EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
DRAFT of UW-Whitewater’s Assurance Arguments to be Submitted to the Higher Learning Commission for Decennial Visit DRAFT

Criterion One. Mission
The institution’s mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution’s operations.

Core Component: 1.A. The institution’s mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.
- The University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents mandates that each campus formulate a Select Mission that defines its operations in broad terms consistent with the UW System’s Mission Statement. UW-W’s Core Values and Select Mission guide the University’s governance, planning, and decision-making processes. UW-W revisits its mission documents as changing circumstances warrant.
- All academic and non-academic programs participate in comprehensive program review processes that require completion of self-studies where the program assesses how its goals and its mission align with the institutional mission.
- The Strategic Planning and Budget Committee (SPBC), with membership from 38 campus constituencies, sets priorities by developing and vetting institutional goals aligning with the Strategic Plan and Select Mission.

Core Component: 1.B. The mission is articulated publicly.
- UW-W has adopted a package of nested mission documents. The Core Values informed the revision of the Select Mission, which shaped the development of the UW-W Strategic Plan, which is used to guide the development of Strategic Planning Goals. The Reports on Strategic Planning Goals, available through the Chancellor’s webpage, provide an ongoing chronicle of institutional efforts to operationalize the mission documents.

Core Component: 1.C. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.
- UW-W addresses the importance of diversity and inclusion in its mission documents. The Select Mission directs the institution: “To create and maintain a positive and inviting environment for multicultural students, students with disabilities, and nontraditional students, and provide support services and programs for them.”
- To ensure that the University achieves its diversity-related goals, the institution devotes human, fiscal and physical resources, and has developed a variety of policies and programs to ensure that diversity issues are fully integrated in academic, co-curricular and personnel matters. These include positions and committees assigned with specific responsibilities as well as programs and services for students.

- For over 100 years, UW-W has joined all UW System institutions in finding guidance in the Wisconsin Idea. The Wisconsin Idea, the belief that the boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state, is consistently evident in UW-Whitewater’s institutional identity and culture—shaping its mission, priorities, and goals.
- There is no more compelling evidence of UW-W’s commitment and capacity to engage with its external constituencies and communities than its recently having earned Carnegie Community Engagement Classification—a designation held by only 361 colleges and universities nationally.

Criterion Two. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct
The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Core Component: 2.A. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.
- The Mission of the University of Wisconsin - Whitewater is guided by fair and ethical policies and processes as established by the State of Wisconsin, the UW System Board of Regents, the University of Wisconsin System Administration and UW-W’s Administration. A commitment to personal and professional integrity is one of five foundational values at UW-W.

Core Component: 2.B. The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.
- UW-W utilizes a wide range of tools to provide students, parents and the public with a clear and complete picture of the university. UW-W participates in the College Portrait program. This voluntary system of accountability provides accessible, transparent and comparable information on public 4-year institutions of higher education. General information is made available to the public on the UW-W homepage in About the University.
Core Component: 2.C. The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

- The deliberations of the Board of Regents of the UW System reflect priorities to preserve and enhance UW-Whitewater.
- The Board of Regents reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution’s internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations. Board meetings are subject to Wisconsin’s open records and open meeting laws. The Board of Regents has eight standing committees which represent major divisions or units at the campus level.
- The Board of Regents preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution. The Board of Regents has primary responsibility for governance of the University of Wisconsin System as provided for in Wisconsin Statutes s.36.09(1).
- The Board of Regents delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters. The Board of Regents empowers the Chancellor with the necessary authority to fulfill the University’s Mission.

Core Component: 2.D. The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

- The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater’s commitment to freedom of expression is guided by the Wisconsin Idea and the history of the UW System, and expressed in the institution’s mission and values, personnel rules, and various practices and policies that guide teaching, research, service, administration, and governance.

Core Component: 2.E. The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

- The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
- The University Library provides guidelines for copyright compliance, public performance and streaming licenses, use and acquisitions of visual works in the public domain, and a variety of resources and tutorials related to proper citation requirements and plagiarism.
- At the campus level, the Dean of Students’ office coordinates and enforces the Academic Code of Conduct, provides training and consultation for faculty and staff, provides education to students regarding academic misconduct through programs and promotional materials throughout the year, and develops materials used in New Student Seminar classes to familiarize students with academic integrity expectations and procedures.

