

The Gateway Conversation

- Students say instruction is a strength of the college. Mentoring of first-year instructors benefits the college and students through effective teaching.
- Gateway promotes effective teaching by maintaining qualified and certifiable faculty, supporting faculty with reasonable workloads, and providing professional development opportunities.
- Students have benefited from the reorganization of Student Services through a greater use of technology, most notably in cybercounseling, online financial aid forms, and WebAdvisor.
- Student frustrations over course scheduling and academic advising remain a continuing challenge. However, the college has worked hard to address student concerns about scheduling and academic advising. Staffing and organization of Student Services concern some because of the expected surge in student enrollment and demand for services.
- The college provides labs, libraries, and technology to help students learn.



Criterion 4: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

Criterion 4 focuses on acquiring, discovering, applying knowledge and promoting a life of learning. Key findings for this criterion:

- Gateway strives to make learning accessible to and successful for each member of the college's diverse student body, whether they are working on GED or introductory courses or are in the final semester of an associate degree program.
- Gateway provides learning opportunities for all of its employees.
- Gateway's strength remains in the real-life experiences used to enhance student learning.
- The college supports learning innovation prompted by assessment results — whether those results are from state licensing exams, local student learning plans, or Wisconsin Technical College System initiatives.
- The college ensures responsible acquisition and use of knowledge.



Criterion 5: Engagement and Service

Criterion 5 focuses on Gateway's ability to identify its constituencies – students, employers, and communities – and to serve them in ways Gateway and its constituencies value. This criterion falls along four themes: engagement, learning, capacity, and value. Key findings for this criterion:

- Gateway engages prospective students, active students, and recent graduates so it can learn how to best serve them. It engages employers both to learn what they expect students from the college's occupational programs to know and to learn what training they need for current employees. It engages with school districts to learn how we can meet the needs of graduating high-schoolers and connect them with college.
- The college has the capacity to welcome students of all ages to access Gateway for a full life of learning. It offers current high school students access to higher education, as well as providing means for graduates to continue their education through transfer agreements with four-year colleges.
- While Gateway has created transfer agreements with four-year colleges, it needs to ensure that these agreements are clearly communicated to students.
- Gateway is willing to form innovative partnerships benefiting business partners and students by addressing the need for qualified workers. Partnerships include those forged through Gateway's advanced technology centers and on-site training at businesses.
- Gateway's constituencies value Gateway's services, proven through the testimonials of community leaders, surveys of students, and requests for Gateway to be a partner in community projects.

Go to www.gtc.edu/hlc for details and the entire self-study report.



Higher Learning Commission Self-study Executive Summary





Members of the Higher Learning Commission evaluation team will visit Gateway Technical College October 26-October 28 as part of the college's accreditation process.

The study illustrates how Gateway strives to meet its mission: "We collaborate to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers, and communities."

A few larger themes can be seen throughout the self-study.

ASSESSMENT

Gateway measures its students' learning outcomes in every occupational program, in its general studies subject areas, and in its Adult Basic Education and English Language Learner programs. This information is used by instructors to make improvements to curriculum, instruction, and the assessment process.

PLANNING (OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC)

Gateway does a good job of collecting data from staff, students, businesses and communities. Gateway also does well in evaluating the skills a business needs in its workers, the workforce needed in its communities, and the educational needs of its students – and tailors its educational programs to meet those needs. The college has education, training, policy, and facility plans designed to meet the needs of all those groups. However, it needs to improve its ability to connect data to planning, planning to evaluation, and evaluation to continuous improvement.

GATEWAY INTERACTS WELL WITH ITS COMMUNITIES IN A NUMBER OF WAYS

The self-study report notes interaction on many levels: staff and students working on the ground level of education; on issues as wide sweeping as the county's economy; and to community groups using Gateway facilities for meetings and training. Each of the three counties lists Gateway as an element of their economic development plans because of the education and technical training opportunities it provides. The college provides many events, lectures, fund-raisers, and cultural events that benefit students and the community. Gateway students serve its communities through many organizations and clubs.

