

**REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE SITE VISIT TO  
WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

**Macomb, Illinois**

**February 14-16, 2011**

**For the**

**Higher Learning Commission**

**Of the**

**North Central Association of Colleges and Schools**

**EVALUATION TEAM**

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## **I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT**

### **A. Purpose of Visit**

This is the report of a comprehensive visit for continued accreditation of Western Illinois University (WIU), Macomb, Illinois conducted for the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools on February 14-16, 2011. The comprehensive visit included a special emphasis review for three topics (strengthening distance learning, growing and strengthening two WIU campuses and measuring and demonstrating WIU core values). No other agenda, e.g. change requests, were under consideration at the time of the visit. The University presently awards bachelor, master and doctoral degrees. Doctoral degrees are limited to the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership.

A nine member team consulted with the president, provost, associate provost, vice presidents and other executive officers, self-study coordinator, self-study steering committee and self-study writing teams, deans, and the Board of Trustees on the Macomb campus. Three open meetings were also held, one each for faculty, staff, and students in Macomb. In addition, two team members met with executive officers, faculty, staff and students, community members, alumni and two trustees at the Quad Cities Campus in Moline, Illinois.

### **B. Organizational Context**

A public institution for the preparation of teachers was authorized for Macomb by the State of Illinois in 1899. Western Illinois State Normal School enrolled its first students in the fall of 1902. The institution was accredited by the North Central Association as a teachers college in 1913. Accreditation has been continuous since that date. The first baccalaureate degree was awarded in 1918, and the first masters degree in 1946. In 1921, the name was changed to Western Illinois State Teachers College; in 1947, the name changed to Western Illinois State College; and in 1957, the name became Western Illinois University.

Since the last comprehensive visit in 2001, WIU has participated in a number of change requests that have led to additional focus visits and other actions by the HLC:

- In 2005, WIU received approval to offer a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership (Ed.D.) degree with a mandated focus visit on its implementation in 2007-2008.
- In 2006 - 2010, WIU participated in the HLC Assessment Academy to re-conceptualize its general education assessment efforts.

- In 2008, WIU successfully completed the mandated focus visit on implementation of its Ed.D degree.
- In 2009, WIU was approved to pursue self-study with three special emphases: strengthening distance learning, growing and strengthening the two WIU campuses and measuring and demonstrating WIU core values
- In 2009 - 2010, facility changes to the Quad Cities campus, Moline Illinois and other sites were approved, as were free-standing certificate programs.

### **C. Unique Aspects of Visit**

The team members found their Western Illinois University hosts to be welcoming and cordial. Prior to the visit, the team had access to online resource room materials, as well as distance delivered courses. The team members also reviewed supporting materials in on-site resource rooms during the on-campus visit in Macomb and at the Quad Cities (Moline campus). During the visit, the team members met regularly to discuss the results of their findings and drafted the team's recommendations for the exit interview.

The team examined the self-study materials provided by the institution and by the Commission prior to arriving on campus. The University accommodated team requests to meet with a broad base of faculty, university leaders, students, and staff. Four open meetings were held – one with students, one with faculty, one with staff and one with members of the Macomb community and alumni. In addition, two open meetings were held on the Quad Cities campus; one for faculty, staff and students and one with community and alumni. Questions were addressed forthrightly and the resource room provided the information necessary.

During the course of interactions with faculty, staff and students at Western Illinois University, the team members identified a variety of areas of further interest beyond the information provided in the written self-study document and the online and physical resource rooms. Each of these was addressed in subsequent conversations and additional documentation was provided as the team confirmed evidence with multiple points of contact. Various staff and faculty provided additional material of interest to the team on a voluntary or as requested basis during the visit and changes in the visit schedule were readily accommodated.

### **D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited**

Two team members visited the Western Illinois University Quad Cities (Moline) campus.

#### **E. Distance Education Reviewed**

HLC approval was previously given to offer the Board of Trustees/Bachelor of Arts undergraduate degree, the Master of Science in Instructional Design and Technology (IDT), and the Master of Business Administration (MBA) as online degree programs. The team reviewed WIU's current distance education course delivery and online courses that were made accessible to the team prior to and during the site visit. In discussions with WIU administrative leaders, faculty, staff and students associated with distance delivery (School of Extended Studies, Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research, and the Center for the Application of Information Technologies), the team identified that WIU has assessed its history of Distance Education programming, analyzed the current state of distance education course delivery; implemented best distance education practices identified in accrediting guidelines and implemented at peer institutions; and, formulated a plan for the future of distance education at the University. The University is now positioned to further develop online academic programs and participate further in the program-by-program distance education HLC change request process.

#### **F. Interactions with Constituencies**

Western Illinois University:

- President
- Provost
- Associate Provost for Graduate and Undergraduate Studies
- Associate Provost for Budget, Planning & Personnel
- Vice President, Quad Cities, Planning & Technology
- Vice President, Student Services
- Vice President, University Advancement and Public Services
- Associate Vice President, Student Services, Housing & Dining
- Associate Vice President, Student Services
- Assistant Vice President, Administrative Services
- Director, Budget
- Director, Internal Auditing
- Assistant Comptroller
- Assistant Vice President & Director of Athletics
- Assistant Vice President, University Technology

- Dean , College of Arts & Sciences
- Dean, College of Business & Technology

Dean, College of Education & Human Services  
Dean, College of Fine Arts & Communication  
Dean, University Libraries  
Director, Illinois Centennial Honors College  
Director, School of Computer Sciences  
Director, School of Nursing  
Associate Dean, Arts & Sciences (2)  
Associate Dean, College of Business & Technology  
Associate Dean, College of Education & Human Services  
Associate Dean, College of Fine Arts & Communication  
Associate Dean, Fine Arts & Communication  
Assistant Dean for Undergraduate & Teacher Education  
Academic Department Chairs (32)

Academic Advisor, Bachelor of General Studies Degree  
Administrative Assistant/Graduate School  
Admissions & Records Supervisor Bachelor of General Studies Degree  
Admissions & Records Supervisor Office of the Registrar  
Architectural Superintendent  
Assessment Facilitator, Associate Professor  
Assistant Athletic Director - Business Operations  
Assistant Athletic Director - External Relations  
Assistant Director, Cross Cultural Educational Program  
Assistant Director, Graduate Studies  
Assistant Director, Physical Plant  
Assistant Director, Residential Facilities  
Assistant Director, Student Activities  
Assistant Director, Student Activities, Greek Life  
Assistant Director, Study Abroad  
Assistant Director, University Relations  
Assistant Manager, Human Resources  
Associate Athletic Director  
Director, Physical Plant  
Deputy Director Physical Plant  
Director, Academic Services-Senior Women Administrator, Intercollegiate Athletics  
Director, Administrative Information Management Systems  
Director, Alumni Programs  
Director, Athletic Training Education Program, Associate Prof. Kinesiology  
Director, Casa Latina  
Director, Communications & Ext Relations, College of Business & Technology  
Director, Disability Resource Center  
Director, Gwendolyn Brooks Center  
Director, Human Resources  
Director, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs  
Director, Institutional Research & Planning  
Director, Non-Credit Programs  
Director, Prospect Research & Management  
Director, Residential Facilities, Housing & Dining Services  
Director, Sponsored Projects

