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

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

The Board of Trustees' Role in the HLC Accreditation Process

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

-

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

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.

-

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

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

-

Composition of Working Groups

- **Criterion One, “Mission”:** Writing Team Representative, BOT Chair/Representative, Faculty Senate Chair,

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:

-