

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Academic Affairs

NO: AAC 16-22

COMMITTEE DATE: April 26, 2016

BOARD DATE: May 3, 2016

**APPLICATION OF MOUNT WACHUSETT COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO AWARD THE
MEDICAL CODING CERTIFICATE**

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the application of
Mount Wachusett Community College to award the **Medical
Coding Certificate**.

Upon graduating the first class for this program, the College shall submit to the Board a status report addressing its success in reaching program goals as stated in the application and in the areas of enrollment, curriculum, faculty resources, and program effectiveness.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9(b)

Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D.,
Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

May 2016 Mount Wachusett Community College Medical Coding Certificate

INTENT AND MISSION

The proposed Medical Coding Certificate program is planned to align with the mission of Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) as it will provide for the education and preparation of credentialed coders within the region. It is intended that the program will serve to enable students to enter into the field of medical coding as well as providing an on-ramp to the Health Information Management (HIM) associates degree program at MWCC. This certificate is designed to satisfy the requirements for the American Health Information Management (AHIMA) coding approval. Graduates will be eligible to sit for the Certified Coding Associate (CCA) exam through American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) or the Certified Professional Coding (CPC) through the American Association of Professional Coders (AAPC). Students can then apply for positions as entry-level coders while continuing in the associate degree in HIM.

The proposed program has obtained all necessary governance approvals on campus and was approved by the Mount Wachusett Community College Board of Trustees on February 21, 2013. The required letter of intent was circulated on October 29, 2015. No comments were received.

NEED AND DEMAND

National and State Labor Market Outlook

Currently, there is a national implementation of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) system for medical coding, resulting in employer concern about the adequacy of credentialed coders systems. It is projected that this has increased the need for credentialed coding staff due to increase processing time to complete the newer codes. This certificate program will address this employment need for coders and it is expected to provide graduates with employment opportunities. According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics and the Occupational Outlook Handbook, the job outlook between now and 2024 is projected to grow 15% for medical records and health information technicians.

When searching for medical records and health information technicians for Worcester County utilizing Wanted Analytics¹, it was found that, there are currently 34 job openings listed. The average posting period for these positions is 49 days. According to the hiring difficulty indicated on Wanted Analytics, it does appear to be more difficult to fill these positions in Worcester County. To validate the employment data for the local area, the college posed the question to the medical coding and records advisory board. These representatives from many of the major healthcare organizations in central Massachusetts indicated that the preferred credentials for

¹ Wanted Analytics, <https://www.wantedanalytics.com/>, retrieved 12/1/15.

coders included the Certified Coding Specialist (CCS), Certified Coding Associate (CCA) and the Certified Professional Coder (CPC), which will be attainable through the proposed program. Graduates will be eligible to apply for these credentials as outlined in the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) standards.

Student Demand

MWCC has consistently demonstrated high student demand for all health care-related fields over the last several years. According to the MWCC Institutional Profile 2013-2014, the largest program at MWCC is Interdisciplinary Studies – Allied Health (840 students). The proposed certificate in Medical Coding is expected to provide another career option for students with an interest in health and also enable students to enter a new and rapidly growing industry within a short time period. Additionally, it is anticipated that this program will provide an option for students with an interest in the health sciences who do not desire a direct patient care position like those of a nurse, medical assistant or physical therapist assistant. It is also expected to provide individuals with information technology skills with an on-ramp to the health care industry.

The proposed program was derived from stated needs of the area's clinical facilities with more than 75% responding positively to a survey. Health care organizations either attended the initial advisory committee² meeting or expressed interest in further involvement. Advisory committee members noted a concern regarding the number of current employees nearing the retirement age and the lack of trained workers to fill the pending openings.

The curricular requirement to include authentic coding experience through professional practice leads MWCC to anticipate an initial enrollment of 12 students. Recruitment for this program will include current workers who need training and credentials derived from the implementation of ICD-10 in October, 2015 as well as interested and qualified individuals who wish to enroll in a new career with a positive prognosis for job opportunity. It is anticipated that graduates will be equipped to move into the workforce and/or continue their studies to complete the MWCC associate degree program in Health Information Management.

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM

Duplication

While there are many coding certificate programs available throughout Massachusetts, there are no professional certificate approved programs recognized by the AHIMA. There are some distance education programs offered in other states; however, there is no other option for students to earn a credential at this level at other public institutions.

² The advisors are providers and represent the acute care and teaching hospitals within the MWCC service area. Further detail provided on p7 of this document.