GATEWAY PREPARES STUDENTS FOR THE WORKPLACE

Insight gathered from listening to businesses, community organizations and its many partners has allowed Gateway to successfully educate and prepare students appropriately for the local and global workplace. Gateway also gives students a great breadth of educational experiences, improving their job readiness through general studies courses, adult basic education opportunities, and student activities and organizations.

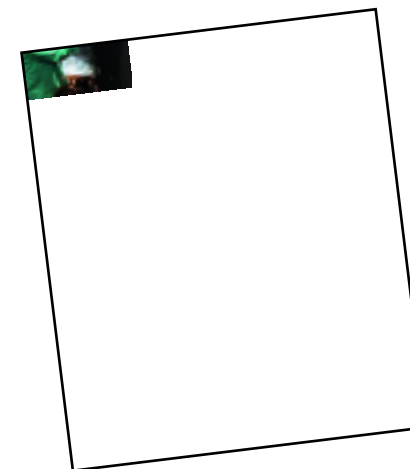
The accreditation self-study process focuses on how well Gateway carries out the commitments in its mission statement relative to five criteria. The report to the Higher Learning Commission is a self-study of the college within the framework of these five areas. Go to www.gtc.edu/hlc for details and the entire self-study report.

The self-study also provides insight on Gateway in respect to each of the five criteria:

Criterion 1: Mission and Integrity

This section relates to the mission of the college. Some of the key findings for this criterion include:

- The mission, while altruistic, is also pragmatic in its message of serving students, employers, and communities.
- Gateway's mission recognizes the importance of diversity and provides the foundation for the college to serve diverse students, staff, communities, and partners.
- The administration recognizes the responsibility to lead the college in fulfilling its mission. It provides leadership, an effective organizational structure, promotes collaboration, and continues to work on improving communication channels, all in order to serve Gateway's constituencies.
- The board helps define the mission and monitors the college's progress in fulfilling it.
- Gateway recognizes its constituencies have many views of integrity, and it works hard to uphold integrity within the framework of those views. They include responsible use of community resources, adhering to laws and regulations and making its mission a reality – or doing what it says it will do in its mission statement.



Criterion 2: Preparing for the Future

Criterion 2 focuses on Gateway's gathering of information, evaluating its resources, planning, interpreting and then acting on the results in many forms, from education to facilities. Key findings for this criterion:

- Gateway's planning is responsive to its constituents' needs. For instance, it works with district employers and workers to identify specific education and training needs for each of its programs.
- Gateway monitors local economic conditions and demographic trends and works with business partners to ensure

the programs it provides students reflect a real-world working environment. Education and training focus on the skills needed in the workforce – ensuring well-trained graduates who benefit area businesses and the economy today and into the future.

- Gateway has begun to implement an effective strategic plan through its Vision 2012 effort. The plan was formulated through listening sessions and the engagement of faculty, staff, and communities the college serves.
- Gateway is a multi-campus, multi-county institution. As a result, it is sometimes challenged to strike a balance between planning districtwide efforts needed for the college as a large organization with planning needed at each individual campus. Gateway has worked hard to meet its needs as a college the needs of each community it serves.
- Careful goal-setting in Gateway's Affirmative Action planning has resulted in minority and female hiring that is at excellent levels across all job categories.
- Gateway has the financial, human, facility, and technological resources needed to fulfill its mission and manage these resources so that the college will be successful in the future.
- The current soft economy poses a concern for Gateway – enrollment has increased but property tax levels may likely stagnate.
- Planning helps Gateway fulfill the commitments we make in our mission.

Criterion 3: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

Criterion 3 focuses on student learning, teaching effectiveness, learning resources, and learning environments. Key findings for this criterion:

- Student assessment at the program level is increasingly integrated with other college efforts such as curriculum review and program review. In addition, the focus of student assessment has shifted from solely reporting data to using that data to improve student learning.
- Despite improvements in student assessment, challenges remain
 - The first is to ensure assessment of learning accounts for all students, including those enrolled in online and alternative delivery classes.
 - A second challenge is providing a mechanism for assessing the college's nine core abilities as students complete programs of study. A new initiative holds promise for college-wide core abilities assessment linked to program-level student assessment.
 - A final challenge is to ensure student assessment involves all program faculty working collaboratively rather than the student assessment facilitator working alone.