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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Campus Overview, Institutional Structure and Governance, and Significant Developments 1998-2008

The new century has been an exciting, productive, and also challenging time for UWSP. Since undertaking the accreditation process in 1998, the University has welcomed a new Chancellor and two new Provosts, as well as new Deans of the Colleges of Letters and Science, Communication and Fine Arts, and Natural Resources. The Higher Learning Commission self-study process comes as the University begins implementation of *Vision 2015 - UWSP: Connecting to the Future*, the University's ambitious plan to guide its continuing development. Discussed in more detail in Chapters 1 and 2, *Vision 2015* emphasizes the importance of maintaining UWSP's traditional strengths and its strong connection with the Central Wisconsin region while proactively preparing the institution and its students for the future.

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point was founded in 1894 as Stevens Point Normal School, a teacher-training institution with an initial enrollment of 152 students. It was first accredited (as Stevens Point Normal School) in 1916 and maintained this status until 1922, when it was dropped because of failure to submit required documents. Reaccredited in 1951, UWSP has remained accredited ever since. In 1967 accreditation was extended to include preliminary accreditation for the Master's of Science in Teaching Home Economics. In 1969 preliminary accreditation was also granted for the Master's of Science in Teaching-Biology and the Master's of Science in Speech Pathology-Audiology. UWSP is accredited without stipulation for bachelor's- and master's-level degrees. Its Clinical Doctorate in Audiology was accredited by the HLC in May, 2006. The University does not offer degrees at off-campus venues and is not accredited to offer programs via distance education. However, it is in the process of obtaining UW System approval and, thereafter, HLC accreditation for asynchronous delivery of its degrees.

Originally part of the Wisconsin State University System, the Stevens Point campus became part of the University of Wisconsin System in 1971. The University of Wisconsin System comprises two doctoral institutions, eleven comprehensive institutions (collectively known as the University Cluster), and thirteen two-year colleges. The UW System also has several substantive articulation agreements with the Wisconsin Technical College System that allow students to transfer between the two statewide (but operationally separate) postsecondary systems. UWSP is one of the eleven comprehensive institutions, offering bachelor's degrees, master's degrees,

and a Doctorate in Audiology (in collaboration with UW-Madison). It offers 48 majors and 78 minors leading to Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Music, and Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees. UWSP also offers an associate's degree and a variety of master's degrees.

Institutional Structure and Governance

The University of Wisconsin System, in accordance with state statutes, is governed by an eighteen-member Board of Regents. Sixteen of these are appointed by the state Governor to seven-year terms, and two student representatives are appointed to two-year terms. The President of the UW System, the thirteen Chancellors of the universities, the Deans of the two-year colleges, and the Chancellor of Extension and the two-year colleges are appointed by the Board of Regents. The Regents establish the basic parameters within which the different constituencies of the UW System function, including budgets, admission standards, and tuition rates.

At each of the universities the chief executive officer and the person responsible for programs and operations is the Chancellor. UWSP's current Chancellor (its thirteenth) is Linda Bunnell. She was officially inaugurated on June 1st, 2004, succeeding Interim Chancellor Virginia M. Helm (2003-2004) and prior Chancellor Thomas George (1996-2003).

The administrative staff who report directly to the Chancellor are the Vice Chancellors of the three major divisions of the University, two unit directors, and three staff officers:

- Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs—Mark A. Nook;
- Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs—Greg Diemer;
- Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs—Bob Tomlinson;
- Executive Assistant to the Chancellor—Rob Manzke;
- Special Assistant to the Chancellor for Affirmative Action—Mai Vang;
- Administrative Assistant to the Chancellor—Jean Scherer;
- Director of the Office of Policy and Planning—Shari Ellertson;
- Director of the UWSP Foundation—Todd Kuckkahn;
- Director of University Relations and Communications—Stephen Ward.

These administrative units operate in an environment of shared governance with the Faculty Senate and the Student Government Association (SGA). Faculty governance is an important tradition at UWSP. Faculty are responsible primarily for curriculum and for the hiring, promotion, tenure, and retention policies for faculty; they also play an important role in recommending policies to the administration in many other areas.

Organization charts for the Executive Office, the Faculty Senate, the Academic Affairs Office, and the campus at large can be found in Appendix B.

UWSP: A Distinctive University

UWSP is home to approximately 8,700 undergraduate and graduate students and 400 faculty, of whom nearly two-thirds possess doctorates or other terminal degrees; the campus boasts a 20:1 student to faculty ratio and also the highest percentage in the UW System of undergraduate courses taught by tenure-track faculty. This point is frequently cited by students as a major factor in their decision to attend UWSP. The campus is frequently ranked as one of the top public midwestern universities in U. S. News and World Report's College Rankings. Half of all incoming freshmen rank in the top 25 percent of their high school graduating classes, with an average high school GPA of 3.4 and an average ACT score of 23.