ACADEMIC AND RELATED MATTERS

Admission

The Medical Coding Certificate (MCC) program is expected to be an open enrollment program. It is planned that students who are college ready will be eligible to register for the first-semester's coursework. The course of study is planned to allow co-enrollment of students within ENG 101, BIO152, **HIM 101** and HIM 102 during the first semester then co enrollment of **HIM 130**, HIM 150, HIM 160 and HIM 170 in the second semester. During the 3rd and final term, students will co-enroll in HIM 175, HIM 180, HIM 190 and HIM 103. The milestone courses are taken in the first two terms and are highlighted in bold text, above. These milestone courses serve as prerequisites to coursework within the subsequent term. This insures that students have achieved competence in foundational content and are prepared for more complex coursework.

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

# of Students	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
New Full-Time	12	12	12	12
Continuing Full-Time	0	0	0	0
New Part-Time	12	12	12	12
Continuing Part-Time	12	12	12	12
Totals	24	24	24	24

Curriculum (Attachment A)

The proposed curriculum has been planned to align with the Professional Certificate Approval Program of the AHIMA Foundation and to address content knowledge in the areas of Life Sciences and Clinical Coding and Classification Systems. The Life Sciences cluster includes anatomy and physiology, medical terminology and pathopharmacology. It is intended to insure students will develop a clinical knowledge of the structure and function of the healthy human body, pathophysiology, diagnostic and treatment modalities and pharmacotherapy for patient care management and allows for enhanced professional communication within the healthcare environment. The Clinical Coding and Classifications Cluster is intended to insure students develop an understanding of the coding and classification system in order to assign valid diagnostic and/or procedure codes across a varied case mix, including the validation of coded clinical information.

Internships or Field Studies

Through participation in professional site visits, it is planned that each student will complete a 40-hour and field-based practice experience and complete written journal entries and assignments based on the field experience. The topics for the written assignments will include documentation requirements of the health record, identification of a complete health record based on the organization's policies and procedures and other relevant topics as determined by the instructor. Prerequisites for professional site visits include HIM 101, HIM 130, and HIM 150.

RESOURCES AND BUDGET

The Medical Coding Certificate Program is expected to share many resources with the existing HIM Department. No additional projected expenses or resources are anticipated. The HIM department budget is included within the Division of Health Professions, Public Service Programs and Social Sciences at MWCC. The department has procured some of the resources necessary for the coursework including a 3M Encoder, AHIMA memberships for faculty, professional development funds for faculty, and the use of a virtual Electronic Health Record (NEHR Perfect). In line with its goals to complete the process for candidacy through the Commission on Accreditation in Health Informatics and Information Management (CAHIIM) for the HIM degree program, MWCC has hired a program director and a second full time faculty both of whom are well qualified to teach in both the Medical Coding certificate and the HIM Associate degree programs.

Fiscal (Attachment B)

All items needed for the program are purchased and budgeted, because they are required to meet the needs of the current HIM AS degree accreditation. Additional costs are attributed to part time faculty salary as MWCC anticipates part time faculty will be needed as additional course offerings arise. A minimum estimate of 12 students entering the proposed Medical Coding Certificate program is expected to result in \$94,464.00 in new revenue from tuition. It is expected that an increase in enrollment will result from pairing the opportunity for students to attain a coding credential as a registered health information technician (RHIT), with matriculation toward the completion of their AS degree in Health Information Management.

Faculty and Administration (Attachment C)

MWCC hired several qualified faculty for the HIM Department and its programs. The department is led by a program chair, qualified with an MS, RHIA, RHIT, and an extensive background in the field of Health Information Management. A previous instructor within an accredited HIM program, the chair is a member of AHIMA, a recognized ICD-10 trainer through AHIMA, and the author of several textbooks. The CAHIIM requirements for an HIM Associate Degree program have led MWCC to hire a second full time faculty member with several years of experience as a coding manager for an acute care facility. MWCC has also hired two HIM adjunct instructors with experience in teaching both HIM and coding courses.

It is expected that the Dean and Assistant Dean of Health Professions and the Chair of the Health Information Department will have oversight of the Medical Coding Certificate. MWCC current HIM faculty are expected to have the skill, expertise and depth to provide sufficient

faculty for the added certificate program. Administrative support is planned through the Division of Health Professions, Public Service Programs and Social Sciences. The HIM department is currently working with the Admissions and Marketing departments to provide materials to include the Medical Coding Certificate and the HIM Associate Degree department offerings.

