

# UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-WHITewater:

## SUMMARY OF OPEN PATHWAY REAFFIRMATION REVIEW (VISIT 10/5/2015)

### 1 – Mission

**The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.**

#### Summary Evidence Statement

UW-Whitewater's mission is to offer high-quality education, contributing to the local community, and enhancing the cultural and diversity awareness and engagement within its service area. These values are evident in the goals and planning aligned with its mission statement. UW-Whitewater's academic programs, co-curricular activities, enrollment and recruitment initiatives are consistent with its mission and goals. Enhancing the diversity of the campus is clearly a top priority for the UW-Whitewater campus. They have launched several programs designed to recruit and retain talented faculty and students in underrepresented groups. The Chancellor's Committee on Inclusive Excellence focuses on the promotion of campus programming in this area. (p.12)

### 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

**The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.**

#### Summary Evidence Statements

UW-Whitewater has clearly woven into the cultural fabric of the institution a commitment to ethical and responsible behavior. This commitment is demonstrated in a number of ways through shared governance, the inclusive nature of the Strategic Planning and Budget Committee and Board of Regent policies. At the institutional level, policies outlining conflict of interest and codes of student conduct serve to strengthen UW-Whitewater's expectations of behavioral standards.

It is important to note that there is concern regarding the limitations of autonomy and the impact this has on the faculty and administration at UW-Whitewater. The limitations on autonomy are seen by some as an obstacle to innovation and to meeting the educational mission of the university. This concern ranges from differing perspectives on transparency of budget reduction process to the potential loss or change of the traditional role of the faculty in the curricular process. While there is currently sufficient autonomy to act in the best interest of UW-Whitewater, this could change depending on potential changes to the role of faculty. (p. 20)

### 3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

**The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.**

#### Summary Evidence Statement

UW-Whitewater provides a range of undergraduate and graduate programs aligned with the university's mission. There is a clear and systematic curriculum review process lead by the faculty to ensure that all programs offered are current and relevant. Faculty and administration are strongly committed to the assessment of student learning outcomes. Students are provided with a multitude of curricular and co-curricular activities to enhance the learning experience, such as undergraduate research, study abroad, service learning, civic engagement, and student organizations and clubs. Co-curricular activities are available for students through the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Student Success (MASS) and the Career and Leadership Development Office (CLD). Professional advisors work with freshmen and undeclared students and faculty advisors advise the students when they transition into their respective majors. Issues have been raised about the quality of the advising process, which are currently being addressed. Declining state support and uncertainty at the state and system levels have resulted in faculty perceptions of potential loss of oversight of the tenure and curriculum processes. Community engagement is a signature area for UW-Whitewater as evidenced by the 2015 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. It is apparent that UW-Whitewater has strong community ties and is an asset to the region. (p. 30)

#### **4 - 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.**

##### Summary Evidence Statement

UW-Whitewater maintains an ongoing and well-established practice of program review. As a requirement by the state system, UW-Whitewater is conducting its own program review following a five-year cycle with a comprehensive and highly detailed approach. UW-Whitewater provides clearly-described guidance on assessing other types of credits. Policies, practices, and review processes for course prerequisites, dual credit and evaluating instructors teaching dual credit courses are well documented. The University holds and maintains specialized accreditation among respective programs.

UW-Whitewater has established a system to articulate learning goals at different academic levels, including a recently adopted set of eight overarching learning outcomes for master's level programs. Under the university-level learning outcomes, each program has the flexibility of identifying program-specific learning outcomes. The general education program has implemented an array of assessment activities and will continue to assess more learning outcomes based on the findings from its recent General Education Self Study. The Assessment Strategic Plan is succinct and will guide the assessment of student learning into the future. The University's assessment practice addresses learning both inside and outside the classrooms, curricular and co-curricular areas, multiple levels, and direct and indirect measures. Assessment data emerges from embedded assignments within classrooms and from applied experiences such as learning communities, capstone courses, and internship, and from co- and extra-curricular settings such as work settings and residence halls. Overall, UW-Whitewater has established a well-orchestrated system and culture of assessment of student learning, and using assessment results to make improvements. (p. 37)

