

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 4: Criterion 2 Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

Speaker: Justin Schuch

- Welcome to the next podcast episode of *The Leatherneck Accreditation Lab* where we will be providing you with information about reaccreditation. Today we are focusing on the second criterion which is focused on ethical and responsible conduct. My name is Justin Schuch, I am lucky to serve as the Executive Director of Retention Initiatives here at Western Illinois University. I am joined today by a very special guest, Dr. Polly Radosh. Dr. Radosh serves as the chair of our Board of Trustees, retired from Western Illinois University in 2008 after 24 years on the faculty where she was a professor of sociology and the founding chair of the Department of Women's Studies. Dr. Radosh are you excited to talk today about our accreditation and ethical conduct?

Speaker: Dr. Radosh

- Oh, yes. Excited.

Speaker: Justin Schuch

- Perfect. Well, we will dive in. The Criterion 2 is really broken down to a few nice areas and we are going to talk about each one of them and kind of go back and forth. If you wanted to follow along at home as you are listening to our podcast, you can find the document on the website which is wiu.edu/aasp. The first part of this criterion as I mentioned, really overviews ethical and responsible conduct. The first section is focused on establishing and following different policies and procedures and making sure the University faculty and staff, everyone involved, is actually upholding those policies and procedures.
- In this part of the criterion, you will be able to review a little bit about our Board of Trustees which Dr. Radosh will talk more about shortly as well as have as many links as you can possible imagine to many different types of policies, procedures, guidebooks, things that our faculty and staff abide by. A large part of this section is focused on financial statements and financial process, how we spend our funds. Ensuring we are spending them with all of the appropriate state guidelines we need to work through for procurement processes. You can learn a lot about procurement by looking at this particular part of our accreditation documents.
- I will hand things over to Dr. Radosh.

Speaker: Dr. Radosh

- Sure, I am going to talk very briefly about the Board itself. The Board of trustees is an independent board. We oversee the institution but none of us are employed by the institution. In fact, a lot of the members of the board both currently and historically have

not been employed in higher ed at all. The idea behind the board is that they are independent of the minutiae that may get in the way of decision making on the campus because they are completely away from the campus and don't have any direct affiliation. Most have had some affiliation in the past, they were students or in my case a former employee. Most have very strong ties in that they are very committed to the institution for one reason or another. In my case, prior employment I am very committed to seeing success. For others it is because they are an alumni, alum, or donor or someone who has a long term commitment to the institution.

- So, it is an independent group and we are appointed by the governor, we are appointed to fix terms and if we should stay on longer we have to reapply for our position again in the future. Each individual is appointed by a political party. So, if the governor is, say, democrat as he is today, then 4 of the trustees will be democrats and three will be republican. The board has to be legally balanced in that way and then we have one student member.
- Unlike many boards in many states, our student board member is a full voting member of the board and is only exempt from very few things such as voting on tenure or things where he or she would have a direct conflict with the role on the campus. But the student member votes on budgetary issues, and curriculum, and hiring of the President and all kinds of other things that have quite a lot of responsibility.
- So, this particular board was established in 1995 and was under state law when we became an independent board, prior to that time the board was part of a larger governing board called the board of governors that oversaw higher ed in the entire state.
- In 1995 all of those state campuses were sections out of the board of governors and we set up our own board. So, lots of rules and regulations, responsibilities that are specifically delineated in the bylaws and the rules for how the board is governed. That is true both by state statute and the institution so we have our own specific fuels and requirements.
- We have a set of priorities that we go through annually we oversee quarterly reports from various different constituencies on campus. We oversee the budget and the approval of the budget. All sorts of program changes, athletic changes, standards such as graduation standards or enrollment standards. All of these things come before the board and we make decisions that we feel are in the best interest of the institution. Our goal is not to be loyal to any particular group or any particular agenda on campus but to always keep the best interest of the campus at heart and what is best for the institution. We take that very seriously. We have annual training where we are updated on the changes in state law, or changes on campus, or new state policies we would need to be informed about to make good decisions for the campus. I do not know I am rambling here, do you want to, Justin to maybe ask questions or may articular something else.
- Speaker: Justin Schuch
One nice thing people may or may not be aware listening is the public community can definitely participate and be active with the board, attend meetings, right now watch on YouTube while we are in this weird time. I think that is always really valuable for people to understand and hear the community voice. The board listens and wants different

perspectives from everyone, not just faculty, staff, and students. We have stakeholders who may not be directly tied that is an important piece of the puzzle. Can you talk a little bit about how soon people can know about the meetings in case they wanted to plan for that?

Speaker: Dr. Radosh

- Right, all of the agenda items, the agenda for every meeting is posted on the board of trustees web page on the WIU Webpage so you can just put it in the search; board of trustees or BOT and it will come up. And the agenda is published, we try to get the agenda out at least a week in advance so people have time to look at it but we are not always successful. It has to be out 48 hours before each meeting. But we try to get it out as soon as possible so there is time to respond if people have particular issues. Your point about people having an opportunity to contact us is really an important point. We take information we receive from the public, the public in general or the campus public, very seriously. We consider those opinions and the points of view people express to us. Sometimes it is a phone call but most often it is an email or something that is sent to the board that helps us to understand somebody's point of view. Those are important, more important than probably most people realize. We may get 100 comments about something or we may get none and it influences us if many people have something to say or they want us to consider something they think is important about a pending issue. That is an important component.

