July 2020 Update

To: Members of the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees

Polly Radosh, Chair	Kisha Lang
Greg Aguilar	Doug Shaw
Justin Brown	Carin Stutz
Erik Dolieslager	Mark Twomey

From: Mark Mossman, Associate Provost and Associate Vice President
Accreditation Liaison Officer

Date: July 9, 2020

Re: July 2020 Strategic Plan Update

This month's update shares our direction and planning for WIU's Reaffirmation of Accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. In the spring of 2020, the work of the Social Responsibility Task Force as it related to the assurance argument was handed to the Assurance Argument Writing Team, who will collaborate with five working groups to finalize evidence-based arguments in support of each criterion.

The attached presentation was shared at the June 12, 2020 meeting of the Board of Trustees.

The working groups will consist of individuals from across the university with area-specific expertise needed to ensure the assurance argument is fully developed. An assurance argument feedback committee comprised of stakeholders from across our campus community will also be formed to review the argument and provide feedback prior to submission to the Higher Learning Commission.

The Assurance Argument Writing Team and working groups will post drafts for review at wiu.edu/WEBSITE. We look forward to engaging the entire campus community in our reaccreditation process.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

cc:

Interim President Abraham	Faculty Senate Chair Pynes
Interim Provost Clow	Faculty Council Chair Porter
Associate Provost Morgan	COAP President Schuch
Asst VP/QC Admin Mindrup	CSEC President Friedrichsen
Interim Vice President Smith	SGA President Levchenko
Associate VP Trepac	SGA President Kletke
Associate VP Reed	
Institutional Research Director Bonifas	

Western Illinois University Higher Learning Commission Accreditation Update

Board of Trustees Meeting
June 12, 2020

Key Items

- WIU is entering Year 10 of its accreditation cycle and requires a “reaffirmation of accreditation.” To obtain this, the University will submit an “assurance argument” by January 2021 and receive a physical/virtual visit from representatives of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) in April 2021.
- A University’s assurance argument details how the institution meets HLC’s Criteria for Accreditation.
- The Social Responsibility Task Force, led by Dr. Joe Rives and comprised of over 75 individuals representing various areas of the university and region, was formed in Fall 2015. This task force discussed various aspects of accreditation and began compiling supporting evidence and drafting documents for the HLC assurance argument and 2021 accreditation visit.
- In Spring 2020 an assurance argument writing team was formed (see future slide). This team is now drafting the assurance argument, attending workshops sponsored by HLC, preparing the necessary webpages for the accreditation review, and implementing the next steps in this process.
- In Summer 2020 five working groups (see future slide) will address individual pieces of the assurance argument.
- Representatives from the BOT will be involved in these next steps of the process (see future slide).
- In Fall 2020 the final draft of the assurance argument for HLC accreditation will be shared with the BOT.

HLC Assurance Argument Writing Team

- Dr. Mark Mossman, Associate Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer (Chair)
- Dr. Lori Baker-Sperry, Professor and University Assessment Coordinator
- Ms. Angela Bonifas, Director, Institutional Research
- Dr. Kristi Mindrup, Assistant Vice President, Quad Cities Campus
- Dr. Amy Patrick Mossman, Professor and Director of the University Writing Center
- Mr. Justin Schuch, Interim Executive Director of Retention Initiatives

The Board of Trustees' Role in the HLC Accreditation Process

The BOT's role in the HLC accreditation process includes the following responsibilities:

- BOT members will review this PowerPoint to understand the definitions of each criterion in the assurance argument;
- BOT members will participate in various small criteria working groups in Summer 2020;
- BOT member will participate in a larger, representative Assurance Argument Feedback Committee in Fall 2020;
- BOT as a whole will be asked to read the final draft of the assurance argument in December 2020;
- BOT members will be available for questions from HLC representatives during the visit in Spring 2021.

Overall Timeline for Compliance, Assurance Argument, and Preparation for the Accreditation Visit

Spring 2019 – Fall 2019	Continued Social Responsibility Task Force meetings and compilation of supporting evidence for the assurance document
Fall 2019	Federal compliance document submitted
Spring 2020	Annual institutional review completed and submitted to HLC
Spring 2020 – Summer 2020	Assurance argument writing team continues work, contact with HLC Liaison, development of criteria working groups
Summer 2020	Implementation of criteria working groups
Fall 2020	Assurance argument document shared with Assurance Argument Feedback Committee comprised of representatives from the entire WIU community
December 2020	Final draft of assurance argument document shared with BOT
Spring 2021	Submit finalized assurance argument document
Spring 2021	HLC visit completed

Elements of the Assurance Argument

- The university provides a narrative and supporting evidence that demonstrates it meets HLC's five criteria for accreditation
- Supporting evidence must
  - substantiate the facts and arguments presented in the narrative,
  - respond to the prior HLC peer review team's concerns and recommendations,
  - explain any nuances specific to the university,
  - strengthen the university's overall compliance record, and
  - affirm the university's overall academic quality, financial stability, and integrity.

Criterion One: “Mission”

Purpose: Demonstrate that the institution’s mission is clear and articulated publicly, and that it guides the institution’s operations.

