Table of Contents

Program Overview ........................................................................................................................................ 1

1. Program Discipline/Goals
   A. Educational goals/objectives .............................................................................................................. 2
   B. Mission, values and goals ....................................................................................................................... 2

2. Curriculum
   A. Evaluation of curriculum using national professional guidelines..................................................... 4
   B. Changes in course content and/or outcomes ....................................................................................... 4
   C. Assessment of course outcomes .......................................................................................................... 6
   D. Assessment of College Core outcomes ............................................................................................... 7
   E. Mode of course delivery via distance learning ................................................................................... 8
   F. Adoption of educational initiatives ..................................................................................................... 8

3. Changes in needs of students and community
   A. Student demographics ......................................................................................................................... 9
   B. How feedback has affected instructional changes .............................................................................. 9
   C. Current and projected demand and enrollment pattern ................................................................. 10
   D. Strategies within program to facilitate access and diversity ............................................................ 10
   E. Operational challenges that impact student learning ....................................................................... 11

4. Faculty: composition, qualifications and development
   A. Information re: ................................................................................................................................. 12
      i. Composition
      ii. Quantity, quality
      iii. Turnover
      iv. Adjunct faculty
      v. Diversity and cultural competency goals
   B. Changes in instructor qualifications ............................................................................................... 12
C. Contributions of professional development activities .................12

5. Facilities and Support
   A. Online technologies ..........................................................13
   B. Student use of resources .....................................................13
   C. Clerical, technical, administrative and tutoring support ............13
   D. Advising ............................................................................14

6. CTE program needs
   A. Advisory Committee impact ...............................................15
   B. Degree and Certificate Outcomes .......................................15
      i. Changes made to degree and certificate outcomes
      ii. Strategies for assessment of outcomes
      iii. Evidence of student success
      iv. Improving attainment of degree
   C. Job placement data .............................................................16
   D. Future employment opportunities ........................................17
   E. Barriers to success ...............................................................17
   F. Related PCC programs ......................................................18

7. Recommendations for improvement
   A. Assessment of strengths ....................................................19
   B. Areas needing improvement ...............................................19
   C. SAC recommendations ........................................................20

Reference documents ...........................................................................................................................................21
The Health Information Management program was established in the 1970’s to serve the growing demand for medical record technicians in the Portland metro area. The program has undergone many transitions since then including a name change from the Medical Record Technology program to Health Information Management in alignment with industry standards. It has moved its campus based program to an online environment using current technologies simulating real world experiences.

Students enrolled in the health information management program must complete 96 credits within the two year associate degree program, which is accredited through the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM). Following successful completion of the program, students become eligible to take the national examination offered through the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) and become credentialed as Registered Health Information Technicians (RHIT).

Health information management (HIM) is the profession dedicated to the effective management of patient information and healthcare data to deliver high-quality treatment and care to the public. HIM professionals are the experts in health data collection, data abstraction, diagnosis and procedure coding, and reporting of healthcare statistics while maintaining the highest standards of data integrity, confidentiality and security. As healthcare adapts to the electronic health record (HER) environment, the HIM professional role is critical to ensure that providers, healthcare organizations, and patients have access to the right healthcare information when and where it is needed. The HIM professional will be on the front lines in delivering the benefits of electronic records and health information computing to the community and society at large.

Portland Community College’s HIM program has embraced a new vision proposed for quality education in HIM, and that is to graduate students that will successfully sustain and lead amidst a rapidly changing healthcare delivery system.
1. PROGRAM/DISCIPLINE GOALS

A. Educational goals/objectives

The Health Information Management program’s primary goal is to provide graduates who will meet the entry-level competencies as defined by the American Health Information Management Assn. (AHIMA) and become gainfully employed in the HIM field.

Since the last program review the HIM program has undergone many changes, most significant is the program structure shifting from a campus based program to being offered entirely online. The educational goals and objectives have been modified to reflect the needs of online learners. A main objective is to create an online learning environment providing the instruction necessary to be successful in the health information management field. Therefore, the online mode of course delivery lends itself to the type of work the HIM graduate will perform on the job. For instance, coding and billing specialists now perform their work on computers, viewing medical records electronically. Our curriculum has incorporated electronic viewing of actual medical records provided by local area hospitals. As the student becomes proficient in adapting to technologies used in their online courses, they will be better prepared for using those same technologies in the HIM work environment.