Director, University Advising & Academic Services Center  
Director, University Marketing  
Director, University Relations  
Director, University Union  
Director, Women's Resources & Programs  
Director of Development, College of Arts & Sciences  
Director of Donor Relations, WIU Foundation  
Director of Marketing & Community Relations, College of Education & Human Services  
Director of Marketing, Athletics  
Employee Development Manager, Human Resource  
Librarian  
Library Instructor  
Librarian Reference/Instructor  
Manager, Photographic Lab, University Relations  
Peace Corps Fellows-Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs  
Photographer, University Relations  
Pre-Award Administrator, Sponsored Projects  
Procedures & Systems Analyst, Registrar  
Program Manager Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs  
Program Manager, Mapping, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs  
Program Manager, Rural Economic Technical Assistance Center Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs  
Public Information Coordinator, University Relations  
Public Information Specialist, University Relations  
Publications manager, University Relations  
Registrar  
Research & Instructional Consultant, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs  
Sponsored Projects Compliance Specialist  
University Architect

Distance Learning Meetings:

Advisor, School of Distance Learning  
Assistant Director Instructional Technology Systems, WIU-Quad Cities  
Assistant Director, University Support Services, University Technology  
Assistant to the Director, Center for Application of Information Technology  
Assistant to the Executive Director, University Technology  
Chief Technology Security Officer  
Consultant, Research & Instruction  
Coordinator, Web Sources  
Director, Electronic Student Services  
Director, Document & Publication Services, Electronic Student Services  
Director, Distance Learning, International Studies & Outreach  
Director, Electronic Student Services  
Director, University Technology  
Director, Center for Innovation in Teaching & Research  
Executive Director, University Technology  
Graphic Designer Associate, Document & Publication Services  
Instructional Design & Technology  
Instructional Technology Systems Manager (4)

Manager, University Technology  
 Technical Personnel meetings (both campuses – 22)  
 Web Specialist, University Relations  
 Webmaster, Electronic Student Services

Open & Group Meetings:

Alumni and Foundation Meeting (11)  
 Community Members (2 meetings – 24 participants)  
 Diversity Council (8)  
 Faculty Governance and Members (2 meetings – 63 participants)  
 First Year Experience (30)  
 Student Governance and Students (18)  
 Staff Members (2 meetings – 16 participants)  
 Staff Governance (2 - CSEC President; COAP President)

**G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed**

Western Illinois University:

Board of Trustees Report 10.12/4  
 Board of Trustees Report 10.12/5  
 Board of Trustees – Annual Report on Financial Aid Programs – March 26, 2010  
 Board of Trustees – Enrollment, Retention, Graduation Rate Info – Dec. 17, 2010  
 Board of Trustees – Fiscal Year 2011 Performance Report – December 17, 2010  
 Enrollment, Retention and Graduation Rate Information  
 Facility Condition Assessment for the WIU Macomb, Illinois, February 25, 2009  
 Fact Book 2010 – 2011  
 Federal Compliance Index  
 Financial Audit and Compliance Examination – March 16, 2010  
 Fiscal Year 2011 Performance Report  
 FY2011 Functional Organization Chart - July 2010  
 FY2011 Performance Dashboard Overview – 2/14/11  
 Higher Values in Higher Education, Strategic Plan – 2008-2018  
 Master Plan  
 Official University Policy Manual – Technology Password Policy – revised 4/13/10  
 Report Digest, Financial Audit and Compliance Examination (In accordance with the Single Audit Act and OMB Circular A-133) for the Year Ended June 30, 2009, Release Date, March 16, 2010, State of Illinois Office of the Auditor General  
 Student Complaints File-Academic Affairs – 2009-2010  
 Summary Tables of Headcount & FTE Enrollments – Spring, 2010 and 2011  
 Updated Self-Study Tables, 2010  
 Illinois Board of Higher Education, Operating or Degree-Granting Authority, September 22, 2010  
 Illinois Board of Higher Education, WIU Programs (126)  
 State of Illinois, WIU Financial Audit, Year-ended June 30, 2010

**Websites Visited:**

WIU online courses accessible the committee

WIU – Home page website

[http://www.wiu.edu/graduate\\_studies/catalog/general\\_information/index.php](http://www.wiu.edu/graduate_studies/catalog/general_information/index.php)

[http://www.wiu.edu/CPEP/accreditation\\_overview.html](http://www.wiu.edu/CPEP/accreditation_overview.html)

WIU Foundation ([www.wiu.edu/giving](http://www.wiu.edu/giving))

WIU Foundation 2010 Annual Report

([www.wiu.edu/foundation\\_and\\_development/pdfs\\_and\\_docs/FY10\\_Year\\_in\\_Review.pdf](http://www.wiu.edu/foundation_and_development/pdfs_and_docs/FY10_Year_in_Review.pdf))

WIU Foundation IRS Form 990 for tax year 2008

([www.wiu.edu/foundation\\_and\\_development/pdfs\\_and\\_docs/FY\\_2009\\_IRS\\_990.pdf](http://www.wiu.edu/foundation_and_development/pdfs_and_docs/FY_2009_IRS_990.pdf))

Higher Values in Higher Education Capital Campaign case statement

([www.wiu.edu/giving/CapitalCampaign-10-11.pdf](http://www.wiu.edu/giving/CapitalCampaign-10-11.pdf))

WIU Brand Standards Manual ([www.wiu.edu/styleguide](http://www.wiu.edu/styleguide))

Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board ([www.ptb.state.il.us/](http://www.ptb.state.il.us/))

**II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW****A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process**

In the visiting team's review of materials submitted, confirmed in subsequent conversations with institutional and external representatives and additional materials reviewed, we observed that the self-study process was comprehensive and inclusive in its conduct.

The team reviewed the Self Study Report and, with subsequent opportunity for discussion with Western Illinois University administrative and academic leaders, faculty, staff and students, found it fairly and accurately presents the current status of the university. The Self-Study Report addresses the five criteria for accreditation and the special emphases, a supplemental report was provided as an institutional snapshot, and related information relevant to the comprehensive self-study was also available to the team prior to the visit. Online access to resource materials and distance delivered courses was also available to team members prior to the visit.

**B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report**

The self-study gives evidence of an extensive participatory process for self-study, confirmed by interviews and meetings with members of the Western Illinois University self-study steering committee and writing teams, as well as members of the University's internal and external communities. Meetings with university leaders, faculty and staff indicated that the institution is beginning to address some of the issues identified in the self-study process; e.g. analysis of the special emphases in relation to the university's strategic planning documents. This response is evidence of the authentic commitment of the University to self-study.

**C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges**

The team considers the response of the institution to previously identified challenges to be adequate.

**D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment**

Requirements were fulfilled.

**III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS**

The team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information. Specific information is provided in the worksheet on Federal Compliance Requirements (Attached).

**IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA**

**CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY.** The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met**

WIU currently has four well-communicated values (academic excellence, educational opportunity, personal growth and social responsibility) that are realized through its strategic plan *Higher Values in Higher Education*. Planning documents were developed in a broad and inclusive manner that included an array of institutional constituencies. There are a variety of plans addressing specific issues related to technology integration and facilities planning. There is a clear sense of progress and accomplishment shared by those we interviewed, both individually and in groups, with the values and strategic plans as accepted guides.

**Core Component 1a:** Western Illinois University's mission documents are clear and articulate its commitments.

The organization produces annual strategic plan reports that document activities and list goals, actions, and priorities. These are endorsed by campus governance groups and approved by the Board of Trustees. This practice seems to be internalized and anticipated by the administration, faculty, and staff as useful documentation.

**Core Component 1b:** In its mission documents, Western Illinois University recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society that it serves.

