

UWSP ACCREDITATION
It's All About Learning!

Accreditation Steering Committee
Meeting Notes from Friday, April 27, 2007
Founders Room, Old Main

Present: Karyn Biasca, Patty Holland, Steve Bondeson, Patti Becker, Neil Heywood, Dave Arnold, Julie Zsido, Wayne Sorenson, and Bob Mosier

I. Announcements

Faculty Senate Presentation Karyn Biasca reported that she will be presenting an update on the self-study process to the Faculty Senate. She will share information about progress on the self-study report, as well as updates from the HLC annual conference in Chicago.

Strategic Planning Process Karyn Biasca, Bob Mosier, and Wayne Sorenson reported on the final meeting for this year of the Strategic Planning group, which met on Thursday evening, April 26. The focus of the meeting was to share a strategic planning model for next year and to reach agreement on mission and values statements. The strategic planning model was accepted by the planning group for implementation next fall. The mission and values statements were also accepted by the planning group. There was discussion about the fact that the new mission statement is in addition to the current select goals and responsibilities of UW-Stevens Point, rather than replacing it.

Meeting with the UW-Oshkosh Self-Study Coordinator Karyn reported that she is working on arrangements for a meeting with the UW-Oshkosh self-study coordinator during finals week. Joining Karyn on the visit to Oshkosh will be Steve Bondeson, Bob Mosier, and Wayne Sorenson.

II. Federal Compliance Section of the Self-Study Report

Federal Compliance Steve Bondeson stated that he is working to complete a draft of the federal compliance section of the self-study report. Steve would like to share this draft with the Steering Committee. Karyn reported that she has created a place for this to occur in D2L.

III. Reports from the HLC Annual Meeting

Information Learned at the HLC Annual Meeting Each of those attending the recent HLC annual meeting reported on what they had learned. Each of the

individuals felt the conference was very worthwhile, with gains of important new information. Karyn Biasca and Patty Holland talked with the self-study coordinator at UW-La Crosse about how the experience had gone and what she had learned. Each of the Criterion Task Force chairs attended a session held on their criterion. The information was very helpful. Each of the attendees went to a session on how to become a peer reviewer. The session focused on the necessary skills and training to become a peer reviewer. People attended sessions on assessing co-curricular programs, GDRs, strategic planning, information literacy, writing self-study reports, assessment techniques, and other relevant topics. The resource room also contained a number of new self-study reports that had valuable information.

Potential Changes to Accreditation Agencies and the Accrediting Process.

Neil Heywood shared information on several sessions he attended on the peer review process, in which staff members from HLC talked about potential changes in the accreditation process in the next several years. The HLC staff are currently involved in negotiations with the Department of Education, as are other higher education accrediting agencies, over the recent recommendations from the Spellings Report, on reforming the accrediting process, among other items.

Steven Crow, Executive Director of HLC, stated that the Department of Education had several areas of concern with respect to accreditation. First, they felt the accrediting agencies were not doing a good enough job of regulating the accreditation process with institutions in higher education. Second, they felt the peer reviewer system needs to be replaced with professional reviewers. Third, they think that the results from the visiting team accreditation reviews need to be more transparent and made available to the public, as do test results of instruments, such as the NSSE. Fourth, they thought there need to be more standardized accountability measures for higher education institutions. Fifth, they thought that the use of peer reviewers promoted an “old boys/girls network”, that prevents objective evaluation of institutions. In their view, this leads to protective and self-serving decisions, that are not tough-nosed. Sixth, they thought that reviews “skimmed”, rather than penetrating to greater depths in their evaluations. Seventh, the reviewers were unclear at times, and inconsistent, in defining and evaluating the concept of performance, according to the Department of Education.

Meeting these changed accreditation processes would be necessary for higher education institutions, so that their students could receive federal financial aid. If the Department of Education decides to implement these changes, there could possibly be a very short turnaround time of potentially two or three years for the accrediting agencies to make the changes and have the colleges and universities meet the new standards. As an example of the magnitude of the potential changes, HLC currently has approximately 1,200 peer reviewers.

If they needed to implement a change to full-time professional staff reviewers in two or three years, it would take a very concentrated effort by HLC staff.

Steven Crow thought that changes could be made without overhauling the entire accreditation process. He thought that HLC was learning from the AQIP processes; was promoting greater transparency; creating peer processes that can focus on customized self-studies; discovering and disseminating best practices; and are having an on-going exploration of tailored and technologically-supported means of training.

As far as future challenges, Crow thought that: there were needs to meet global standards; need to create a national corps; create processes that enable more Presidential participation; deal with globalization issues; and take responsibility for new federal tasks.

IV. Marketing

Room Reservations for the Review Team's Visit Wayne Sorenson reported that after reviewing the visiting team's schedules from UW-Oshkosh and several other schools, he has a much better idea of the potential needs of the visiting team at UW-Stevens Point. He is working with the reservations staff member in the University Centers to obtain rooms for the visiting team, including a meeting room, resource room, and a space for meetings with others. He is looking forward to the meeting with the self-study coordinator at UW-Oshkosh about how she handled the logistical support for the visiting team. Wayne is reserving several vehicles for the time when the visiting team will be on campus, in case of the need for transportation.

Mission and Values Statements Julie Zsido reported that she and Wayne have talked about providing something like the bookmark that had the criteria on it to people at UW-Stevens Point in the fall. One possibility would be a card or mouse pad that would have the mission and values statements on it. This would help people stay focused on the mission and values statements, prior to the visiting team's arrival on campus. UW-River Falls had a very nice card to inform people of their mission and values statements, as an example.

V. Editor

Editor's Report Dave Arnold provided an update on editing activities related to the self-study report. He is working on the chapter drafts, as well as the design of the self-study report with Meas Vang and Denise Deering.

VI. Next Meeting

The next meeting, and last meeting for the academic year, will be held on Friday, May 11, at 7:15am-8:30am in the Founders Room of Old Main.

