

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
800 W. Main Street
Whitewater, Wisconsin

March 13-15, 2006

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The team observed

- The faculty and instructional staff have been able to maintain high quality instruction and significant scholarship and service in spite of an increased work load.
- A culture of life-long learning is evidenced by professional development opportunities for faculty, academic staff, and classified staff. In addition, the LEARN Center and Research and Sponsored Programs are commended for services provided for the faculty and academic instructional staff.
- The institution is commended for its emphasis on developing, nurturing, and maintaining strong relationships with local and regional community partners. Consistent with its mission, UW-W faculty, academic staff, classified staff, students, and administrators are actively engaged in the community, and external stakeholders view the institution as an essential cultural and economic resource for the area.
- An obvious *esprit de corps* exists at UW-W. This sense of team effort is evident from the active involvement of a wide range of internal stakeholders in the self-study process. Those with whom the team met expressed collective pride in the successes the institution has achieved since the last accreditation visit and confidence in their ability to address challenges identified through their work in preparation for this visit.
- The institution has thoroughly and carefully responded to external budget pressures over the last years. Continued collaboration, communication, and linkage to the emerging strategic plan will be critical elements of an effective resource allocation process.
- Faculty, academic instructional staff, and students clearly indicate that the general education program is well-conceived and delivered. Substantive changes have been made in the program in recent years as a result of assessment of the program core courses.
- The student-led initiative in support of a differential fee to fund first-year student programming and services, and the subsequent judicious use of those funds to address student-identified needs in area of advising and orientation, are praiseworthy.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

A Institutional Advancement/Development and Fundraising

Consistent with the institution's practice of devolving authority and responsibility to the lowest level of the organization possible, a significant portion of the fundraising function was assigned to the college deans when the position of College Development Officer was created. The Assistant Chancellor for University Advancement provides broad oversight to these officers, but the deans have the hiring responsibility and supervise their activity.

There is merit in having college development officers work closely with deans and faculty members to raise private dollars for academic support and other college-based

program needs. However, the current arrangement leads to uneven performance expectations and somewhat differential job descriptions. As a component of the general process of re-centralizing some functions that we have recommended, these college development officers could be reassigned to report to and be supervised by the Assistant Chancellor even while they continue to work closely with the deans on college fundraising initiatives.

This change will better support college initiatives by providing effective supervision of these officers by development professionals. It will also help to assure more uniformity in performance and greater appropriateness of expectations for these positions. It also can help them serve the institution's overall efforts when, in the judgment of the Chancellor, fundraising goals would be better served by inter-college collaboration.

B Campus Diversity and Climate

The Campus Climate Report 2005 presents the institution with an excellent opportunity to engage in an institution-wide conversation on campus diversity. Its many findings deserve immediate consideration and broad discussion. The commitment of the institutional community to attaining greater diversity as a strategic goal is pervasive, but the Climate Report indicates that there is more unevenness in the impact of that commitment than most of those who discussed the issue appears to appreciate.

One example of many where individuals report a less than optimal climate is the dissatisfaction with the uneven implementation of the recommendations of the 1994 LGBTQA Task Force where the number of fully realized items remains fewer than half of those suggested. This is surprising since the list of those that were not addressed included the formal designation of the Task Force as an institutional body, seemingly an easily accomplished thing with powerful symbolic as well as practical implications.

Filling the position of Assistant Chancellor for Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, or alternatively assigning an individual with another title but with direct responsibility to the Chancellor, would help to begin the process of addressing all climate issues. This officer should assist the Chancellor and other senior leaders of the institution in structuring an ongoing campus discussion of diversity issues so that the conversation is infused throughout the institution and becomes an established and accepted value within the campus culture.

C Assessment Plan

The Plan for Academic Assessment at UW-W (1993) needs to be evaluated and updated in light of the current HLC expectations. There is a great deal of data being collected by Institutional Research but there is insufficient evaluation of the data as well as dissemination to faculty, staff and students. The data are readily available on the Institutional Research website and this openness is to be commended. The plan for academic assessment does not describe well the various kinds of assessments taking place at the institution and might be better titled "plan for institution assessment". Although significant assessment activities are taking place at the unit level, these activities are uneven; the aggregation, evaluation, and use of these data at the institutional level are minimal.

An excellent example of assessment at UW-W is the composition rubric used for ENG101 and GENED390. This rubric is designed uniquely to assess writing skills, specifically student improvement over time, as well as overall student performance. The results of this assessment have led to an emphasis on departmental writing, writing awards, and faculty professional development. From this example it appears that other general education core courses are trying to follow-up with stronger and more effective assessment programs. Evaluation of program structure and learning outcomes for all courses in general education as part of the regular review cycle should occur.