The mission and vision documents illustrate and align Western Illinois University's four core values. The mission and values documents include strong commitments to high academic standards, personal growth, and social responsibility. The core values are a badge of honor found, among other places, on the back of student identification cards and prominently displayed in the athletics office. Students interviewed indicated that they were keenly aware of the four values, even if they were not able to recite the mission or vision statements.

**Core Component 1c:** Understanding of and support for the mission pervades the organization.

The site visit team reviewed evidence from the self-study, campus documents, and interviews with, among others, Faculty Senators, indicating that curricular decisions were made with WIU's core values in mind. This extends to the inclusion of a Health and Well-Being requirement in the general education curriculum and a Writing in the Discipline requirement in each major. Moreover, students participating in the First Year Experience program spoke of the last two years' common readings as works that promoted the values of personal growth and social responsibility.

**Core Component 1d:** Western Illinois University's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable Western Illinois University to fulfill their mission.

**Core Component 1e:** The organization upholds and protects its integrity.

The university community appears to have an open and free exchange of ideas that promotes flexibility and innovation. In these discussions, although sometimes lacking formal structure, WIU's core values serve as touchstones. Examples of institutions created or sustained by these free exchanges of ideas include the Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center and the Western Organization for Women. Moreover, as evidenced by discussions with students and faculty, the members of upper administration appear to have an open door policy and are readily accessible for consultation and discussion with members of the university community.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention.**

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion One is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE.** The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met**

WIU has a robust set of planning processes involving administration, faculty governance, employee councils and also input from students. The Self Study, *Higher Values in Higher Education*, improvement to the general education curriculum, and the budget cycle all are evidence of thorough planning processes.

**Core Component-2a:** The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

The institution has developed a comprehensive strategic plan, *Higher Values in Higher Education* (2008-2018) that includes future-focused goals, actions, priorities and opportunities. Several internal and external stakeholder groups were involved in developing the strategic plan. To assure deployment of the strategic plan, the institution has implemented an annual planning and accountability process that is integrated with the annual budget process.

**Core Component 2. b.** The organization's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

The institution has developed a comprehensive campus master plan that includes short and long-term upgrades and improvements in facilities. A large group of internal stakeholders were involved in developing the plan, and this group meets regularly to oversee implementation of the plan and discuss related issues.

**Core Component 2c.** The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

The institution has designed and implemented a number of new undergraduate and graduate programs in the past decade. These programs were designed to meet regional needs and have been

well received by students and employers. Examples include programs in nursing, supply chain management and engineering.

**Core Component 2.d.** All levels of planning align with the organization's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

Supporting analyses, updated self-study tables, annual reports to the Board of Trustees, admission and enrollment analyses are available. Among those interviewed needs analysis, as a part of the development of new or expanded initiatives, is recognized as an integral part of decision making. In conversations with members of WIU's faculty and staff, it was apparent that there was a collegial and inclusive environment during the varied planning initiatives.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention.**

There are some areas that require organizational attention. Examples include: assuring deliberate critical decision making about institutional finance in the face of severe constraint in Illinois; possible shifts in the demand for financial aid in response to anticipated enrollment growth; new demands for space and additional/more convenient computer access with new initiatives; decision making related to further development of academic programs, be they online or face-to-face, related to the Quad Cities Campus; and recognizing the challenge of substantial deferred maintenance and its relationship to continued operation.

The state of Illinois is currently experiencing a serious budget shortfall and the institution is not receiving consistent state funding. In the short-term, this fiscal situation has resulted in a lack of discretionary travel funds, an inability to upgrade computer/office technology and a decrease in professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. In the long-term, this situation may limit the institution's ability to carry out at least some of the actions identified in the strategic plan.

The institution has a significant backlog of deferred maintenance projects relative to academic, administrative and residence hall buildings. Unless funding is identified to address the most urgent projects, the condition of the physical plant will deteriorate and the campus will not be able to implement the improvements outlined in the master plan. Thus, the University would be wise to monitor the conditions of all university facilities on an ongoing basis and identify maintenance projects with the greatest potential bearing on safety, accessibility, and student recruitment and retention.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

## Recommendation of the Team

Criterion Two is met; no Commission follow-up recommended

**CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING.** The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

### 1. Evidence that Core Components are met

The team commends WIU for its foresight and dedication to the HLC Assessment Academy and its work to substantially revise its general education curriculum. The persistence and dedication of staff and faculty in forthrightly addressing substantive challenges encountered is also acknowledged. Also, the continued work to disseminate progressive student learning outcomes assessment practice in the academic major programs to all academic major programs is commendable.

**Core Component 3.a.** The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

At Western, a long history of effective assessment practices has been made possible by the attention the institution has given to articulating student learning outcomes for all programs, including General Education. WIU has well-documented assessment practices guiding curricular changes that have emerged from assessment in Annual Assessment Reports and in cyclical program review reports. Interviews with the Associate Provost for Graduate and Undergraduate Education, the Faculty Assessment Facilitator and the Student Learning Assessment Committee (SLAC) confirmed that while the level of sophistication in WIU departments' practices for assessing student learning outcomes varies, the vast majority of departments have clearly specified learning outcomes for their programs, are regularly implementing multiple direct and indirect measures of those outcomes, and are using these data to improve student learning. Importantly, units across campus outside of academic departments (e.g., the Office of Student Activities) emphasize the need to be "active" and "intentional" in viewing their work in the context of student learning outcomes.

A culture of assessment pervades WIU's campus. SLAC reports that when an annual report is produced that provides a summative evaluation of each department's activities in assessment and the effectiveness with which they carry out those activities, faculty are not threatened by it but value the instruction it provides and embrace it. Deans, Department Chairs and faculty all speak to the concept of 'alignment' noting that Consolidated Annual Reports are linked to the *Higher Values in Higher Education* strategic plan, that departmental missions and goals are aligned with institutional mission and goals, that healthy parallel communication exists across Cabinet areas; and that the campus community has great confidence in the President and upper-level administrators'

leadership.

**Core Component 3. b.** The Institution values and supports effective teaching.

Institutional documentation and personal interviews clearly and consistently reiterated the principle that the highest priority of the university's faculty is instructional excellence. Faculty recruitment, hiring, development, evaluation and advancement practices all support the commitment of the institution to effective teaching. The current WIU/UPI Collective Bargaining Agreement affirms the importance of institutional and departmental standards that guide evaluation of faculty performance; those standards uniformly describe teaching as "the most important area". The Provost's Awards for Excellence and the annual identification of a University Distinguished Faculty Lecturer are examples of how WIU publically recognizes the contributions of its diverse and highly qualified faculty in carrying out the institution's educational mission.

Faculty, staff, and administrators with whom team members met expressed great satisfaction with instructional support services for both on-campus and distance learning. These services include, but are not limited to, assistance with course development, technical support for teaching online and for using online tools to enhance on campus courses, availability of graduate and undergraduate assistants, and education regarding copyright and accessibility issues. The team consistently heard that these services are timely, well-informed, based on current best practice, and effective. Furthermore, it is clear that WIU evaluates these services on an ongoing basis and uses the evaluative data to improve them continually. Interviews with representatives from both Human Resources and the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research (CITR) reflected a strong commitment to quality professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. Both units regularly conduct needs assessments and satisfaction surveys. There are dedicated facilities for training that serve large constituencies; and collective efforts to accomplish these goals (e.g. the Quad Cities Professional Development Network) reflect the commitment of partner organizations to work together toward common professional development goals.