With the momentous transformations occurring in the U.S. healthcare system, the objective for the HIM program will be to stay abreast of industry changes (See 2. Curriculum)

B. Mission, values and goals

PCC mission statement:  Portland Community College provides access to an affordable, quality education in an atmosphere that encourages the full realization of each individual’s potential. The college offers opportunities for academic, professional, and personal growth to students of all ages, races, cultures, economic levels, and previous education experiences.

As a career technical degree program, the HIM program has continued to address the mission, values and goals of Portland Community College. We have recognized that the HIM program necessitated conversion to an online program to meet the needs of working students. We have created full and part-time program options to allow the student to complete their degree within a time frame that will promote success. HIM program applicants that meet pre-requisite requirements are accepted into the program on a first come-first serve basis, and regardless of age, race, culture, economic level or previous education experience.

HIM program values reflect the college Statement of Values, providing an education setting that will allow the student an outcomes based approach to education. Their courses are structured to encourage constructive discussion and debate, and to promote free thinking within a safe environment.
The HIM program students will be working in a rapidly changing healthcare environment where continued education is both required to maintain certification as well as to keep current in the field. Therefore, it is the goal to encourage our students to participate in ongoing educational opportunities offered through the national and state professional associations in addition to other community education offerings. With the national recognition given to health information management, health informatics, and national electronic record systems, it is imperative that HIM professionals prepare themselves for ongoing challenges. These changes have been reflected in curriculum changes within the last few years (see details under Curriculum). In addition, we have partnered with other community colleges offering certificate medical record programs to accept transfer students (Lane Community, Chemeketa CC, Mt. Hood Community, and Clark College). We also encourage our graduates to consider transferring PCC credits to baccalaureate degree programs in HIM and have worked closely with the newly created RHIA (registered health information management) program at OHSU (their program director is on our advisory committee and HIM program director is on their advisory committee).
2. Curriculum

A. Evaluation of curriculum using national professional guidelines

The Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM) requires that the program must demonstrate that the curriculum meets or exceeds the professional course content as published in the American Health Information Management Assn. (AHIMA) Model Curriculum for Associate Degree Programs which includes the HIM Entry-Level Competencies and Knowledge Clusters. Therefore, the HIM program courses are reviewed annually using the Knowledge Cluster Mapping Worksheet provided by AHIMA (see Reference Documents).

B. Changes in course content and/or outcomes

In 2006, AHIMA’s Education Strategy Committee created a blueprint to quality education in health information management entitled “Vision 2016”. The aim was for “HIM to be able to further sustain and lead amidst a rapidly changing healthcare delivery system”. It was recognized that with the movement towards an electronic record environment a trained workforce would be required specializing in applied clinical informatics, information technology, and information management. Vision 2016 recommended preparation of a stronger health information specialist work force for the future through formal education. Specifically the goals were to:

- Include informatics in professional goals and competencies
- Ensure faculty competencies in the electronic health information environment
- Engage informatics and information management education leaders in preparing a vision of the academic resources and network needed for health information education leadership in the U.S.

The report concluded that for the electronic health record to be successfully implemented and maintained, not only are trained computer technicians needed, but the core competencies of HIM professionals are fundamental to success. Therefore, PCC’s HIM program included additions to existing courses and added new courses to align with AHIMA’s Vision 2016 goals. HIM 283 was developed in December 2006 specifically to address these goals. The course description states:

“Examines the goals and features of health information systems including administrative and clinical applications. Teaches health information management students strategies and tools to insure the development and/or selection of health information systems.”

During the 2008-2009 school year, portions of HIM 110, 120, 182, 282 and 286 were updated to further reflect the national trend from paper-based to electronic record systems. Assignments were revised to incorporate hands on use of healthcare system technologies, including the use of scanned medical records for student analysis. However, it was recognized that to meet program competencies it would be necessary to provide more hands on education to the student. Beginning fall, 2009 the HIM program will be using AHIMA’s Virtual Lab system.
This is an e-HIM® Virtual Laboratory that provides students with single site, virtual access to a full array of health information management technologies. Developed in partnership with health information technology software corporations, the Virtual Lab allows students to work with the software they will encounter in the workplace, in an environment that closely simulates real world application of those technologies. See Reference documents for examples of Virtual Lab assignments.