The campus supports over 180 student clubs and organizations, including student government, multicultural clubs and organizations, community service and professional clubs, professional and academic organizations, and Greek organizations. The campus television and radio stations, as well as the campus newspaper, are staffed and run by students. Students and faculty can also participate in 25 intramural and 22 club sports, and opportunities abound to attend theater, concerts, dance programs, and art exhibitions. In addition, more than one in five UWSP students spend time in one or more of twenty different foreign countries as part of study-abroad programs offered by UWSP's Office of International Programs. For more information on International Programs, see Ch. 4, section 4b-1, and Ch. 5.

UWSP's main campus comprises roughly 400 acres and 35 buildings, including fourteen residence halls housing around 3,100 students. Recent additions include an expanded and enhanced University Center (which opened in January, 2008) and the Noel Fine Arts Center, which includes theaters, a concert hall, an art gallery, and state-of-the-art practice and performance spaces. Just to the north (though still part of the campus) lies the 275-acre Schmeeckle Reserve, a natural area that provides a managed habitat for native ecologies as well as affording campus and community members a wide variety of outdoor education and leisure opportunities, including biking, canoeing, nature walks, and fishing. UWSP also maintains a number of facilities off-campus, including the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station (CWES) and Treehaven, both of which are teaching, learning, and recreational environmental centers that are wholly owned and operated by UWSP.

As these last comments suggest, one of UWSP's distinctive features is its focus on the environment: helping students, faculty, staff, and members of the community become more responsive and responsible stewards of the earth's resources is the main thrust of many of the University's most innovative and important programs. UWSP is striving to become a more self-sustaining campus. Many examples of this initiative exist, including the student-staffed College of Professional Studies Café and its commitment to using food from local organic producers, the increasing use of solar domestic hot water, the Learning Resource Center's "green roof," the inclusion of photovoltaic panels on one of the residence halls and the Noel Fine Arts Center addition, and the overall campus commitment to go "off the grid" in five years. The College of Natural Resources (CNR) clearly represents the University's commitment to a global outlook on environmental issues, not least through its establishment of the internationally-recognized Global Environmental

Management Center (GEM). Established in 2000 as a world-class center for outreach education in natural resources and environmental management, GEM's purpose is to link faculty, students, and citizens worldwide in pioneering and applying practical learning methods and technology to solve natural resource problems. The CNR also operates three field stations mentioned above—CWES, Schmeeckle Reserve, and Treehaven—that serve both students and the community as sources of environmental information, education, and recreation.

Beyond this, UWSP demonstrates that it is fulfilling its educational mission through many points of strength. External reviewers in November, 2006 noted that UWSP offers strong academic programs with regional and, in some cases, national prominence; that students cite the strength of its academic programs as one of the major reasons for choosing UWSP; and that retention and graduation rates (79% and 58%, respectively) are high, significantly higher than at most peer institutions. Assessment data reflect strong skills among UWSP graduates, who are regularly sought by employers because of their reputation for being highly qualified. The Tenth Annual Assessment Report shows that UWSP students scored higher or significantly higher than the mean for comparable test-takers in reading, science, reasoning, and critical thinking.¹

Further, UWSP has enjoyed significant growth and development in many important areas since its last accreditation. As mentioned above, the first years of the 21st century have seen major renovations to the Noel Fine Arts Center and the University Center, the latter made possible by a generous and far-sighted allocation of funds from the Student Government Association. The campus also has ambitious renovations and expansions planned through the next two decades, including construction of a new Student Services building, the addition of a new wing to the Science Building, the projected construction of suite-style dormitories, and numerous upgrades designed to improve and “brand” the appearance of the campus and its points of interface with the surrounding community.

UWSP has also begun or continued implementation of a number of significant strategic planning and development projects since its last accreditation, including a systematic review of its General Degree Requirements, Vision 2015 (mentioned above and discussed in detail in Chapters 1 and 2), and the UW System Plan 2008: Forging a Culture of Diversity (discussed in Chapter 1).

Several new programs, majors, and degrees have been added or are in advanced planning stages, including Health Sciences, with a potential for a program in nursing; B.S. degrees in biochemistry and, possibly, geosciences; and Masters' of Science in Informatics and Leadership (still in the planning stages). UWSP is also moving toward accreditation of programs offered via distance education methods. In 2006 the Higher Learning Commission approved the School of Communicative Disorders' new Clinical Doctorate in Audiology (Au.D), in collaboration with UW-Madison. During the past decade UWSP has also received or renewed professional accreditations for many programs. For a complete list see section 2a-4.

Responses to the 1998 North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Site-Visit

UWSP was last accredited in 1998 by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. In their “Report of a Visit to University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point” (March 2-4, 1998),² the NCA Review Team made a series of recommendations. As part of those recommendations, the Review Team asked for a report by 2001 on several areas of concern, including “results of assessment of student outcomes and their impact on allocation of resources, curriculum revision, and the General Degree Requirements.”

UWSP’s response to this request, “University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Progress Report to the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools” (CO RE 445.09), was delivered to the North Central Association in February, 2001 and describes responses from 1998 to 2001 at UWSP. The criteria listed in this February 2001 report are those used by the NCA in 1998.

