



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION REACCREDITATION VISIT

[SEPTEMBER 14-16, 2009]

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Higher Learning Commission (HLC)?

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools — one of six regional associations that accredit degree-granting institutions of higher learning. The HLC accredits more than 1,000 institutions in 19 states.

What is accreditation and why is it important?

Accreditation is the primary means of assuring and advancing the quality of institutions of higher education. **Accreditation is required in order for UW-Eau Claire to be eligible for federal and state government funding (including student financial aid), and is also the primary reliable authority for support from the private sector.** UW-Eau Claire has been continuously accredited since 1950. Every 10 years the HLC comes to campus for a “comprehensive visit” to determine whether we meet the criteria for continued accreditation. This is the September 14-16 visit we are gearing up for.

Where can I find our Self-Study?

Central to the reaccreditation process is an institutional Self-Study. You can download the full report at www.uwec.edu/hlc. Or, look for “Higher Learning Commission” in the A-Z index on the UW-Eau Claire homepage.

When is UW-Eau Claire’s comprehensive visit, and who will the visitors be?

A team of eight Peer Reviewers (administrators, faculty members, and staff members from peer institutions) is reviewing our Self-Study right now. The team of Peer Reviewers will visit our campus Monday, September 14 through Wednesday, September 16, 2009.

What will happen during the site visit?

During the visit, the team of Peer Reviewers will meet with administrators, students, staff members, and faculty members from across the entire University, both in formal meetings and open forums, and informally as they walk the campus. The team of Peer Reviewers will seek to verify the information we have provided in our Self-Study — the strengths and challenges we’ve cited and the data we’ve provided.

In our Self-Study, we have addressed the HLC’s five Criteria for Accreditation (see the next page for more details). We have also responded to eight challenges that were identified by our 1999 review team, and we have submitted two Change Requests for new programs — our online MBA program and our new Doctorate of Nursing Practice program.

The HLC Peer Reviewers will have read carefully through our report in advance, and will use their time on campus to seek clarification of what we’ve written; review our policies, procedures, and other documents; and determine whether we meet the standards for reaccreditation.

What kinds of recommendations might the HLC Peer Reviewers make?

On Wednesday morning, September 16, the HLC Peer Reviewers will make an exit report to the campus (in Schofield Auditorium) to share their preliminary findings. In October or November, we will receive the Peer Reviewers’ written report, which will provide us with evaluative feedback about how effectively we are meeting the Criteria for Accreditation and whether we have adequately addressed the concerns noted in our 1999 review. The HLC Peer Reviewers may simply identify our current strengths and challenges and recommend continued accreditation with no

follow-up visit needed before our next visit in 2019. Or, they could require a focused follow-up visit sooner if significant concerns are identified. The Peer Review Team could also recommend other kinds of progress reports or monitoring reports. The feedback we receive from our Peer Reviewers will be shared with the Board of Regents.

How have we prepared for the HLC visit?

We have been preparing for our HLC comprehensive visit for more than three years, since the spring of 2006. A Self-Study Steering Team recruited help from people across the entire UW-Eau Claire community. Study Groups were formed to address each of the five Criteria for Accreditation. Another Study Group evaluated our progress toward correcting the 1999 challenges. Additional groups worked to assemble evidentiary data, engage the entire campus community in the self-study process, and create both an electronic and a physical “Resource Room” containing our self-study evidence.

Many of you participated in our HLC Self-Study Survey (or the pilot survey) and/or the follow up Focus Groups that were held to gain a clearer understanding of how we measure up against the HLC Criteria for Accreditation.

Our HLC Study Groups used information from the survey, the focus groups, and a careful review of hundreds of documents as the bases for draft chapters responding to each of the Criteria. Dr. Mickey Crothers, our Lead Writer, worked with the Steering Team to verify all information and refine the drafts prepared by the Study Groups. The campus had an opportunity to provide feedback on each chapter of the Self-Study as it was finalized during this past year.

University of Wisconsin
Eau Claire