Criterion Three. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support
The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Core Component: 3.A. The institution’s degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

- UW-Whitewater is committed to providing high-quality undergraduate and graduate programs that serve the needs of the region. Currency, relevance, and appropriateness of courses and programs are carefully evaluated when courses and programs are proposed and revised, and they are continuously reevaluated during systematic program reviews.
- Learning goals are clearly articulated from the level of the university to individual programs, and they are differentiated across undergraduate and graduate programs. At the university level, the student, staff, and faculty governance groups voted in 2010 to adopt the Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) from the AACU Liberal Education & America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative as the set of learning outcomes that all of our undergraduate students should achieve before graduation.
- UW-Whitewater has consistent processes for program and course approval, instructor approval and quality review for all modalities (including online education) and locations. All courses, whether intended as long-term offerings or one-time only, must undergo review and approval via the defined curriculum processes.

Core Component: 3.B. The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

- The General Education (GE) program at UW-Whitewater serves as the unifying educational foundation for all baccalaureate degree programs while also reflecting the unique values and mission of the university.
- The nine current learning goals of the GE program derive directly from this philosophical framework and provide specific guidance as to the specific skills, knowledge, and dispositions that UW-W students should acquire by the end of their GE studies.
- UW-Whitewater's baccalaureate ELOs and graduate learning outcomes reflect the institutional commitment to students’ achievement of the key intellectual and practical skills needed for academic and career success in the 21st century. Both the GE learning outcomes and the baccalaureate essential learning outcomes aim to provide students with the transferable skills and dispositions that they will need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.
- The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater works actively to promote human and cultural diversity in curricular requirements and offerings, co-curricular opportunities, and staff and student recruitment efforts. The university offers more than twenty undergraduate majors and minors that focus on multicultural or international topics and at the graduate level offers an MBA in International Business.
- A strong line of evidence regarding research productivity is the annual Recognition of Scholarship and Creative Achievements Ceremony. The Undergraduate Research Program supports a significant portion of the research endeavors undertaken by undergraduate students. Participation has increased dramatically over the last decade.
Core Component: 3.C. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

- Data reported in the Common Data Set show that the total number of instructional faculty is 620, with 465 being full-time and 155 being part-time. The fall 2014 student-to-faculty ratio was 21:1. The university offered a total of 1,673 undergraduate class sections in fall 2014. Student credit hour full time equivalent for faculty is reported in an annual productivity study.
- UW-W Faculty Personnel Rules require that all instructional staff must have a minimum of a master’s degree, and in order to be considered for tenure track positions, faculty must have completed terminal degrees. To teach graduate courses, faculty normally must have terminal degrees and be members of the campus Graduate Faculty (a procedure exists to approve faculty with professional qualifications).
- Instructor evaluation is done through a systematic process of review and feedback from students, peers, and administrators.
- The university supports professional development, including pedagogical development, in several ways. New faculty participate in the First Year Program designed to assist first-year faculty in becoming successful teachers and scholars. The Learning Enhancement, Assessment and Research Network (LEARN) Center provides a range of workshops and programs that totaled 8,750 faculty/staff development hours from 2009-2010 through 2013-2014. Specific programs include workshops on instructional issues, a peer coaching program and book groups where instructors and other staff meet to discuss readings related to teaching.
- Instructors are available for student inquiry in several ways. All instructors hold regular in-person office hours each week. These hours must be posted on syllabi and scheduled at times when students are reasonably expected to be on campus. Most instructors provide additional opportunities for student inquiry through supplemental instruction such as tutorial sessions, help sessions, and online communication.

Core Component: 3.D. The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

- UW-Whitewater approaches students as unique individuals. Thus, we provide numerous programs and services that take into account the distinct experiences, backgrounds, and orientations to learning that students bring to our campus. Many programs and services begin early in students’ tenure on campus.
- Learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of our students begins with appropriate forms of testing. UW-Whitewater’s Testing Office develops and implements various administrative testing procedures and programs.
- Through UW-Whitewater’s Academic Advising and Exploration Center (AAEC), student advising has followed a total intake model. With some exceptions, freshmen and undeclared students are advised at the AAEC, while upper division students are advised by their college.
- UW-Whitewater provides resources to support instruction and student learning, evident in the University Library, computing and technology/infrastructure, performance and learning spaces (including clinical spaces), and scientific laboratories.

Core Component: 3.E. The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

- Consistent with UW-Whitewater’s mission and, indeed, with the notion of a holistic (liberal) education, our campus sponsors a broad array of co-curricular offerings. These experiences are centered on multiple forms of learning: self-discovery, personal and professional development, physical, emotional and spiritual development, community engagement and service, diversity learning, and much more.
- From science exploration and artistic endeavors to entrepreneurship, the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater is committed to community engagement. In schools, parks, offices, nursing homes, and theaters, our students, faculty and staff members are actively reaching out into the community. Similarly, the Undergraduate Research program is an advocate for expanded experiential learning that enhances engagement in undergraduate research, scholarship and creative activity, including faculty-mentored research.