D Financial Aid

Meeting students' expectations in providing sufficient financial aids are a constant struggle. For those who qualify for neither federal entitlement assistance programs nor merit scholarships, there is not much the institution can offer in terms of financial assistance to those in need. The team recommends that the institution put forth efforts in building up its foundation and establishing a need based assistance program for those students who struggle constantly or who are on the verge of dropping out due to financial difficulties. In either scenario, if the problem is not remedied, student learning suffers and student access to higher education is diminished.

E Technology Infrastructure

We all know that the ideal situation would be that all institutions have unlimited resources to carry out its mission. In the world of ever increasing demand for resources and raising costs of operation, state support has been dwindling for the past few years. In spite of this challenge, the institution has managed to keep its services affordable while providing students with "cutting edge" technology. In order to endure the anticipated cost increases and to sustain the current level of services especially in the area of technology, it appears the institution needs to exert more central coordination and unification in hardware/software selection/purchase, upgrade, and support.

F Expectations for Faculty/Academic Instructional Staff Productivity

The Institution's perceived high teaching load 5-4 for academic instructional staff and 4-4 for tenured/tenure track faculty, especially with the added expectations for faculty production in research and publication, is a major concern. Many faculty and instructional academic staff perceive the current teaching load limits their ability to engage actively in daily life on campus such as serving on committees and advising students, and makes it harder for the Institution to retain and recruit quality faculty. Evidence indicates that recruitment of quality faculty is difficult because of the fierce competition among UW campuses. The team suggests that at the upcoming strategic planning exercise, all concerned parties revisit this issue of expectations for teaching vs. expectations for scholarly productivity in search of a common understanding and strategies that are the best fit, as well as realistic for the future of the institution.

G Student Retention

Since the last NCA Team visit in 1996, the institution has made considerable progress

in collecting institutional data that are used for learning outcomes assessment, program evaluation, and decision-making. The institution aspires to increase the student retention rate. Studies showed that students often transfer or stop-out due to reasons that are not directly controlled by the institution. Using available data sources such as National Student Clearinghouse and the UW-System enrollment databases, the institution could conduct a comprehensive study focusing on tracking students who have either dropped-out or stopped-out at the Whitewater campus to gain further knowledge of their enrollment behavior. Perhaps the current retention rates, between 76% and 80%, are a reality that the institution should enjoy in the midst of current program availability, support services, and resources.

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

While external budget pressures have continued to erode financial resources and flexibility, the campus has done a remarkable job at minimizing the impact on educational priorities and services. The organizational structures, budget processes, and cross unit collaboration is a clear indication of the value the institution places on shared fiscal responsibility. This has had positive consequences, namely, the development of alternate revenue streams to enhance or maintain services. The campus must continue to explore new and creative strategies that add value as well as resources to further achieve its select mission.

The team noted that the facilities have been maintained at a very high level and the physical spaces on campus were attractive, functional, and comfortable. Success in fundraising efforts partially to support new building construction is also noteworthy and allows the campus to advance its priorities and goals at an accelerated rate despite reduced state support for construction projects.

Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

INSTITUTION and STATE: University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI

TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS): Continued Accreditation

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW: Comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation

DATES OF REVIEW: 3/13/06 - 3/15/06

Nature of Organization

LEGAL STATUS: Public

TEAM RECOMMENDATION:

DEGREES AWARDED: A, B, M, S

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS: Accreditation at the Specialist degree level is limited to the Educational Specialist Degree (Ed.S.).

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF NEW DEGREE SITES: Prior Commission approval required.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES: Prior Commission approval required for distance education programs other than MBA.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Commission approval required for the delivery of online degree programs.

REPORTS REQUIRED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

OTHER VISITS REQUIRED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 1995 - 1996

YEAR OF NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2005 - 2006

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: 2015-2016

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

INSTITUTION and STATE: University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI

TYPE OF REVIEW: Comprehensive evaluation for Continued Accreditation

Educational Programs

		Program Distribution	Recommended Change (+ or -)
Programs leading to Undergraduate	Associate	1	
	Bachelors	46	
Programs leading to Graduate	Masters	13	
	Specialist	1	
	First Professional	0	
	Doctoral	0	

Off-Campus Activities

<p>In-State:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Campuses:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Sites:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Course Locations:</p>	<p>Present Activity:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">None</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Janesville (UW Rock County) ;</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Madison (American Family Ins.)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">11</p>	<p>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</p>
<p>Out-of-State:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Campuses:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Sites:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Course Locations:</p>	<p>Present Wording:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">None</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">None</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">None</p>	<p>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</p>
<p>Out-of-USA:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Campuses:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Sites:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Course Locations:</p>	<p>Present Wording:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">None</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">None</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">None</p>	<p>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</p>

Distance Education Certificate and Degree Offerings:

Present Offerings:

Master of Business Administration offered via Internet

Recommended Change:

(+ or -)

No prior Commission approval required for the delivery of online degree programs.