**Core Component 3.C.** The organization creates effective learning environments.

WIU offers a rich First Year Experience program, and all evidence available to the team indicates that it yields multiple benefits to the campus. The team met with a large, diverse, and enthusiastic group of faculty, staff, administrators, and students who contribute to various components of the program (e.g., FYE courses; residence hall programming; co-curricular programming; peer mentoring). These individuals cited program benefits for students, for themselves, and for the campus, which include the opportunity to teach small classes that offer opportunities for meaningful student-faculty interaction; the ability to form collaborative and collegial relationships

campus-wide; and an enhanced understanding of how the work of colleagues across the university (e.g., residence life, as compared to faculty, as compared to student services professionals) contributes to campus climate. The Program Director coordinates an ongoing evaluation of program effectiveness, primarily based on thoughtful mining of a variety of data sources. This evaluation informs ongoing program adjustments to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Discussions with faculty members and documents available to the team reflected an institutional focus on helping students learn to write clearly and effectively. Course and curriculum materials, in particular, specified numbers and lengths of writing assignments; it is clear that WIU students have multiple opportunities to hone their writing skills. While the team did not find much information regarding *specific* instructional strategies implemented to teach writing beyond the fact that *multiple* writing assignments should be provided, WIU expresses the commitment to help students become more accomplished writers. WIU faculty may benefit from a broader campus conversation to develop consensus on effective pedagogies in the area of writing in an effort to help students who struggle to write well.

**Core Component 3.d.** The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

The institutional self-study and discussions with students, staff, and faculty members indicated that WIU effectively uses co-curricular activities to complement formal coursework. The FYE program, in particular, offers a variety of types of lectures, discussions and demonstrations, performances, and residence hall programs to complement the campus FYE Common Reading and address the annual theme. Because these events are open to all members of the campus community, the benefits extend well beyond first-year students. In addition, many majors offer experiential learning opportunities; study abroad options similarly offer avenues outside of formal curricula through which students can enrich their education.

WIU demonstrates that it ensures broad access to learning resources through its libraries (Malpass, Curriculum, Music, Physical Sciences, and WU-Quad Cities), its technological infrastructure and support, its teaching and research laboratories, and through projects. The WIU capital budget has supported construction of state-of-the-art facilities such as the Multicultural Center and the Performing Arts Center in Macomb and the WIU-Quad Cities Riverfront Campus. As the state and national economies continue to languish, it will be important for campus leaders to prioritize new construction and deferred maintenance projects to ensure that state and private funding supports those projects that can have the greatest campus impact.

## **2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention.**

Organizational attention is required to conduct meaningful assessment of student learning outcomes for general education. As the general education program was recently revised, it is not surprising that its learning outcomes assessment is not yet – in the institution’s judgment – at the desired level of development. At the time of the team visit, only three semesters of assessment data had been collected. This assessment approach encompassed primarily classroom-based assessment to assess achievement of each of the six student learning outcomes for general education. Participation in the HLC Academy for Assessment of Student Learning provided WIU the opportunity to focus on developing and implementing assessment for general education. The General Education Committee, SLAC and the Associate Provost for Graduate and Undergraduate Education recognize that in all areas of student learning assessment, including general education, the future is in using assessment results to effect change at course, program, department, college and institutional levels. Because general education impacts *every* student and provides a foundation for advanced undergraduate, graduate and professional coursework, continued institutional attention to this area is important. WIU faculty, staff, and administrators are appropriately aware of and focused on this challenge.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

#### **Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion Three is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE.** The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

The breadth of the institution’s definition of scholarship, its efforts toward developing faculty and students as creative scholars, and the noteworthy accomplishments of faculty through active, productive scholarly and creative activity reflect a commitment of the institution to promoting a life of learning.

**Core Component 4.a.** The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

WIU's mission states that the institution prepares today's and tomorrow's leaders as responsible life-long learners. While it is clear that the primary role of the faculty is instruction, the level of faculty research, scholarship and creative activity continues to increase. Faculty are active in presenting at professional conferences, publishing books and refereed journal articles, creative activities and writing grant proposals. Over the past three academic years, the number of sponsored projects has increased more than 50 percent and the award funding has more than doubled during this time period. Moreover, the environment of scholarship that exists at WIU extends to all learners; numerous opportunities in scholarly and creative activity exist for both undergraduate and graduate students. These opportunities are facilitated by the Centennial Honors College and the academic colleges. For example, The Centennial Honors College sponsors an annual Undergraduate Research Day where faculty-mentored research conducted by students is showcased. Across colleges there are numerous undergraduate and graduate student research competitions and symposia that focus on the sharing and recognition of student work. In this regard, the Director of the Centennial Honors College characterized WIU's campus as a whole as exhibiting an "Honors culture", which reflects the high value that the institution places on academic excellence and scholarly pursuits.

**Core Component 4.b.** The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

Colleges and departments provide financial support to faculty, albeit limited, for direct support of scholarly and creative activity or travel. A Summer Stipend Program provides support for faculty scholarship in the summer and a recently-created Provost's Travel Awards program offers support for faculty presenting at national and international conferences and symposia. In addition to financial resources, the intellectual resources of multi-disciplinary, collaborative centers and institutes at WIU, such as the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) and the Institute for Environmental Studies (IES), expand the research and scholarship base of the institution as an integral part of the outreach efforts of the university to many partners both inside and outside of higher education.

WIU demonstrates that, as an institution of higher education, it embraces a broad definition of scholarship that encompasses basic and applied research as well as creative activity in the fine arts and scholarly work focused on teaching. Representatives from the Office of Sponsored Projects and the University Research Council stressed that a broad definition of scholarship is "a university initiative" – so pervasive that its value is reflected clearly in how intramural research funding decisions are made and faculty members are recognized for excellence in scholarly and creative

endeavors.

**Core Component 4.c.** The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

At WIU, the general education program is considered foundational to all other academic programs. Beginning in 2005, WIU engaged in a thorough review of its general education program. The articulation of six learning outcomes are the basis of how WIU's general education program provides a foundation for future learning and WIU defines six categories of classes for the general education program. The Council on General Education (CGE) is appropriately constructed and charged by the Faculty Senate to oversee general education and its assessment. Members of the CGE indicate that, generally speaking, both students and faculty view general education *not* simply as a list of requirements but an opportunity to be liberally-educated as preparation for socially-responsible leadership in a global society. The Summer Orientation and Registration (SOAR) Program and professional advising of students in each of the colleges are credited with helping to create that culture; having professional advisors to successfully guide student progress through general education and into majors has not only freed faculty members to focus on teaching and research, but it has enhanced the institution's ability to provide more consistent, meaningful counsel to students.

Regular academic program review is embraced by the faculty as a critical element of continuous improvement of the quality of the institution's educational programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Moreover, the institution has a commitment to acquiring and maintaining program-specific external accreditations where appropriate. WIU operates on a state board-mandated eight-year academic program review cycle (three years for new programs) that, importantly, includes the use of external reviewers. Academic program review documents reflect the commitment the institution has to providing quality educational programs and the high value WIU places on effective assessment of student learning. The Board of Trustees particularly stressed the value and importance that it places on meaningful and rigorous academic program review, especially for graduate programs. In a time of increasingly scarce resources, aligning academic programs with the institution's mission and values, and documenting program effectiveness, quality and rigor are of paramount importance.

**Core Component 4.d.** The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

The infrastructure is in place at WIU to support research and creative and scholarly activity among faculty, staff and students. The Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP), as the administrative unit

that oversees all activities relative to federal compliance, human subjects training, bio-safety and animal welfare, also assists faculty members in every aspect of grant proposal preparation. OSP also administers University Research Council (URC) Awards that provide "seed" financial resources for the initiation of new projects or to support ongoing projects. The expectation that URC Award recipients submit an extramural proposal is explicit. However, the self-study noted that less than half of URC Award recipients apply extramurally for external research support, and identified this as a challenge and opportunity for the future.

