

Higher Learning Commission
Self-Study Questionnaire/Report for Non-Instructional Units

Non-Instructional Unit: **LEARN Center**

Individual(s) Completing the Questionnaire/Report: **John Stone**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Describe in a paragraph or two what your unit does (i.e., the services it provides).
Designed by faculty and academic staff, the LEARN Center provides services, resources, and support necessary to assist faculty and instructional academic teaching staff in their ongoing efforts to develop and refine their skills as teacher/scholars. The faculty advisory boards serve as conduits between the colleges and the LEARN Center--giving direction to short and long-term initiatives designed to help UW-Whitewater faculty and staff develop and grow.

2. Who is/are the constituency/ies you serve, and approximately how many of each constituency do you serve annually? (e.g., students, academic departments, classified staff, etc.)
 - **junior, mid-career, and senior faculty (150)**
 - **instructional academic staff (50)**
 - **department chairs (25)**
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3. Overview and evaluate the adequacy of the human, physical, and fiscal resources your department deploys to serve students and meet other programmatic needs by answering the questions below:

Human Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the human resources (i.e., the # of employees (including student help) and their skills) relative to the unit's ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (**completely inadequate**) to "9" (**completely satisfies needs**).

9 **1-9**

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

The two co-directors of the LEARN Center (Steve Friedman and John Stone) have learned much about faculty development since the program's inception in 1997. Sally Lange, as a designated .25 support staff resources, provides what amounts to a full FTE of support. We're also able to use a portion of a graduate assistantship, when workload permits, to assist with literature reviews, etc.

Physical Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the physical resources (e.g., office and storage space, supporting technology, other equipment) allocated to the unit relative to the unit's ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (**completely inadequate**) to "9" (**completely satisfies needs**).

8 **1-9**

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

The office and library space for the LEARN Center provides, generally, adequate space for materials. Necessary technology is available. Difficulty occasionally arises in scheduling meeting space, in the University Center, for workshops or other sessions.

Fiscal Resources

While recognizing that every unit would benefit from a larger budget, evaluate the general adequacy of fiscal resources allocated to the unit to serve its constituencies and achieve other programmatic goals by assigning a number between "1" (**completely inadequate**) to "9" (**completely satisfies needs**).

8 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

The general purpose revenue budget is adequate for covering fundamental costs (e.g., food for events (approximately 60% of the budget), professional development costs for session facilitators (approximately 15%), books and materials (approximately 20%) associated with basic workshops. Other expenses, affiliated with offering special programs such as the *Teaching Scholars*, the *First Year Program* and the *Scholar/Mentor Program*, have been covered by either grant writing, support from the Provost's Office, or program revenue generously shared by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education.

4. In a paragraph or two, overview significant changes made in your unit since 1996 (i.e., the last North Central Association Accreditation Visit). (e.g., re-organized, key staff changes, change in purposes, etc.) The LEARN Center opened in fall term 1998 and, since then, has evolved a bit from the original conception described in the second part of this question. Since fall term 1998, with guidance provided by a faculty advisory committee, the follow initiatives have been launched:
- Workshops (on topics ranging from improving lecturing and online discussions, to efficient and fair grading and evaluation, to improving academic assessment, etc.)
 - *First Year Program* (a yearlong program to acculturate and introduce newly hired tenure-track faculty)
 - *Peer Coaching Program* (faculty and instructional staff work with a Peer Coach for an academic semester to revise, review, or revisit their instruction)
 - *Teaching Scholars Program* (a group of 10 faculty meet with a facilitator over the course of 12-24 months to review instructional practice, as well as design and conduct a scholarship of teaching and learning project)
 - *Scholar/Mentor Program* (small groups of 3-4 tenure-track faculty work with a research mentor, meeting six times over the course of the summer to demystify the publication process and prepare and submit an article for publication)
 - *Reading/Discussion Club* (groups of (up to 12) faculty or staff convene six (6) times over the course of the semester to discuss a book or packet of readings around a specific topic)
 - *Chair's Council* (meets three times a semester to hold face-to-face meetings with the Provost, and discuss issues important to department chairs—ranging from peer evaluation to supporting new faculty)
 - *Faculty and Departmental Consultation* (the co-directors work with individual faculty in consultations to improve testing, interpret data for research, discuss research projects, and provide support to academic departments relative to academic assessment efforts, improving course evaluation and peer evaluation processes)

In another paragraph or two, describe why these changes occurred.

