

## Why Accreditation and Assessment at Snow College

### Accreditation

The following statement is an excerpt from the web site for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities which is the body that accredits Snow College.

“Regional accreditation is a process of recognizing educational institutions for performance, integrity, and quality that entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public. In the United States this recognition is extended largely through nongovernmental, voluntary membership associations that establish accreditation criteria, evaluate institutions against that criteria, and approve institutions that meet the criteria.

“Institutions accredited . . . by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities are required to examine their own missions, goals, operations, and achievements. It then provides expert analysis by peer evaluators, and, later, commendations for accomplishments and recommendations for improvement from the accrediting body. Since the accreditation status of an institution is reviewed periodically, institutions are encouraged toward continued self-study and improvement.

“While accreditation criteria and procedures of regional accrediting agencies differ from region to region, the principles underlying eligibility and levels of expectation are similar in their intent to:

- foster excellence through the development of criteria and guidelines for assessing educational quality and institutional effectiveness;
- encourage institutional improvement through continuous self-study and evaluation;
- ensure the educational community, the general public, and other organizations that an institution has clearly defined and appropriate educational objectives, has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected, appears in fact to be substantially accomplishing them, and is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so; and
- provide counsel and assistance to established and developing institutions.”

### Assessment

The purpose of assessing students is to obtain information that can be used to guide decisions about how to help those students learn better. An analogy might be the information a self-correcting cruise missile receives from radar to help it make mid-course corrections so it will hit its target. Assessment is done to help faculty and staff

help students, and the institution as a whole, to achieve the objectives (the targets) desired.

Institutions of higher education have always been involved in assessment of one form or another. When faculty teach students to gain certain knowledge or skills, they then engage in assessment to find out how well the students did learn. Administrative departments of the college also identify goals to be achieved (targets) and then periodically collect information to help determine how well the goals are being met. Building a “culture of assessment” at Snow College suggests that assessment is done more systematically, with more focus, and that what is learned results in specific actions to be taken to make improvements.

A recent publication called *Committing to Quality: Guidelines for Assessment and Accountability in Higher Education*, and endorsed by 27 national higher education organizations, describes the need for greater levels of formal education for U.S. citizens in the future. To help achieve the higher levels, the publication recommends that institutions do the following:

- Set clear goals for student achievement
- Regularly measure performance against those goals
- Report evidence of success
- Continuously work to improve results

Snow College is committed to meeting fully the accreditation standards of the Northwest Commission. It is also committed to building and sustaining a culture of assessment and institutional effectiveness to help students learn and to enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

The purpose of this web page is to provide access to information that is relevant to the accreditation and assessment work of the College.