The hidden value of NCA reaccreditation

As we begin to accelerate our efforts to secure reaccreditation from the North Central Association (NCA), we must continue to look to the university community as a whole in order to gain a wide range of perspectives. It is also important to remind ourselves that while the impetus of our evaluative efforts stem from the criteria set by NCA’s Higher Learning Commission, we can not underestimate the value of this opportunity to take a hard look at our current state of being. There is no doubting that the reaccreditation process and outcome are critical to our continued success. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that perhaps even more important is the knowledge and insight that we ourselves will gain as we consider the strengths and weakness of every department, program, and process related to the university. We must not view reaccreditation as an externally mandated chore, but an opportunity to reaffirm commitment to our vision, mission, and goals.

In fact, one of the main results of our reaccreditation efforts will be the completion of an extensive self-study report. Essentially a reckoning of who we are, where we want to go, and how we intend to get there, the self-study report can be of great value to us because it will not only identify the starting point from which we begin our journey, but will also provide us with a road map to our future. While seemingly straightforward, however, we must take the proper precautions to ensure that we obtain an accurate fix on where we currently are so that we can continue our journey in the “right” direction.

Cramer joins Tippins as self study co-coordinator


Dr. Cramer’s professional expertise is the integration of technology into classrooms to engage students and demonstrate learning. Active and knowledgeable about UW Oshkosh and reaccreditation reviews she has served as Chair of the Faculty Development Board, Interim Grants Director, COEHS Assistant Dean, Assistant NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) Director, and MS Educational Leadership Program Coordinator. She has also served on the Committee for Committees, Advisory Council for Comprehensive Academic Advising and currently serves on the Ad Hoc Review Group - Academic Program Reviews. Susan is enthusiastic about the quality of education and engagement offered at UW Oshkosh and invites you to help the Self Study team illustrate this in the reaccreditation process.
As part of the overall reaccreditation of our university, Criterion One (Mission & Integrity) stipulates that we must "operate with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of [our] mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students." Included in Criterion One are several core components that help to define actions and processes that, when considered together, indicate that an organization possesses integrity and has developed and is attempting to "live" a mission that takes into consideration the viewpoints of its constituents.

Specifically, the core components of Criterion One and some examples of evidence are as follows:

1. The organization’s mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization’s commitments.
   - The board has adopted statements of mission, vision, values, goals, and organizational priorities that together clearly and broadly define the organization’s mission.
   - The mission, vision, values, and goals documents define the varied internal and external constituencies the organization intends to serve.
   - The mission documents include a strong commitment to high academic standards that sustain and advance excellence in higher learning.
   - The mission documents state goals for the learning to be achieved by its students.
   - The organization regularly evaluates and, when appropriate, revises the mission documents.
   - The organization makes the mission documents available to the public, particularly to prospective and enrolled students.

2. In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.
   - In its mission documents, the organization addresses diversity within the community values and common purposes it considers fundamental to its mission.
   - The mission documents present the organization’s function in a multicultural society.
   - The mission documents affirm the organization’s commitment to honor the dignity and worth of individuals.
   - The organization’s required codes of belief or expected behavior are congruent with its mission.
   - The mission documents provide a basis for the organization’s basic strategies to address diversity.

3. Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization.
   - The board, administration, faculty, staff, and students understand and support the organization’s mission.
   - The organization’s strategic decisions are mission-driven.
   - The organization’s planning and budgeting priorities flow from and support the mission.
   - The goals of the administrative and academic sub-units of the organization are congruent with the organization’s mission.
   - The organization’s internal constituencies articulate the mission in a consistent manner.

4. The organization’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.
   - Board policies and practices document the board’s focus on the organization’s mission.
   - The board enables the organization’s chief administrative personnel to exercise effective leadership.
   - The distribution of responsibilities as defined in governance structures, processes, and activities is understood and is implemented through delegated authority.
   - People within the governance and administrative structures are committed to the mission and appropriately qualified to carry out their defined responsibilities.
   - Faculty and other academic leaders share responsibility for the coherence of the curriculum and the integrity of academic processes.
   - Effective communication facilitates governance processes and activities.
   - The organization evaluates its structures and processes regularly and strengthens them as needed.

5. The organization upholds and protects its integrity.
   - The activities of the organization are congruent with its mission.
   - The board exercises its responsibility to the public to ensure that the organization operates legally, responsibly, and with fiscal honesty.
   - The organization understands and abides by local, state, and federal laws and regulations applicable to it (or by laws and regulations established by federally-recognized sovereign entities).
   - The organization consistently implements clear and fair policies regarding the rights and responsibilities of each of its internal constituencies.
   - The organization’s structures and processes allow it to ensure the integrity of its co-curricular and auxiliary activities.
   - The organization deals fairly with its external constituents.
   - The organization presents itself accurately and honestly to the public.
   - The organization documents timely response to complaints and grievances, particularly those of students.
**Our Mission**

The Abridged Select Mission of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is to serve people by:

- Providing students with access to a high-quality, affordable, comprehensive education that enables them to develop their general intellectual capacities, specific interests, and abilities through academic programs and personalized student development services.
- Fostering the scholarly activities of faculty, students, and staff related to teaching, research, intellectual activities, creative expression, and service.
- Sharing its intellectual and specialized capabilities with individuals, organizations, and communities in our Wisconsin region and beyond in a way that is responsive to the needs of the people we serve.