- “The institution’s mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.”
  - Supporting evidence might include documentation of the history, development, and adoption of the university’s mission statement; documentation of the policies and actions implemented or discontinued to achieve clearer alignment between the university’s practices and its mission; and documentation that academic programs, student support services, and planning and budgeting priorities align with the mission.
- “The institution’s mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.”
  - Supporting evidence might include documentation of the university’s role in the community; a list of efforts, programs, and certificates that meet community or constituent needs; and engagement of faculty, staff, and students in the community.
- “The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally-connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.”
  - Support evidence might include course-based activities that promote civic engagement, documentation of how diversity and inclusion are addressed in the university’s strategic plan, and student demographics and enrollment strategies that demonstrate a focus on diversity and inclusion.

Criterion Two: “Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct”

Purpose: Demonstrate that the university acts with integrity, and that its conduct is ethical and responsible.

- “The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.”
  - Supporting evidence might include hiring qualifications and processes for faculty and staff; institutional policies on non-discrimination, FERPA, Title IX, etc.; and internal budget control policies.
- “The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.”
  - Supporting evidence might include published list of current accreditations, faculty and staff roster, and recruitment and admissions documents.
- “The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution’s integrity.”
  - Supporting evidence might include information about athletic academic services, fine arts offerings, and a list of cultural events and research symposia.
- “The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.”
  - Supporting evidence might include a list of board members with bios; board manual, policies, and bylaws; and board approval of planning and budgeting documents.
- The institution’s policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff, and students.”
  - Supporting evidence might include the academic integrity policy, student and faculty handbooks, and Institutional Review Board protocols, by-laws, and training documentation.

Criterion Three: “Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support”

Purpose: Demonstrate that the university provides quality education in all its offerings.

- “The rigor of the institution’s academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.”
  - Supporting evidence might include agendas and minutes from Faculty Senate and associated councils and curriculum committees, examples of course- and program-learning goals, and guidelines for course outlines.
- “The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.”
  - Supporting evidence might include documentation of curriculum and course development processes, dual credit guidelines, and general education learning goals and curriculum.
- “The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.”
  - Supporting evidence might include student-to-faculty ratio, guidelines and processes for hiring faculty, and documentation of professional development and training opportunities for faculty and staff.
- “The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.”
  - Supporting evidence might include the student handbook, undergraduate and graduate catalogs, and list of student support services.

Criterion Four: “Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement”

Purpose: Demonstrate responsibility for the quality of educational programs, learning environments, and support services, as well as effectiveness for student learning through evaluation processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

- “The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.”
  - Supporting evidence might include program review documentation, transfer credit policies, and alumni surveys.
- “The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcome of its students.”
  - Supporting evidence might include annual assessment reports, Faculty Senate minutes, and course learning goals and outcomes.
- “The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.”
  - Supporting evidence might include enrollment management plans, student advising procedures and policies, and documentation of student support services.

Criterion Five: “Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness”

Purpose: Demonstrate that the University is meeting our mission through budgeting, processes, and planning.

- “Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution’s leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.”
  - Supporting evidence might include the university’s organizational chart; bylaws, policies and procedures for administrative, faculty, and student governing bodies; and a list of campus committees.
- “The institution’s resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.”
  - Supporting evidence might include the campus master plan, documentation of strategic plan investments, and collective bargaining agreements.
- “The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.”
  - Supporting evidence might include annual strategic plan updates, enrollment management plans, and facilities and technology plans.

Composition of Working Groups

- **Criterion One, "Mission":** Writing Team Representative, BOT Chair/Representative, Faculty Senate Chair, Graduate Council Chair, General Faculty Representative, General Academic Affairs Administrative Representative, General Student Services Representative, Foundation Board Representative, QC Administrative Representative
- **Criterion Two, "Ethical and Responsible Conduct":** Writing Team Representative, BOT Chair/Representative, EOA Representative, Legal Services Representative, Auditing/Business Services Representative, QC Administrative Representative
- **Criterion Three, "Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, Support":** Writing Team Representative, Faculty Senate Chair, CCPI Chair, CGE Chair, Graduate Council Chair, the Registrar, CITR Director, Student Services Representative, QC Faculty Council Chair
- **Criterion Four, "Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement":** Writing Team Representative, CCPI Chair, CAGAS Chair, Representative from Admissions, Representative from Provost/Academic Contracts, Representative from UPI, the Registrar, CITR Director, QC Faculty Representative
- **Criterion Five, "Resources, Planning, Institutional Effectiveness":** Writing Team Representative, Director of Institutional Research, Executive Director of Personnel and Financial Affairs, Associate Provost of Budget, Planning, and Personnel, Director of Quad Cities Operations and Planning

Composition of The Assurance Argument Feedback Committee

- WIU BOT Representative
- WIU Central Admin Representatives
- WIU Department Chair, Dean, and Director Representatives
- WIU Faculty Senate Representatives
- WIU QC Faculty Council Representatives
- WIU Faculty Representatives from Macomb and QC campuses
- WIU Student Representatives from Macomb and QC campuses
- Staff Representatives from Macomb and QC campuses
- Macomb and QC Community Representatives

Conclusion

Moving forward into the completion of this work we will keep the following in mind:

- This work provides a great opportunity for the institution to better understand its successes in mission, operation, student learning, and larger cultural and economic importance for our region,
- This work continues to be done with a commitment to cooperation and collaboration.