The LEARN Center was conceptualized and designed by a group of faculty assembled by the Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs (Larry Davis) in 1997, at the request of then Chancellor, Gaylon Greenhill. Their goal was to establish a “one-stop shop” that provided support, resources, and programming to assist faculty in their efforts to “optimize student learning” by putting instructional improvement, academic assessment, and grant writing under one roof.

MISSION & PLANNING

5. In a paragraph or two, describing any significant projects/initiatives that your unit is planning or currently has underway, but has not yet completed.

The LEARN Center is in the preliminary stages of preparing a voluntary program for newly hired instructional academic staff that will, in many respects, parallel the *First Year Program* in scope and intent. The plan is to launch this program on a pilot-based in fall 2005.

6. Below are five “core values” the University identifies as central to its purposes and operation. Please evaluate the importance of each core value in terms of how each aligns with the purposes of your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the five values, with those values that align more closely to the purposes of your unit receiving more points).

| Core Value | Importance (100 points) |
|--|-------------------------|
| Commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding | 35 |
| Development of the individual | 35 |
| Personal and professional integrity | 10 |
| Commitment to serve | 05 |
| Commitment to develop a sense of community, respect for diversity, and global perspectives | 15 |
| Total= | 100 points |

7. Each and every academic and non-academic unit engages in planning for the future. Review the list of variables below and evaluate the extent to which each of the following influences decision-making behind the planning process for your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the planning variables listed below, with those variables playing the larger role in your unit’s planning efforts receiving more points)

| Planning Variables | Importance (100 points) |
|--|-------------------------|
| The mission of the university or the unit | 05 |
| Academic assessment data/information relevant to student performance against learning outcomes | 10 |
| Other data/information gathered relevant to performance (e.g., Audit & Review feedback) | 20 |
| Societal/Cultural trends (e.g., changes in demographics, lifestyles, professions) | 0 |
| Campus trends (e.g., changes in university-initiated needs and demands) | 25 |
| Technology trends (e.g., technology developments that affect delivery of service) | 10 |
| Professional trends (e.g., changes evident at other universities/colleges) | 20 |
| Available human resources (e.g., # of employees, talents, etc.) within the unit | 0 |
| Available financial resources (e.g., budget, available and accessible \$) | 10 |
| Available physical resources (e.g., space, existing technology, etc.) | 0 |
| Other: | 0 |
| Total= | 100 points |

8. Does your unit have a mission statement?

Yes No

If you answered "yes," please list the mission statement here, or, if your mission statement can be accessed on the web, please list the URL here.

The LEARN Center provides high quality programs, services, resources, and support to assist faculty and instructional academic staff in their efforts to develop and refine their skills as teacher/scholars.

If you answered "yes," please describe how, if at all, this mission statement plays a role in your unit's planning and/or decision-making.

It doesn't really play a role. The "teacher/scholar" role has been construed broadly enough such that planning relevant to professional and personal development can safely infiltrate the programming agenda with genuine relevance.

OPERATION AND PERFORMANCE

9. What are the major or measurable objectives of the unit?
- Assist junior faculty in developing a clear understanding of the institution's traditions, expectations, and values, as well as develop skills relevant to developing a sustained record of scholarly/creative activity.
 - Cultivate collegial relationships among faculty and instructional staff from across campus
 - Celebrate effective instruction and make student learning and effective pedagogy a more predominant topic of campus conversation among faculty and instructional academic staff.
 - Encourage faculty and instructional teaching staff to reflect on personal practice in view of "best practices" evident in the literature of post-secondary instruction and/or scholarly and creative activity.
 - Assist individual faculty and instructional academic teaching staff in evaluating strengths and weaknesses, and developing plans for professional improvement relevant to instruction and the production of scholarly and creative activities.
 - Cultivate in faculty and instructional staff a deep understanding of the literature on student learning and effective teaching practice, and equip them with the skills to complete scholarship of teaching and learning projects.
 - Support and consult with individual faculty, as well as academic units (e.g., departments, colleges, graduate programs, general education program) with their implementation of classroom-level and department/program level academic assessment of student learning outcomes.
10. What outcome measures (i.e., data, information) provide evidence that your unit's objectives are being met?
- Program evaluations are conducted for all *workshops, the First Year Program, the Peer Coaching Program, the Teaching Scholars Program, the Scholar/Mentor Program, and the Chair's Council.*
11. Related to question #10, does the unit regularly collect data/information to evaluate how effectively it serves its constituency(ies)? (This might include surveys of constituencies.)
- Yes No

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

- Individual workshop evaluations (and annual summaries) for all years since 1998.
- Pre- and post-program evaluations are conducted annually by the *Teaching Scholars Program* (summary available), and the number of scholarship of teaching and learning projects completed by program participants are chronicled.
- The *Peer Coaching Program* collects program evaluations from each participants—a five year summary of fixed and open responses are available.