The responsible conduct of research and social responsibility in general are supported by institutional policies and procedures that are appropriately disseminated and enforced. The Office of Sponsored Projects has a fulltime Compliance Specialist who administers and oversees institutional policies and arranges and conducts necessary training. WIU also subscribes to online training modules through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) for ongoing certification of faculty, staff and student training in compliance and responsible conduct of research. In their efforts to ensure a well-developed and competent faculty and staff, CITR and Human Resources personnel communicated to team members that their work is driven by the principles of the *Higher Values in Higher Education* strategic plan and institutional values.

## **2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**

The state of Illinois is currently experiencing a serious budget shortfall and the institution is not receiving consistent state funding. In the short-term, this fiscal situation has resulted in a lack of discretionary travel funds, an inability to upgrade computer/office technology and a decrease in professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. In the long-term, this situation may limit the institution's ability to carry out the faculty, staff and student activities needed to meet the criteria relative to the Acquisition, Discovery and Application of Knowledge.

## **3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

## **4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

### **Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion Four is met, no Commission follow up recommended.

**CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE.** As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both values.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

WIU presents a compelling case for fulfilling Criterion Five. The self-study reported that the university is engaged in varied local and regional community issues, consistent with the core value of social responsibility. This engagement is reflected in partnerships with other educational institutions, local foundations, community non-profit organizations and nearby school districts. The achievement of the Carnegie Community Engagement classification recognizes WIU nationally as an engaged campus.

**Core Component 5.a.** The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

Very recently, the campus was notified that its application for recognition under the very selective Carnegie Community Engagement Classification was successful, in both the Curricular and Outreach and Partnership categories. The Carnegie process demands thoroughly documented evidence of community engagement and represents a signature achievement for WIU. Several examples illustrate the strength of programming, on- and off-campus, that distinguishes WIU as an engaged campus and the solid base on which future improvements will be built. All of the examples illustrate that WIU is attentive to learning from its many constituencies and matches its capacities to identified needs, to be responsive to those constituents.

**Core Component 5.b.** The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.

WIU operates a free bus service (Go West) for the campus and surrounding communities in partnership with McDonough County. The campus invests more than \$500,000 annually from student fees to operate the bus service, which helps to leverage eligibility for State and Federal transportation subsidies. The bus service is an extraordinary University commitment (including the students who approve the use of fees for the service) that enables the regional community to address a pressing social need. Free bus service is a tangible, very visible benefit of a mutually-valuable University-community partnership.

Western Illinois University has developed effective ways to communicate and engage its many constituencies. Offices such as Alumni Relations, University Relations, and the Student Assistance and Parent Service Center serve as a central point of contact for particular constituent groups. In addition, each individual academic college has a designated marketing coordinator to reach out to particular constituent groups on behalf of the faculty, staff, and programs in that college.

Several examples exist of co-curricular activities that have been created by Western Illinois University to engage with internal and external constituent groups. These include home athletic events, film festivals, and cultural offerings made throughout the year. To support these outreach activities, Western Illinois University has committed financial and human resources to these projects and included external constituent engagement in its strategic planning process.

**Core Component 5.c.** The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.

The Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs resulted from the farm crisis of the 1980s and was charged by the legislature to address all dimensions of rural community development, beyond agricultural issues alone. The Institute has a state-wide outreach, research and policy development mission that demonstrably aligns with the WIU values. The program's initiatives cover the full range of rural community development issues and the Institute's work is driven by regular surveying and environmental scanning in communities around the state (e.g., The Illinois Rural Life Poll) and a preoccupation with tracking the documentable results of projects, some of which can take several years to come to maturity. The Institute partners with WIU faculty to conduct theoretical and applied research and stays engaged through the implementation of community-based projects. Some concrete achievements include Placement of Peace Corps Fellows (WIU graduate students) in rural community development roles (a clear connection with the primary academic mission), two affordable housing projects that ultimately resulted in new construction valued at \$4M and \$2.2M, assisting rural residents to establish local foundations and sustaining the annual Rural Community Economic Development Conference for twenty-two years. The Institute was the lead department in the successful Carnegie Classification application and has established a web-based, searchable Service Learning Data Base that is being prepared for the WIU public web site. The data base can be the template for WIU to publicize all of its engagement commitments more systematically.

The mutuality of engaged relationships is also seen in partnerships, such as that with the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board program that is housed at WIU. The program is charged to carry out research and executive training state-wide and is funded by the state Board, with a reporting line to the WIU vice president for administration as well. The program collaborates with WIU faculty members across the disciplines who possess the needed academic and research expertise and sees itself as a WIU "ambassador" in the state law enforcement community. The program conducts environmental scans and focus groups to inform its plans for training and research projects and, in all of its work, makes its partnership with WIU very prominent. The

thriving relationship with local law enforcement around the state is reinforced through the credibility that accrues from the emphasis on the ability to apply the theoretical to the practicalities of law enforcement professional life. WIU benefits from this close association that comes from hosting the program and the participation of its faculty in highly regarded work with the law enforcement community.

The Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board is another example of how Western Illinois University responds to constituent need with relevant, timely, and quality programs. Curricular programs related to law enforcement training are developed through collaborative relationships with law enforcement professionals. These relationships include formal opportunities to provide input such as advisory boards and surveys for program participants, to informal relationships developed over many years with leaders in law enforcement locally, regionally, and nationally. Western Illinois University has demonstrated a willingness to actively engage law enforcement professionals in order to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the programs and services offered through the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board.

**Core Component 5. d.** Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.

Western Illinois University demonstrates a desire and willingness to evaluate its service to internal and external constituents. Examples include seeking feedback through surveys regarding library operations to engaging external governance groups such as the WIU Foundation and Western Illinois Alumni Association on issues of current importance. Through this evaluation process, the university can show that constituents value the services provided by the institution. Measures such as attendance at events, charitable donations, willingness to provide feedback, and student retention show that constituents value the programs and services offered by Western Illinois University.

Civic leaders value the economic, cultural, and volunteer impact made by Western Illinois University on the Macomb community. One example of this relationship is the transportation system referenced earlier in this report. Through the university's leadership, a free transportation system has been developed that benefits not only the students of Western Illinois University, but also the community of Macomb.

Engagement is the highest priority of all those who work in the WIU Office of Student Activities, beginning with orientation for new students. The staff outlined the multi-layered approaches that encourage students to be engaged in campus life and with the larger regional community.

Engagement appears to be a pervasive message that WIU students encounter. The staff attend to assessment of outcomes, to carefully measure the extent to which WIU students are engaged in learning experiences beyond the classroom. In addition to ongoing surveys among students, a national survey instrument is being used in 2011 to sample 4,000 WIU students to secure more specific data on how deeply engagement reaches into the student experience. Data to maintain membership of the President's Honor Roll program are also regularly collected, but more systematic approaches to documenting both levels of participation and measurable learning outcomes are in development. Students have a variety of alternatives for engagement with the Macomb regional community, including the Western All-Volunteer Effort (WAVE), Volunteer Now! (a local agency) and Students Today; Leaders Tomorrow. These programs respond directly to needs and interests expressed in the community and local nonprofit agencies participate eagerly in the twice-yearly campus volunteer fairs to recruit students to work with them. With engagement so clearly a campus priority and value, it is surprising that the staff report that service learning activity is not more prominent. Service learning is an indicator of the integration of student engagement experiences with the core academic mission. A Carnegie Community Engagement campus should be able to easily address this anomaly. A good start might be to renew WIU's affiliation with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' American Democracy Project, a principal purpose of which is to integrate civic engagement and student learning.