In addition to asking for this specific report, the NCA recommended that UWSP continue to address the challenges noted in the 1998 report. Since 2004 the University has worked to meet challenges in these specific areas. Appendix C, “Responses to the 1998 North Central Association Criteria and Recommendations of the Visiting Team by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point,” summarizes the progress UWSP has made to improve policies and practices as they relate to the 1998 North Central Association’s five criteria.

Self-Study Process

The UWSP Accreditation Steering Committee was formed in 2005 in response to a mandate from Vice Chancellor Virginia M. Helm. Steve Bondeson, Associate Vice Chancellor for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Programs, and Robert Mosier, former Director of Residential Living, were appointed co-coordinators of the HLC self-study process. Mosier and Bondeson attended the 2005 NCA Annual Meeting to develop a broad understanding of the PEAQ process for reaccreditation. They in turn appointed five Task Force Leaders, one in charge of each of the accreditation criteria used by the HLC, as well as a Writer/Editor and two publicity and logistics coordinators. They also sought involvement from Information Technology professionals and Student Government, securing a seat on the committee for the SGA president and/or a representative. The Chancellor undertook to ensure community participation by recruiting a local businessperson. During this time the co-coordinators worked with Task Force leaders to assemble committees to work on individual criteria.

The Accreditation Steering Committee (ASC) met regularly during the 06-07 academic year, developing strategies for collecting evidence to support UWSP’s request for accreditation. During this time each Task Force leader presented an open forum on his or her criterion to solicit feedback from campus constituencies and to increase awareness of the ongoing accreditation process. The committee also attended the Higher Learning Commission Annual Meeting in Chicago in April, 2006 and again in 2007, gaining valuable insight into the self-study process.

Each Task Force was provided with guidelines for preparing their chapters and charged to submit a complete draft to the Writer/Editor by June, 2007. The drafts underwent editing and review throughout the summer of 2007 and were presented to the campus at large for review in September, 2007 on the ASC website.

The final draft was laid out by a UWSP Art / Graphic Design major, Chao Yang, in cooperation with Meas Vang, a graphic designer from University Relations and Communications, and printed on paper manufactured on the Department of Paper Science and Engineering's paper machine.

Purpose and Structure of the Self-Study Report

This self-study is actually quite limited in its focus. While UWSP boasts a vast array of programs and student-focused activities, this document purposefully describes those that specifically answer the Core Components delineated by the Higher Learning Commission in its criteria for accreditation. The omission of a particular aspect of the campus climate should in no way be construed as a denigration or undervaluation. Much material exists that demonstrates how and why UWSP is the learning environment of choice for over 9,000 students, faculty, and staff, and this self-study constitutes an evaluative summary of campus activities, initiatives, programs, and policies rather than a truly comprehensive examination. Many aspects not described here are described in detail in the annual reports found in the Virtual Resource Room (VRR), a guide to which appears in Appendix D.

The structure of this self-study document is based closely on the Higher Learning Commission's five criteria for accreditation. It begins with a Table of Contents, followed by a general Introduction, which provides an overview of UWSP, its history and current resources, and its accreditation history.

The Introduction is followed by five body chapters, each devoted to a specific criterion. These follow the core components and examples of evidence laid out in the Higher Learning Commission Handbook of Accreditation, though in some chapters these have been adapted to better address unique aspects of UWSP's situation.

The Conclusion summarizes UWSP's accomplishments over the last decade, as well as its response to various challenges it faces. Beyond this, the Conclusion looks more closely at the four cross-cutting themes, using this discussion as a structure to revisit key evidence that the University continues to meet the criteria for accreditation.

The Conclusion is followed by a number of appendices:

- Appendix A details UWSP's compliance with various Federal policies and regulations.
- Appendix B reproduces the four UWSP organizational charts.
- Appendix C contains specific information about UWSP's responses to the 1998 Site Visit by the NCA Review Team.
- Appendix D contains a complete guide to the Virtual Resource Room and the use of the Becker Locator Numbering system, which is used

throughout the self-study to document the various forms of evidence being adduced.

- Appendix E contains a selection of computer software technologies embedded within disciplines at UWSP.
- Appendix F names the members of the Accreditation Steering Committee.

The documentation scheme is an important structural feature of this self-study report. As evidence mounted and lists of citations lengthened, the decision was reached to rely on a system of endnotes to provide thorough documentation while keeping the main document pages as uncluttered and readable as possible. Keyed to superscript numbers in the text, the endnotes typically provide a brief description of the piece of evidence they document followed either by a URL or a Becker Locator Number. The Becker Locator Numbering system was devised by Patti Becker (a reference librarian in the University Library and Task Force leader for Criterion Four), in collaboration with Yan Liao (University Library) and Bob Mosier (Student Affairs). Its goal is to provide a quick and efficient way to navigate the wealth of information in the Virtual Resource Room by specifically delineating the type of document being referenced, its origin, and where it has been cataloged and filed. This coding scheme is described in detail in Appendix D.

Introduction Notes

¹ Assessment Subcommittee Tenth Annual Assessment Report: AA AI 110.02.7.

² 1998 NCA Visiting Team Report: CO RE 445.07.

