credential passage rate).</i></p>
D1419	Increased involvement in school improvement	<p>The team recommends broader involvement of all staff in the development of school improvement goals and the accreditation self study.</p> <p><i>(99% completion rate, 95% placement rate, and 97% licensure/credential passage rate).</i></p>
D2475	Increased involvement in school improvement	<p>The evaluation team did not see evidence of student involvement in the planning process. It is recommended that this group be included in the future.</p> <p><i>(93% completion rate, 86% placement rate, and 97% licensure/credential passage rate).</i></p>
D1949	Data-driven	<p>Draw staff development needs from data gathered and work toward all faculty being engaged in the school improvement process taking responsibility for student learning.</p> <p><i>(85% completion rate, 95% placement rate, and 97% licensure/credential passage rate).</i></p>
3495	Data-driven	<p>The school improvement process will be enhanced by a better school information system and by developing a more detailed annual budget.</p> <p><i>(82% completion rate, 85% placement rate, and 100% licensure/credential passage rate).</i></p>

D2825	Comprehensive system	Although the review standard was marked as having been met, it was noted that the individual departments and campuses had strategic plans, but the district as a whole did not. The administration and staff reassured the review team that the district was in the process of developing one and had concentrated efforts on these more-specific plans first. <i>(District average: 83% completion rate, 90% placement rate, and 68% licensure/credential passage rate).</i>
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Standing Steering Committees

Public career and technical postsecondary schools must have a standing steering committee for the institution to provide ongoing input and feedback for continuous improvement, according to an NCA CASI school coordinator. The established committee meets the NCA CASI standards, as well as complies with the federal Perkins regulations and many state department requirements. Commendations identify the composition of steering committees, community involvement, and commitment.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) Standard: Steering Committee Commendations

7% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D14	Composition of steering committees	The Building Leadership Team consisting of the chief administrator, five faculty members elected through secret ballot, and one student elected by the student body provides for a variety of input into day-to-day operations and continued institutional planning.
D308	Community involvement	The current institutional improvement initiatives include many avenues. The school involves groups in the community led by the Community Relations Board which meets monthly to offer recommendations and review programs. The center also addresses industry needs through the Industry Needs Council which meets quarterly.
D1048	Commitment	Administrators, faculty and staff have taken the continuous school improvement process very seriously and have given of their time well beyond the requirements.

Recommendations suggest strategies to structure the meetings and roles of the committees; develop and monitor action timelines; and evaluate progress.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) Standard: Steering Committee Recommendations

5% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D182	Structure and roles	A School Improvement Team, or Committee, needs to be implemented to plan and coordinate the schools ongoing improvement efforts. Input is currently solicited from all stakeholders; however, a smaller team is more effective for implementing and monitoring. This should be a standing committee that meets at least quarterly to determine if the established goals for the SIP are being met and/or if they need revision. (91% completion rate, 88% placement rate, and 96% licensure/credential passage).
D287	Structure and roles	Meet regularly with stakeholders to assure that an adequate array of career development programs are available for students to train for careers available in the area. (81% completion rate, 98% placement rate, and 92% licensure/credential passage rate).
D1130	Action plan	It is our recommendation that you now establish action plan committees to implement your school improvement plan. This can be accomplished by writing implementation strategies, develop timelines to achieve the goals for each strategy, and establish criteria to evaluate the progress toward accomplishing each goal. (83% completion rate, 99% placement rate, and 92% licensure/credential passage rate).

Business, Industry, and Community Involvement - Advisory Committees

Commendations focus on community support, positive advisory committee relationships, composition of the advisory committees, and communication structures. Advisory committee member roles include: identifying community labor market needs; identifying clinical and internship sites, and employment opportunities; assisting in

program development; analyzing curriculum, monitoring student achievement; serving as mentors for instructors; and recommending resources.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) Standard: Advisory Committee Commendations

69% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D65	Community support	[The school] has an excellent reputation within the community as evidenced by the advisory committee support for each program at the center.
D101	Relationships	Advisory Board members speak very highly of the programs and continue to supply meaningful input and assistance. Active diverse community involvement on advisory committees and boards appear to be in response to an environment that invites their ideas and thoughts.
D1157	Relationships	The Advisory Committee is extremely supportive and complimentary of the faculty and graduates of the program. Instructors feel comfortable calling members for assistance and advice. Members report that meetings contain substance with no hidden agendas
D1973	Relationships	Advisory committee members interviewed expressed the feeling that their input was valued by the organization.
D162	Advisory roles – Labor market needs	The school continues to show an overwhelming willingness to develop programs to meet the special needs of the community as stated to the review committee by community and state agencies, School Board President and Advisory Committee members.
D560	Advisory roles – Curriculum	Each career development program has an active, involved advisory committee that provides input addressing the needs of business and industry. Advisory committee input is utilized along with industry and assessment information to determine future program design.
D1345	Advisory roles - Curriculum	The advisory committees are active in the process of education by assisting the instructors with what is needed in each curriculum regarding the reality of learning job related skills.
D1301	Advisory roles – Curriculum	Strong partnerships with business and industry contribute to the overall educational process at the school. The team noted many examples of community and industry involvement including, but not limited to, serving on advisory committees, providing clinical sites for the PN program, and ride-a-longs for the firefighter program, and providing technical expertise and resources.

D338	Advisory roles – Employment opportunities	Meetings of the career and technical education advisory board have greatly enhanced the link between program, community and employment opportunities.
D1766	Advisory roles – Employment opportunities	The advisory groups are an excellent resource for students in areas of internship and job opportunities. Advisory groups and partnerships with local business have been instrumental in the planning and implementation of the new Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) program.
D1465	Advisory roles – Multiple	Dedicated participation from the community, business and industry, and advisory committee members is evident. They regularly provide input and recommendation for program improvement, curriculum design, equipment purchases, and contribute to general school improvement, as well.

Many recommendation statements on the advisory committees identified lack of meeting minute documentation for some schools; the need to increase the number and diversity of members, as well as increase communication through more frequent meetings. Data collection through advisory member surveys would provide additional documented input, and evidence is needed showing advisory input is used. Committee member roles are suggested to utilize their expertise in the classrooms and capitalize on their networking contacts to promote the school.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) Standard: Advisory Committee Recommendations

53% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D330	Documentation	More structured record keeping of advisory and staff meetings, agendas and minutes.
D634	Documentation	An advisory committee representative of the community should be involved in the review and planning of the school's educational program. While interviews reflect advisory committee involvement, there is very little documentation to support that. The school's written statement on advisory committee participation sets its own high standards, which should be met and documented.

D119	Increased communication	Recommendation is to have Advisory Committee Meetings at a minimum of two times per year in order to more actively use actions and recommendations in improvement efforts. While they are involved in the school, formal meetings will enhance their effectiveness.
D132	Data collection	Continue to follow through with the improvement strategy to develop and implement a survey of the adult advisory committees to make decisions involving adult programming.
D1751	Action on input	Have a system in place to address advisory committee concerns, as well as, proof the concerns were considered or implemented.
D3173	Role	Business and co-op placement is an integral part of the programs. Programs foster a positive image in the community; however, this image does not appear to have translated into additional enrollment for the district. Use the advisory committee members as active participants in program development and recruitment.
D1226	Role	More programs should utilize their advisory committee members for panel discussions, field trips, guest speakers, etc.
D2163	Role	The district may wish to consider having mentors from business and industry for the nontraditional students to assist with their retention and placement.

Ongoing Accreditation Process

NCA CASI accreditation is an ongoing five-year continuous improvement cycle. Schools are required to submit an annual report providing demographic updates and evaluating their progress on every standard and criteria through a rating scale. It is a requirement of the vision and leadership standard for schools to provide staff to participate in training and serve on external peer-review accreditation teams (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007). Commendations address the benefits of accreditation processes, commitment of the staff, and confirm documentation is on file.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) Standard: Ongoing NCA CASI Accreditation Process

Commendations

22% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D1190	Accreditation process	The external audit of the school is a valuable tool for use in the school improvement plan
D2302	Accreditation process	The team recommends that an additional staff member receive training for NCA site visit teams since the school has grown to over 500 students.
D604	Commitment	The school is to be commended for its commitment to pursue accreditation by NCA. The standard and criteria for postsecondary education are relatively new, and although the school has not fully implemented all criteria, it is evident from on-site review that all staff are dedicated to completing the process of full compliance. Significant steps have been made by the staff during its internal self study, and interviews with staff reflect their on-going commitment to continuous improvement.
D2222	Documentation	The school administration and staff are to be commended for pioneering the online self-study documentation process. Although some glitches occurred when reviewing the documents, the staff did a good job in placing the required documents on the dedicated website. Any additional documentation required by the evaluation team was available at the school on the day of the on-site evaluation.
	Documentation	The NCA self-study files were well organized and accurately reflected the essential evidence needed for the external team review. A wide range of materials were presented for review of information systems utilized at the schools adult career center. The materials were well organized in either files or notebooks, were readily accessible and provided sufficient information to make a thorough review.

