

To: Members of the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees
Carolyn Ehlert Fuller, Chair Bill Griffin
Jesse Andrews Mike Houston
Bill Epperly Steve Nelson

From: Joe Rives, Vice President, Quad Cities, Planning and Technology

Date: October 18, 2011

Re: October 2011 Strategic Plan Update

This month's *Strategic Plan Update* provides a summary of the *Comprehensive Site Visit [Report] to Western Illinois University*. Members of the Higher Learning Commission-North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (the Commission) completed the *Report* and it, as discussed below, serves as the basis for future university planning. The complete *Report* is available at www.wiu.edu/university_planning/accreditation.php.

Background

Western Illinois University received 10-year re-affirmation of accreditation with no follow-up reports or visits, which is the highest distinction an institution can receive. The basis for Commission action was reported in the *Comprehensive Site Visit to Western Illinois University*. The Commission's Institutional Actions Council approved the accreditation decision and team *Report* for Western at their September 6, 2011 meeting.

All Commission site visit reports actually contain two reports. The Assurance Report evaluates fulfillment of the criteria for accreditation (Mission, Planning, Instruction/Assessment of Student Learning, Research/Creative Activities, and Service). The Advancement Report provides consultation based on materials presented in the institutional self-study and discussed in the on-site visit. Because Western Illinois University applied for and was accepted to complete three special emphases related to strengthening distance education, growing two campuses, and measuring and demonstrating our values, there is also specific feedback on these items in the *Reports*.

Assurance Report Summary

Each of the five criteria contain four items: Evidence that the core components (sub-criteria) are met, evidence that one or more of the core components need(s) organizational attention, evidence that one or more of the core components require(s) Commission follow-up, and evidence that one or more of the core components are not met and require(s) Commission follow-up.

The *Site Visit Report* indicated that Western met all 21 core components for accreditation with no follow-up required. Western also met all eight items required for federal compliance with *Title IV* (financial aid) and the United States Department of Education regulations. The University did have four items that require organizational attention. This is down from the 12 observations requiring institutional change and six challenges facing the University in its last accreditation on-site visit in 2001. Progress and successful resolution of these previous 18 areas of concern are documented in the University's 2011 *Self-Study*, which is available at www.wiu.edu/university_planning/accreditation.php.

Per Commission definitions, items requiring organizational attention are challenges that face an institution, are being addressed, do not imply that the core component(s) are not met, and are included in the next self-study to show how the institution initiated and sustained progress in these areas. A summary of the team's

findings and initial actions for Western is stated below. Page numbers indicated parenthetically are the page(s) from the Commission's *Report* where the action is referenced.

1. *The effects of state cash flow have caused a decrease in discretionary travel funds, professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, and delayed re-instatement of the faculty computer and electronic classroom upgrade programs* (Page 13).

Supporting increases in travel funds, professional development, and technological enhancements are part of Dr. Thomas' Presidential Initiatives that were developed in consultation with the Western Illinois Board of Trustees, Vice Presidents, and campus governance groups. These Presidential Initiatives are available at www.wiu.edu/president/initiatives.php.

It should also be noted that at the time the Commission's on-site review team was on campus, complete Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 travel funds had not been dispersed due to delayed receipt in state appropriations. However, final travel expenditures for FY 2010 and 2011 were \$1.7 million and this continues to be the budgeted amount for FY2012. WIU will continue to support travel and professional development; such actions are necessary to support faculty tenure and staff advancement.

The University also continues to make technological progress since the on-site review team was on campus. Central funding for the computer upgrade funding was suspended due to state cash flow issues. However, the University remains committed to establishing four-year computing rotations. Currently, 56.5 percent of the 2,174 faculty computers are on a four-year rotation, up from 52.4 percent in Fiscal Year 2010. Gains are made by budgetary choices made within academic administration and through new state funding. The University successfully negotiated purchase of all new faculty and staff computers for those based in Phase I of the Riverfront Campus as part of the furniture, fixtures, and equipment budget in the capital funding. Current computers used by those end users in the Quad Cities will be rotated to faculty and staff on the 60th Street location. The one exception is the College of Education and Human Services. The Dean's Office declined participation in this program.