Speaker: Justin Schuch

- Thank you, I appreciate that. For those listening this part of the chapter or criterion is 2C so as Dr. Radosh mentioned a number of different policies and procedures are all linked there. You can see them in great detail if you would like. You can head to that website as you are reviewing the document if you like.
- I will turn and talk more about 2B which focuses on how the institution represents to the public, to our students. A large portion of this part is really focused on what we put out there on our website so you will see if you have been active with the WIU website there are links to many different things but we really try to highlight different links to many of the colleges, departments, different support services that we have for students, faculty, and staff throughout campus. This part of the criterion tries to highlight some of those things. You can see links that go to the undergraduate catalog to admissions criteria.
- Our goal here, as I mentioned, is to make sure what we put out in the world is actually what we are abiding by and producing. That is actually the second part of 2B is making sure that the institution has the ability to back up any claims that it makes about what we are supporting, or offering. This is a really interesting part to develop because there are a lot of ways and different examples we could use to back up claims but in this process we have a word count so you will see some linked in the document and significantly more on websites. One example we dive into is talking about our impact on the local community so you will see an overview of some internships that we have and the impact they might have with local community, community engagement economic groups that we have here both in the Quad Cities and the Macomb area. This portion, like I said, is

really focused on making sure we are represented the way we say we are and links are active. I think it is an important piece to talk about now as as we go throughout this process we have a really awesome group of individuals making sure our website is up to date and making sure links are working and where they need to be. That has been a really good process to go through and make sure what we are saying is what we are doing out there.

- So, that is an overview of 2B. Not maybe the most exciting portion but an important piece as we think about how we represent ourselves to our students and community.

Speaker: Dr Radosh

- It is how we organize ourselves. I think it is important to keep consistency in the forefront. All of those reports and links are what keep us consistent. That is pretty important.

Speaker: Justin Schuch

- Dr. Radosh would you like to talk about the last probation of this criteria?

Speaker: Dr. Radosh

- That last portion is 2D. This is an overview of how we protect academic freedom and freedom of expression. It is kind of especially in this day in age which is somewhat touchy. Especially as higher ed is the recipient of all kinds of criticism of having a particular perspective. We go to great lengths to make sure that everyone's perspective and idea no matter how controversial, or uncontroversial, is protected. We do this through a whole series of policies. We have a policy for example on political activity that ensures that faculty and staff or other people employed by the institution do not promote a particular political point of view. We hold that as a very important point to respect people's points of view. We want this to be a supportive and peaceful place to work and to become educated and we do not want to impose our point of view. The same is true about religious observance. We take that to be very important that people who have particular religious views are not in any way felt to be or made to feel that those points of view are unwelcome on this campus.
- We have a student code of conduct and disruptive student behavior policy and procedures for handling these so that if someone should try to obstruct teaching or research or any other activity on the basis of the point of view or some other pushing some other activity or agenda that we deal with that quickly and responsively so that people feel free to express themselves. This whole section covers the procedures and the responsibilities that we have to ensure fairness and opportunities for equity and respectful civil dialog.
- There are several links that help us articulate those policies.

Speaker: Justin Schuch

- I appreciate the thought and pointing out in this section particular particularly how we try to welcome diversity of thought and some of these policies protect diversity of thought and try to get multiple viewpoints and as you mentioned, that is why we try to have

policies and procedures in place so our students and faculty know we can have civil discourse and that diversity of thought is what helps all of us move forward and learn about each other. I appreciate you pointing that out.

- I would be remiss to not also highlight the code of student conduct. I know our student services team really try to focus to make sure that our students know about that process which is outlined step by step with what expectations are there for our student both academically and how they conduct themselves outside of the classroom. Also, within that code which is important for people to know is the responsibilities and the rights that a student has in a process and how we ensure as an institution that we are protecting them and they have a fair process whether that be through a conduct board or appeal process, there are multiple layers. So, hopefully that is a link that will be clicked on a lot as people go through there.
- Dr. Radosh, is there anything else you would like to cover as we talk about ethical and responsible conduct?

Speaker: Dr. Radosh

- I do not think so, but I would urge people to look at it. I think we forget sometimes that we have built in protections for free speech and freedom of expressions. It is worth spending a couple of minutes to look at those.

Speaker: Justin Schuch

- I agree. Well, thank you very much for joining me today Dr. Radosh and thank you for anyone who is listening. As I mentioned at the beginning by heading to our website which is wiu.edu/aasp and you will see links that take you to the complete argument, all of the chapters, and everything we have highlighted today as well as throughout the rest of the podcast series.
- Thank you so much for joining me, I appreciate it.

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.