Recommendations encourage schools to use the NCA CASI self study document as a continuous improvement tool; and promote review team participation.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) Standard: Ongoing NCA CASI Accreditation Process

Recommendations

13% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D1190	Accreditation process	The external audit of the school is a valuable tool for use in the school improvement plan
D87	Accreditation process	Utilize self study document as a continuous improvement tool. Include all staff members to establish rating for all criteria and select improvement goals based on criteria weaknesses. The school should review and complete the strength rating for each NCA CASI standard and criteria. This rating will serve as an excellent resource for the School Improvement Process.
D2864	Documentation	Accreditation requirements are met and supporting documentation is kept on file.
D977	Documentation	Publish accreditation identification in all publications and on the web-site.
D1919	Team Participation	The team recommends the NCA steering committee utilize input from the entire administration, faculty and staff, perhaps as members of action teams addressing documentation for the criteria. Their active participation on the NCA committees is essential to the success of school accreditation and school improvement efforts.
D1329	Team Participation	Recommend other teachers become certified through NCA CASI and make required visits annually.

School Improvement Plan Goals

The school improvement planning process should analyze data and develop student-centered, measurable goals. Commendations recognize formalized goal development processes, involvement of multiple stakeholders, Perkins alignment, and student achievement.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) Standard: Goals Commendations

41% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D2577	Formalized process	Goals are established through a formal process and key individuals participate in the formulation and implementation of the plan.
D3518	Formalized process & Stakeholder involvement	School Improvement Plan goals were co-created by administration and staff and reflected advisory member needs and in most cases, student performance goals. Tracking of progress on the goals is timely and detailed
D337	Perkins alignment	School improvement plan goals are evident in the Perkins Plan. The Perkins Plan is evaluated annually by on-site visits and reporting procedures from state staff members at the State Department of Education.
D207	Student achievement focus	Goals are designed to improve and strengthen student achievement.

Recommendations focus on measurable goals, alignment with other accountability measures, action strategies, and ongoing evaluation processes.

. School Improvement Plan (SIP) Standard: Goal Recommendations

19% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D179	Measurable goals	Broad based goals are difficult to show outcomes for, without long lists of strategies. It is easier if the goals are divided into more measurable segments. For example, instead of "Improve academic education" as a goal, it would be easier to measure if this were listed as several goals. One would be to "increase the reading skills" of students in all technical programs. This is measurable with the tests already administered and a desired outcome can be listed. The same could be done for writing, math, and basic computer skills; all of which would be the improving of academic education.

D4521	Measurable goals	The technology center administrators are encouraged to continue the strategic planning process. Specifically, they should continue to ensure that goals and objectives are realistic, achievable, measurable, and understood by all referent groups.
D3345	Measurable goals	Benchmark performance measures should be established based upon nationally recognized standards such as new program growth, market penetration, return rate, program cancellation rates, and financial measures. The staff should then annually evaluate and increase program goals.
D181	Alignment	Other ideas for school improvement goals can be taken from the FY2003 [State Performance report. The report] shows areas where improvements could be beneficial. The Monitoring Summary Report from the [State] Department of Education for FY2004 addresses other areas for continuous improvement that should be made a part of the new computer based plan.
D776	Action strategies	The team recommends strengthening the building improvement goals by identifying specific strategies for motivating achievement and measurement criteria in the evaluation process.

Information Systems Standard

The Information Systems standard and criteria require schools to use a comprehensive, data-driven information system. The system continuously analyzes student performance and effectiveness by collecting student and community data (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007). Schools are in various stages in information systems expertise, as evidenced by 72% of schools receiving commendations and 75% with recommendations in this standard. These stages could be classified as data collection, data analysis, and data-driven decision-making. The Information Systems standard section also identifies commendations and recommendation statements for student performance.

Data-driven Information

Commendation themes for data collection relate to target populations, types, and purposes of data collection methods. Data Analysis commendations focus on technology-based analysis processes. Strengths identified on data-driven decision-making focus on statistical analysis of performance and program decisions.

Information Systems (IS) Standard: Data-driven Information Commendations.

72% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
<hr/>		
Data Collection		
D66	Type	The adult education department has collected attitude data from students, alumni, faculty and the community that clearly demonstrates the high overall satisfaction level and positive educational climate that exists at the center.
D1801	Type	The schools gather a multitude of data: standardized tests, perceptual surveys, formative/summative data to track student progress, and demographics.
D1929	Type	The school is to be commended for having Advisory Committee surveys that add another community input dimension to their data. Through the school's advisory committees and community liaisons, school leadership and faculty can evaluate community needs and factor them into curriculum, equipment, and facilities planning
D706	Type	School information is collected and reviewed on a regular basis, including: attendance, grades, exit surveys, instructor and course evaluations, assessment information and placement data.
D114	Purpose	The (school) is developing a process to collect data that allows the institution to make decisions based upon information derived from data. The continued development of this process should allow for effective management of resources and the development of accurate budgets
D312	Purpose	The school has in place a data driven system that is comprehensive, current and is derived from many sources. The system is designed to track students from the application process to successful placement in a job or postsecondary education.
D2952	Purpose	The Auto Collision survey conducted at one campus is a great example of labor market research for that program.

D171	Purpose	The school has developed a process to collect data that will allow the center to make decisions based upon information derived from data. The continued development of this process should allow for more effective management of resources and the development of accurate budgets.
Data Analysis		
D306	Technology-based analysis	The use of Blackboard to analyze data collected by surveys is exceptionally presented and well-utilized.
D2769	Statistical analysis of performance	A great deal of evidence shows that statistical data are used in the analysis of departmental performance.
Data-driven Decision-making		
D842	Data-driven decisions	The use of control charts allows for the identification of trends and assists in making decisions based upon long term analysis.
D308	Data-driven decisions	The data that is collected is used in driving programmatic decisions.
D389	Data-driven decisions	The tracking tools used by the school Adult Division collected the necessary information from students to allow accurate, timely reporting to the State and allow the adult division to compile the necessary data on which to base program decisions
D1164	Data-driven decisions	The school information system is outstanding. It allows staff to monitor a wide variety of data about students, school operations, trends. There is strong evidence that decision-making at the school is based on facts furnished by the database.

Recommendations suggest improvements in data collection methods; sources of data; implementation, frequency and consistency of survey processes; and need for centralized data management systems. Data analysis recommendations include implementing an analysis process, performance and trend analysis, and using technology. Data-driven decision making needs were identified as utilizing data, and training and/or hiring of staff.

Information Systems (IS) Standard: Data-driven Information Recommendations

75% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
Data Collection		
D1764	Sources	The team recommends the development of and inclusion of a school profile that specific data for individual programs such as, but not limited to, completion rates, pass/fail rates, credentialing rates, drop out rates, and placement rates.
D193	Sources	Lack of surveys (staff, student, and community) collection and review of surveys could be used as a valuable tool in curriculum development/tweaking. Suggestions might be an entrance survey, (What do I expect to learn in this program), a mid-year survey, (Am I satisfied with the training I have received to date?), and a completion survey, (Did the program meet my expectations?). Employer surveys would provide customer satisfaction levels and could provide valuable information on an ongoing basis as industry needs change. Surveys should be a large part of our continuous improvement plan.
D462	Sources	Continue to work on internship surveys for employers and for student completion to ensure these are valuable experiences, expectations are being met and the course curriculum is covering the needed job skills (D462).
D4510	Sources	The instructors have expressed a desire to rewrite the student satisfaction survey. This is recommended. More areas could be included for student comment. Staff recognizes that students are their customers and they are desirous of their input.
D291	Consistency	Increase communication between directors/instructors of the various programs and develop consistency of data collection forms, such as evaluations.
D410	Methods	Ensure that students are completing the Customer Satisfaction surveys in class when possible (in lieu of mailing) to increase response rate and giving more data that can be assessed and evaluated.
Data Analysis		
D1789	Technology	We recommend that the school computerize, at minimum, the tabulation process using an Excel spreadsheet to enter survey data. This will allow for measuring improvements versus anecdotal comments. Ideally, surveys could be conducted online (ie: Survey Monkey).
	Technology	Consider using web-based surveys to allow for automatic compilation and charting of survey data.

D3496	Performance Analysis	Better analysis of drop-out information is needed.
D1928	Trend Analysis	All data presented for document review should be multi-year, so trends can be analyzed. Data should be analyzed and linked to programmatic changes, instructional improvement efforts, student achievement and professional development provided.
D496	Trend Analysis	Consider developing methods of better identifying trends. One method might be the use of control charts to identify such trends and to establish criterion to verify that the data are valid to provide for systematic improvement.
D3947	Trend Analysis	The school uses a variety of surveys to drive school improvement. Trend data for the past two surveys reflect an overall satisfaction rating of 96% of those completing the instrument.
Data-driven Decision-making		
D1849	Implement	Surveys completed by teachers should be reviewed with staff and actions taken based on data received should be shared, especially if concerns had been expressed.
D84	Utilization	(The School) has a lot of good data that is captured and used by the center for continuous improvement. The Adult Education Department should continue to utilize their survey data from students, faculty, and community partners in order to continually improve their educational delivery process.
D1930	Utilization	The team recommends that data be multi-year and presented in both aggregated and disaggregated form. Summaries might be written to fully explain how data are used to make decisions on instruction, curriculum, learner outcomes, and professional development needs.
D2144	Staff training	The administration might consider future training for staff in using more data to make instructional decision when establishing individualized goals.
D2688	Alignment	The Director and Superintendent are keenly aware of the challenges of aligning data collection with the Strategic Plan. Efforts to continue in this direction will support new initiatives and changes that are responsive to needs.
D327	Centralized data management system	Find a solution to the school information system (software package) that will allow for growth and the ability to gather data and report necessary local, state, and federal reports.