The HIM program curriculum has also added overviews on the emerging field of health informatics. Health informatics is the field of information science concerned with the management of all aspects of health data and information through the application of computers and computer technologies. The two fields overlap in some areas and associate and baccalaureate degree programs in HIM and medical informatics are accredited by the same agency, the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM). Portland Community College has received grant money from the State of Oregon Office of Community College and Workforce Development (CCWD) to lead a statewide consortium of Oregon community colleges in creating health informatics associate degree programs. Since health informatics requires knowledge of HIM practices, it was recognized that some of the HIM core classes will be essential components of the new CIS degree. Therefore, the HIM program’s healthcare delivery course, HIM 182, will now provide an overview of health informatics and greater emphasis placed on electronic record systems in other HIM courses. It is expected that a percentage of HIM program students will also take additional CIS classes to further their computer technology skills as HIM professionals become employed in this area.

Another significant change for HIM professionals will be the national conversion from the current ICD-9 coding classification system to ICD-10, with a compliance date set by the Department of Health and Human Services for adoption by October, 2013. The rule has major implications for every aspect of the healthcare industry, particularly the education of the future HIM work force. The ICD-9 CM system has been used in the United States since 1979 and is now facing major changes in established coding and billing practices. The United States is the only industrialized country in the world not already using ICD-10 and has been reluctant to move forward with acceptance of ICD-10. However, implementing ICD-10 will maintain mortality and morbidity data comparability internationally and the U.S. acknowledges the necessity of being in alignment with the rest of the global healthcare community.

Currently the HIM program includes four coding classes using ICD-9 in its curriculum which will require updating. In addition, the program’s finance and reimbursement class content will also need revisions to reflect ICD-10 implementation. The HIM program must prepare for the transition from ICD-9 to ICD-10 by continuing to train students to ICD-9 while gradually integrating study of ICD-10 into the curriculum. The plan is to initially introduce ICD-10 into the curriculum in the HIM coding classes in winter and spring, 2010. Beginning 2011 the two
coding classes will incorporate a cross-walk between ICD-9 and ICD-10 code sets, teaching both systems, which will continue until 2013 at which time the courses will be redesigned to encompass only the study of ICD-10.

Lastly, beginning fall of 2009 the HIM program has been approved to teach an online Anatomy & Physiology series specifically for HIM program students. This had previously been the only component of the program (other than the practicum courses) that was not offered online and an obstacle to many students entering the program. Since so many students in the program must work and/or are unable to easily access a college campus, the problem was addressed by the HIM SAC. It was felt that although the HIM program students should have anatomy & physiology, they do not need the lab portion as required in some of the other health career programs (medical lab technology, nursing). Therefore, per approval by the Biology SAC, a new HIM course is under development to be taught by a Biology instructor for HIM students beginning fall, 2009. (See CCOG’s for HIM 128 and 129 in Reference Documents).

C. Assessment of course outcomes

Learning outcomes are assessed by a number of methods. Students in HIM lecture courses are evaluated through tests and assignments. The tests in the program include three types of questions: recall, application, and program solving. Assignments in the lecture courses involve the application of the knowledge covered as well as critical thinking skills. For example, in HIM 282, Data Management and Analysis 2, students are required to analyze the changes in death rates during the 1900’s. In order to analyze the death rates students use knowledge learned in previous courses on the U.S. health care system and the history of medicine. The students are then asked to use critical thinking skills to determine how society could influence or change the leading causes of death in certain age groups. The results of tests and assignments are used to evaluate the content of individual courses and the teaching methodologies.

Students in HIM laboratory courses are evaluated on their skills to perform HIM tasks. Lab modules are competency-based with each module having specific criteria identified. The student is required to repeat work until the competency is demonstrated. Student evaluations of laboratory modules are used to evaluate not only the lab experience but also the lecture courses in which the student received the knowledge to perform the required skill.

