Faculty-Student Research: A Great Way to Collaborate

A common misperception of the criteria for accreditation is that they are seen as exclusive bins. Criterion 3 is Student Learning, and Criterion 4 is Faculty Research. The situation is, of course, more complex and the criteria are interrelated in many ways. One beautiful example is faculty-student collaboration on research.

There are many avenues supporting scholarship on campus. One such avenue is the Faculty Student Collaborative Research grant program. In this program students may apply for and receive funds to support their research. Undergraduate students may earn stipends up to $2,500, graduate students up to $3,000. Additionally, they may ask for up to $500 for supplies and equipment. Stipends can be paid either for summer work or projects that will run throughout the academic year.

Projects supported through this program are many and varied. For example, this past summer Michael Shupryt collaborated with Dr. Robert Stelzer in Biology/Microbiology to study Plant Beds in Streams: Pattern and Process of a Biodiversity Hot Spot. Sonja Jeter worked with Dr. Colleen McDermott also of Biology/Microbiology examining genes from avian waste and canine feces. Undergraduates Mary Bayer and Anna Simeth worked with Dr. Paul Klemp in English on a project entitled Combating Silence and Invisibility: The Representation of Older Women in Selected Novels by Toni Morrison and Anita Shreve while Beau Buchmann worked with Dr. Marianne Johnson from Economics on a project entitled Nonprofit Commercial Activity and Donations: Is There Evidence of Crowd-Out?

Another small program that exists to support student research is the Small Grants Collaborative Research program. Supported by funds from the Student Compact and Differential Tuition, students can apply to receive up to $500 to purchase supplies and equipment needed in their research. Applications are accepted monthly with funds distributed as awarded.

Why not involve some students in your research? It’s a win-win adventure for everyone involved!

Do your bit: review a draft of the Self Study

We need you!! The writing team has been working hard all summer to weave together all the input and documents gathered from you during the past year. We are hopeful they represent our campus comprehensively and accurately. But, we need your input. Does the self study accurately represent the campus from your vantage point? Please read the self study (portions or the whole document) and let us know. You can email your feedback to either Susan Cramer (cramer@uwosh.edu) or Mike Tippins (tippins@uwosh.edu) or attend one of our listening sessions which will be scheduled for November.

When ready, it will be posted on the Reaccreditation web site at http://www.uwosh.edu/nca_accreditation/

Drafts of the chapters on the five criteria will be available for your comment and feedback from November 6 to November 27. The Introduction and Conclusion chapters will be available for your comment from November 15 to November 27.
An in-depth look at Criterion Four:
Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

Providing an environment in which faculty, students, and staff are able to acquire, share, and apply knowledge is a key value of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. We live this value by actively pursuing collaborative research and engaging in the creative development process. The Higher Learning Commission recognizes the importance of acquiring, discovering, and applying knowledge. The articles in this issue on pages 1, 3, and 4 highlight some examples of how UW Oshkosh meets this criterion.

Criterion 4: 
Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

Core Component - 4a
The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.
• The board has approved and disseminated statements supporting freedom of inquiry for the organization’s students, faculty, and staff, and honors those statements in its practices.
• The organization’s planning and pattern of financial allocation demonstrate that it values and promotes a life of learning for its students, faculty, and staff.
• The organization supports professional development opportunities and makes them available to all of its administrators, faculty, and staff.
• The organization publicly acknowledges the achievements of students and faculty in acquiring, discovering, and applying knowledge.
• The faculty and students, in keeping with the organization’s mission, produce scholarship and create knowledge through basic and applied research.
• The organization and its units use scholarship and research to stimulate organizational and educational improvements.

Core Component - 4b
The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.
• The organization integrates general education into all of its undergraduate degree programs through curricular and experiential offerings intentionally created to develop the attitudes and skills requisite for a life of learning in a diverse society.
• The organization regularly reviews the relationship between its mission and values and the effectiveness of its general education.
• The organization assesses how effectively its graduate programs establish a knowledge base on which students develop depth of expertise.

• The organization demonstrates the linkages between curricular and co-curricular activities that support inquiry, practice, creativity, and social responsibility.
• Learning outcomes demonstrate that graduates have achieved breadth of knowledge and skills and the capacity to exercise intellectual inquiry.
• Learning outcomes demonstrate effective preparation for continued learning.

Core Component - 4c
The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.
• Regular academic program reviews include attention to currency and relevance of courses and programs.
• In keeping with its mission, learning goals and outcomes include skills and professional competence essential to a diverse workforce.
• Learning outcomes document that graduates have gained the skills and knowledge they need to function in diverse local, national, and global societies.
• Curricular evaluation involves alumni, employers, and other external constituents who understand the relationships among the courses of study, the currency of the curriculum, and the utility of the knowledge and skills gained.
• The organization supports creation and use of scholarship by students in keeping with its mission.
• Faculty expect students to master the knowledge and skills necessary for independent learning in programs of applied practice.
• The organization provides curricular and co-curricular opportunities that promote social responsibility.

Core Component - 4d
The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.
• The organization’s academic and student support programs contribute to the development of student skills and attitudes fundamental to responsible use of knowledge.
• The organization follows explicit policies and procedures to ensure ethical conduct in its research and instructional activities.
• The organization encourages curricular and co-curricular activities that relate responsible use of knowledge to practicing social responsibility.
• The organization provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and practice conducted by its faculty and students.
• The organization creates, disseminates, and enforces clear policies on practices involving intellectual property rights.

http://www.uwosh.edu/nca_accreditation
The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Initiative of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is a campus-wide program that assists faculty and instructional academic staff in improving undergraduate and graduate education. Originally, the initiative was a two year project (03-05 academic years) funded by a partnership between the UW Oshkosh Faculty Compact and the UW System Office of Professional Instructional Development. A new grant has extended the initiative into its fourth year (06-07). A steering committee comprised of representatives from across the campus oversees the overall operation of the program. The co-coordinators of the initiative, who oversee daily operations, for the '06-'07 year are Marianne Johnson, COBA and Peter Meyerson, COEHS.