The University Diversity Council is another example of the broad-based effort to engage students and the campus community generally in issues of substance and in ways that especially address two WIU values: Personal Growth and Social Responsibility. The Council was established three years ago and represents constituencies and organizations from across the campus. A key function has been to publicize campus programs addressing contemporary diversity. The Council also promotes opportunities for students to be engaged in the larger Macomb community (e.g., Martin Luther King Service Day in January, which generally attracts 50-60 volunteers on a holiday). Examples of campus-community events in which members of both the WIU and Macomb-area celebration engage include the Juneteenth celebration in Downtown Macomb (which regularly attracts 2,000 participants) and the International Festival on the campus. The Human Resources Department also takes its efforts to diversify the WIU workforce to the community, with both direct recruitment efforts and programming to assist community members to prepare to qualify for employment at the University. The University Diversity Council is a clearinghouse to promote all of these efforts and it appears that it is refining its processes and building a track record for advancing

engagement at WIU, with specific reference to themes of diversity.

The institution's athletic program undertakes several engagement opportunities for student athletes, including a program that places WIU students in local elementary schools two days a week. Such program enhance athletics' role as the "front porch" of the institution for many constituents and strengthens the connection between the university and the local community.

- 2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention.**
- 3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**
- 4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

#### **Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion Five is met, no Commission follow-up is recommended.

#### **Special Emphases:**

**Special Emphases One - Distance Learning:** To develop and implement a comprehensive plan for distance education at Western Illinois University with measurable goals and outcomes consistent with the University's *Higher Values in Higher Education 2008-2018* Strategic Plan (HLC Agreement, February 2009).

Over the past 5 years, WIU has developed a coordinated approach to selecting, developing, and supporting distance learning courses. The campus has substantially answered the original questions posed in the special emphasis agreement. Their progress in expanding distance learning offerings has been primarily through online courses, although Codec (videoconferencing tool) is also used for some graduate courses. Over the same period, the institution has also strengthened its approach to preparing faculty members for online teaching and to supporting both faculty members and students throughout a course. Both students and faculty members expressed appreciation for these improvements. The Director of Distance Learning, International Studies and Outreach works closely with deans and department chairs in the course selection process to ensure that courses selected for online development meet the needs of the college and department.

Currently, WIU offers three fully online programs, and numerous additional courses. Their expansion in distance learning offerings has been strategic, in that courses are added in light of (1) the numbers of students and programs served by each addition and/or (2) a course's role in completing a minor, certificate, or concentration. However, discussions with campus constituents and review of

documents indicated that work to reach and serve new student populations has not been a primary driver in shaping distance learning offerings. Taking such an approach could enable WIU to attract students who would not otherwise have access to the institution, thus expanding total enrollments and revenue. This approach could also support WIU's value of educational opportunity. The Bachelor's degree program in General Studies has proven to be a very adaptable degree-completion option for adults in the online environment, reflecting the progress that the campus has made in understanding and responding to the potential market for adult and online learning.

Students expressed satisfaction with and appreciation for the assistance they received in such processes as advising, course selection, registration, and the like. Both students' and faculty members' needs for support in the distance learning enterprise are dynamic, as the nature of the tools available for teaching and learning in a distance environment are developing rapidly. Conversations with the professionals involved in supporting distance learning show that they are aware of the need to maintain an agile and dynamic support system. The work of the task force on mobile learning, and the "Faculty Innovators" group in the College of Education and Human Services, indicates that the institution is aware of the importance of continually looking ahead to the changing shape of distance learning and its implications for serving students and faculty members in a satisfactory manner.

**Special Emphasis - Two Western Illinois University's Two Campuses:** To develop and implement a comprehensive plan for growing enrollment on the Quad Cities Campus from 1,360 students to 3,000 students, while maintaining the resource base in Macomb and continuing the progression of the Quad Cities Campus from a regional center to a branch campus, with strategies that are consistent with the University's *Higher Values in Higher Education 2008-2018* Strategic Plan (HLC Agreement, February 2009).

There is clear evidence that the special emphasis on growing two campuses flows from WIU's values and that the central points in the self-study were arrived at through an inclusive and collaborative process. The special emphasis writing team included personnel from the Quad Cities (QC) and the Macomb campuses with personnel ranging from administrators to faculty and staff, and an administrator from a partner community college. (As reflected in the membership listed included in the self study and in the meeting with the writing team.)

The special emphasis team members were enthusiastic about the process that took two years and the final result. In a series of conversations with site team members, it was clear that those involved in guiding the relations between the two campuses are looking forward to receiving feedback from the site visit team.

In a series of meetings with the site team members, the WIU Quad Cities' (WIU-QC) staff, faculty and administrators displayed strong and sincere commitment to serving QC students and advancing WIU's mission and values in the QC area. Turnout at each of the meetings was significant, but it was especially so for the open forum with WIU-QC faculty and staff. There was also a high turnout at a luncheon to which community leaders were invited. These leaders conveyed an impressive level of support for and appreciation of QC's engagement in the community and its educational role. There is clear evidence that the WIU-QC is an active and engaged partner within the region.

As shown in the self study and in meetings with team members, WIU clearly recognizes the strong potential for enrollment growth at the QC campus, with the resulting prospects for alleviating some of the financial constraints.

Since the Macomb campus largely serves traditional 18-22 year old undergraduates, the predicted decline in the number of high school graduates places limits on growth in that student population. In contrast, the QC campus, based in a larger metropolitan area, serves almost as many graduate as undergraduate students. Also, the undergraduates that QC serves are often adult students. These factors strengthen QC's enrollment prospects, although it does face a competitive environment.

As detailed in the self study, the senior administrative officer at the QC campus has risen in the overall WIU hierarchy over the last decade. This is commendable and has helped ensure consistent QC enrollment and promoted the core values of academic excellence and educational opportunity.

Many WIU faculty serving at the QC campus are well-integrated into their respective departments and colleges, and see the annual evaluation and promotion and tenure process as equitable. Indeed, some QC faculty have served as the lead persons in their departments in the P&T process. Other faculty, however, perceive inequities for those based outside of Macomb. For instance, service may look different off the Macomb campus where it often takes the traditional form of department and college committee's work. In contrast, at the QC campus, faculty service may involve work with the community, a local K-12 school district or a partner community college. Such service, however, still clearly advances WIU's mission or values and thus could well be considered as meeting service criteria. WIU should consider how to ensure consistent integration of faculty based at QC. The strong inclusion of QC faculty in organizations contributing to self governance, such as faculty senate, may be helpful in this regard.

WIU has pursued a good number of agreements with community colleges, including in the QC region. In the future it will be important for the university to try to maximize the role of its community college partnerships, not only to increase the number of transfer students but also to ease the transfer process. As it works to advance in this area, WIU could review the processes it uses to negotiate and finalize agreements in order to ensure that they are efficient and timely. In order to deepen its

partnerships, WIU could explore co-marketing with its community college partners. There also appear to be some advising issues in which community college students do not take the proper courses to move efficiently towards an admission to a bachelor's degree program. WIU, and especially personnel at the QC campus, should explore forms of ongoing partnerships to make advising in community colleges more effective for their bachelor degree oriented student population.