#### **5 - 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.**

##### Summary Evidence Statement

UW-Whitewater has weathered recent budgetary rescissions by focusing on increasing enrollment and being entrepreneurial regarding how they allocate resources. This effort was undertaken with a clear focus on preserving the quality of instructional programs utilizing a transparent and collaborative budgeting process. A key element of maintaining a focus on instruction was through a strategic planning process that was begun over a decade ago. As UW-Whitewater completes the final two-year planning cycle, it is already focused on the creation of a new strategic planning process that will include a longer planning horizon yet continue to engage on-campus and off-campus stakeholders in creating a vision for the future of the university. Strategic planning is enhanced by a robust set of curricular and co-curricular assessments that allow the institution to learn about the effectiveness of its programs and apply that knowledge as it seeks to maintain its relevance to the people of Southeast Wisconsin. (p. 45)

#### **Review Summary**

##### Final Comprehensive Evidence Statement for Report

UW-Whitewater's current situation reflects the challenges present in American higher education, but the situation in the State of Wisconsin seems especially difficult. The stressors placed upon higher education by rapid political change and decreasing fiscal stability have presented this campus with significant challenges over the last 10 years. In the face of these challenges the UW-Whitewater community has implemented responsible stewardship. As a result, the campus is forging ahead with changes needed to not only survive but to strengthen operations. With new leadership and the start of a new strategic planning initiative, UW-Whitewater is prepared to meet any future challenges. (p. 47)

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**Special strengths (as noted in the various evidentiary statements under core components):**

- UW-Whitewater provides a variety of programs and services for a diverse student population including students of color, students with disabilities, veterans, first-generation students, at-risk students, first-year students, and adult learners... These support programs are offered through academic affairs, student affairs and career services on campus. Students who may experience a crisis on campus receive assistance through the Dean of Students Office. University Housing is also actively involved in referring and assisting students in accessing appropriate services. Interviews with faculty, staff, and students verified the broad scope of services and institutional commitment to providing support services to ensure student success. (p. 27)
- UW-Whitewater offers co-curricular activities that are aligned with the institution's mission and support the students' educational experience. Students are provided with a multitude of curricular and co-curricular activities to enhance the learning experience, such as undergraduate research, study abroad, service learning, civic engagement, and student organizations and clubs... Review of supporting evidence and interviews with support services faculty, staff and students confirmed the high quality of programming and strong student participation. (p. 29)
- In 2015, UW-Whitewater received the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification, which recognizes the high level of community outreach across the university. UW-Whitewater partners with regional schools and community agencies for field placements, service learning, and summer activities. Summer programming on campus typically serves 8,000 school-aged children coming from an 80 mile radius. It is apparent that UW-Whitewater has strong community ties and is an asset to the region. (p. 29)
- UW-Whitewater has applied comprehensive and sound methodologies to assess student learning. There is evidence that UW-Whitewater's practice of assessment of student learning is both inside and outside the classroom, within curricular and co-curricular areas, at multiple levels (i.e., university-college-department-program), and uses of direct and indirect measures. There is a broad buy-in and understanding of using Essential Learning Outcomes (ELO) in connection with work and assessment among student support service areas. Assessment data emerges from embedded assignments within classrooms and from applied experiences such as learning communities, capstone courses, and internships; and from co- and extra-curricular settings such as work settings and residence halls. Overall, UW-Whitewater has established a well-orchestrated system and culture of assessment of student learning. Evidence supports implementation and use of assessment results to make institutional improvements. (p. 34)
- The university has a robust system of shared governance that engages internal constituents in the governance of UW-Whitewater. This is evident through the curriculum development and budget processes. Changes in courses begins in the department curriculum committee and proceeds to the college and finally the institution's curriculum committee. Proposals to create new academic programs follows a similar path after notifying the UW System of an "Intent to Plan." In addition, departmental and college advisory boards comprised of employers and alumni provide feedback on curriculum and new programs. The budget process includes numerous opportunities for all employees to participate in open budget forums as well as send representatives from their department, college, and division to participate in the Strategic Planning and Budget Committee as well as campus governance groups. (p. 41)