Through numerous programs the initiative focuses faculty and staff on engaging in scholarly inquiry into their own teaching and learning practices. Projects are quite varied. For example, a current project involves Marianne Johnson, Denise Robson, and Lee VanScyoc from Economics exploring “Paper or Plastic? Evidence from a Sample of Clicker Versus Paper Quizzes.” In 2004-5 Suzanne Fondrie from Education conducted a project titled “Unlearning the Classroom: Student and Instructor Expectations in a Democratic Approach” while Robert Hinrichs and Jane Wypiszynski from Communication explored “Critical Thinking in the Speech Classroom: Does the Textbook Matter?” In each project participants explored an aspect of their classroom to gain a better understanding of student learning and achievement.

Other programs the initiative organizes include a year-long mentoring program in which tenured faculty with SoTL research experience meet monthly with tenure-track faculty participants for dialogue related to establishing scholarly investigation of teaching and learning. The initiative also organizes the Provost’s yearly Summit at which the entire faculty and staff of the University are invited to come together at a variety of events held over the course of a week to discuss critical issues related to teaching and learning. For the fall 2006 the theme of the summit is issues related to differences in student and faculty perspectives on teaching, learning, and college life. The initiative also runs a small grants program that provides funds for faculty and staff to conduct formal research studies in to their teaching practices. This year, in order to weave the student voice more directly into the research, the initiative requires that all funded projects involve the creation of collaborative faculty and student teams to conduct these research projects.

The initiative is in a period of transition this year. Along with continuing to sponsor our usual array of programs we are currently, with financial support from the Provost, creating a Center for Scholarly Teaching on the UW Oshkosh campus. The overall goal of this center is to create a physical space with the resources (in terms of both teaching tools and personnel) to actively engage all faculty and staff on campus in reflection on their teaching practices through a variety of programs about the scholarship of teaching and learning. Hopefully, the outcome of this center will be a teaching faculty and staff who continue to be known nationally for the excellence and scholarly nature of their teaching even as the nature of instructional delivery at the post-secondary level continues to evolve.

For more information on SoTL, to read calls for participation, and to see other people and their projects, go to the website: http://uwosh.edu/sotl/

Watch for open forums on the Self Study during the month of November!
Conducting research is a big part of what we do at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. Whether collecting data to confirm the existence of a relationship between two latent factors, testing one chemical compound’s effect on another, or using oil paints and canvas to create a work of art, each member of our university community seeks to his or her mark in one way or another. One of the greatest parts of working in academia stems from the freedom each of us has to conduct research or be creative in a varying and diverse manner. In fact, for many of us it was this freedom that attracted us to academia in the first place.

One individual who exemplifies the finer points of conducting research is Dr. Peter Westort. A relatively newcomer to our campus community, Peter’s research tends to focus on issues related to the taxation of individuals. Dr. Westort spends a significant portion of his research efforts in attempting to measure the fairness of the federal income tax system (horizontal equity), while examining the effects of various income tax policies. For example, as part of one current project he is wrestling with the fairness issues related to the alternative minimum tax; a topic that is gaining more and more attention in both the popular business press and Washington, D.C.

To assist Dr. Westort, and others within our campus community, many mechanisms have been developed for the purpose of facilitating high quality research and creative activities. In fact, UWO’s demonstration of a strong commitment to research was an important factor in Peter’s decision to come to our campus. Peter states that he has “found the support for research here excellent” and has “been fortunate enough to be awarded two faculty development grants during my first two years.” He also gives high praise for The Office of Grants and Faculty Development for providing workshops to explain the grant process and a reading service that is available to give feedback on the grant request prior to submission. Peter further states that “the grants are a signal that the institution cares about research enough to provide substantial financial support.”

Just one of many examples on campus, Dr. Peter Westort continues to show how the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is continuing to live its mission by adding new knowledge to our collective understanding of our world and the way things work (or should work). Thus, a central goal we must pursue involves finding new ways in which we can continue to provide support for our scholarly activities. Because, by pursuing such activities, we in turn pursue excellence.

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**What they’re looking for in a self study**

*from the Handbook for Accreditation 3rd. Edition*

**Hallmarks of an Effective Self-Study Report**

Every organization stamps its unique character on its self-study report. While [site visitation] teams appreciate attention to effective presentation, they value substance over graphic design. They need a self-study report that provides:

- A brief evaluative profile of the organization, including special qualities and distinctive programs
- A summary of significant changes that have occurred since the last comprehensive evaluation
- A brief summary of the organization’s accreditation history
- A brief evaluation of the thoroughness of the self-study process
- A summary of the organization’s understanding of and response to the major issues identified by the last team(s)
- An explicit evaluation of how the organization fulfills each of the Criteria for Accreditation through meeting the Core Components

Teams also find the following very helpful:

- A clear explanation of the purposes of and audiences for the report
- A clear explanation of how the report is organized
- Identification early in the report of any requests for change that are included
- A useful table of contents
- Effective cross-referencing within the report
- Indexed citations in the report corresponding to appendices to the report and exhibits in the resource room

Teams expect:

- Use of information and data to create evidence to support the organization’s self-evaluation
- Thoughtful analysis of evidence
- Easily identified and succinctly stated institutional priorities for improvement
- Honest evaluation, not public relations, characterizes the tone and content of the report