Student Performance

NCA CASI Information System criteria IS14 focuses on student performance in the areas of program completion, placement, and industry credential passage rates. The

United States Department of Education requires AdvancED/NCA CASI to establish a process to annually monitor these performance measures (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2007).

Commendation statements recognize some of the schools with high student performance measures, emphasis on industry credentialing, comparisons to other schools, and placement services.

Information Systems (IS) Standard: Student Performance Measures Commendations

57% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D2656	Placement	The student overall placement rate was exceptionally high last year at 99.1%. (Note: This recommendation was made after the visit in 2003. The annual report in 2007 shows 93% completion rate, 93% placement rate, and 93% licensure/credential passage rate for this school).
D933	Industry Credential	The team commends the integration of curriculum objectives throughout the course of study. This reinforcement lends its self to the excellent performance results on the NCLEX examination by its graduates (97.3%). An active advisory committee is evident which helps in obtaining quality clinical experiences for students and excellent placement rates (97.26%). The on-site ABLE/GED program is of great assistance in assisting applicants and students having difficulties with academics related to the nursing curriculum. (78.4% completion rate, 100% placement rate, and 95% licensure/credential passage rate).
D2697	Industry Credential	Emphasis on industry standard as an assessment tool for credentialing, certification, and improvement of curriculum is of utmost importance. (91% completion rate, 94% placement rate, and 94% licensure/credential passage rate).
D3478	Industry Credential	State and/or national credentialing can be earned in all programs where such credentials are available. (82 completion rate, 85% placement rate, and 100% licensure/credential passage rate).

D3260	Industry Credential	Certification may be obtained in the following areas of ARIES Networking, CISCO Networking, Dental Assisting, Pro-Start, Welding, Plumbing, Auto Technology, Dental Lab, Licensed Practical Nursing, and Electrical Technology. (97% completion rate, 98% placement rate, and 100% licensure/credential passage rates).
D3192	Industry Credential	The school is to be commended for their continued efforts to credential their instructors, programs, and students. The team encourages the school to continue to press for this level of quality. (95% completion rate, 90% placement rate, and 95% licensure/credential passage).
D2754	Placement Services	The school is to be commended for the effort made to help students gain employment with the addition of the job specialist. Because of the multiple employment issues, this specialist can improve services to students and employers. The students are better prepared for the work world because of the many activities that are offered by the job specialist, instructors, and student services staff. The On-Line College Connection Network, which has been newly implemented, can provide job placement services to current students, as well as alumni. This software provides connection between employers and students and also provides equitable documentation for student access to the job openings. Informative reports can be generated to assist the job specialist and instructors with follow-up reporting activities. (88% completion rate, 97% placement rate, and 92% licensure/credential passage rate).
D2432	Placement Services	Free retraining is offered if the employee does not meet employer expectations for one full year. (District average of the multiple schools is: 91% completion rate, 91% placement rate, and 92% licensure/credential passage rate).

Recommendations suggest improvements in increasing and tracking performance measures, and providing placement services.

Information Systems (IS) Standard: Student Performance Measure Recommendations

38% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D1370	Completion	Develop an internal retention strategy team to follow up on the PN retention survey. The school had an outside review of this issue which [indicated] the topics being taught were too long of hours for a specific content and at too fast of a pace. (88% completion rate, 97% placement rate, and 79% licensure/credential passage rate).
D3650	Completion	A plan should be developed at the school to help retain students through the completion of their program. (Note: Recommendation was from the 2004 report where completion rate was 61% - 2007 Annual Report shows. 91% completion rate, 82% placement rate, and 96% licensure/credential passage rate).
D3501	Completion	Better analysis of drop-out information is needed. (82% completion rate, 85% placement rate, and 100% licensure/credential passage rate).
D3548	Completion	Consider providing a formal exit interview process for all students who drop out of the program. (90% completion rate, 89% placement rate, and 73% licensure/credential passage rate).
D2870	Completion	Program completion rates should be addressed in the student handbook. Consumer information should be available to potential students and other interested parties in paper format because not everyone has access to the Internet. The information should be posted in a visible location. (District average is 69% completion rate, 81 % placement rate, and 90% licensure/credential passage rate).
D145	Industry credential	Seek additional ways to improve the passage rates of national registry exams for EMT and Paramedic programs. (83% completion rate, 78% placement rate, and 81% licensure/credential passage rate).
D198	Placement	Don't forget the possibility of developing a job bank with employers to provide skilled, ready to employ students (91% completion rate, 88% placement rate, and 96% licensure/credential passage rate).

Process of Schooling

The NCA CASI Process of Schooling (PS) standard encompasses student learning goals, curriculum, teaching, professional development, assessment, and student services criteria. The standard states “The school is responsible for developing educational programs that reflect the characteristics of the community and that increase the intellectual, personal, physical, social, and career development of the students it serves” (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2006, Standards and Criteria Manual, p. 8).

Student Learning Goals

Commendations on student learning goals center on documentation, student awareness, and tracking measurable content standards, competencies, or learning outcomes in lesson plans.

Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Student Learning Goal Commendations

19% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D3610	Documentation	Educational objectives are clearly defined in course syllabi and in program booklets.
D957	Awareness	Content standard outcomes are posted in most of the classrooms, on the website, and students are very aware of the terminology and relationship to end of course testing.
D3676	Awareness	Students are given a competency list at the beginning of the program to help them understand what will be taught.
D2416	Tracking	Academic competency checklists are utilized in all occupational programs. Pre- and post-testing by instructional unit is utilized to determine student gains. Occupational instructors are highly involved in determining goals, selecting materials, and incorporating contextual activities that reinforce academic skills.

Recommendations suggest increasing student awareness of learning goals and assuring goals are measurable.

Information Systems (IS) Standard: Student Learning Goals Recommendations

9% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D2275	Awareness	All teachers should make students aware of individual content standards taught each day. This could also be identified on the lesson plan.
D1130	Measurable goals	It was observed that several programs have measurable outcomes within their curriculum; however, it is our recommendation that all program areas review their curriculum to include measurable standards.

Curriculum

Commendations recognize program development is labor market driven; aligned with business/industry, national program accreditation standards and local advisory committee input; innovative; academic integration; and articulations.

. Process of School (PS) Standard: Curriculum Commendations

59% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D2720	Labor market driven	The administration is to be commended for aggressive development and implementation of several innovative programs to include: sonography, bilingual computer fundamentals, biotechnology and geo-spatial technologies. The program planning documents for the programs indicate strong employment demand for the programs as evidenced by national and regional labor market data. The new program proposal document is well developed, comprehensive, and effectively used.
D3357	Labor market driven	The district uses a variety of resources to determine labor market demands. In addition, industry demand appears to be a primary determinant in program development.

D2246	Industry standards	A wide variety of program offerings are available. The administration and staff are commended for the systematic effort it takes to keep programs current with industry standards.
D2285	Program accreditation	The short-term program staff maintains a strong presence in the occupational certification and licensing community and provides leadership in dissemination of regulatory information and changes statewide upon request.
D2736	Program accreditation	The school is to be commended for the commitment to external program review and accreditation. Outside agencies providing program certification include the State Board of Nursing, State Department of Workforce Development, and the State Department of Education. The level of program accreditation and certification that the school attains provides credibility and quality to their programmatic offerings.
D1523	Program accreditation	The school has many strong articulation agreements in place, strong advisory committees, strong emotional and financial support from business and industry and has met program accreditation in many areas.
D1661	Local advisory committee involvement	The team commends the school for its use of external advisory boards for curriculum development. It was evident through the community and school board members as well as instructors and advisory members that valuable input is considered when making decisions regarding equipment, training, and curriculum improvements.
D2175	Innovation	The expansion and delivery of curriculum in program areas such as machining and manufacturing technology, construction trades, and health is evidence that the school believes in innovation.
D2502	Academic integration	It is to be commended for its innovative approach to providing academic integration for all students with an emphasis on the involvement of technical and occupational instructors in the process. Programs in all cluster areas are incorporating writing activities, and math support is provided at all levels from basic to advanced. Science skills are enhanced through program-specific instruction as well as through demonstrations of physical science principles with program equipment.
D311	Articulations	Articulation agreements are being developed aggressively between the school and local colleges, as well as with business and industry.
D3236	Articulations	Articulation agreements with local colleges are in place and updated on a regular basis. Students meeting requirements have the ability to continue their education at the local college.

D480	Articulations	The development of collaborative program efforts and articulations with area career centers and credit granting institutions is extensive and is a great potential benefit for students.
D1300	Articulations	The school articulates with community college (as well as private colleges). This relationship allows students, without repeating coursework, to transfer upon program completion at the school.
D1191	Articulations	Students interviewed had definite career and education goals of how they would use their training after leaving the school. Several LPN students have plans to become RN's.
D2327	Articulations	Excellent articulation and credit opportunities for students with [local] community college. Every postsecondary student can take classes at [school] and receive 24-36 credit hours at the community college for \$25. This dual-enrollee process provides credits for postsecondary programs as follows: Automotive Technology, Culinary Arts, Electromechanical Technology, HVAC, Office Technology, and Surgical Technology.

Recommendations address improvements for academic integration, increased involvement of employer and agencies into curriculum, and program expansion.

Recommendations for increasing articulation opportunities are also identified.

.Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Curriculum Recommendations

36% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D2275	Academic integration	May want to explore a curriculum mapping process to align/integrate academic standards with career program content standards for contextual learning. May first want to start with English and an academy style program area to explore this integrated English delivery approach.
D764	Local advisory committee involvement	Efforts to garner local employer, agencies, and instructors input on program completers competencies and validate course offerings should be systematically put in place.