Since one of WIU's core values is educational opportunity, persons at both of the WIU's campuses should consider ways to increase financial aid opportunities at QC. Given the different student populations between the two campuses, it may make sense to have different financial aid structures and timelines. To facilitate growth and expedite processing, it may be worth considering allowing financial aid packaging to occur at the QC campus, although under the same guidelines and processes as in Macomb. It is also important to ensure work study and graduate assistantship opportunities at the QC campus readily available.

**Special Emphasis - Three Measuring Values:** To develop and implement a comprehensive plan for making changes in university structures, processes, reporting, and other artifacts to demonstrate the University's core values in ways that show that the University embraces its core values in daily operations, reporting, and long-term planning (HLC Agreement, February 2009).

Western Illinois University has fostered an environment steeped in planning to direct the processes that advance university priorities. Launched in 2002, the *Higher Values in Higher Education* strategic planning process is designed "to guide institutional planning, resource allocation, and accountability reporting." Driven by the mission, vision and core values, the institution appears to ensure fidelity to the plan through the use of Annual Strategic Plan updates required of units that lead in a vertical progression to the president and culminate in focused and intentional action.

The institution recognized that "the values of the institution were loosely coupled to the goals of its strategic plan" and therefore set out to explicitly connect goals to actions. It created four methods to measure and report its values informed in part from the self-study it developed for the Higher Learning Commission. Accountability became the goal of the process.

The use of the planning process was evident in the decision making of units and groups from the Department of History to the Gwen Brooks Cultural Center. Plans resound with questions framed by the core values of academic excellence, educational opportunity, personal growth, and social responsibility. Students are reminded of the institution's core values as their identification cards list them on the reverse side. Faculty and staff are guided by the plan as they develop new and innovative programs and instruction. Faculty members suggested that this process is essentially a way of communicating about WIU's intention to be the absolute best it can be. It was further reported that administrators listen very

carefully to recommendations from faculty. Though faculty recommendations may not always be approved, the sense is that planning regards the core values as it is evaluated against existing resources and competing priorities.

Conversations with Quad Cities administrators clearly indicated that the core values are considered the baseline for making decisions and plans to grow the campus. Likewise, faculty and staff conversations revealed a dedicated sense of the importance of the core values in the delivery of courses, stimulating learning and delivery of services. The QC marketing team has created and displayed attention getting posters that feature the core values throughout the building. While the conversations did not focus on continuing this featured display of the core values in the new Riverfront campus, it should be safe to assume that they will continue this awareness building approach to promoting the core values in the new buildings.

There appears to be a culture of planning prevalent throughout the institution—one that is guided by an awareness of its core values. Possibly because of the planning process (and the accompanying feeling that great things are possible), the morale of the faculty and staff appears to be high in spite of the state’s larger economic environment. Faculty and department chairs advanced the notion that “what defines us institutionally is what makes us strong...[and]our mission is a good mission. Western has a lot going for it so that we can continue to attract [students].”

The formula to creating a culture of planning appears to include accessibility and transparency with leadership, unionization of faculty that is transformative in leading to shared governance, the dedication of faculty and staff to create for students a great educational experience, and inculcating students with the spirit of the core values. Western is to be lauded for its efforts.

## **V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS**

### **A. Affiliation Status**

The team recommends continued accreditation of the Western Illinois University, with the next comprehensive visit being scheduled in 10 years, 2021.

### **B. Nature of Organization**

#### **1. Legal status**

No Change

#### **2. Degrees awarded**

No Change

### **C. Conditions of Affiliation**

#### **1. Stipulation on affiliation status**

No Change

**2. Approval of degree sites**

No Change

**3. Approval of distance education degree**

None - The team recommends that the special emphasis on strengthening distance learning is complete.

**4. Reports required**

None

**5. Other visits scheduled**

None

**6. Organization change request**

None

**D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action**

None

**E. Summary of Commission Review**

Continued accreditation of Western Illinois University with the next comprehensive visit being scheduled in 10 years, 2020-2021.

**VI. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS**

None

## WORKSHEET ON Western Illinois University Federal Compliance Requirements

### INSTITUTIONAL MATERIALS RELATED TO FEDERAL COMPLIANCE REVIEWED BY THE TEAM:

### EVALUATION OF FEDERAL COMPLIANCE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

In the examination of materials and subsequent conversations related to issues pertinent to federal compliance, the team confirmed evidence of compliance and HLC minimum expectations.

**1. Credits, Program Length, and Tuition:** *The institution has documented that it has credit hour assignments and degree program lengths within the range of good practice in higher education and that tuition is consistent across degree programs (or that there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition).*

The team reviewed this component of federal compliance and observed that academic degree programs are well organized, provide substantive and strong curricular content, and contain conventional academic elements appropriate to the specific disciplines and professional areas of study. Credit hour assignments, degree program length and structure, and tuition rates are consistent within normal academic practice.

**2. Student Complaints:** *The institution has documented a process in place for addressing student complaints and appears to be systematically processing such complaints as evidenced by the data on student complaints for the three years prior to the visit.*

The team reviewed this component of federal compliance. The university has several systems for gathering and responding to student complaints, school-specific committee processes, and provost's office files.

**3. Transfer Policies:** *The institution has demonstrated it is appropriately disclosing its transfer policies to students and to the public. Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions.*

The team reviewed this component of federal compliance. Western Illinois University has intentional relations with local community colleges and other institutions, with clear and readily available advising information. The institution is experienced in dealing with transfer inquiries and enrollments.

**4. Verification of Student Identity:** *The institution has demonstrated that it verifies the identify of students who participate in courses or programs provided to the student through distance or correspondence education.*

The team reviewed this component of federal compliance. The University currently uses unique log-in verification for student identity checking. Staff are cognizant that future regulations may require implementation of improved validation options.

#### **5. Title IV Program and Related Responsibilities:**

The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program. The team has reviewed these materials and has found no cause for concern regarding the institution's administration or oversight of its Title IV responsibilities.

- ***General Program Requirements:***

The institution has provided the Commission with information about the fulfillment of its Title IV program responsibilities, particularly findings from any review activities by the Department of Education. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.

- ***Financial Responsibility Requirements:***

The institution has provided the Commission with information about the Department's review of composite ratios and financial audits. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.

- ***Default Rates, Campus Crime Information and Related Disclosure of Consumer Information, Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies:***

The institution has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.

- ***Contractual Relationships:*** *The institution has presented evidence of its contracts with non-accredited third party providers of 25-50% of the academic content of any degree or certificate programs.*

The team reviewed this component of federal compliance and confirmed that Western Illinois University does not contract with third-party entities for the provision of its academic content.

#### **6. Institutional Disclosures and Advertising and Recruitment Materials:** *The institution has documented that it provides accurate, timely and appropriately detailed information to current and prospective students and the public about its accreditation status with the Commission and other agencies as well as about its programs, locations and policies.*

The team reviewed this component of federal compliance. The University accurately reflects its relationship with the Commission. Print and web marketing materials are clear about programs, locations, and policies.

#### **7. Relationship with Other Accrediting Agencies and with State Regulatory Boards:** *The institution has documented that it discloses its relationship with any other specialized, professional or institutional accreditor and with all governing or coordinating bodies in states in which the institution may have a presence.*

The team reviewed this component of federal compliance. The University accurately reflects its relationship with other accrediting agencies and state regulatory boards.

**8. Public Notification of an Evaluation Visit and Third Party Comment:**

The team reviewed this component of federal compliance.

The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comments. The team evaluated comments received which were uniformly positive in nature.

