

Accreditors to give OCC its own 'report card' during spring visit

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Like the students who take classes there, Oakland Community College will get its own report card this spring.

A team from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools will visit the campuses April 6-8 and decide whether to accredit OCC for up to 10 years.

"It's a stamp of approval on whether we meet the expectations of the consumer. It assures students their credits will transfer to any place in the U.S.," said OCC Chancellor Richard T. Thompson.

To understand it, don't think of a student taking a standardized test. Think of a "truth in advertising" checkup.

"It also assures our eligibility for federal funding," added Dr. James Warner, biology teacher and former vice-chancellor.

Thompson is extremely familiar with the process. He has been on North Central accrediting teams visiting other colleges. And even before he became chancellor two years ago, he was on the college's steering committee preparing for the North Central visit.

"It's a collegial process,"

Thompson said. "It has 27 full-time staff. Its commissioners — the policy making body — are all volunteers."

In the United States, government doesn't accredit colleges. Instead, six regional agencies, funded by dues and fees, fill that role. North Central, founded in 1895 and headquartered in Chicago, covers 19 states.

First: self-study

First step is for the college to do a self-study. In a book-length series of reports, committees outline Oakland County's demographics, economy, course offerings, student financial aids and facilities. The mid-1995 voter decision to pump \$30 million in new tax money for seven years plays a prominent role here.

One telling set of questions:

"What promises (to applicants) are made?"

How are the promises communicated — catalog, admissions materials, recruiter visits ... through high school counselors? How do we ensure we keep the promises?"

OCC must be frank about internal changes. "The institution has seen turnover in the executive and senior staff rank. We have a new chancellor, sever-

al new chancellor's council members, and new deans. Several early severance packages were offered to all full-time staff."

It looks at its relations to the extended student body — business and government. Its Business and Professional Services office, operating since 1984, deals with companies who need employee training, offering them course packages in everything from auto servicing to manufacturing technology.

It trains future police officers at the Oakland Police Academy on the Auburn Hills Campus and firefighters at the Fire Training Institute in Southfield.

"North Central doesn't like institutions to do things for the visit," said Thompson. "They review us against things we say about ourselves."

'Exhausting' work

Step two is for North Central's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education to review OCC's writings and visit.

"Their team looks at our mission statement and purposes and judges us against those criteria," said Thompson.

Linda Pososki, who teaches business administration and

chaired the steering committee, added, "There isn't a perfect organization. There always is a way to do things better."

OCC's first three campuses were accredited individually in 1966. The full college was accredited a few years later. The last North Central evaluation came in 1987-88.

"I think we were a creditable institution, and they gave us lots of concerns and suggestions," Thompson said.

North Central paid OCC a "focus" visit in 1991, concentrating on institutional planning. The focus team found us to be in good order."

Thompson, who has served on visiting teams to other colleges, describes grueling 12-14 hour work days. "We meet with every conceivable institution and faculty member. It's not something you do more than once a year because it's exhausting," he said.

The 12-member North Central team will be chaired by Dr. Arthur W. DeCuboter, president of Scottsville (Az.) CC.

It will look at audits, advisory committee minutes, catalogs, contracts, board minutes, staffing plans, the library and computer information.

OAKLAND DIGEST

Oakland Digest provides a summary of headline stories from around the county during the week leading up to March 8.

BIRMINGHAM

Resident and pet to compete in dog show: Sarah Fowler of Birmingham hopes her Border Terrier, Trooper, will be crowned a champion at this weekend's 80th annual Detroit Kennel Club show at Cobo Hall.

CLARKSTON

Racquet club hosts fund-raiser: The Oakland County chapter No. 183 of Phenaxants Forever will hold its ninth annual fund-raising banquet on March 21 at Deer Lake Racquet Club. Call (248) 889-1217.

LAKE ORION

Park development slows: Development of Friendship Park in Lake Orion has slowed due to a lack of funds, said Parks and Recreation director Rock Blanchard.

OXFORD

Community invited to fund-raiser: Red Knapp's American Grill in Oxford is hosting a "Linguine Fund-raiser" 4-10 p.m. Monday, March 16, with proceeds benefiting the D.J. Maskill Cerebral Palsy Fund. A portion of the proceeds will also go to the Erica Ettinger Fund. Tickets are \$10 for students; \$20 for adults and are available at Red Knapp's, the Lake Orion branch of Oxford Bank and at the door.

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ROCHESTER HILLS

Court in search of new home: Currently located at Barclay Circle and Rochester Road, the 52-3 District Court's lease expires in 1999 and now there's a debate whether to keep the courtroom in Rochester Hills or move it west to Auburn Hills.

SOUTHFIELD

Gregory wins commission seat: Vincent Gregory, D-Southfield, received 1,136 votes at last week's general election and will fill the unexpired term of Lawrence Fernick. Gregory, 49, will represent District 20, which includes Southfield, north of I-696 and Lathrup Village.

TROY

Republican leaders attend dinner: A Who's-Who of state Republican leaders, including John Engler, L. Brooks Patterson, Spencer Abraham and Candice Miller wined, dined and talked politics during Friday's Lincoln Dinner at Troy's San Marino Club.

WEST BLOOMFIELD

Cable switch confuses viewers: MediaOne cable TV company is switching its subscribers to the new Broadband optical fiber network and adding new channels, which has caused a switch in the channel designations.

Here's what they'll look for:

"An evaluation is a very public process," said OCC's Linda Pososki. Here is how the public can have access to the North Central Association accreditation team:

■ You may send written comments on OCC to: Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, North Central Association, 30 N. LaSalle — Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60602.

■ You may meet the group informally at 7 p.m. Monday, April 6, in the Technology Build-

ing of the Auburn Hills Campus, 2900 Featherstone Road, east of I-75.

■ You may listen to the team's oral report about noon Wednesday, April 8, in the OCC District Office, 2480 Opyke, Bloomfield Hills.

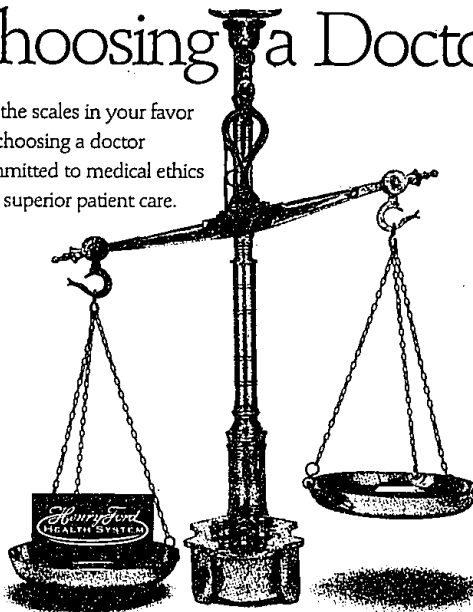
■ The final written report will take weeks. It is expected to be available in July in the chancellor's office in the OCC District Office. It is a public document.

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For a copy of any of the following, mail to:
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