The professional practice experience courses include assignments that are structured for students to gain experience in applying knowledge to technical procedures in health information systems and in developing professional attitudes for interacting with other professionals and consumers in the healthcare field. Students are evaluated on whether or not they meet the entry-level competency. The program receives feedback on student performance from the healthcare facilities that is used to evaluate the program courses. Students provide feedback on whether they had the knowledge and skills to perform the professional practice assignments.
The American Health Information Management Association sends School Score Reports semi-annually providing data on the performance of program graduates taking the national RHIT exam within that period. The data in the School Score Reports include summaries of individual pass rates compared to the national mean. Competencies are assessed listing the scores achieved in each domain/sub domain. Results below par in any area must be reflected in an action plan. The national pass rate for the national RHIT exam has remained steady for HIM program graduates (above 95%), for the last three years (was 100% in 2008 compared to 78% nationally).

During the 2008-2009 school year the HIM SAC made changes to several course outcomes. With the revisions made incorporating electronic medical record technologies into curriculum, HIM 110 and HIM 283 were converted from three to four credits. The HIM SAC is continuing to assess all CCOG’s to reflect accurate content and improve course outcomes. With the initiation of the Virtual Lab into program classes, revised course outcomes can be achieved meeting the standards set forth in AHIMA’s Vision 2016.

D. Assessment of College Core outcomes

The PCC core outcomes reflect the American Health Information Management Association’s beliefs that HIM professionals should attain in their education; communication, community and environmental responsibility, critical thinking and problem solving, cultural awareness, professional competence, and self-reflection. Health information management is a service-oriented profession and the HIM student must possess these characteristics to be successful.

The HIM program includes course lectures and assignments that expose the student to situations where these attributes are examined. HIM 290 is a relatively new course where students develop skills for training healthcare teams, using communication and effective group collaboration. HIM 271, the quality improvement in healthcare course, requires students to assess professional competence. The program management course, HIM 272 and accompanying lab section, entails principles of management and includes instruction on supervising diverse teams of workers.

Successful outcomes are confirmed by graduate pass rates on the RHIT national exam. AHIMA’s 2007-2008 annual school report indicates 85% pass rate for program students in the area of human resources and management.

All HIM course instructors incorporate group projects into the curriculum. It is emphasized that teamwork is imperative in HIM departments and that learning effective communication, cultural awareness, and professional competence will enhance marketable skills for future employment.
E. Mode of course delivery via distance learning

The core HIM program classes went online in 2002, and with the addition of HIM 128 & 129 (Anatomy & physiology series) the HIM program is now delivered entirely online. This has allowed the HIM program to meet the needs of working adults thereby doubling enrollment. As new technologies for distance learning are being made available a greater variety of instructional methods are being used. For instance, we have added audio pronunciations to our pre-requisite medical terminology courses, and have used Elluminate in the coding classes allowing greater instructor/student interaction. Our students have indicated that they prefer several options for course delivery to meet the needs of kinetic, auditory and visual learning styles and it is our goal to provide that using current technologies available.

F. Adoption educational initiatives

In accordance with the college’s promotion of inquiry-based educational initiatives, the HIM program supports problem-based learning approaches in its curriculum. Six of the HIM core classes contain accompanying lab sections to augment understanding of lecture material via inquiry-learning activities. In addition, with the purchase and use of the Virtual Lab program beginning fall 2009 the HIM program can include student lab assignments replicating actual hospital system operations. Students surveyed have repeatedly expressed the importance of problem-based instructional opportunities to promote greater understanding, as expressed in the following excerpt from a winter term 2009 course evaluation:

“I really liked that the course had a complimentary lab class. It is one thing to read about certain functions, processes, etc., but when we’re allowed to apply what we’ve learned in the lab class, it really gives a new meaning to the lecture.”
3. Changes in needs of students and community

A. Student demographics

The Health Information Management program has had a good record with respect to student retention. The recent data available from IE reveals that 75% of the cohort that entered in Fall 2006 completed the program in Spring 2008. With regard to health programs at PCC this falls near the median.

The typical HIM student is older than the average student at the college. About 45% of the students in 2007–2008 were over age 40 and another 26% between ages 31 and 40. The HIM cohort is predominantly female, 92% in the most recent IE data. Another characteristic that sets the HIM student cohort apart from PCC students in general is location of residence. About half of the students enroll from outside the district. Last year, 47% of the registered HIM students were from Washington state or Oregon locales beyond the borders of our college district. The year before, the figure was 59%. The online structure of the program obviously contributes to this variation.