Criterion Four. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Core Component: 4.A. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

- The general education program and all undergraduate and graduate programs are reviewed in five-year cycles through the Audit & Review (A&R) process.
- The institution has policies regarding acceptance of transfer credits and strict evaluation standards.
- The institution has 12 undergraduate and/or graduate programs that currently hold specialized accreditation.
- The institution tracks the success of graduates through a series of university and program-level initiatives.

Core Component: 4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

- UW-W has adopted AAC&U’s Liberal Education in America’s Promise (LEAP) Essential Learning Outcomes and established the Essential Learning and Assessment Review Committee (ELARC) to review campus-wide assessment work relative to LEAP outcomes.
- Assessment of student learning against LEAP outcomes occurs at the departmental, college, divisional, and institutional levels—with the institution funding a number of university-side direct assessment projects related to student writing and critical thinking abilities.
- Assessment has matured in academic departments and in co-curricular programming areas, with results from the colleges and other academic and non-instructional areas reviewed by ELARC, who makes recommendations to improve student learning campus-wide.
- Assessment data/information has been used to: change curricula across campus—including the MBA Program in a number of entry-level courses in a number of departments; develop and launch an Intensive English Language Program for international students; develop a
UW-W Writing Academy; and shape professional and instructional development programming provided by the LEARN Center.

- UW-W's assessment practices closely adhere to the “best practices” of assessment in higher education.

Core Component: 4.C. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

- A University Retention Committee was formed at the start of the 2013-14 academic year, composed of student services directors and co-chaired by the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment and Retention and the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.
- The Retention Committee has adopted UW-W Growth Agenda goals for fall-to-fall retention and graduation rates, and tracks performance in these areas for all students generally, and for underrepresented minority students specifically, evaluating campus progress on reducing the achievement gap. The campus also tracks the efficacy of various programs on improving retention and graduation performance in keeping with the “best practices” of retention work nationwide.
- The university’s office of Institutional Research and Planning employs mechanisms for collecting and analyzing information on retention and graduation and is actively engaged in improvement of data dissemination for timely delivery of actionable data.
- UW-W utilizes UW System definitions for establishing criteria on student retention and graduation rates; the University also uses standard methodologies and data definitions for institutional data reporting on federal compliance surveys, college guidebooks, and peer data sharing surveys.

Criterion Five. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness
The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Core Component: 5.A. The institution’s resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

- All institutions within the UW System are currently engaged in budget planning for the upcoming biennium to accommodate an estimated $300 million reduction in state support and an accompanying freeze on undergraduate tuition. UW-W's portion of that reduction is estimated to be approximately $8 million.
- The campus has been a forerunner in online education. Online courses generate additional revenue for academic operations as well as for the library and technology support. Instructional technology infrastructure is additionally supported through laboratory and classroom modernization funds and tuition revenue funds specifically earmarked as student technology fees.
- UW System guidelines: ensure educational processes are prioritized in elective resource allocation; monitor that institutional planning decisions align and support institutional mission and strategic priorities; and ensure that all institutions have well-developed processes in place for budgeting and monitoring expense.
- The institution employs an extensive search and screen process when hiring employees, and makes ongoing training available.

Core Component: 5.B. The institution’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

- The UW System’s Board of Regents provides oversight over all System schools relative to financial and academic policies, and practices that position the institution to meet its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
- The Board meets eight times annually, and has eight standing committees: Education; Business and Finance; Capital Planning and Budget; Personnel Matters Review; Executive; Faculty and Academic Staff Collective Bargaining; Audit; and Research, Economic Development, and Innovation Committees.
- The Faculty Senate, Academic Staff Assembly, University Staff Council, and Whitewater Student Government engage with the Board of Regents and institutional administration in providing shared governance for the institution.
- Collectively, there are 112 faculty, instructional staff, non-instructional staff, University Staff and students that are elected annually to serve on the various university governance groups.

Core Component: 5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

- UW-Whitewater’s total budget in 2014-15 was just over $219 million dollars. Budget increases over time have been the largest in the instructional and student support areas while administrative services has remained relatively flat—decisions that clearly align with the institution’s mission and strategic priorities.
- Essential Learning and Assessment Review Committee (ELARC) routinely and systematically reviews assessment data/information from across campus relative to the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes, and share recommendations for improving student learning with all campus budget-setting constituencies, including UW-W's Strategic Planning and Budget Committee.
- Although the UW System does not yet have a budget planning tool that allows for predictive planning that includes variables such as tuition increases, pay plans, enrollment changes and shifts, UW-W has developed an Excel tool that allows us to look at a 5-year projection and change certain variables to create different scenarios—helpful when trying to examine different eventualities.

Core Component: 5.D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

- The institution has a number of mechanisms for collecting performance data (ranging from individual contributors to institutional level), and implemented a number of organizational procedures for systematically reviewing and planning for improved performance.