

**Bookend** - Welcome to the *Leatherneck Accreditation Lab*, a podcast to prepare for Western Illinois University's HLC Accreditation site visit. This is Debbie Kepple-Mamros, Director of Assessment, Accreditation and Strategic Planning. We have several episodes planned. One episode will be released each week up until the site visit on March 29 - 30, 2021.

### Episode 3: Criterion 1: The Mission

#### Speaker 1 - Debbie Kepple-Mamros

- Welcome to this first podcast episode of *The Leatherneck Accreditation Lab* where we will be providing you with information about accreditation. This is episode 3, titled Criterion 1: The Mission. Let's get started!
- Dr. Mark Mossman, Associate Provost for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies is here again with us, as is Mr. Billy Clow, the Dean of Fine Arts and Communication at WIU. Mr. Clow also recently completed service as the Interim Provost at Western.

#### Speaker 2 - [Mark Mossman](#)

- Hello again to all our listeners.
- As you know, Western Illinois University has its ten-year reaffirmation of accreditation with HLC coming up this semester.
- Even though this event only happens once every 10 years, Western has been actively working towards this event since the last time HLC visited, as is typical of high quality universities.
- A significant part of this review is the development of a roughly 35,000 word document called the Assurance Argument. This document provides a narrative and supporting evidence that demonstrates the university meets HLC's five criteria for accreditation. Supporting evidence must substantiate the facts and arguments presented in the narrative, respond to the prior HLC peer review team's concerns and recommendations, explain any nuances specific to the university, strengthen the university's overall compliance record, and affirm the university's overall academic quality, financial stability, and integrity.
- The first chapter, or criterion, of this large document concerns the Mission of the institution. In this chapter our purpose is to demonstrate that the institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly, and that it guides the institution's operations. So, for example, we document how "The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution." Supporting evidence here might include documentation of the history, development, and adoption of the university's mission statement; documentation of the policies and actions implemented or discontinued to achieve clearer alignment between the university's practices and its mission; and documentation that academic programs, student support services, and planning and budgeting priorities align with the mission. We also demonstrate that "the mission demonstrates commitment to the public good." Supporting evidence here might include documentation of the university's role in the community; a list of efforts, programs, and certificates that meet community or constituent needs; and engagement of faculty, staff, and students in the community. A final example for this chapter is the way we "provide

opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally-connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.” Evidence for this includes course-based activities that promote civic engagement, documentation of how diversity and inclusion are addressed in the university’s strategic plan, and student demographics and enrollment strategies that demonstrate a focus on diversity and inclusion.

- I’d like to now introduce Billy Clow, who has been a central figure in this work for the past year.
- Billy, can you give us a brief overview of your experience with Western’s HLC accreditation process, with the University’s mission, and how CoFAC, for example, works to fulfill the institution’s mission?

#### Speaker 3: Billy Clow

- Details experience of the last year.
- Provides examples from CoFAC
- Talks, with passion, about the significance of the mission for our region.

#### Speaker 4 - [Mark Mossman](#)

- Thanks Billy
- I would like to echo Billy’s note about providing accessibility to higher education to our region. WIU provides vital help to our region—we give our students the kind of education they need to succeed in the world, and we give this region the kind of support and presence its needs to develop economically.

#### Speaker 5 - Debbie Kepple-Mamros

- Thank you both. That’s all for this episode. If you have any questions, please feel free to email us at [aasp@wiu.edu](mailto:aasp@wiu.edu).

**Bookend:** This has been an episode of *The Leatherneck Accreditation Lab*, a podcast to prepare for Western Illinois University’s HLC Accreditation site visit. Tune in next week when we bring you another episode to prepare the Western Illinois University community for our upcoming accreditation visit.