The HIM program has traditionally had a less diverse group of students than the college in general. Last year 83.9% of the students were Caucasian and 12.5% Asian or Pacific Islander. In the three years of available IE data only four HIM students identified themselves as African American or Hispanic. The IE data indicates that the non-Caucasian student population for CTE programs is about 25%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HIM Program</th>
<th>Career/Tech/Professional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Distribution</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>91.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Distribution</td>
<td>Over Age 40</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data provided from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness)

B. How feedback has affected instructional changes

Students surveys are routinely sent to students following graduation which indicate students prefer various options of educational instruction. The HIM program has recognized this request by:

- purchasing in 2009 the Virtual Lab program which will allow students simulated work experiences with system technologies used in hospitals
- incorporating video and audio lecture materials to courses
- creating assignments affording interactive group discussion
- requesting Distance Learning quality course reviews (in process, but will have completed all HIM course reviews by end of 2009).
C. Current and projected demand and enrollment patterns

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor, employment in the health information management field is expected to grow faster than average. Job prospects should be very good; technicians with a background in medical coding will be in particularly high demand. Employment nationally of health information technicians is expected to increase by 18 percent through 2016—faster than the average for all occupations. The Oregon State Employment Department projects a 30% increase for medical records and health information technicians in the state from 2006 to 2016.

With the new government administration’s push for nationwide healthcare initiatives and promotion of electronic records, there has been an increase in attention placed on the profession. The following is projections data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor (www.bls.gov):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Title</th>
<th>Employment, 2006</th>
<th>Projected employment, 2016</th>
<th>Change in numbers, 2006-16</th>
<th>Percent of change, 2006-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIM technicians</td>
<td>170,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result of these projections, the HIM program has had increased applications for 2009-2010. In fall 2008 the HIM program admitted 28 students. For fall, 2009 the HIM program has 40 confirmed applicants with a waiting list of 10 or more. This is in part the consequence of the current high unemployment rate, but is also in response to the Labor Bureau employment projections for HIM.

D. Strategies within program to facilitate access and diversity

The decision to put the HIM program online was the most critical component in reaching students that would otherwise not be able to attend classes. It has allowed working adults to continue their employment while obtaining their degree. It has given access to students outside of the area that may not be close to a college campus.

The biggest obstacle since the program went online was for students to fulfill the Anatomy & Physiology course credits. With the expectation that the entire program was online, students were disappointed to learn they would need to take A&P on campus, or locate an online equivalent course. Therefore, the HIM anatomy & physiology series has been approved and is under development to deliver online beginning fall, 2009.

Although historically the HIM profession has employed predominantly females, there has been an increase in male applicants recently. This may be due to the fact that more males have
been employed in computer and information technology areas, and with recent layoffs are looking for more secure positions in a high demand health technology field. Our marketing strategies have addressed this population as well as trying to form strong alliances with area high schools via articulation agreements. We would like to bring in younger students (traditionally HIM students average age is approximately 40) and through the PAVTEC Education Consortium, PCC credits can be obtained for high school courses that are equivalent to PCC medical profession courses. HIM program staff also routinely attends high school career fairs promoting the profession and program.

E. Operational challenges that impact student learning

The HIM program has made considerable progress in meeting the operational challenges impacting student learning as indicated by the development of an online HIM anatomy & physiology series, and improving online methods of course delivery. (The challenges facing online students is discussed in detail in 6 E.)
4. Faculty: composition, qualifications and development

A. Information regarding faculty:

The Health Information Management Program has two full time faculty, one with a full teaching load and the other with one quarter release time to fulfill duties as faculty chair and program director. In addition, there are three part-time faculty teaching HIM courses which equates to approximately two and a half FT positions.

Since 2007 there has been a change in HIM program leadership with the retirement of the program director. The new program director took over in fall of 2007, and is currently filling directorship and faculty chair positions. The other full-time faculty member is in the process of retiring and will not be returning in fall 2009. Until that position is replaced the program chair and the adjunct faculty will take over that assigned workload.

B. Changes in instructor qualifications:

Instructor qualifications are being reviewed to reflect essential education and credentials. Instructor qualifications was a topic discussed at the May 2009 HIM Advisory Committee meeting with consensus among members that it is important to require full-time faculty to have an Associate or Bachelor’s degree in Health Information Management, and current credential as a Registered Health Information Technician or Registered Health Information Administrator and at least three years work experience in HIM. Qualifications for part-time instructors will depend on course content and individual experience and credentials in health related fields. Professional development is a requirement for all HIM educators to maintain accreditation. A two year cycle of continuing education units must be maintained and are validated through The American Health Information Management Assn.