# **ADVANCEMENT SECTION**

## **REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE SITE VISIT TO WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

**Macomb, Illinois**

**February 14-16, 2011**

**For the**

**Higher Learning Commission**

**Of the**

**North Central Association of Colleges and Schools**

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**I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION**

Western Illinois University (WIU) demonstrated that it is well-positioned to realize its mission during the site-visit. The university accomplished an assertive self study agenda that included three special emphases: strengthening distance learning, growing and strengthening two WIU campuses and measuring and demonstrating WIU core values. In accomplishing its self study, the university is commended for establishing such an inclusive and expansive process of in-depth self-study. Also, the team observed that the university is thoughtfully approaching the transition to a new President so that it will also be able to realize opportunities for improvement in the future.

**II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM****"Cost Guarantee":**

The "cost guarantee" for student tuition and other expenses has become closely associated with WIU's sense of distinctiveness and clearly enjoys very strong support at WIU. It is a complex approach to operating revenues that has been successfully managed for an extended period of time in a difficult financial environment. Because the larger financial environment for public higher learning is likely to remain volatile in the foreseeable future, the Team recommends that WIU's leadership continue to carefully and critically review the "all costs" guarantee approach for longer-term viability and document more specifically the opportunity costs entailed in this commitment.

**Distance Learning:**

As noted in the Assurance section, WIU has created a strong and strategic approach to distance learning. However, discussions with campus constituents and review of documents indicated that work to reach and serve new student populations has not been a primary driver in shaping distance learning offerings. Taking such an approach could enable WIU to attract students who would not otherwise have access to the institution, thus expanding total enrollments and revenue. This approach could also support WIU's value of educational opportunity.

**Two Campuses:**

Given the distinct student population served by QC, a more customer-services orientation is likely needed at the QC campus than is at the Macomb campus. Greater flexibility and local autonomy may facilitate such an approach, which has the potential to increase QC enrollment. WIU could explore ways of fostering flexibility on the QC campus, such as in course scheduling and allowing the development of a pool of qualified part-time faculty (using criteria set by academic departments or subject to their approval).

The QC campus may also find autonomy helpful in regards to summer session planning, budgeting, and course scheduling. This would extend to the decisions determining whether a course has sufficient enrollment to be offered, given late enrollment by many adult learners. Such a step may

involve making a distinction between tuition generated in Macomb versus at QC and allowing each campus to keep its own summer session revenue.

As detailed in the self study, the senior administrative officer at the QC campus has risen in the overall WIU hierarchy over the last decade. This is commendable and has helped ensure consistent QC enrollment and promoted the core values of academic opportunity and excellence. There is some reason to believe, however, that in the future QC could be well-served by also having a senior academic officer who is well-positioned in the overall WIU academic hierarchy. Such a position could help foster informed, timely decisions related to programs, institutional partnerships, and academic initiatives.

There are likely a number of different possible models of how such an academic officer role could be situated. If such a position were created, or added to an existing position, the University should consider that the person would report to the provost in order to have a strong role to advance QC's academic agenda and mission.

Given the potential for growth and revenue generation at QC, some thought should be given to clarifying the budget relationship between the Macomb and the QC campuses. One possible approach might be adopting a self-supporting income budget for QC whereby the QC campus covers its expenses and can retain an agreed upon portion of revenue after expenses for program innovation with the balance of net revenue being returned to the Macomb campus. This would provide incentives for increased program delivery at QC and may allow for an opportunity to maximize growth at both campuses.

### **III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES**

Compared to the very basic questions that framed WIU's original agreement with the Commission, to include a special emphasis on online learning in its self-study, the University has demonstrated substantive organizational growth by, in expeditious fashion, both answering those questions and moving beyond them to using the very solid base of experience it has acquired to build a responsive program that is characterized by high-quality learning experiences.

WIU is to be congratulated for being recognized nationally as an engaged campus, with the award of the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification in both the Curricular and Outreach and Partnership categories.

*Team Recommendations for the  
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** Western Illinois University, IL

**TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Continued Accreditation

**DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Request for the University to conduct a special emphasis review for three topics (distance education, growing and strengthening our two campuses and measuring and demonstrating our core values).

**DATES OF REVIEW:** 2/14/11 - 2/16/11

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**Nature of Organization**

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**LEGAL STATUS:** Public

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**DEGREES AWARDED:** B, M, S, D

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**Conditions of Affiliation**

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**STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS:** Doctoral degrees are limited to the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS:** The Commission's Streamlined Review Process is only available for offering existing degree programs at new sites within the state.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

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**APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES:** New Commission policy on institutional change became effective July 1, 2010. Some aspects of the change processes affecting distance delivered courses and programs are still being finalized. This entry will be updated in early 2011 to reflect current policy. In the meantime, see the Commission's Web site for information on seeking approval of distance education courses and programs.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** None

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**REPORTS REQUIRED:** None

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** None

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**OTHER VISITS SCHEDULED:** None

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** None

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**Summary of Commission Review**

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**YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION:** 2000 - 2001

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*Team Recommendations for the*  
**STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS**  
**YEAR FOR NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2010 - 2011**

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION: 2020-2021**

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## ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** Western Illinois University, IL

**TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Continued Accreditation \_\_X\_\_ No change to Organization Profile

### Educational Programs

	Program Distribution	Recommended Change (+ or -)
Programs leading to Undergraduate		
Associate	0	
Bachelors	66	
Programs leading to Graduate		
Masters	34	
Specialist	2	
First Professional		
Doctoral	1	

### Off-Campus Activities

In-State:	Present Activity:	<b>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</b>
Campuses:	Moline (Western IL Univ Quad Cities)	
Additional Locations:	Abingdon (Abingdon Senior High School) ; Chicago; Chicago (John G. Shedd Aquarium) ; Havana (Havana High School) ; Lombard (Lombard Police Substation) ; Moline (Caxton Block) ; Naperville (Naperville Police Department) ; Palatine; Pekin (Pekin Central School District) ; Peoria (Ridgeview Elementary School) ; Sherrard (Sherrard Community School District) ; Springfield (Department of Corrections) ; Springfield (Franklin Middle School) ; Springfield (Springfield Police Academy)	
Course Locations:	9	
Out-of-State:	Present Wording:	<b>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</b>
Campuses:	None	

Additional Locations: Davenport, IA (Figge Art Museum)  
Course None  
Locations:

Out-of-USA: Present Wording: **Recommended Change:**  
(+ or -)  
Campuses: None  
Additional Locations: None  
Course None  
Locations:

### **Distance Education Programs:**

Present Offerings:

Bachelor - 24.0102 General Studies (BA in General Studies) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 51.3801 Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) offered via Internet; Certificate - 13.0501 Educational/Instructional Technology (Instructional Design and Technology: Distance Learning) offered via Internet; Certificate - 13.0501 Educational/Instructional Technology (Instructional Design and Technology: Educational Technology Specialist) offered via Internet; Certificate - 13.0501 Educational/Instructional Technology (Instructional Design and Technology: Multimedia) offered via Internet; Certificate - 13.0501 Educational/Instructional Technology (Instructional Design and Technology: Technology Integration in Education) offered via Internet; Master - 13.0501 Educational/Instructional Technology (MS in Instructional Design and Technology) offered via Internet; Master - 13.1202 Elementary Education and Teaching (M.S.Ed. in Elementary Education) offered via Internet; Master - 52.0201 Business Administration and Management, General (Master of Business Administration) offered via Internet

### **Recommended Change:**

(+ or -)

### **Correspondence Education Programs:**

Present Offerings:

None