Facilities, Library and Information Technologies

The MWCC LaChance Library is fully staffed and supported by a head librarian, two reference librarians and additional clerical support. Faculty and students have full access to databases including EBSCO, CINAHL, Health Reference Center and other reference materials online or at the Gardner Campus. Blackboard™ is the learning management system used by all instructors to support the online delivery of the HIM coursework. The faculty has and will continue to work with the assistant dean of curriculum and Instruction to incorporate technologies into the instruction of online courses.

The general education courses are available in all delivery methods with the exception of BIO 152, which is only available face-to-face at MWCC’s Gardner and Devens Campuses. Students who are at a distance from MWCC are encouraged to take an equivalent course at a closer community college campus and transfer it for completion. The HIM prefixed courses are available exclusively online. The online coursework has been delivered utilizing a variety of technology-enhanced educational products as well as industry-ready technology such as Neehr Perfect, a cloud-based electronic health record tool and a 3M Encoder for simulated workplace coding.

Affiliations and Partnerships

An advisory committee comprised of MWCC administrators and faculty as well as health information management professionals from area clinical facilities is a liaison and supporting mechanism for all of the HIM programs at MWCC, including the proposed Medical Coding Certificate. The advisory committee members are providers who represent the acute care and teaching hospitals within the MWCC service area. The two large systems represented in this group, UMASS Memorial Healthcare and St. Vincent’s Hospital, involve acute care hospitals, satellite campuses, clinics and physician offices. Clinical partners from the Advisory Committee have indicated that they are willing to serve as professional practice experience sites and may be future employers of the graduates. A complete list of advisors and their affiliations was included in the application. Facilities and position details are in the table below.

Facility	Information Management/ Medical Records
Athol Memorial Hospital	Manager, Medical Records
Clinton Hospital	Medical Records
UMASS Memorial Medical Center	DRG Validator
HealthAlliance Leominster Campus	Director of Health Information Management
Heywood Hospital	Director of Health Information Management
Marlborough Hospital	Medical Records

Nashoba Valley Medical Center	Director of Medical Records
Saint Vincent Hospital	Assistant Director, Medical Records
Saint Vincent Hospital	Medical Records
UMass Memorial Medical Center	Health Information Manager
Worcester State Hospital	Medical Records
Cheshire Medical Center Dartmouth-Hitchcock Keene NH	Medical Records
MWCC	VP of Academic Affairs
MWCC	Dean, Health Professions
MWCC	Assistant Dean, Health Professions
MWCC	Program Chair, Health Information Management

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Goal	Measurable Objective	Strategy for Achievement	Timetable
Credentialing pass rates	MWCC graduates to achieve a minimum of 70% first-time test takers pass on the CCA exam	During curriculum experience, students will be tested using credentialing exam like questions.	To be monitored annually with each graduating cohort
Job placement	Job placement rates of 90% of successful graduates	Utilize advisory board members as potential employers, participate in annual job fairs. Provide students with job placement strategies.	Monitor annually with each graduating cohort
Certificate approval process	Achieve initial approval	MWCC curriculum has been developed so as to meet the requirements outlined by the AHIMA Foundation.	Following 6 months of curriculum offering, the program will apply for AHIMA approval.
Maintain industry recognized curriculum	Maintain AHIMA Foundation approval	Continuous systemic program evaluation to monitor curriculum	Annually

		alignment with AHIMA Foundation standards. Submit program update annually to VP of Academic Affairs and complete a full program review every five years.	
Transfer	75 % of students who complete the certificate program will transfer into the degree program	Advise continuously about the advantage of additional credentials.	Monitor annually

EXTERNAL REVIEW AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

The proposed program was externally reviewed by Christy Matheson, RHIA, CCS, Vice President of Coding at Medical Records Associates in Quincy, MA and Patricia Peterson, MA, RHIA, Program Chair, the HIT On-Line program at Northwestern College in Chicago, IL.

The external reviewers indicated that the design of the certificate as a precursor to the degree program presents a significant advantage to students. The team agreed that certificate will likely provide students with a more rapid entry into the workforce, noting that a 41-credit certificate will satisfy the credential requirements expected by prospective employers. Reviewers also noted the high qualifications of the faculty and noted that no other AHIMA-approved programs exist within the state of Massachusetts. Both reviewers noted the benefit of this program, particularly the significance of using software for encoding and electronic health records, and the institution's investment in and commitment to the proposed program

