

To: Members of the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees
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From: Joe Rives, Vice President, Quad Cities and Planning

Date: August 14, 2012

Re: August 2012 Strategic Plan Update

The July 2012 *Strategic Plan Update* focused on new accreditation processes required by the Higher Learning Commission-North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The new accreditation process includes new annual reporting and a new format with a four-year Assurance Review, completion of a Quality Initiative, and an on-site Comprehensive Evaluation visit in addition to federal compliance reporting. Because the new reporting and format relate to the new criteria for accreditation that will be implemented at the start of academic year 2012-2013, this month's *Strategic Plan Update* displays the new accreditation criteria. A future Strategic Plan Update will summarize changes in federal compliance reporting when published by the Commission.

The new accreditation criteria (addressing mission; integrity; teaching and learning—quality, resources, and support; teaching and learning—evaluation and improvement; and resources, planning, and institutional effectiveness) have 21 Core Components and 68 subcomponents that require annual electronic documentation as evidence that the University meets the criteria for accreditation. A working team is being formed by the President's Leadership Team to review the criteria, identify sources of evidence, and ensure that it is in the format required by the Commission.

This working team is, therefore, preparing an electronic repository that will be the basis for future reporting. Later in the process, larger institutional teams will prepare and edit drafts in preparation for sending materials to the Commission. The first reporting will be the Assurance Review showing how the University is meeting accreditation criteria in academic year 2014-2015. The self-study and results from our quality initiative (which is similar to a special emphasis topic) will be submitted in advance of the on-site Comprehensive Evaluation visit in academic year 2020-2021. Following the University's inclusive planning processes, accreditation-related reports will be endorsed by all governance groups on both campuses and approved by the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees before sending materials to the Commission.

The new accreditation criteria for which the new accreditation processes and reporting is based is displayed in the pages that follow. Should you have any questions about these materials, and/or feedback for the continued successful advancement of Higher Values in Higher Education, please contact me.

cc:	President Thomas	CSEC Pres. Rupert	Associate Provost Neumann
	Provost Hawkinson	COAP President Grimm	Associate Provost Parsons
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**The New Criteria for Accreditation
By The Higher Learning Commission**

I. Criterion One: Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly: it guides the institution's operations.

Core Component 1a. The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

- The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
- The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
- The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1)

Core Component 1b. The mission is articulated publicly.

- The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
- The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
- The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Core Component 1c. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

- The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
- The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for constituencies it serves.

Core Component 1d. The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

- Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
- The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
- The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

II. Criterion Two: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Core Component 2a. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Core Component 2b. The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Core Component 2c. The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

- The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
- The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
- The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
- The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Core Component 2d. The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Core Component 2e. The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

- The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
- Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
- The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

III. Criterion Three: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Core Component 3a. The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

- Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
- The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
- The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Core Component 3b. The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

- The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
- The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
- Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

- The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
- The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Core Component 3c. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

- The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
- All instructors are appropriately credentialed, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
- Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
- The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles: it supports their professional development.
- Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
- Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Core Component 3d. The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

- The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
- The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
- The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
- The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
- The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Core Component 3e. The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

- Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
- The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

IV. Criterion Four: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Core Component 4a. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

- The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
- The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning.
- The institution has policies that assure the quality of credit it accepts in transfer.
- The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
- The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
- The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Core Component 4b. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

- The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
- The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
- The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
- The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Core Component 4c. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

- The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
- The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
- The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
- The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

V. Criterion Five: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Core Component 5a. The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

- The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
- The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
- The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
- The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
- The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Core Component 5b. The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

- The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies-including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students-in the institution's governance.
- The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight for the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
- The institution enables the involvement of its administration, faculty, staff, and students in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Core Component 5c. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

- The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
- The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
- The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
- The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
- Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Core Component 5d. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

- The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
- The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Achieving and maintaining institutional accreditation is a key priority in *Higher Values in Higher Education* as a measure of quality and a prerequisite for the administration of federal financial aid. The Higher Learning Commission-North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (the Commission) is the University's regional accrediting agency and Western Illinois University is accredited through academic year 2020-2021. However, there are immediate changes to the accreditation process that become effective September 1, 2012.

Therefore, this month's *Strategic Plan Update* summarizes changes to the Commission's accreditation processes that were approved by its governing board in June 2012 for implementation at the start of academic year 2012-2013.

Background

In the previous accreditation model, Western Illinois University maintained membership in the Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ). The PEAQ process used institutional self-study and external review to determine university accreditation status. Western completed its last self-study between fall 2007 and fall 2010, hosted the on-site visit in February 2011, and received a ten-year reaffirmation of accreditation, lasting through academic year 2020-2021.

New Process

This PEAQ process has been replaced with the Pathways program, which contains two alternatives. The Standard Pathway requires two self-studies and two on-site comprehensive evaluations during the 10-year accreditation cycle. The Open Pathway includes one on-line assurance review, one comprehensive evaluation, and the advancement of a quality initiative during the 10-year accreditation cycle.