C. Contribution of professional development activities

With changes in course content relating to the new coding classification system (to go into effect 2013), faculty will need training in ICD-10 (International Classification of Diseases, 10th ed.) The proposed three year timeline for implementation of ICD-10 instruction begins with a system overview in winter term 2010 and will therefore require training within the six months. Since coding instruction is an integral component of the HIM program, training for the instructor(s) will be imperative and further course development required. The division has been supportive of faculty, with assurance of continued resources for professional development.
5. Facilities and Support

A. Online technologies

When the HIM program transitioned from campus classes to online many of the traditional methods of instruction had to be revised to reflect the changed environment. The paper medical records that were previously used for hands-on lab assignments were out of date and therefore we contracted with a local area hospital to scan their records for use online. The records are now easily available and the students must review and analyze record content via their computer screens. Since HIM professionals now utilize computers to perform record analysis in the work setting the online mode of learning gives the student a more authentic experience.

The HIM program has purchased AHIMA’s Virtual Lab which uses several software programs to simulate HIM work performed in healthcare settings. This technology will be incorporated into several classes beginning fall, 2009.

B. Student use of resources

Students in the HIM program are encouraged to become members of AHIMA, the national professional association. AHIMA offers many different resources for students including a Community of Practice (CoP) site specifically for students going through accredited HIM programs. Many of the HIM program classes require students to research information using AHIMA’s online reference library, in addition to other available resources, including PCC’s library system.

C. Clerical, technical, administrative and tutoring support

Clerical support has decreased since 2007 with the retirement of the previous Admissions Coordinator, who in addition to managing the applications of students also performed advising and assistance with directed practice coordination. The current position requires the faculty to coordinate all directed practice rotations for students, and the advising duties have been shifted to the division’s Perkins advisors.

Technical support is available through PCC’s Blackboard Help Desk, although we have been finding in the last few years that more students are familiar with taking online classes and not needing assistance. However, all of the HIM courses provide information on how students can find technical support if needed.

Since the field of health information management is so specific, administrative and tutoring support is provided for the most part by HIM program instructors. The faculty work closely
with students and track success via ongoing course assessments. If a student is struggling in a class we make contact and discuss a plan of action. We are conscious of life obstacles that may inhibit student success and encourage ongoing communication between student and instructor. If a student cannot meet an assigned deadline we are open to reasonable extensions.

D. Advising

HIM student advising is also performed by a Perkins advisor assigned to the HIM program. She maintains a database program tracking student progress term to term. If a student does not meet program requirements from a previous term the student is to be contacted. The HIM program director and the Perkins advisor have also discussed maintaining an online HIM advising site for students to access their program status.
6. CTE program needs

A. Advisory Committee impact

The HIM Advisory Committee is made up of community healthcare professionals working in a variety of health information management areas, from quality improvement to coding and billing (see Reference documents). They all have RHIT’s working for them and have a strong interest in the continued success of PCC’s health information management program. Since the HIM program must meet the needs of the medical community, the input given by the Advisory Committee is of utmost importance.

At the committee meeting in May 2009, the Advisory Committee discussed the success of the program since it has gone online. They are supportive of the direction the program is going, particularly with the inclusion of increased instruction of electronic health record systems. They encourage the use of the AHIMA Virtual Lab program for HIM students and suggest that since it includes an electronic record component that it be considered for use in other allied health programs.

With recent curriculum changes the Advisory Committee agrees that a solid HIM education be required by faculty. The program should insist on the full time faculty maintaining AHIMA credentials and adjunct faculty credentials should be evaluated individually per course. All full time faculty should be required to have a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in addition to three to five years previous HIM experience. With the many changes occurring in the healthcare industry the HIM program will continue to rely on input from the Advisory Committee for guiding its future.

B. Degree and Certificate Outcomes

The HIM associate degree outcomes have remained the same in “providing graduates who will meet the entry-level competencies as defined by the American Health Information Management Association and become gainfully employed in the health information management field.” A one year certificate in HIM coding had previously been offered but was discontinued due to low enrollment.