**Additional work/challenges for the campus (as recommended in the various evidentiary statements under core components):**

- ... The role of the Graduate Council in reviewing programs and ensuring that learning outcomes are assessed needs to be more clearly defined. (p. 22)
- ... Through interviews with faculty governance leaders, it was evident that there is a perception that due to the cuts in state support it will be difficult to continue to recruit and retain high quality faculty. (p. 25)

- ... Faculty currently have ownership of the curriculum and assessment processes; however, declining state support and uncertainty at the state and system levels have resulted in faculty perceptions of the potential loss of oversight of the curriculum process. (p. 25)
- ... The HLC Student Survey indicated that several student respondents were not satisfied with their advising experiences. The review of supporting documents and interviews with directors, faculty and advisors provided information on how the institution is working to strengthen this area. (p. 28)
- ... Technology support services will need to expand as more online and hybrid courses are developed. (p. 28)
- ... As the institution begins the process of launching a new strategic planning process, the visiting team encourages UW-Whitewater to more clearly link curricular development, assessment of student learning, co-curricular assessment of operations, indirect measures such as NSSE, strategic planning, and budgeting together to give a clearer picture of the institution's current state and how it plans to arrive at its desired future. (p. 42)
- During the site visit, the chancellor, senior leadership, and members of the Strategic Planning and Budget Committee all mentioned the university's plan to launch a new strategic planning process... This new planning cycle will come to UW-Whitewater at a critical time as it grapples with state budget cuts, tuition freezes, a growing enrollment, aging physical plant, emerging technology, and changing needs of students and employers, all of which the new plan will need to address. (p. 43)
- While UW-Whitewater collects a substantial amount of data on curricular, co-curricular, and administrative operations, the HLC team did not find comprehensive evidence that demonstrates a systemic and systematic university-wide approach to continuous improvement. To improve performance and outcomes in teaching, learning, services, facilities, technology, staffing and compensation, UW-Whitewater will need ongoing investment to build a culture of continuous improvement. The university and state's ongoing challenges will require a synthesis of data to improve institutional effectiveness and create a culture of data-driven decision making. (p. 44)

## UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-WHITewater: FEDERAL COMPLIANCE REVIEW

### Assignment of Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

*Are the institution's degree program requirements within the range of good practice in higher education and contribute to an academic environment in which students receive a rigorous and thorough education?*

Comments:

UW-W requires 120 units for a Bachelor's degree, with a minimum GPA of 2.0. Degree requirements for Master's degrees vary with the program and are consistent with good practice in higher education.

UW-W tuition costs are within the range of good practice and are clearly stated.

*Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution?*

Comments:

The general language of the policy provided in the Curriculum Handbook link makes it clear the policy applies to all formats – online, compressed, and standard.

The policy states clearly the expectation that each credit hour equates to 48 hours of coursework, including 16 50 minute periods in class and 32 hours of outside work. UW- W provides examples of how the coursework might be broken down into various components such as lectures, reading, and so forth.

The syllabi reviewed showed that UW-W follows its policy for assigning credit to academic courses. UW-W publishes a list of required syllabi elements; these elements are included on the syllabi reviewed.

The syllabi reviewed provided clear evidence that UW-W states learning outcomes for each course, regardless of delivery format. Syllabi reviewed included summer term courses which are offered in a compressed format.