Prior to the suspension of the electronic classroom upgrade program, staff from Physical Plant, University Technology, Quad Cities Technology, and Academic Affairs, upgraded 42 of the University's 127 general instructional electronic classrooms (33.1 percent) in the last three years. Due to internal reallocation associated with the re-opening of Memorial Hall and state funding for the opening of Phase I on the Riverfront Campus, this total increases to 67 of 154 (43.5 percent) of the University's electronic classrooms having been upgraded.

2. *Monitor and prioritize deferred maintenance with highest priority on safety, accessibility, and student recruitment and retention* (Page 13).

Deferred maintenance will continue to be monitored and prioritized through established procedures of the Physical Plant, the Auxiliary Facilities System, and WIU-Quad Cities. Based on institutional need, and cost evaluations of renovation or construction, the Presidential initiatives include completing the Performing Arts Center, beautifying the entrance to campus, creating a Welcome Center (by renovating the former University Cinemas and demolishing the former Godfathers Pizza), renovating the Three-Dimensional Art Facility in the Heating Plant Annex, relocating the Heating Plant to the periphery of campus, and establishing new facilities, including a Science Complex, Visual Arts Center, and all three phases of the Western Illinois University-Quad Cities Riverfront Campus.

3. *Continue to provide organizational attention to the following issues* [identified on Page 13]:
 - a. *Critical decision making about institutional finance in the face of severe constraint in Illinois.* This item addressed state cash flow issues that were discussed in Item #1 (above).
 - b. *Possible shifts in the demand for financial aid in response to anticipated enrollment growth.* The *Report* did not provide context for this item. However, needs for increasing financial aid opportunities, graduate assistantships, and allowing Quad Cities to package its financial aid, rather than being dispersed by the Macomb Campus, is discussed later in the *Report* and this *Strategic Plan Update*.

- c. *New demands for space.* The need for new campus facilities and deferred maintenance is discussed in Item #2 (above).
 - d. *Decision making related to further development of academic programs on the Quad Cities Campus.* The *Report* did not provide context for this item. However, later in the *Report*, it discusses the need for the WIU-Quad Cities to have a senior academic officer located on campus for academic matters. It should also be noted that the academic community continues to support the Quad Cities Campus. In fall 2011, the University announced the establishment of Communication and Supply Chain Management as new majors at the Quad Cities.
4. *Continue to enhance general education assessment* (Page 17).

The on-site review team's recommendation supports WIU's recent completion of the Commission's Assessment Academy. The University chose to enhance general education assessment. In the new model of assessment, courses are linked to stated goals of the University's general education program through operational definitions. Departmental faculty teaching general education collect assessment data, analyze findings, and report assessment activities and process improvements (current or planned) to the Provost's Office and the Council for General Education to inform the ongoing, annual review of General Education. The University has four semesters of data in its new process. While still quite new, the new process has produced meaningful change and is sustainable.

As part of the special emphasis process that the University volunteered for, WIU received additional feedback in the *Assurance Report*. Following Commission protocol, the University is required to evaluate the following recommendations, and document whether each item was accepted or rejected and the implementation status for those recommendations that were accepted. By special emphasis area, the recommendations were to:

1. *Strengthen distance learning by identifying and serving new distance learning student populations* (Pages 25-26).
2. *Grow two campuses by:*
 - a. *Considering external service in meeting contractual service requirements.*
 - b. *Including Quad Cities faculty in the Faculty Senate, and other forms of self-governance.*
 - c. *Reviewing processes to negotiate and finalize agreements [with community colleges] in order to ensure that they are efficient and timely.*
 - d. *Exploring co-marketing with community college partners.*
 - e. *Exploring partnerships to make advising in community colleges more effective for their bachelor degree oriented student population.*
 - f. *Considering ways to increase financial aid opportunities at [the] Quad Cities.*
 - g. *Evaluating financial aid. 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.*
 - h. *Ensuring [that] work-study and graduate assistantship opportunities at the QC campus are readily available* (Pages 27-28).
3. *Measure and demonstrate [Campus] values by displaying the core values of the University at the new Riverfront Campus* (Page 29).