D3049	Program expansion	The largest area for growth for the district's program offerings is in the area of continuing education. The staff should consider reviewing industry needs and availability of programs from other technology center districts that can be obtained through distance education. Generally speaking, the district has an opportunity to broaden all program offerings in all areas.
D2297	Program expansion	A formal needs assessment process should be developed and documented to guide program and course development and facilitate collaboration between departments. The LERN program planning and evaluative tools could serve as useful tools in program planning, development, and evaluation.
D28	Articulations	Articulation agreements should be sought for all programs to encourage students to seek higher education after graduation.
D877	Articulations	Continue to pursue articulation agreements with other educational institutions to allow students to further their education. The proximity of the school to the local community college provides opportunities and advantages that should continue to be explored.
D1019	Articulations	A review of articulation agreements with other post-secondary institutions should be conducted.
D1794	Articulations	Publicize articulations.

Teaching

Commendations identify a variety of teaching methods including academic integration, project-based learning, service learning, workplace experiences, distance education, technology integration, and addressing individual student learning needs. Structure, including lesson plans, syllabi, and programs of study, also received some commendations.

Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Teaching Commendations

45% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D1241	Variety of teaching methods	During classroom observation, visiting team members were struck by the uniformly high quality of teacher-student interaction. Instructors use a variety of teaching techniques and information is presented in a clear, well organized fashion. In many cases it was difficult to tear ourselves away from the class.
D2330	Variety of teaching methods	A variety of teaching methods are used, including: collaborative teams, demonstrations, hands-on performance activities, technology integration, projects, and multi-program activities.
D2737	Variety of teaching methods	Numerous listening and learning methods are being used, such as surveys, focus groups, repeat enrollment analysis, and CEO network.
D2673	Academic integration	The school is to be commended on its comprehensive attention to providing academic instruction in the context of programs across the breadth of its occupational options and spanning the full spectrum of student learning styles, paces, and abilities.
D3112	Project-based learning/ Service learning	Multi-program projects as demonstrated in the building of the community library by the combined efforts of the Building Construction, Electrical Technology, CISCO, Drafting, and Heating, Ventilation, and Air-conditioning programs, allow students experience in real world applications and the reward of seeing a final project. This project was especially meaningful due to the fact that it allowed students to be instrumental in the replacement of a community asset that was destroyed in a devastating flood.
D1238	Service Learning	The school is committed to community service. Cosmetology students provide free haircuts and other services to handicapped children and nursing home residents. Grooming is provided to special needs students in the middle school
D607	Student needs	Instructors use classroom practices that make the most productive use of instructional time. The instructional techniques utilized by the Medical Office Technologies instructor are a strong example of excellent teaching/learning strategies that enhance the holistic needs of students to prepare them for successful workplace experiences.

D2022	Student needs	The team was extremely impressed with the student strategic planning.
D2447	Work-based experience	Strong real-life learning opportunities are available for students. Programs have work-experiences, co-op, clinical experiences, or other work-related opportunities
D2178	Distance education	The use of an online, self-paced delivery format by Health Science Technology is also to be commended
D2519	Distance education	The distance education programming has been a model for the state.
D536	Technology integration	The district has moved towards an electronically based Learning Center with complete access to video conference, media retrieval system, ample computers and related technology. All staff are instructed and supported in the use of media resources. The school employs a technology coordinator and an Adult Basic Education coordinator who are available to assist the adult staff.
D1441	Technology integration	Effective use of technology. Most classrooms had Smart boards. PDA's are used in the automotive technician program.
D1195	Structure	The LPN program meets and follows the state requirements for LPN programs. The program has well developed course syllabi with dates and lesson topics listed for each of the courses. There are clearly stated measurable objectives and task lists for the LPN program.
D271	Structure	In written program evaluations, students indicated course materials were presented in a logical sequence from simple to complex ideas. The labs adequately prepared them for the clinical setting. They received counseling and extra help as needed. A variety of teaching methods helped them to learn. They feel adequately prepared to enter the workforce.
D2749	Structure	The plan of study format developed by the school is impressive.

Recommendations focus on improving structure (ie: syllabi, lesson plan, and program of studies); teaching methods, addressing diverse student learning needs; increasing contextual learning experiences; and evaluation processes.

Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Teaching Recommendations.

30% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D1323	Structure	Course syllabi elements were present, but not consistent with each program. Merge course rationale, course descriptions, course objectives, grading policies, class expectations, and modifications. This would be a comprehensive document.
D368	Structure	Be sure to make all course of study objectives clear, concrete and measurable.
D1606	Structure	Development of course syllabi with identified student expectations would help document course content for the school year. The syllabi could include teacher school contact information, broad goals, textbook and other materials to be used, how learning was to be measured, contact information for the instructor and classroom procedures.
D1626	Structure	The team recommends that all programs have a complete and consistent presentation of curricula design including assessments, activities, and rubric scoring guides.
D1303	Structure	The team recommends that all programs have a complete and consistent presentation of curricula design and course syllabi. The Practical Nursing (PN) department provided an excellent template for the program directors and instructors to emulate. While no one right way exists for documenting course curricula and syllabi, the team recommends a consistent method to be implemented across the board by following a model/template agreed upon by administration, faculty, and external advisory members.
D1374	Structure	Develop course of studies with terms, academic years and projected completion times. Arrange adult program schedule of classes to enhance student learning, retention, and multi-tasking. This would also help with the problem of subject content being taught in a single day over numerous hours.
D2666	Consistency	Although the plan of study format developed by the school is impressive, regular and consistent use has not occurred. It is strongly suggested that development of the plan of study continue with regular updating provided for the students.
D3549	Methods	Add additional critical thinking, theory and writing skills into all trade and industrial programs.

D2355	Methods	Documentation of strategies and teaching methods needs to be strengthened, including Intel Thinking Tools, those shared by the Technology Integration Specialist, etc. Current evidence is focused on lecture, worksheets, and teacher demonstration.
D4530	Methods	Utilizing a variety of teaching techniques, including reading, writing, and problem solving strategies, will better prepare students to successfully pass the objective core content exams and be more versatile in their world of work. The [State Department] is also available to provide technical assistance in reading and writing strategies, higher order questioning techniques, and syllabus development.
D2898	Contextual	It is important to increase exposure to and practice with reading materials that are contextual to the occupational programs in which students are enrolled.
D2606	Evaluation	A system of regularly monitoring and reviewing lesson plans should be implemented monthly or per grading period to assure that quality instruction is taking place.
D2897	Evaluation	It is strongly recommended that procedures at this campus be modified to include accurate tracking of student participation as well as use of materials and instructional methods other than generic computerized drills.

Professional Development

Commendations for professional development focused on staff-driven processes that include needs analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation. Professional development methods; alignment with industry; individualized professional development plans; orientation and mentoring programs for new staff; networking; and administrative support are recognized.

Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Professional Development Commendations.

53% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D1635	Staff needs analysis	Professional development days are scheduled throughout the school year. Faculty meetings provide teachers professional growth and educational team growth opportunities. Surveys are collected to determine staff development wants and needs. Staff also completes feedback forms suggesting professional development needs. All professional development programs receive evaluation and feedback from participants.
D2136	Professional development methods	The delivery of professional development includes individualized, small group, and large group activities based upon the identified needs. The integration of coaching needs during the self-reflection process is very resourceful and allows for a well-organized peer coaching system.
D3425	Professional development methods	Professional development opportunities are made available in a variety of delivery modes. E-learning opportunities are made available to accommodate the faculty. The district has recently created a professional development division that will provide additional professional development opportunities.
D2423	Professional development methods	The administrative staff, as well as the faculty, demonstrates action leadership with their involvement in state and national professional organizations.
D1635	New staff programs	The school district mandates a three day new teacher orientation program prior to the start of the school year. The program enables new teachers to make a more effective transition into the classrooms. Additionally, the school assigns a teacher/mentor to each new teacher. The mentor program also provides the new instructor with an administrative person to contact with daily questions. These programs help alleviate anxiety for new teachers thereby enhancing initial learning outcomes for students.
D1963	Alignment with industry	According to the PN staff, professional development for the practical nurse staff is aligned with current trends in the health occupations and legislation.
D2132	Individual professional development plan	The staff has received very strong leadership in moving towards an individual professional development system. The current system is a model of excellence and involves reflection, goal setting, and targeted alternative deliveries. It is very well organized and sequential.

D2774	Individual professional development plan	A system is in place to determine individual professional development needs. There are a number of systematic approaches in place, including the individualized professional development plan. The employee drafts an individualized plan and collaborates with the supervisor to finalize a plan to address growth areas.
D2329	Administrative support	The school pays tuition, travel and books for the 22 hour state required teacher education program for new teachers. This is a 3 year process for 22 credit hours.

Recommendations address the need for a formalized professional development process to determine needs, planning, implementation, and assessment; staff needs analysis; including all staff; individualized staff professional development plans; and staff orientations. Specific curriculum and teaching topics, networking opportunities, industry externships, and teacher evaluation processes are suggested strategies for improvement.

Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Professional Development Recommendations.

51% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D636	Formalized plan	A formal staff development plan should be written with evidence of follow-up and completion of the plan. The plan should be designed through a needs assessment with input from all personnel, and not decided solely by a supervisor.
D2717	Formalized plan	A formal system to record and maintain an accurate record of staff development for full time and part time instructors.
D1949	Needs analysis	Draw staff development needs from data gathered and work toward all faculty being engaged in the school improvement process and taking responsibility for student learning.
D2781	Include all staff	Professional development planning should be expanded to include non-instructional as well as instructional staff.

D3280	Individual professional development plan	The school needs to be more proactive in moving from general staff development to individualized professional development for the purpose of improving student achievement. A single plan of large staff development intended to satisfy all participants can no longer achieve the quality of instruction needed within today's classroom. Personalized professional growth is not a single event – it is continuous from the beginning to the end of the school year. To increase student achievement, teachers must take charge of their development based upon study and reflection of their own practices, program, and students.
D2946	Individual professional development plan	The school district should continue to move from general staff development to individualized professional development for the purpose of improving student achievement. (Note: District averages are: 68% on licensure/credential passage rates).
D57	Curriculum and teaching topics	Staff training needs to include teaching methodology and lesson planning.
D2124	Curriculum and teaching topics	It is suggested that the district provide professional development opportunities for occupational instructors in particular on the topics of effective teaching for differing learning styles, gender-based learning differences, and strategies to improve reading and communication skills in the content areas.
D3108	Curriculum and teaching topics	The school provided copies of the Professional Growth/Development Plan and Staff Development Verification Forms. The Personnel Handbook outlines staff development requirements. Examining the in-house staff development agendas shows the majority of staff-development times at the school focus on the nuts and bolts of life at the school – ie: policies, procedures, etc. While this is a necessary part of professional practice, it is recommended that the school attempt to include more in-house staff development opportunities that focus on improving pedagogical practice and skills for the 21 st century of its teaching staff.
D937	Networking	Staff development for faculty is on target. The team recommends that staff development opportunities for adult program leaders to improve communications with external organizations, such as the Department of Education and NCA be put in place.
D1105	Teacher evaluation process	Develop standardized tool and process for professional evaluation for all personnel.

D3330	Industry externships	The administration should utilize and expand current staff development opportunities for the professional and support staff. Providing opportunities for instructors to work in industry for upgrading training would be a great addition to an already comprehensive professional development plan.
D918	Teacher evaluation process	Part-time instructors are informally evaluated and no record is kept of the evaluations.
D2296	Teacher evaluation process	Although a tremendous adjunct-instructor orientation program is in place, ongoing evaluation by staff is a missing component. A formal instructor review process should be created to continually evaluate instructor development needs and ensure a quality experience is being provided for students.
D56	Teacher evaluation process	Staff evaluation process needs to be improved.
	Teacher evaluation process	Teacher evaluations would be more effective by use of instructive feedback. Example – strategies for improvement and technical assistance from administration

Assessment

Commendations recognize pre-assessment screening tools, performance measures, and licensure and industry-based credential assessments.

Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Assessment Commendations.

34% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D1959	Pre-assessment screening	Students' progress is continuously monitored and tracked. Evidence was documented demonstrating that students are given pre-class evaluations. The school just switched from using Work Keys testing as a post-course evaluative tool to a pre-entrance testing tool to help insure student success. Additional verification was provided that showed that remedial support is available to the students through the adult basic education student service resources.
D3680	Industry credentials	All programs offer industrial credentialing, which is a stamp of quality that industry looks for when hiring students. Students are then placed in the area in which they have studied.

D2268	Industry credentials	Preparation for licensure exams and other credentials receives a great deal of attention, and students are well informed of the connection between this instruction on their ultimate career success. Student participation in academic enrichment activities is documented and regularly reported to program instructors and other relevant staff.
D4516	Industry credentials	State and national certifications are available in 13 programs. This provides a structure for high quality instruction. Students are better prepared to enter the world of work with a recognized credential.

Recommendations suggest pre-screening assessments, conducting pre- and post-assessment data to analyze learning objectives, academic assessments and industry credentials, increasing state and national credentialing exams, and use of multiple assessment measures.

Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Assessment Recommendations.

34% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D637	Pre-assessment screening	Effective use of diagnostic assessments, given prior to instruction, can be beneficial in determining individual student goals and establishing an individual learning plan. Without that, the individual learning plan isn't driven by individual academic needs. Use of the TABE assessment should be properly administered and given at appropriate levels for each student.
D2751	Pre-assessment screening	A serious concern in policies outlined in different publications is that keeping a student out of a program due to one factor – a grade equivalent score on a certain assessment. The concept of technology centers embraces training for all who need it and want it.
D92	Academic assessments and industry credentials	More emphasis could be placed on results on academic (Work Keys) assessments and industry specific and state assessment results in evaluating the success of the program.
D26	Industrial credentials	State and/or national credentialing exams should be made available for each program

D2269	Multiple assessment measures	Assessment documentation in lesson plans could be strengthened by the use of goal profiles, summative and formative assessments, student performance demonstrations, project-based learning, portfolios, etc.
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Pupil Personnel Services

Commendations recognize student service strategies relating to diverse needs, career planning, placement assistance, orientation activities, guidance services, and remediation strategies.

Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Pupil Personnel Services Commendations. 77% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D1472	Student service strategies	The team commends the school's strong pupil personnel services available to secondary and post-secondary students, including a full-time counselor and full time VRE. In addition, assistance is available for students through the basic skills programs and the GED options program.
D846	Student service strategies	Students have easy access for scheduling visits and appointments with Adult Division Counselor, Financial Aid Administrator, program instructors, remediation/adult basic education Coordinator and administrators.
D3418	Serving diverse needs	The district is to be highly commended for providing the Careers Unlimited program for nontraditional students and Displaced Homemakers/Single Parents and Single Pregnant Women program with special services and programs. The district is a leader in promoting diversity and establishing a district-wide diversity council with fifteen members and three elected officers.
D1304	Career planning	The school utilizes Career Scope to predict student success and provide pre- and post-tests. The school assists students in identifying students' career interests, aptitudes, abilities, and work. A counselor provides an analysis of the assessments to students in determining an appropriate educational and career path.

D3343	Placement assistance	The school continues to support activities that assist students to gain employment. The academic center staff, the counselors, and the instructors coordinate these activities to prepare students for employment and job stability. Job placement skills, such as writing resumes, interviewing and job-readiness skills are delivered through a variety of opportunities in the classrooms and workshops
D3201	Guidance services	The counselor meets with all new students individually to assist them in developing and recording their short and long term goals. Discussion during this process focuses on how the career and technology center can assist them in reaching their goals
D3335	Guidance services	The counselors make good use of the electronic database by recording any meetings with or assistance given to students so an accurate picture may be formed of the student no matter who is assisting him/her.
D2446	Remediation	According to students, teachers provide multiple methods of remediation and re-teaching assistance. Examples identified were one-on-one individualized assistance, peer assistance, student online or CD access to the teacher's lesson plans and supportive materials.
D140	Remediation	The intensive training program demonstrates the commitment to developing all aspects of their students. A good example is those students who are deficient in Work Keys scores are given remediation through Key Train.
D1193	Remediation	Special needs forms located in the LPN handbook are available for students requesting specialized educational programs. Verification was provided that the QUEST program offers remediation sessions for individuals in basic academic classes. Additional evidence was documented to indicate that instructors were available one day a week and by appointment for remediation assistance to students within the LPN program.

Recommendations indicate a need for guidance counselors at some schools; establishing formalized student service and evaluation processes; and implementing remediation strategies.

Process of Schooling (PS) Standard: Pupil Personnel Services Recommendations.

59% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D3110	Guidance counselor	It is recommended that the school explore ways in which a guidance counselor be employed. NCA recommends that no school have less than a half-time position for counseling services.
D2406	Student service processes	Develop systematic student admission procedure from start to finish including pre-testing, student intervention, student remediation.
D3213	Student service processes	It is recommended that a formal, written plan be established as an on-going guide for the performance of those working to fulfill the counseling and guidance needs of the center. This would be especially beneficial given the fact that the present counselor is being transferred from the career center after the current school year
D3273	Student service processes	Give yourself credit for remediation efforts, it appears you are doing the work, just make it formal
D463	Evaluation	Have a more formalized screening tool to identify potential barriers and develop action plans to overcome those barrier. Along with this, an assessment tool should be implemented to identify remedial need in a more timely fashion and those needs should be addressed
D1916	Remediation	Postsecondary students expressed concerns with regard to getting extra help in understanding materials in class. This may simply be due to the rigor of course content, but efforts to provide help should be addressed.
D3320	Remediation	It is recommended that the occupational instructors be encouraged to utilize the Applied Technology, Writing, Business Writing, Listening, and Observation instructional components of Key Train to augment their programmatic instruction. These lessons incorporate career-specific skills, reinforce content presented in other formats, and incidentally improve written, oral, and auditory communication skills.
D184	Remediation	Develop remediation programs to support student achievement-based on Work Keys data.

Vision, Leadership-Governance and School Community (VL) Standard

The Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL) standard examines criteria related to business/industry and community involvement; school leadership and governance; and the school community’s vision and mission. “All members of the school community share the responsibility for improving student success” (AdvancED/NCA CASI, 2006, Standard & Criteria Manual, p. 14).

Business, Industry and Community Involvement

Community and business/industry support are prevalent in the commendations, as additionally evidenced on page 71 showing 65% of schools received commendations under the School Improvement Plan standard in the advisory committee section.

