

Academic Matters

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FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR:

HLC/NCA Visit

The visit of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association to our institution for the purposes of reaccreditation concluded on March 12. The two and one-half day visit went quickly, if hectically, and was the culmination of almost three years of work. I want to thank all those who participated in the visit in person, by compressed video or by teleconference. You impressed the team with your commitment to students and your dedication to helping them learn and achieve their academic goals.

Special thanks also to Shirley Hensch and David Gratz, co-chairs of the Self-Study Coordinating Committee, and to the members of that committee: Rex Hieser, Faye Flesia, Craig Hurst, Wava Haney, Mary Beth Emmerichs and Eric Craver. A large number of people served on the working groups and they are named in the Self-Study; I thank them as well for all their hard work.

Next Steps for the Team Report

Now that the team is gone, what happens next? During the third week of April, approximately, we will receive a draft of the team report for corrections of error of fact. In mid-May, the team chair will send us the final report and we will choose one of two types of review: readers' panel or review committee. This is a normal step in the process which provides another check of the team report. By the end of July, we should have the review recommendations. Those recommendations then go to the Commission for action. We will likely not have official HLC notification of the result of our visit until mid-fall.

Does this mean that actions to meet the challenges they've presented to us are "on hold" until next fall? No. We have the team's statement of our strengths and challenges from the exit interview on March 12. While wording may change slightly for the final report,

the actual strengths and challenges will not. We need to begin as soon as possible to formulate plans to meet the challenges they have cited: the merit system, recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups, syllabi information regarding expected course outcomes in breadth of knowledge and proficiencies, and assessment.

Assessment Challenge

I'm addressing the assessment challenge here, out of the four above, because it is on this one that we have a monitoring report due in 2006 to HLC. The team indicated the following in the exit interview which some of you saw via compressed video:

Although a pattern of good intention and some meaningful assessments are apparent, a comprehensive and systematic program for assessing student learning has not been developed. An assessment program must include expected student learning outcomes that are articulated in measurable terms, direct measures of student learning and thorough analysis of data. Results must be used to improve student learning and inform planning and allocation of resources.

In order to demonstrate that we are meeting the challenge above, we are required to do the monitoring report. We do not yet know exactly when in 2006, but that will be clarified for us. In that report, we must show progress in implementing a comprehensive and systematic program for the assessment of student learning informed by the Higher Learning Commission guidelines. Specifically the team indicated the following.

The report will document the implementation of a program of assessment of student learning at course, program, and institutional levels. The report will document that the UW Colleges has:

- ∞ defined its proficiencies in measurable terms,
- ∞ collected direct measurement data on both proficiencies and breadth of knowledge,
- ∞ used the resulting data to inform improvements to courses and programs,
- ∞ measured the effectiveness of such changes, and
- ∞ used the data on student learning to influence planning and resource allocation.

Whether you agree or not with the team's evaluation of our assessment program, or whether you agree or not with the HLC stance on assessment, we ALL MUST work to do what is required of us for the monitoring report. Note that the team is not asking for a plan by 2006, the team has required that we have completed all the activities above by 2006.

What if we don't meet the requirements of the monitoring report? If the HLC determines that the monitoring report has not provided sufficient evidence that we have met these requirements, the next comprehensive reaccreditation visit will be in 2009-2010 instead of in 2012-2013. Note that it would be a comprehensive visit in 09-10, not a focused visit.

To be trite but factual, we have our work cut out for us. We do have many of the components of a good assessment program and have been working diligently on improving that program. The team noted, however, that they "did not find evidence of widespread course or program

assessment beyond a limited number of faculty and instructional academic staff.” We all know that to be true.

What happens now?

We work together on assessment—all of us. Greg Lampe and I will draft a process and timeline for the institution and will take that draft for comment and revision to the Senate Steering and Assessment Committees, the department chairs and the deans. To meet the challenge that the HLC has set before us, ALL of us will need to play a role in our assessment efforts. Although the time is short, I am confident we can produce the results that the HLC is requiring of us. I know we are up to this challenge and I know we can do this.

Engaging Students in the First Year Spring Conference

By Greg Lampe

On Saturday, March 29, over 120 faculty, staff, and administrators traveled to the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley campus to participate in the Engaging Students in the First Year (ESFY) Spring Conference. The Conference Planning Committee (Salah Bassiouni, Dan Blankenship, Michael Jacobs, Martha Nelson, Jim Perry, and Chris Taylor) planned an exciting day of opportunities to connect with colleagues from across the institution and to advance the ESFY initiative.

The conference featured three tracks: First-Year Seminars, Learning Communities and Interdisciplinary Studies Courses, and Support Services for First-Year Students. In all, eighteen different workshops were offered throughout the day. The sessions featured faculty, staff, administrators, and student presentations. During the sessions, participants learned about ESFY efforts and initiatives being planned and carried out on the campuses. The Program Review Committee (Michael Brophy, Deborah Cureton, Ray Hernandez, Katherine Holman, and Jane Oitzinger) did an outstanding job reviewing and arranging the sessions. Participants were encouraged to take part in any of the workshops that were of interest to them.