- The *First Year Program* collects participant perception data at the end of each of its eight sessions, along with an overall efficacy assessment that happens at the end of the program. Summary data for the three preceding years is available.
- Pre- and post-program evaluations are conducted annually for the *Scholar/Mentor Program* (summary available), and the number of scholarly articles that are submitted as a result of participating in the program are tracked.
- Individual program evaluations from all *Chair's Council* sessions are available.

12. In a paragraph or two, describe specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in the preceding questions. Please be specific.

All of the preceding data is reviewed by the LEARN Center's Faculty Advisory Board, discussed, and recommendations made for programmatic changes. The following represents a chronicle of those changes, to date:

- Feedback from the workshops has led to a general shift in the scheduling of workshops (to lunch hour workshops) and greater responsiveness to issues relevant to the effective use of technology in instruction.
- Pre- and post-program evaluation data for the *Teaching Scholars Program* had led to a small handful of changes, including expanding the length of each program from one year to two, the reduction of faculty expectations for completing the program (no expectations for additional workshop participation, reciprocal coaching, etc.) and increased support in the data collection and interpretation phase in completing the scholarship of teaching and learning project.
- Data from the *Peer Coaching Program* has been reviewed by the Peer Coaches corp, and a recommendation that a confidentiality agreement be developed and signed by both applicants to the program and the Peer Coach.
- Data from the *First Year Program* has led to the program eliminating some sessions (e.g., using technology in teaching) and replacing it with others (e.g., hands-on technology session led by T&IR).
- Pre- and post-program evaluations from the first year of the *Scholar/Mentor Program* indicated that it was difficult for faculty participants to devote full attention to the program when held during a semester. The *Scholar/Mentor Program* is now run entirely during the summer months.

13. Please provide a list of services, if any, that your unit provides for constituencies that are external to the university.

- None
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14. Please list any partnerships your unit has developed with the community (external to the campus, at the local, national, or global-level).

- The LEARN Center is part of the "campus-cluster" program sponsored by the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) promoting and supporting AAHE's nationwide scholarship of teaching learning initiative.
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- Supporting Evidence: The LEARN Center has been recognized by the Professional and Organizational Development Network (POD) as a model program in the Midwest.
- 2. Specific Strength: The LEARN Center has been able to secure additional funds from the program revenue side of its unit (i.e., School of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education), UW-System Grants, UW-Whitewater Faculty Development Grants, and the Provost's Office to launch and offered continued to support to programs such as the *Teaching Scholars Program*, the *First Year Program*, and the *Scholar/Mentor Program*.
- Supporting Evidence: The LEARN Center, over the past five years, has secured approximately \$25K a year, beyond its GPR budget, to support its programming needs.
- 3. Specific Strength: The staff. John Stone is a solid presenter and programmer. Steve Friedman is knowledgeable and provides support campus-wide regarding academic assessment initiatives. Sally Lange, the program assistant who supports the program administratively, is notably efficient and has a remarkable knowledge of the campus and its inner-workings.
- Supporting Evidence: Check out the workshop and program evaluations.

Concerns

19. List and prioritize no more than three primary concerns that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these concerns, you may wish to consider: What could be improved? What is done poorly? What do we, as a unit, avoid doing, even though we know it's important?

After identifying each concern, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

Finally, identify one or more recommended actions to address the area of concern. This may include actions that your unit has already begun, actions being planned, or preliminary thinking about how to address the area of concern.

1. Specific Concern: Much of the Center's programming is funded by outside sources providing soft-money (see Strength #2 above). To that end, some of the Center's most significant programming is relatively tenuous, likely to be at risk of being funded from year to year.
 - Supporting Evidence: The Center has been, ostensibly, able to double its budget, and hence some of its most-developmentally intensive programming efforts through the acquisition of additional fiscal support from sources listed in Strength #2 above.
 - Recommended Actions:
2. Specific Concern:
 - Supporting Evidence:

- Recommended Actions:
- 3. Specific Concern:
- Supporting Evidence:
- Recommended Actions: