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## Chapter Seven: Request for Continued Accreditation

Over the past 10 years, the University of Northern Colorado has evolved as a student-centered, academically rigorous, forward-looking institution. Undergraduate programs are comprehensive and high-quality; specialized graduate programs through the doctorate are first-rate; and academic priorities focus on a strong liberal arts foundation, professional preparation, and real-world experiences. Instruction cultivates students' abilities to think critically about complex and practical problems, to understand their disciplines deeply, to apply methods of inquiry to new topics, and to work productively in a diverse, changing, technologically advancing, and global society.

The mission of the University has been disseminated broadly and endorsed enthusiastically. During the past 10 years, the mission was revised slightly to elevate attention to students' needs, to specify learning outcomes for undergraduate and graduate students, and to formalize expectations that everyone acts honorably and inclusively. The programs, activities, and policies of UNC are implemented with scrupulous attention to mission directives.

The past decade has witnessed major strides in planning. Throughout this period, the mission has guided University planning and budgeting, thereby preserving the institution's distinctive identity. Progress has been made along several dimensions of planning: level of coordination among planning initiatives; breadth of recommendations from individual units; openness about communication in the planning process; zeal in reviewing programs and structures; and quality of proposals for institutional improvement. The plans that emerge from Charting the Future will set the stage for the University to move forward over the next decade.

Equally impressive progress has been made in the University's commitment to teaching and learning. Student learning takes place not only in classrooms but also in laboratories, meeting rooms, residence halls, work sites, playing fields, schools, studios, and communities across Colorado. Partnerships among faculty, staff, and students create a warm and challenging environment in which students can attain their full potential. An emphasis on teaching is evident both in budgetary decisions and in classroom transactions. Faculty members are effective instructors who take pride in their students' learning. Faculty members take advantage of opportuni-

ties to improve their teaching through professional development, particularly in instructional technologies, and they are recognized with teaching awards, honors, and promotions. Progressing as a consciously student-centered institution, the University has formulated assessment strategies that benefit students. Learning goals are publicized, programs are improved with assessment data, and instructors modify their strategies based on data from students.

UNC has also demonstrated a commitment to the learning and growth of its faculty, staff, and administrators. An atmosphere of learning is manifested in everyday analysis of data and requests for critical perspectives. Moreover, individuals, programs, and units have demonstrated a steady commitment to high ethical standards and responsible action. Original research, scholarship, and creative works invigorate the intellectual climate of the University, community, state, and nation.

The University continues to be enriched by strong connections among its constituents and, significantly, with the broader community. Schools, health centers, businesses, and community agencies offer students invaluable practical experiences and in return, gain from partnerships with faculty, academic units, and the greater University. Statewide and regionally, the University offers degree programs in education and allied professional fields through a variety of instructional formats. Nationally and internationally, the University reaches out in select areas of concentrated expertise, providing services, research, and policy recommendations for practitioners, parents, policy makers, and scholars.

The University has changed dramatically since the 1994 NCA accreditation review. Today, campus-wide learning, particularly student learning, is given the focused attention that is its due. As exemplified by its current planning process, *Charting the Future*, the University remains committed to discovering opportunities, fostering imagination, and investing in greatness.

These and other accomplishments reveal that UNC is well positioned to move forward and to face the challenges summarized in this self-study document. The many strong assets of the University – a focused mission; its heritage and integrity; the caliber of its students, faculty, staff, and administrators; its commitment to learning for all; the goodwill of its constituent groups; and its recent successes in systemic planning – create the necessary mindset to meet these challenges and others that will inevitably surface over the next decade.

In closing, UNC has demonstrated strong patterns of evidence that meet all the accreditation criteria of the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. The evidence accumulated in the nearly two-year process of completing this self-study affirms that the University strives to be a learning-focused, connected, distinctive institution with an eye on the future. The self-study process has also identified challenges and opportunities for the future, and these will be addressed as the institution progresses. In essence, the institution has lived up to the motto of its self-study process, focusing on the future, and building on quality. Accordingly, the University respectfully requests continued 10-year accreditation status.

**Focusing on the Future, Building on Quality**