Commendations highlight partnerships, community roles, labor market needs, community service, community involvement, and customized training. A small percentage of schools received marketing commendations.

Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL) Standard: Business, Industry and Community Commendations

82% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D1659	Partnerships	We commend the school for developing a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, Housing Authority, and local health care facilities. These partnerships benefit students in a variety of programs, as well as the entire community.
D2865	Partnerships	The paramedic joint venture with another career technology center is a terrific example of district partnering to deliver quality training.
D750	Partnerships	Strong working relationship with the state Jobs and Family Services agency. (30% of students come to the school from this agency).

D3058	Partnerships	Relationships/partnerships with higher education institutions strengthen the curriculum and opportunities available to students.
D3215	Role	The center thrives on strong community support demonstrated by the availability and utilization of student internships, project-based learning, hands-on educational experiences within local businesses, numerous contractual agreements for student affiliation, and active participation of business and industry in program area advisory committees.
D2393	Role	Evidence was presented which shows that internal and external partners at all levels are afforded the opportunity to give input regarding programming, facilities, and operational decisions of the administration. It is also evident that the input has been effectively used.
D507	Labor market needs	A positive strength is the school's ability to develop, implement, analyze, and react quickly in identifying community program needs.
D1158	Labor market needs	The school provides the community with much-needed Licensed Practical Nurses and Surgical Technologists.
D2818	Labor market needs	The Manufacturing Alliance is doing a great job showing results of economic impact of training and services.
D3114	Service	Community involvement includes collaboration with the Commission on Aging. One hour per day is allotted to assist senior citizens with basic computers, the Internet, etc., at no charge.
D2816	Involvement	The group involvement includes participation in eight Chamber of Commerce and various service organizations. They hold 20 community memberships and participate in 21 community sponsored events.
D3523	Involvement	It is evident that the school is very involved with the community. Advisory councils, the local Chamber of Commerce, and the county Planning and Development Council are all good resources upon which to build. These relationships are important for keeping the community involved in the center, and even more importantly, to gather feedback for program modification and improvement. One of the business partners made the statement, "[The school] fills our need, it's not just a placement."
D3273	Involvement	Staff attends and seeks information at various industry meetings, Chamber meetings, and other civic meetings throughout the district ensuring that both customized and open-enrollment programs are on target with community and business needs.

D3363	Customized training	The district served 128 companies last year with customized training services and 16% of those companies were companies that were not previously served by the district. The Memorandum of Understanding and the Statement of Goals used when services are provided to companies were both excellent.
D3286	Marketing	Changes to the marketing of the course brochure and layout are to be commended. There is a very readable and user-friendly look and feel to them now.

The majority of the recommendations suggest the need for formalized marketing plans and improvements in marketing strategies for 33% of the schools. Other recommendations focus on increasing community involvement and partnerships.

Vision Leadership (VL) Standard: Business, Industry and Community

Recommendations

54% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D2736	Marketing Plan	On several occasions during the team visit, it was stated by faculty, administration, and advisory members that the school is one of the best kept secrets in the community. As a team we recommend that the school develop a formal marketing plan that is in place year-round with a chairperson and individual marketing activity leaders.
D2138	Marketing Plan	Current marketing practices seem to be random and fragmented. The development of a comprehensive marketing plan of action (using RACE) with mini action plans that outline activities, strategies, responsible persons, timelines, budget, and evaluation components for major initiatives like recruitment, business and industry services, etc., will all the marketing of the technology center to be more cost-efficient and proactive rather than reactive. The plan will serve as an active, ongoing guide and roadmap for the coordinator and staff.
D1131	Marketing Strategies	We realize the school is in a rural setting and the student community is quite difficult to reach; therefore, it is increasingly important that quality marketing materials be developed and disseminated throughout the service area.

D2858	Equity	The program recruitment brochures, media, and team composition should continue to be reviewed annually to ensure that stereotyping is not modeled to the prospective students in the areas of race, color, national origin, gender, or disability.
D3424	Community involvement	It is suggested that additional staff members periodically attend meetings of civic organizations in the town, as well as in surrounding areas within the technology center district. This involvement will help ensure increased communications with local and regional business and industries and create a larger framework for recruitment.
D741	Partnerships	Continue to develop relationships with local/state government and businesses to identify future growth in labor markets.

School Leadership and Governance

Commendations recognize district Board of Education and administrative support, roles, and governing documents.

Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL) Standard: School Leadership and Governance Commendations.

62% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D3213	Support	The school has strong support from the Superintendent and the County Board of Education.
D2358	Roles	The Board also evaluates performance and measures data.
D2392	Roles	The administration and Board are to be commended on their foresight in maintaining and implementing a comprehensive capital improvement plan. It is very apparent that the plan has been used to make decisions regarding construction and budget priorities.
D2119	Governing documentation	The Board of Education is commended for developing a well-organized Board Policy Manual and for updating Board policies as necessitated by new or amended statutes and regulations. It is obvious from this evaluation the Board is very involved in developing and approving these policies. The legal references that are cited and the history of each policy's revision date were very helpful.

Recommendations suggest increased leadership support for career and technical education.

Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL) Standard: Leadership and Governance Recommendations.

26% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D551	Support	Consideration should be given towards continuing board financial support as well as ensuring adequate on-going funding for providing career and technical adult education programs and services to residents of the district.
D1089	Support	The school's governing board and the three district Superintendents should develop a realistic vision for career and technical education, determine their level of support, and promote the school to their students and their communities.
D2847	Support	Additional administrative barriers to offering adult career development courses should be identified and removed.

Mission and Vision

Commendations recognize development processes, focus, and communication of mission and vision statements.

Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL) Standard: Mission and Vision Commendations.

31% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D938	Development Process	The school has a vision and mission statement approved by the Board of Education These statements were developed with input from the advisory board, faculty, and students.
D1202	Focus	A comprehensive vision and mission is centered on student performance and communicated to all staff.

D2747	Focus	A review of the documentation presented the mission statements and goals that are reviewed annually and if necessary, are revised. Conversations with staff provided insight to the high level of commitment on the part of the school board, administrative team, and teachers to prepare students with the skills necessary to succeed in a competitive highly technical workforce.
D3729	Communication	Students, employees, and customers are well informed on the district's mission and vision through meetings, as well as through the student handbook, policies and procedures manual provided online for staff, and plaques on every classroom wall.

Recommendations suggest revisions and communication strategies for the mission and vision statements.

Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL) Standard: Mission and Vision Recommendations.

29% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D1746	Revision	Add to the mission statement a futuristic component.
D1474	Revision	The format of the school mission and goals should be changed to be more concise and quantitative. Though the school seems to be headed in the right direction, a new format might better communicate how the school district, school and program goals fit together and how the mission of school district and school compliment each other.
D32	Communication	The mission statement and organizational goals should be included in all handbooks.
D1252	Communication	There is a need to develop a plan for communicating the vision and mission both internally and externally. One solution is to post vision, mission, and building goals in the hallways and classrooms. An additional suggestion is to publicize this information on letterhead, student handbooks, or other items that would carry the vision and mission to the community.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard

The Resource and Allocation (RA) standard focuses on time; space, staff preparation and qualifications; finances; instructional resources; and technology criteria. According to the AdvancED/NCA CASI Standards and Criteria Manual, Resource and Allocation (RA) standard states, “Sufficient financial resources are available to provide space, people, time, materials, and instructional programs to maximize the potential for all students to make successful life transitions” (2006, p. 16).

Time

Commendations address flexible scheduling and instructor planning time.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Time Commendations.

34% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D1165	Flexible scheduling	Meeting student needs – the school maintains an open entry/open exit programs in many areas. This allows students to begin when they wish, to progress at their own rate, and to graduate when they are ready. In terms of logistics, this can be extremely difficult because instructors occasionally have as many distinct “classes” as there are students. One of the primary reasons that the school is able to continue such a difficult schedule is related to the efficiency of the student information system and a high level of instructional skills.
D3283	Flexible scheduling	The department offers a wide variety of classes to reach business and industries, the transitional adult, incumbent worker, and senior adult life-long learning needs. These programs are offered in a day, evening, and weekend format to provide a variety of learning options. The programs are successful as indicated by the low cancellation rates.
D1876	Instructor planning time	Instructors are allowed time for instructional preparation as documented in teacher class schedules.

Recommendations suggest increased flexibility in scheduling, instructor planning time, and reducing class interruptions.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Time Recommendations.

18% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D371	Flexible scheduling	Develop ways to enable students who work 2 nd or 3 rd shift to attend classes.
D3506	Instructor planning time	The planning/conference time is inflexible. An alternative meeting time at student request must be set outside of normal school hours.
D1229	Reduce class interruptions	A less invasive procedure for announcements/PA broadcasts to eliminate distractions for postsecondary students – a definite disruption for instructors during lecture.

Space

Commendations relate to providing a safe learning environment, student record security, class size, ADA compliance, and effective use and appearance of physical space.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Space Commendations.

75% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D3156	Safety	Safety is a priority in all lab areas. Equipment has annual inspections. Students are provided with proper safety equipment. Safety training is provided to staff and students.
D1213	Safety	The school's safety plan is thorough, easy to read, and numbered with step-by-step directions.
D536	Safety	The district has developed a Crisis Intervention and Emergency Plan that addresses such concerns as mail opening procedures, bomb threats, evacuation of building, and other processes to insure the safety of staff and students.