Because Western Illinois University has a proven history of achieving maximal accreditation status and there are no Commission conditions on the University's accreditation status, we will be able to apply for the Open Pathway. The Open Pathway has five components (defined below) that require annual submissions, and culminate in a four-year review, multi-year quality initiative, and on-site accreditation visit.

- 1. Electronic Repository.** Items that are required to be annually submitted to the Commission's repository include the University's audited financial statements, budget and expenditure reports, mission and planning documents (e.g., *Higher Values in Higher Education*, *Campus Master Plans*), governance documents (charter, bylaws, university organizational chart), contractual and consortium agreements related to academic programs, third party comment notices, and federal compliance materials.

2. Assurance Materials. For each Criterion, the University will provide:

- A Criterion introduction.
- An articulation of how each Core Component within the Criterion is met, including a statement of future plans with regard to the Core Component, and, if applicable, an explanation of circumstances that call for improvement, support future improvement, or constrain improvement/threaten the University's ability to sustain the Core Component
- A statement regarding any additional ways in which the university fulfills the Criterion that are not otherwise covered in the statements on the Core Components, including any gaps in achievement and future plans with regard to the Criterion.

The Assurance Materials also contain links to materials in the University's Evidence File that has two sections. In section one, the Commission provides recent comprehensive evaluation and interim reports, a trend summary from *Institutional Update* submissions, copies of official actions and correspondence, public comments, and any other information it deems necessary. In section two, the University uploads its evidentiary materials that, together with its Assurance Argument, demonstrate meeting the Criteria for Accreditation. Preparation of Assurance Materials is assumed to be an annual process.

3. Assurance Review. In year four of the accreditation cycle, Commission Peer Evaluators (PEs) complete an on-line Assurance Review. Using materials provided in the University's Assurance Argument and Evidence File, the PEs conduct a consensus review to determine if the University is meeting all federal compliance and accreditation requirements.

4. Quality Initiative. Between years five and nine of the accreditation cycle, the University proposes and completes a Quality Initiative (QI) that focuses on institutional innovation and improvement. The timeframe to initiate the QI is flexible to accommodate the amount of time necessary to complete the initiative.

The choice of a QI topic is also flexible and designed to best suit institutional needs. Examples of QIs suggested by the Commission include updating the institutional strategic plan, enhancing assessment of student learning processes, implementing comprehensive partnership programs with community colleges, or engaging in Commission-sponsored or endorsed programs (e.g., the Foundations of Excellence program offered by the Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education or the Liberal Education and America's Promise Initiative offered by the Association of American Colleges and Universities).

5. On-Site Comprehensive Evaluation. In year ten of the accreditation cycle, the University hosts an on-site comprehensive evaluation. Peer Evaluators will determine if the University continues to meet the criteria for accreditation, federal compliance requirements, and they will conduct a branch campus review of Western Illinois University-Quad Cities. The on-site evaluation has been streamlined from two and a half days to one and a half. During the on-site evaluation, members of the team meet with the university's leadership and board; those involved in preparing the Assurance Argument and the Evidence File; students, faculty, and staff in open sessions; key individuals and groups, including governance groups and assessment committees.

Summary and Next Steps

This *Strategic Plan Update* focused on new accreditation processes required by the Higher Learning Commission-North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. As shown in the table below, and indicated by X's in the table cells, there is new annual reporting and a new format that includes a four-year Assurance Review, completion of a Quality Initiative, and an on-site Comprehensive Evaluation. All 1,900 institutions accredited by the Commission are being transitioned into the Pathways program and Western joins as a "Year 2" institution to keep its accreditation on a ten-year cycle.

Academic Year Reporting and Process Requirements Associated with New Commission Accreditation Processes					
<u>Academic Year</u>	<u>Electronic Repository</u>	<u>Assurance Materials</u>	<u>Assurance Review</u>	<u>Quality Initiative</u>	<u>On-Site Evaluation</u>
2011-2012 (Year 1)					
2012-2013 (Year 2)	X	X			
2013-2014 (Year 3)	X	X			
2014-2015 (Year 4)	X	X	X		
2015-2016 (Year 5)	X	X		X	
2016-2017 (Year 6)	X	X		X	
2017-2018 (Year 7)	X	X		X	
2018-2019 (Year 8)	X	X		X	
2019-2020 (Year 9)	X	X		X	
2020-2021 (Year 10)	X	X			X

Associated with the new reporting and process requirements are new accreditation criteria (to be enacted January 1, 2013) and new federal compliance requirements. These, coupled with a discussion of how the University will address the new accreditation reporting requirements, will be presented in your August 2012 Strategic Plan Update.

If you have any questions regarding the materials presented in this month's update, and/or feedback regarding the continued successful implementation of Higher Values in Higher Education, please contact me.

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