The entry-level competencies as dictated by AHIMA must be evaluated each year using the CAHIIM Annual Program Assessment Report (APAR). Established thresholds must be met in the following areas:

- Graduate placement
- Employer satisfaction
- Program attrition rates
- RHIT national exam pass rate
Areas not meeting thresholds require analysis and corrective action plans be submitted to AHIMA. In addition, the CAHIIM report entails goals established with corresponding target outcomes, plans, and results.

**Current goals include:**

- Faculty will demonstrate knowledge skills, qualification and professional development in the content areas they teach.
- Program graduates will demonstrate the HIM entry-level competencies.
- The HIM curriculum will include, at a minimum, the required knowledge clusters with content and experiences to enable students to meet current entry-level competencies.
- The HIM program will demonstrate responsiveness to the needs of the community(ies) of interest.

The 2008 CAHIIM Annual Program Assessment report indicates HIM program students are meeting outcomes as evidenced by the following:

- 100% program pass rate vs. AHIMA national mean pass rate of 78%
- 85% of students responding to post graduate surveys attained employment in HIM vs. 80% nationally
  ~ the remaining 15% decided to delay job searches until they passed their national exam, or are pursuing higher education
- 100% employer satisfaction according to surveys performed vs. 85% nationally

**C. Job placement data**

Data collected from 2004 through 2007 indicate placement rate amongst program graduates has improved as stated below:

- 2004 – 61%
- 2005 – 84%
- 2006 – 84%
- 2007 – 82%

**HIM graduates in this period obtained jobs as:**

- Cancer registrar at Kaiser Permanente
- HIM manager at long term care facility
- Outpatient coder at Kaiser Permanente
- HIM manager at Children’s Farm Home in Corvallis
- HIM supervisor at Providence
- Coder at Longview hospital
- Coder for oncology clinic
- Quality assurance at Oregon State Hospital
- Document imaging (medical record scanning) at Providence
- HIM manager at Virginia Garcia Clinic
Salary information has not been included in graduate surveys and is therefore unavailable. However, the types of positions graduates have secured suggest salaries that should be in alignment with entry to intermediate level standards for the region.

D. Future employment opportunities

With the new government administration promoting healthcare initiatives including electronic health record systems, the future is currently very promising for the profession. President Obama has proposed significant funding for the adoption of health care information technologies and has called for the computerization of all health records within five years. The transition from paper to electronic record systems is a colossal undertaking for healthcare facilities and requires the expertise of HIM professionals to succeed.

According to U.S. Dept. of Labor statistics, “employment of medical records and health information technicians is expected to increase by 18 percent through 2016—faster than the average for all occupations. Health information technicians will be needed to enter patient information into computer databases to comply with Federal legislation mandating the use of electronic medical records”. (www.bls.gov) Technicians with a strong background in medical coding should be in particularly high demand. Changing government regulations and the growth of managed care have increased the amount of paperwork involved in filing insurance claims. Additionally, health care facilities are having some difficulty attracting qualified workers, primarily because employers prefer trained and experienced technicians prepared to work in an increasingly electronic environment with the integration of electronic health records.

E. Barriers to success

Although the online delivery of the HIM program has created opportunities for students to complete their educations, it can also be a barrier to success. Suddenly the student finds themselves in a different learning environment. They must adapt to changes in pedagogy, where their instructors take the role of facilitators and which requires them to be more self-directed. The student must be self-directed and have good time management skills. They need to be detailed readers in order to interpret data in online health record reports; the same characteristics that the HIM community of interest is looking for in employees. Students who do not have these skills get behind in the work and may drop the program. To address this concern, the HIM program now requires informational orientation sessions prior to admission. These mandated sessions are the last step in the application process and the student will not be accepted in the program if they do not attend. The orientations introduce the student to the health information management profession and the program curriculum. The students are informed of the challenges they face with an online program, and reassured of faculty and advisor support. Since initiating the orientation sessions we have seen a decrease in attrition rates (from 10 students in 2003 to 4 students in 2008).
F. Related Programs at PCC

The Institute for Health Professionals offers a hybrid, distance-education course in Basic Coding and Insurance Billing. This course is designed for entry level workers. The content includes basic medical word structure and terms that relate to the body; ICD-9-CM and CPT coding for services furnished by physicians, clinics and hospitals; and current insurance regulations, medical procedures and coding requirements as they affect reimbursement are explored.