There was some dissonance regarding the changes to curriculum recommended by the reviewers, both related to course sequencing. This produced concern by HIM faculty and after much discussion, it was determined that it is essential for students in this program to master foundational knowledge of anatomy and physiology and medical terminology in order to later be successful in learning specific coding content. In addition, faculty expressed concern that without the completion of two coding courses student may likely be less able to assimilate subsequent learning material as expected. The final response of MWCC to the external reviewers differing suggestions for curricular change was to move forward with the proposed curriculum as planned. Once the program is approved and running, MWCC plans that the curriculum will undergo annual assessment with attention to the review team suggestions for changes.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted by Mount Wachusett Community College and the external reviewers. Staff recommendation is for approval of the proposed **Medical Coding Certificate**

ATTACHMENT A: CURRICULUM

Medical Coding Certificate Curriculum Outline

Required (Core) Courses in the Major (Total # courses required = 12)		
<i>Course Number</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>
ENG 101	College Writing I	3
BIO 152	Essentials of Anatomy and Physiology	4
HIM 101	Introduction to Health Data	4
HIM 102	Medical Terminology for HIM	3
HIM 130	Diagnostic Coding	4
HIM 150	Pathopharmacology	4
HIM170	Physician Coding	4
HIM 160	Procedural Coding	4
HIM 175	Advanced Coding	4
HIM 180	Health Information Financial Management and Reimbursement Methods	4
HIM 190	Compliance and Supervision	2
HIM 103	Professional Practice Experience I	1
	Total Required Credits	41
Distribution of General Education Requirements Attach List of General Education Offerings (Course Numbers, Titles, and Credits)		# of Gen Ed Credits
Arts and Humanities, including Literature and Foreign Languages		
Mathematics and the Natural and Physical Sciences		
Social Sciences		
Total General Education Credits		
Curriculum Summary		
Total number of courses required for the certificate		12
Total credit hours required for certificate		41
Prerequisite, Concentration or Other Requirements:		

ATTACHMENT B: BUDGET

MWCC Medical Coding Certificate					
One Time/ Start Up Costs		Annual Expenses			
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	Cost Categories				
	Full Time Faculty (Salary & Fringe)				
	Part Time/Adjunct Faculty (Salary & Fringe)	\$7000.00	\$7000.00	\$7000.00	\$7000.00
	Staff				
\$2500 (application fee)	General Administrative Costs		\$750(annual maintenance fee)	\$750.00	\$750.00
	Instructional Materials, Library Acquisitions				
	Facilities/Space/Equipment				
	Field & Clinical Resources				
	Marketing	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
	Other (Specify)(professional Development for faculty)	\$2000.00	\$2000.00	\$2000.00	\$2000.00
	TOTALS	\$12,000.00	\$10,250.00	\$10,250.00	\$10,250.00
<p>Fulltime faculty costs and equipment costs have already been budgeted and purchased for utilization within the Associate Degree program in Health Information Management.</p>					
One Time/Start- Up Support		Annual Income			
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	Revenue Sources				
	Grants				
	Tuition	\$94,464.00	\$94,464.00	\$94,464.00	\$94,464.00
	Fees				
	Departmental				
	Reallocated Funds				
	Other (specify)				
	TOTALS	\$94,464.00	\$94,464.00	\$94,464.00	\$94,464.00

ATTACHMENT C: FACULTY

Summary of Faculty Who Will Teach in Proposed Program							
Name of faculty member (Name, Degree and Field, Title)	Check if Tenured	Courses Taught Put (C) to indicate core course. Put (OL) next to any course currently taught online.	Number of sections	Division or College of Employment	Full- or Part- time in Program	Full- or part-time in other department or program	Sites where individual will teach program courses
Bowie, Mary Jo MS in Health Information Management Associate Professor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIM 102 (OL) • HIM 150 (OL) • HIM 170 (OL) • HIM 180 (OL) • HIM 190 (OL) 	1	Day—Health Professions	Full time	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On line
Decker, Lou Ann AS in Health Information Management Instructor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIM 101 (OL) • HIM 130 (OL) • HIM 160 (OL) • HIM 103 (OL) 	1	Day- Health Professions	Full time	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online
Green, Michelle MS in health Information Management Adjunct Instructor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIM 175 (OL) 	1	Day- Health Professions	Part time	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online
Hartwell, Gary AS in Health Information Management Adjunct Instructor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any HIM course needed 	1	Day- Health Professions	Part time	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online
General Biology/English Faculty MS in Biology/English Instructor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIO 152 • ENG 101 	1	Day or Evening- Science, Business, Technology and Mathematics	Full or Part time	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Campus(BIO) • Devens Campus (BIO) • Leominster Campus • Online