D1879	Safety	Health and safety of all students and staff are valued as evidenced by ongoing safety inspections from independent consultants and annual safety reviews.
D689	Safety	The security measures at the school are impressive. The use of ID tags for all students and staff as well as visitors is exemplary. Cameras and lock-down drills are also in place.
D354	Student record security	Records are protected from fire, theft, and other damage.
D477	Class size	Small classes enable individual attention.
D2305	ADA compliance	The facility meets ADA requirements.
D738	Physical space	Excellent facility space to accommodate current programs and future expansion.
D901	Physical space appearance	Appearance of building and overall classroom surroundings are clean, which makes for a good learning environment and also pride in the school.

Recommendations addressed safety issues, student record security, ADA non-compliance issues, and maintenance of facilities. The need for additional classroom, lab, and storage space due is stated for 30% of the schools.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Space Recommendations.		
<u>70%</u> of Schools		
#	Indicator	Recommendation
D2656	Safety	Several of the programs need to strengthen their safety instruction and testing. The State Department provides online safety training and testing. The school safety coordinator should be able to assist in obtaining this safety training for the programs that need it.
D2527	Student record security	Student records that are still in hard copy need to be stored in an area that will protect them from fire. Implement the stated intent to scan student records to be stored electronically and capable of being backed up and stored off site.
D2813	ADA Non-compliance	The current facility is not accessible and therefore is in violation of federal law relating to individuals with disabilities. In addition, it is too small and cramped to accommodate an appropriate number of students, in not in good repair or overall condition, and is arranged in a

		manner that makes it difficult for students to stay on task or to focus on assigned activities.
D3193	Maintenance of facility	While the overall condition of the building and grounds is well maintained, there are several areas that need attention. The men's restroom needs some tile replaced and the entrance should not be used for storage. One can contained corrosive material.
D3224	Additional space	There is a need for additional classroom and laboratory space.
D1253	Additional space	Many classes are small and labs are cramped for the size of classes. Additional space would benefit the growth of existing programs and all for the development of new program offerings to meet the needs of the community. The team recommends the district consider additional space. All current space is being utilized to meet the needs of the students.

Personnel, Preparation, and Qualifications

Commendations recognize staff members have qualifications, credentials, and experience. Specific staff positions and impressive organizational chart structures are identified.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Personnel, Preparation and Qualifications

Commendations.

66 % of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D242	Staff qualifications	Staff holds the necessary teaching certificates as issued by the Department of Education. Many of the instructors hold additional credentials issued by state and national associations.
D1011	Staff experience	Instructors with strong occupational backgrounds are utilized to provide training. Instructors show a willingness to provide assistance beyond normal expectations.
D234	Qualifications	Teaching staff: 53% with a Masters or higher degree; 47% with four year or less education of the full-time faculty.
D1770	Industry credentials	Many teachers have impressive industry credentials.

D3869	Organizational chart	The picture organizational chart was very impressive.
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Recommends suggest compliance, modifying job descriptions, and developing school organizational charts. The need for additional staff is the majority of these recommendations.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Personnel, Preparation and Qualifications

Recommendations.

42% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D3549	Compliance	LPN secretarial assistance does not meet the State Licensure Board recommendations.
D3237	Job descriptions	There are job descriptions; however, they do not in all cases reflect the duties of the person doing the job.
D1304	Job descriptions	The team recommends refining the placement coordinator's position responsibilities so the person can concentrate on placement activities. The team recommends the addition of a full-time adult coordinator for the purpose of building adult programs and assisting in activities such as job and internship placement.
D296	Organizational charts	Create an organizational chart that includes the entire staff/faculty of adult education.
D1291	Additional staff	Consider additional staff in the area of Media Specialist/Technology Specialist.
D1557	Additional staff	The team recommends the financial aid officer should be a separate position from the Director of Career and Technical Education.

Finances

Commendations recognize fiscal management, budgeting, funding sources, and financial aid services.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Finances Commendations.

70% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D139	Fiscal management	Strong fiscal management, as evidenced by paying cash for the five million dollar technology center.
D178	Fiscal management	The school operates in the black – instructional programs are self supporting.
D1010	Fiscal management	The financial health appears to be excellent. Budgets are maintained and analyzed on an ongoing basis. Audits reflect proper procedures are in place. Budgets are detailed as to all expenditures by individual programs and the composite Adult Education Department. As per the audits and budget information, sufficient financial resources are available to support the Adult Education Department. Tuition and fees are reviewed annually and are set based on length, objectives, content, type and location of instruction, knowledge and skills, and program operation areas.
D556	Budgeting	The adult director and assistant director meet with each instructor to keep them abreast of their cost center program goals and opportunities for improvement.
D1010	Budgeting	The financial health appears to be excellent. Budgets are maintained and analyzed on an ongoing basis. Audits reflect proper procedures are in place. Budgets are detailed as to all expenditures by individual programs and the composite adult education department budgets. As per the audits and budget information, sufficient financial resources are available to support the adult education department. Tuition and fees are reviewed annually and are set based on length, objectives, content, type and location of instruction, knowledge and skills, and program operation areas.
D244	Funding sources	Numerous funding sources such as district mil levies, state funds, federal funds (Pell, Stafford, etc.), workforce investment funding, rehabilitation services, customized training contracts, and individual student tuition are used to support programming.
D336	Funding sources	The school generates and manages their monies successfully and supplements these resources by aggressively pursuing grants.
D395	Financial aid	Title IV regulations are followed and financial aid policy and procedures are in line with the Federal regulations.

D843	Financial aid	Financial aid process entails loan entrance counseling which outlines consequences of delinquency and default responsibilities. This is a face-to-face contact with the Financial Aid Administrator. The Financial Aid Administrator also visits off-site LPN program on a weekly basis to answer or obtain any needed information. At the end of the program, an “Exit Interview Data” form is completed and each student again reviews student borrower information with counselor.
D997	Financial aid	A system is in place to ensure that students meet attendance requirements for financial aid purposes.

Recommendations address fiscal management, budgeting, acquiring additional revenues through funding sources, and financial aid services.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Finances Recommendations.

44% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D131	Fiscal management	A long range plan for program development, operations, and fiscal planning should be put in place. Special attention should be given to budgetary considerations showing projected tuition increases which will be necessary to cover expenses increases annually, particularly salary increases required by the Master Agreement. Because the maximum Pell awards have been frozen for several years, it should be examined as to whether it is reasonable to expect Pell grants to sustain quality programming.
D647	Fiscal management	Develop a plan to purchase, maintain, and amortize equipment.
D2779	Budgeting	The administration should review annually the few programs that appear to be under-enrolled and use this data to investigate the possibility of redirecting program dollars to offer newer, more pertinent offerings for the district.
D1134	Acquiring additional revenues	It is our recommendation that the school further examine potential resources that are available as well as explore different methods of allocating resources. This may include establishing individual program budgets.

D3394	Acquiring additional revenues	The grants listed in the documentation are established operational grants that no longer reach to the level of innovation. The district is encouraged to explore additional funding sources that support education and school improvement efforts, such as corporate, charitable, and foundation grants directed toward school program and service development priorities.
D3335	Financial aid	The financial aid personnel should play a major role in development policies and procedures that impact the administration of the financial assistance programs. Financial aid personnel need to be involved in instructional directors' meetings and other administrative meetings regarding financial assistance programs and the minutes of those meetings should be recorded and kept on file.
D3406	Financial aid	The financial aid office was never notified of one student who had withdrawn in the spring of 2007. Consequently, the student was disbursed funds, no return calculation was performed and no return had been made. Therefore, a method needs to be established to inform the financial aid office of the dates of student withdrawals, whether the student formally withdraws or is administratively dropped. In addition, students dropping from full-time to part-time status should be brought to the attention of the financial aid office.

Instructional Resources

Commendations center on instructional resource availability, technology, and alignment with industry standards.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Instructional Resources Commendations.

34% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D2768	Availability	A tour of the facility indicated a strong commitment to operating quality programs. The equipment and instructional materials observed further acknowledges the district's commitment to quality.
D966	Technology	Computer resources are available, including laptop computers and projectors for all teachers. Three smart boards are shared throughout the building.

D1210	Aligned with industry standards	Most equipment is up-to-date. All equipment surveyed is well maintained, and in very good condition to provide students with educational experiences that meet or exceed industry standards.
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Recommendations identify specific resources needed for school programs.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Instructional Resources Recommendations.

23% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D333	Resources needed	Purchase more visuals and manipulatives for Allied Health programs.
D2752	Resources needed	The current hospital beds in the school's nursing laboratory are outdated. Purchase of electrical hospital beds and sill care beds with side rails should be considered as early as possible. Additional instruments and equipment, which are relevant to teaching the nursing skills in the school prior to sending the students out to the clinical sites, should also be considered. The Practical Nursing Education Director will compile a list of requirement equipment and materials that will be submitted to the school's management for budget considerations.

Information and Communication Technologies

Commendations recognize exemplary technology resources, technology plan, teacher training, on-line instruction, and websites.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Information and Communication

Technologies Commendations.

55% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D1514	Resources	The school maintains excellent technology resources for student use and supports programs with industry standard equipment.