In the afternoon, 80-minute Cracker Barrel Discussion Sessions were offered and participants had the opportunity to select one of the three tracks to attend. Each group engaged in extended conversation about its goals and made plans for advancing its particular aspect of the ESFY initiative.

Judging from the feedback that has been received from those who participated in the conference, it seems that participants found the day engaging, meaningful, and energizing. The UW-Fox Valley provided excellent hospitality and facilities, and an outstanding teaching and learning environment. Stay tuned for more information about conference follow-up activities.

From the Professional Development Office

By Shirley Hensch

Congratulations to the following five people who have received funding for Madison Summer Research Grants and will be spending time in Madison this coming summer: Dana Haagenson, (Assistant Professor, Chemistry Department, Marshfield) for work on the synthesis of a stable compound with a silicon-carbon triple bond; Elizabeth Jozwiak, (Assistant Professor, History, Rock County) for research into union rivalry in the Milwaukee shoe worker unions of the early 20th century; Tom Kleese, (Assistant Professor, Art Department, Richland) for work in developing critique methods for a studio environment; Annette Kuhlmann, (Associate Professor, Sociology and Anthropology, Baraboo) for research into criminals and criminal justice in the United States and Germany; and Scott Walter, (Assistant Professor, Biological Sciences, Richland) for work with ruffed grouse ecology in southwestern Wisconsin.

Congratulations also to Jim Brey, who is the UW Colleges' nominee for the Regents' Teaching Excellence Award; to the Philosophy Department, the UW Colleges' nominee for the Departmental Regents' Teaching Excellence Award; and to Karen McLeer and Karl Byrand, who are both UW Colleges' nominees for the Alliant Energy Underkofler Excellence in Teaching Award.

Finally, over the next couple of weeks a committee appointed by the Senate will be reviewing teaching portfolios from faculty and instructional academic staff who have been nominated for the first UW Colleges' Teaching Excellence Award by their departments and/or their campuses.

Plan 2008: Educational Quality Through Racial and Ethnic Diversity
By Nora McGuire

The University of Wisconsin Colleges Plan 2008: Educational Quality Through Racial and Ethnic Diversity was submitted to and approved by the Board of Regents in June of 1999. This ten-year institutional strategic plan for enhancing multiculturalism in the University of Wisconsin Colleges is based upon the seven goals articulated in the UW System strategic plan.

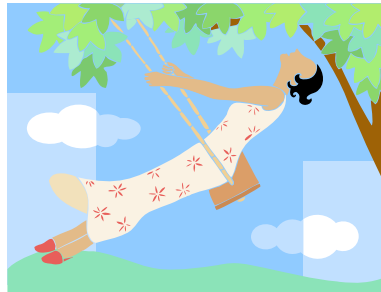
Progress in the first five years of implementation was reflected in the Plan 2008 Phase I report that was submitted in February of this year. The total enrollment of students of color increased by 58% between the Fall of 1999 and the Fall of 2002.

The UW System stated in its Plan 2008, "Consistent with their mission as entry institutions, the UW Colleges will create K-12 precollege programs, adult precollege programs, and recruitment efforts for students with high school grade point averages (GPA) of 2.00 to 2.50." Further, the UW System plan also highlighted the need "to create special programs that are specifically tailored to the unique needs of both rural and urban Indian populations." The UW Colleges has increased the number of precollege participants from 223 in 1998 to 574 in the 2001-2002 academic year. Three programs currently include a special focus on Native American, as well as disadvantaged students. UW-Barron County has a joint program with the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College that emphasizes math and science for students grades seven through twelve. UW-Marinette works with the College of the Menominee Nation to provide the Full Circle Precollege Program for eighth grade students, and UW-Baraboo/Sauk County has initiated a collaboration with the HoChunk Nation to provide a variety of programs.

Each campus is currently in the process of developing its Plan 2008 Phase II Report. The plans will identify the initiatives the campus will undertake in the next five years to achieve the goals of Plan 2008.

***The University of Wisconsin Colleges Alcohol
and Other Drug Education Website
By Nora McGuire***

The staff of the University of Wisconsin Colleges Alcohol and Drug Education Program has created a website for students that contains information about a variety of topics ranging from alcohol and other drugs, to tattoos and wellness. The website contains links to a variety of resources and self-assessment tools. Students in PED 124 Alcohol and Drugs: Awareness, Alternatives reviewed the website as it was developed. AODE Prevention Specialists Patti Wise and Wendy Seegers who teach PED 124 use the website as a resource for the students in their classes. The website can be accessed at www.uwc.edu/aode.



Enjoy the Spring!!!