Community Education offers two related courses in association with Gatlin Education Services, an online vendor of packaged courses for colleges and universities. The first is “Advanced Coding for the Physician’s Office” (80 hours), and the other is “ICD-10 Medical Coding: Preparation and Instruction for Implementation” (200 hours).

The above courses do not fall within the HIM department’s accreditation umbrella, but after six months of relevant work experience students would be able to sit for the entry-level coding credential offered by AHIMA, the Certified Coding Associate designation. The CCA exam is not linked to any formal education or training in coding.
7. Recommendations for improvement

A. Assessment of strengths

The HIM program’s greatest strength is in recognizing the needs of the HIM community and staying abreast of changes in the profession. Healthcare has always been an evolutionary industry and the HIM program has had to keep up with light speed changes in medicine. To keep current, HIM program faculty maintains continuing education units for continued HIM credentials. However, in addition to the CEU’s required by AHIMA, PCC HIM program faculty have been leaders in the state and national association for the last 30 years. Former program directors Joan Hayward and Susan Williams both worked as program accreditation surveyors, traveling throughout the country reviewing HIM programs. They were both active in the profession on a national and local level, having served positions on the Board of Directors. Susan Williams and instructor Trish Berrong served as President of the Oregon Health Information Management Assn. in the ‘90’s, and the current director, Ann Wenning, is completing her two year position as Director of Public Relations, having served on the House of Delegates representing Oregon at this year’s national convention. This voluntary commitment to the professional association necessitates ongoing exposure to current healthcare issues. This knowledge is returned to the classroom and has helped strengthen the program.

B. Areas needing improvement

As technologies advance, the HIM program needs to incorporate these into its curriculum. This is an area needing improvement in order to maintain a competitive edge. There are many other online HIM associate degree programs being offered throughout the nation, and the public demands quality education, using instructional tools and technologies that allow them real life experiences. PCC’s HIM program hopes to meet this challenge with the introduction of the Virtual Lab into its courses. At an annual cost of $5,500 to maintain program licensing, it is essential that the budget be adjusted to accommodate this cost. It is fast becoming a standard component of HIM programs across the country and the benchmark for HIM simulated lab instruction.

A strong emphasis must also be placed on quality coding instruction for program students, particularly with the movement from ICD-9 to ICD-10 coding systems. AHIMA has been offering webinar and in person training sessions to educators and it is vital to the program’s future success to provide instructor training (current sessions are approximately $2,000 for individual AHIMA members). PCC’s HIM program has graduated the majority of coders working in the Portland metro area for the last 35 years and it is the community expectation that we will continue to provide high quality coding instruction. Local hospitals have already made inquiries regarding PCC providing training for their coders and this is an opportunity worth pursuing.
C. SAC recommendations

At the spring, 2009 HIM SAC meeting the committee reviewed CCOG’s with the intention of making revisions since last assessment. Although most major changes were made in winter of 2009, some minor outcomes in a couple courses need to be revisited (HIM 281, 121, and 285).

The SAC also recommended revision of faculty qualifications reflecting current skills and credentials in HIM. Qualifications were also discussed at the May 2009 HIM Advisory Committee meeting with consensus for full time faculty to maintain AHIMA credentials (RHIT, RHIA, or CCS) and hold a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in a health related discipline.

**Recommendations for course improvements identified by the HIM SAC include:**

- incorporation of simulation activities into more courses
- consistency of HIM course format
- inclusion of internet links and multi-media tools
- routine course evaluations by students and DL quality reviewers
Reference Documents

1. AHIMA
   a. HIM Associate Degree Entry-Level Competencies
   b. Knowledge Cluster Mapping Worksheet
   c. School Score Report
   d. APAR Summary

2. National and state employment and earnings statistics for Health Information Management
   b. OLMS – Occupational Report (www.qualityinfo.org)

3. PCC Office of Institutional Effectiveness
   a. Data on Enrollment and Student Characteristics, 2007-08

4. HIM Program Advisory meeting
   a. May 2009 minutes

5. AHIMA Virtual Lab
   a. Informational sheet
   b. Virtual Lab assignment example

6. HIM program CCOG’s
   a. HIM 128, 129
   b. HIM 283