Several of these recommendations have already been enacted. For example, WIU-Quad Cities has shared marketing campaigns with both Black Hawk College and the Eastern Iowa Community Colleges. WIU-Quad Cities academic advisers also meet routinely with colleagues at these institutions and advise on-site to ensure plans of study for students who have declared WIU as their transfer institution are efficient with respect to associate and baccalaureate degree requirements.

The *Assurance Report* also includes team observations interspersed throughout the *Report*. These observations do not require formal institutional response but are to be evaluated by the institution for their viability, feasibility, and sustainability. The On-Site Review Team recommended that Western:

1. *Engage in a campus conversation to develop consensus on effective pedagogies in the area of writing in an effort to help students who struggle to write well* (Page 16).
2. *Prioritize new construction and deferred maintenance projects* (Page 16).
3. *Increase service learning* (Page 24).
4. *Renew participation in the American Democracy Project* (Page 24).
5. *Monitor and implement new federal requirements for verification of student identity in distance learning* (Pages 31-32).

Again, many of these recommendations are already in progress. For example, you approved prioritized appropriated funds construction projects via the *Fiscal Year 2013 Capital Recommendations* made to the Illinois Board of Higher Education at your September 2011 meeting, and you granted authority for the University to proceed with the renovation of the former University Cinemas and the demolition of the former Godfathers Pizza in the area that will become the new Campus Welcome Center. Additionally, the University's support of the fall 2011 Mock Presidential Election led by Dr. Richard Hardy, Director of the Centennial Honors College, and Dr. John Hemingway, Associate Professor of Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration, is consistent with goals and priorities of the American Democracy Project.

Advancement Report Summary

The *Advancement Report* provides advice to the University. The University is expected to evaluate the recommendations but there are no formal reporting requirements back to the Commission. Representatives from the On-Site Review Team provided counsel in two areas:

1. *For the "All Costs" Cost Guarantee:*
 - a. *Continue to evaluate its long-term viability.*
 - b. *Specifically document the opportunity costs associated with the Cost Guarantee* (Page 3).
2. *For Western Illinois University-Quad Cities*
 - a. *Support increased customer-service designed to increase enrollment by increasing local autonomy in:*
 - i. *Quad Cities scheduling.*
 - ii. *Developing a Quad Cities adjunct pool approved by departments.*
 - iii. *Quad Cities summer session planning, budgeting, and course scheduling.*
 - iv. *Cancellation of Quad Cities classes given that registration patterns between the two campuses are different.*
 - v. *Allowing each campus to retain their summer session revenue.*
 - b. *In addition to the current senior administrative officer, include a senior academic officer who is well-positioned in the overall academic hierarchy.*
 - c. *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* (Pages 3-4).

Future evaluation of the All-Costs Cost Guarantee must continue to recognize that setting constant four-year tuition rates is required by *Illinois Truth in Tuition legislation, Illinois Public Act 93-0228*. Emphasizing cost predictability, WIU is the only Illinois public university that sets and holds tuition, fees, room and board constant for new students. Additionally, it should be noted that the Academic Affairs and WIU-Quad Cities work collaboratively on scheduling through protocol described at www.wiu.edu/registrar/coursesched.php.

Next Steps

As this *Update* shows, many recommendations from the *Comprehensive Site Visit to Western Illinois University* are being implemented through new Presidential Initiatives, current reviews/updates of *Higher Values in Higher Education 2008-2018* and the *WIU-Macomb Campus Master Plan*, and through existing processes and structures. Other recommendations require future planning and implementation with academic departments, administrative units, and/or campus governance

groups. Future strategic plan updates will continue to keep you, the campus and external communities informed of this progress, as these actions directly relate to the continued successful implementation of *Higher Values in Higher Education*.

cc: President Thomas
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