**Select Mission of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh**

As adopted by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System.

In addition to the system and core missions, UW Oshkosh has the following select mission: Ours is a comprehensive public university with unique ties to both urban and rural environments. We have a tradition of strong programs in the arts and sciences and in select professional career fields. Our faculty and staff are united in believing that the fundamental purpose of a university education is to develop thinking men and women capable of independent growth and adaptation in all roles of life. Accordingly, our select mission as a university is:

- To acquire, preserve, and disseminate knowledge.
- To provide undergraduate course-work designed to develop learning proficiencies and to cultivate the values and perspectives of educated citizens—specifically, respect for human dignity and cultural diversity, commitment to personal excellence, and the habit of taking thought.
- To challenge students to develop their talents, intellectual interests, and creative abilities; to promote an appreciation for both continuity and change; to provide the impetus for a lifelong commitment to, and enthusiasm for, learning; and to prepare persons for critical evaluation and decision making.
- To expect scholarly activity, including research, scholarship, and creative endeavor that supports its programs at the associate and baccalaureate degree level, its selected graduate programs, and its special mission.
- To provide a broad range of undergraduate degree programs in the arts and sciences, business administration, education, and nursing.
- To offer an array of master's and specialist level graduate programs which grow clearly from areas of undergraduate strength and meet the emerging needs of the regions which we serve.
- To develop and offer programs and services responding to the needs of the people, institutions, and communities which we serve.

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**Can we include your project in the self study?**

Did you ever wonder what projects people are involved in here at UW Oshkosh? Are your projects highlighted in the Points of Pride list? Now is the time and here (of course it's a web address!!) is the place to promote your projects. Briefly tell us about the projects you and/or your students are or have been involved since our last reaccreditation in 1997. The project might be ongoing, or have only lasted a year or two. Examples might include innovative ways your students demonstrate student learning, involve civic engagement, volunteerism or service learning, be research focused, and more. I have students in one class partner with local agencies then draft grants for that agency—some have even been funded—as their course project.

The projects might be large or small. Tell us about them all so we can weave the true story of UW Oshkosh into the Self Study report. To share your projects go to [http://www.uwosh.edu/nca_accreditation/projectform.php](http://www.uwosh.edu/nca_accreditation/projectform.php) and fill in the form. Please don't use full sentences, just give us enough information so we can gather the flavor of your project and contact you for additional details. Enter as many projects as you want.

Susan Cramer - Self Study Co-coordinator

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For a comprehensive look at strategic planning at UW Oshkosh, see [http://www.uwosh.edu/chancellor/plan/Planning.php](http://www.uwosh.edu/chancellor/plan/Planning.php) (There is a link in the Featured Sites section of the UW Oshkosh home page.)

The strategic planning website is currently being updated to include the current status of the seven key operational plans and will include interactive forms for you to provide input on planning and the implementation of the operational plans. Look for a link to this update on the Featured Sites section of the UW Oshkosh home page in the next few weeks.
Spotlight on IR – Institutional Research

Gems of knowledge and assistance are located all over campus. The Office of Institutional Research is one such gem. While their official function is to provide data support for faculty, administration, and students, the reality is a whole lot more exciting. Joe Franklin, Mike Watson, and Lynne Elder have the capabilities to tap into a wealth of data located on campus to answer your data-driven questions. For example, have you ever wondered how many students are enrolled in our various programs, what our student retention and graduation rates are, how long it takes the average student to complete his or her degree requirements, or on average are the male students doing as well as the female students? If these or other such questions have crossed your mind, you can be sure they’ve crossed the mind of the Higher Learning Commission. The Office of Institutional Research plays an important role in gathering and analyzing this sort of information which is critical to the reaccreditation self-study.

In addition to providing department chairs and deans with the data they need for program reviews, accreditation reports, and strategic planning, IR also provides a range of services to faculty members and students. For example, they can help you during the survey design and data collection portions of your research project, as well as provide ongoing assistance during the analysis and reporting stages of the project. So, if your last research/statistics course was a few years ago and you are a bit rusty on all those details (how big a sample do I really need, threats to internal validity, one-tail vs. two tail tests, use of SPSS, etc), give IR a call. Of course, while IR will help you design your study and work with you all the way through writing the results section of your publication, you have to do all the writing (they will make sure your interpretation is accurate).

IR will also work with you to assess student learning in your courses. One of the more common questions being asked of educators today are “How do you know if your students are learning?” To help you find an answer, IR will work with you to develop a pretest-posttest format for assessing student learning. The assessment content is totally faculty driven but the test administration and analysis is completed by IR with results going directly to the faculty member. They have been offering this service each semester since Fall 2003. Use has grown from faculty members in two departments in Spring 2003 to use by faculty in over 16 departments currently. Faculty who use this assessment service have reported that after taking the pretest, students are able to ask more in-depth questions throughout the semester because they have a better idea of the content they are expected to master. Likewise, some faculty members have been able to use the findings to adjust course content and expectations based on student performance.

So, if you haven’t used IR’s services recently, perhaps this is the time to think about how they might be able to help you out with all your data-related needs.