

August 2021 Strategic Plan Notification and Update

To: Members of the Western Illinois University

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

Date: August 4, 2021

Re: Notification on HLC Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Current Strategic Planning Activities

This document provides notifications regarding Western Illinois University's reaffirmation of accreditation and the University's current strategic planning activities.

On June 11, 2021, the University received formal notification that our review was successful and that Western will have continued accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2030-31. In the interim, the University will submit a report regarding financials by 3/30/23. This report will include the FY20 and FY21 audits and an account of CARES Award distribution (none of which were available at the time of the HLC visit).

On June 22, 2021, with HLC's approval, the University formally declared that it will continue its participation in the Open Pathway as its process for the next reaffirmation of accreditation review in 2030-31. The Open Pathway process is defined by a ten-year reaffirmation cycle and a focus on continuing improvement. Eligibility for the Open Pathway is only available to schools that do not pose serious concerns regarding the institution's capacity to meet the Criteria for Accreditation and Federal Compliance.

Prior to the successful HLC visit, President Guiyou Huang formed a number of working groups to implement continuous improvement, growth, development, and distinctiveness for Western. Areas of focus for these groups included:

- Distinctiveness Identification
- Quad Cities Planning
- Recruitment Planning
- Retention Planning

The next step in this process is for the work of these groups to be fully integrated into a formally revised version of Western's current strategic plan, *Higher Values in Higher Education, 2017-2027* (HVHE).

In addition to using the work in the areas noted above, in our revision of HVHE we will consider closely the changes in the higher education landscape and Western's positioning in this changing environment, an environment that now includes, for example, new strategic planning documents from both the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). In our revision we will connect strategic planning documents and activities directly to budgeting, state allocation, resource management, daily operations, the current student-to-faculty ratio, and the forthcoming foundation campaign so that the University's strategic plan is clearly connected to the day-to-day operation of the University as well as its culture and its constituents. In doing so, in connecting strategic planning with overall finance and administration, financial sustainability planning will also be a key component to the revision of the *HVHE*.

President Huang's intention is to have the entire University community engaged in this work. The University will use the momentum of its successful HLC review, as well as the numerous plans now currently drafted and in place, to move quickly at the start of this process. It should be noted that, as this is a revision of the current plan and not the creation of a new planning document, the plan's mission, vision, and core values of the institution do not need to be revised. Our approach instead is to update the current plan so that it continues to be functional for the next six years. In 2026, a year from when the current plan expires, we will be able to take a more comprehensive approach and develop an entirely new university planning document.

As the goal is to be as inclusive as possible, while moving quickly, the process will include the following steps:

1. In August, a large committee of approximately 50 representatives will be assembled from across the University and region. Faculty Senate, Graduate Council, Council of Administrative Personnel (COAP), Civil Service Employees Council (CSEC), and other shared governance structures will be asked to provide suggestions for individuals to participate in this process, which will also include members of our surrounding communities. This group will begin early in the Fall semester to discuss the current plan and the need to integrate the new planning documents for retention, recruitment, and so on. The work of the strategic planning committee will be coordinated through Academic Affairs, and specifically through the Assessment, Accreditation, and Strategic Planning office.
2. Again, as Western will retain the existing mission, vision, and core values articulated in HVHE, this larger group will initially define more specific strategic directives for the institution.
3. A series of subcommittees will be formed to further define each of the strategic directives, identifying goals, performance goals, objectives, and metrics. An executive team, including the Provost, Associate Provosts, and chair for each of the subcommittees will coordinate the work. The full group will come together periodically to review progress. This stage of the work should be completed by the end of the Fall semester.
4. In Spring 2022, an executive writing team will be formed, much akin to the team that was formed to complete the HLC Assurance Argument. This team will review all reports and begin the detailed integration and reconciliation of the smaller group reports with the HVHE plan. The team will meet regularly with the full committee to review the contents of the plan and ensure that they are capturing the essence of each of the subcommittee's reports within a framework document.
5. No later than March 30, 2022, the draft framework document will be shared broadly with all constituent shared governance groups. A series of town hall meetings will be conducted by the executive writing team, and a podcast series will be developed for the entire Western community.
6. A final document will be provided to President Huang in advance of the June 2022 BOT meeting.

All reports, updates, notifications, and other documents pertaining to strategic planning will be or is already available on the Assessment, Accreditation, and Strategic Planning web page. The web link is:

<http://www.wiu.edu/aasp/>.