### **Institutional Records of Student Complaints**

Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

**X** *The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.*

Comments:

UW-W has a process for review of complaints in a timely manner and provided evidence that it follows these processes. UW-W also reviews the complaints for trends and improvement needs. UW-W might benefit from clearly distinguishing "complaints" from "suggestions for improvement/general comments" particularly in the library complaint system. Additionally, UW-W might consider establishing a consistent reporting system shared by all University divisions, and consider categorizing complaints for cross-divisional analysis.

UW-W provided evidence that each department analyzes complaints for patterns, and plans to improve its process for complaint handling and tracking in fall 2015 by adding a trend analysis for complaints.

### **Publication of Transfer Policies**

Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

**X** *The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.*

Comments:

UW-W clearly states its transfer policy. They have guaranteed transfers within the Wisconsin System; other transfers are limited to regionally accredited institutions. The program by program transfer may need to be formalized. However, the process already exists for the Dean to review course equivalencies. Articulation agreements that are in place are stated and available to students through the University website. UW-W has formal articulation agreements in place with UW-Stout, Madison Area Technical College, Palmer College of Chiropractic, UW-Madison, and UW-Milwaukee.

### **Practices for Verification of Student Identity**

Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

**X** *The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.*

Comments:

UW-W utilizes login and password primarily for student identity verification. Although not required, in many courses, Respondus Lockdown Browser Software is used for quizzes/exams. This will not allow students to use communication tools such as Chat or Email while taking an exam. UW-W is encouraged to continue exploring updates to its student identity processes.

### **Title IV Program Responsibilities**

Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

**X** *The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.*

Comments:

UW-W reports that DOE had some concerns related to return of student financial assistance funds. LAB findings WI-13-22 identified a need to strengthen procedures for identifying when a student unofficially withdraws from the University. The University agreed with the recommendation and reports and is working closely with DOE to satisfy audit recommendations. Return of funds was reported as being required on January 5, 2015. There were no findings on audit year ending June 30, 2014.

UW-W has met the HLC criteria for the CFI score for each of the past three years. However, the net operating ratio was negative in 2014, and the CFI included UW-W foundation funds for the first time in 2014. UW-W indicates it plans to increase tuition to offset an operating deficit and to account for an anticipated \$5.8M annual reduction in state support during the next two fiscal years.

The University has disclosed the appropriate information. Information is readily available on the website in regards to campus crime, athletic participation, financial aid related disclosures. As is the trend nationwide, there appears to be a concern about the number of unwanted sexual advances.

The University provides data related to athletic participation by gender and teams for both teams and the UW-W athletic staff.

UW-W's Financial Aid Office provides a calculator to assist potential students, tools provided by FASFA and a website to walk them through the process is available. The University provided the composite ratios and financial audits.

The University clearly lays out the policies and procedures for academic programs and satisfactory academic progress.

UW-W states it has no contractual or consortia relationships.

#### **Required Information for Students and the Public**

Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

**X** *The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.*

Comments:

UW-W has provided clear evidence that it publishes required information for its students and the public. Information regarding the University Calendar, grading policies, admission requirements, academic program requirements, tuition and fees, and refund policies are easily accessed through the UW-W website.

#### **Advertising and Recruitment Materials and Other Public Information**

Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

**X** *The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.*

Comments:

UW-W's website includes the most recent HLC accreditation mark and link to the HLC web site. UW-W discloses other relationships with its accrediting agencies, and provides appropriate information about its program requirements.

### **Review of Student Outcome Data**

Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

**X** *The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.*

Comments:

It appears the College is focusing on the baccalaureate outcomes identified by AACU Essential Learning Outcomes (LEAP Campaign) across all programs. The processes are in place and they are using data to continuously improve in the general education area. UW-W uses self- studies and academic program review (audit and review) as part of an ongoing assessment and improvement.

### **Standing with State and Other Accrediting Agencies**

Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

**X** *The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.*

Comments:

UW-W clearly demonstrates it is in compliance in this area.

### **Public Notification of Opportunity to Comment**

Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

**X** *The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.*

Comments:

UW-W provided adequate opportunities for third party comment.