D3211	Resources	The center has established a first of its kind robotics lab in the state that integrates multiple curricular areas such as Welding, Industrial Equipment, Building Construction, Aries A+, Auto Collision, Auto Mechanics, and Machine Tool Technology. Every class at the center is involved in the success of this program.
D1779	Resources	Up to date technology/equipment in most programs as observed and discussed in interviews with teachers and students.
D731	Technology Plan	A technology plan is used to address the issues of constant modernization and effective utilization of monies.
D2019	Training	Professional development opportunities and tracking are available for all staff. Technology training is also provided free to staff during the summer.
D2237	Training	Significant number of staff trained in Intel and as Technology Integration Specialists (TIS).
D2115	Online instruction	The use of an online, self-paced delivery format by Health Science Technology is also to be commended.
D2836	Online instruction	The staff at this campus has also begun the process to make Health Information Management courses available online to students. Students will be able to access courses either on-site with facilitator support or off campus.
D3350	Website	The development of the HotJobs website proves to be an outstanding and progressive addition to the job placement services. Both employers and students can easily access and/or display job information. Most exciting were the positive responses from instructors regarding the use of this website for their students.

Recommendations focus on access to resources, technology plan, website improvements, technology integration, and online learning.

Resource and Allocation (RA) Standard: Information and Communication

Technologies Recommendations.

45% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D99	Resources	The technical programs should develop a utilization procedure for the available computers in their respective labs. Computer technology is necessary for many technical fields but also is important to the student's success in obtaining a position. Many companies today utilize computer job search sites to post job opening.
D1862	Resources	Some classes appeared to be using outdated equipment/software. For example, not all software was the same in the graphic design class and students trying to use two different versions were having difficulty. The computers/networking equipment were not on the "cutting edge" of this technology today. With district matching funds, the cost of upgrading is in reach.
D302	Technology Plan	Although technology is available and well utilized, it may help to have a comprehensive plan developed and in place to maximize current assets and plan for future needs.
D194	Website	Utilize school website more. Today our society is convenience-driven. A "one-stop shop" type of Internet environment could provide prospective students to program offerings, times and dates, links to funding sources, enrollment requirements, and remedial services.
D1861	Technology integration	Few technology tools were observed in the actual instructional process (ie: Smartboards, projectors, etc.).
D543	Online learning	Continue to expand web-based learning opportunities.

Other Emergent Themes

Two additional commendation and recommendation themes emerged beyond the NCA CASI specific criteria categories. These "other" themes are: 1) school culture and relationships; and 2) documentation processes.

School Culture and Relationships

Commendations recognize student, staff, and community relationships that contribute to a positive school environment.

Other: School Culture and Relationship Commendations

75% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D62	Caring	The school has its strength in the faculty and staff. The employees of the career center are caring, dedicated people who are truly concerned about their programs, students, and community. The employees are the main asset of the school, in talking with current and former students. The staff involves themselves in making the learning experience a successful one. They show flexibility and team spirit in all that they do. (95% completion rate, 93% placement rate, and 93% licensure/credential passage).
D1120	Caring	The external review team met with a representative group of the student body and they stated that the number one thing they liked about the school was the individualized attention they received by caring leaders. As one student said, "It feels so good here, you don't want to leave." (83% completion rate, 99% placement rate, and 92% licensure/credential passage).
D2247	Caring	Students' love and appreciation for the school and teachers are evident as reflected in the interview process. (79% completion rate, 97% placement rate, and 87% licensure/credential passage).
D267	Commitment	All program directors and many of the part-time instructors are graduates of the school's Health Care programs and have commitment to the school and to the successes of the students. (81% completion rate, 98% placement rate, and 92% licensure/credential passage).
D941	Commitment	The team observed a sense of ownership for student success among administration and staff. All instructors demonstrated enthusiasm and observations of classroom experiences showed that students were actively engaged in learning. (78% completion rate, 100% placement rate, and 95% licensure/credential passage).

D1957	Commitment	Practical Nurse - The team members visited with staff members and students. Each seemed eager to share and/or compliment the program. It is impressive that one student drove 60 miles each way to class and works 40 hours per week. (86% completion rate, 92% placement rate, and 97 % licensure/credential passage).
D712	Morale	Student and staff morale are very high and positive. This moral is reinforced in a positive manner by the adult staff from the director to the other support and instructional staff. (95% completion rate, 93% placement rate, and 93% licensure/credential passage).
D3151	Morale	Morale at the school seems very high. This is a valuable link to the success of the students in their career program. The staff at the school is very caring and helps the students gain the vocational and interpersonal skills necessary to succeed in their chosen careers. (65% completion rate, 80% placement rate, and 96% licensure/credential passage).
D1434	Student collaboration	There is a spirit of caring among the students to assist students to a higher level of learning and to assist those in need of remediation. (78% completion rate, 65% placement rate, and 95% licensure/credential passage).
D1190	Communication	Faculty brainstorming sessions, weekly faculty meetings, school climate audit reports, etc., indicated strengths, detractors, discrepancies, and recommendations to aid in adapting the programs to their changing environments. (95% completion rate, 83% placement rate, and 98% licensure/credential passage).
D402	Team approach	Very well organized councils, committees, and a motivated staff are in place to guide students to success in their chosen careers. (92% completion rate, 91% placement rate, and 87% licensure/credential passage).

Recommendations addressed need for improved communications in the school.

Other: School Culture and Relationship Recommendations.

6% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D816	Communication	Continued efforts are needed with working on improving relations internally and externally. (77% completion rate, 87% placement rate, and 87% licensure/credential passage).

D2665	Communication	Communication needs to be strengthened in several areas. It is suggested that the student services staff meet regularly to confer about students and services. Although this occurs informally, it can be strengthened by regular communications among staff members on the various services offered and student information. (88% completion rate, 98% placement rate, and 97% licensure/credential passage).
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Documentation

Commendations focus on commendations of student documents, organization, communication materials, and compliance statements.

.Other: Documentation-related Commendations

49% of Schools

#	Indicator	Commendation
D340	Student documents	The paper trail from the potential student's initial contact with the school until the student graduates is well documented in one location for all programs and students.
D951	Organization	All documentation for the Licensed Practical Nursing program is extremely organized.
D1958	Communication materials	Practical Nursing Student Handbook is extremely thorough.
D3482	Compliance	The district has done an outstanding job of printing the statement of nondiscrimination on all the brochures, catalogs, application forms, and other documents that were examined. The student application and enrollment forms are excellent. The visuals on program brochures show diversity of the populations served in the district.

Recommendations suggest consistency of information, compliance, organization, centralized documents, document processes, and meeting minutes.

Other: Documentation-related Recommendations.

54% of Schools

#	Indicator	Recommendation
D867	Consistency	Be consistent in all publications with NCA accreditation statement language, EEO, mission statements, and ISO quality policy. Good example of complete language is in the Adult Division Handbook. Missing EEO and NCA statements in 2004-2005 course catalog. Nursing section of website and brochure should reflect OBN accreditation as well, but it is noted in individual nursing program brochure.
D373	Compliance	Formally address how ADA issues are addressed. Literature should reflect that accommodations can be provided and how to go about receiving them. Provide a written description of how to access ADA in student literature.
D2377	Compliance	Place a concise grievance policy procedure in adult handbook.
D791	Organization	The school has necessary information and collects records; however, the information is scattered and needs to be relocated in a central location or in a more accessible manner.
D2002	Document processes	Many good things are happening in the classrooms, but these successful procedures and outcomes aren't well documented in the files. Written processes should more clearly reflect teachers' instructional techniques, systematic planning by staff, adapting instructional procedures to meet individual student needs, and the use of varied evaluation instruments.
D694	Centralized	Recordkeeping area and files need to be in a central location. This would prevent several people from maintaining different sections of each student's file. Suggestions would be to use digital imaging and files could also be transferred to CD. The contents of each individual file should also be put in a standardized order.
D325	Meeting minutes	More formal note taking and documentation regarding committee meetings.
D361	Meeting minutes	Work to develop a procedure for documentation of even informal decision making meetings and conversations.

CURRICULUM VITAE
SHERRI E. NASH, Ed. D.

EDUCATION

Marshall University

Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, 2008

Marshall University

Master of Science in Adult and Technical Education, 1994

Marshall University

Bachelor of Arts in Marketing Education, 1991

CERTIFICATION

State of Ohio, Secondary Teacher, 9-12, Specialization: Marketing Education

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

1991 – 1997	Career Development Specialist, Collins Career Center, Chesapeake, Ohio
1992 – 1997	Adjunct Instructor, Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia
1993 – 1996	Adult Education Instructor, Collins Career Center, Chesapeake, Ohio
1997 – 1998	Administration/Customized Training Coordinator – Collins Career Center, Chesapeake, Ohio
1998 – 2002	Director, Collins Career Center, Chesapeake, Ohio
2002 – 2007	Assistant to Superintendent, Collins Career Center, Chesapeake, Ohio
2007 – Present	Associate Director, AdvancED, Decatur, Georgia

PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

1991 – Present	Tabulation Coordinator, West Virginia State DECA Conference
1999	Certified Business Analyst (CBA) Certification, Ohio Department of Development
2000	Myers Briggs Temperament Inventory Training Qualifications
2001	ISO 9000/2000 Z1.11 Education Internal Auditor Certification
2001	Ohio Career and Technical Education Leadership Institute graduate
2003 – 2004	Central Review Committee Member, North Central Association
2003 – 2004	National Bylaws Committee Member, Association for Career Technical
2003 – 2007	Secretary, Ohio Association for Career Technical Education (OACTE) Education (ACTE)

HONORS AND RECOGNITION

2004	Bill Ruth Award Outstanding Education Administrator, State of Ohio
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