

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF OUR HLC SELF-STUDY

Following is a highly condensed summary of our self-study findings regarding how UW-Eau Claire meets the HLC's five Criteria for Accreditation:

Criterion 1: Mission and Integrity

- Our mission documents clearly articulate our commitment to serve the public good.
- Understanding of and support for our lived mission are alive and thriving at UW-Eau Claire. Our strong commitment to student learning is the unifying force behind everything we do.
- We need to bring our UW-Eau Claire Select Mission Statement into clearer alignment with our lived mission. This effort is already under way.
- We are implementing, and will continue to implement initiatives to increase diversity among our students, faculty, and staff, and to promote equity and inclusivity. These efforts will require continued effort and resources.
- Most students, faculty members, instructional academic staff members, and administrative and professional academic staff members indicate that they have opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making via shared governance. However, just less than half of our Classified Staff members indicate that they have adequate opportunities to influence decisions. We must address this problem by assuring genuine valuing of the input and contributions of all members of our work force.
- The strengths of our shared governance process are its thoroughness and stability. However, these benefits sometimes come at the cost of efficiency and imagination. We can improve our decision-making processes by prioritizing issues and increasing our efficiency.
- Our policies are fair, and we act with integrity to uphold them. An important exception is that our students want us to increase the consistency with which we enforce policies related to academic integrity and misconduct. This can be accomplished by instructors consistently following the available guidelines.

Criterion 2: Preparing for the Future

- We have maintained our excellent standard of education despite significant decreases in State support.
- We have responded to fiscal challenges through a comprehensive, transparent strategic planning process resulting in our Centennial Plan, which serves to guide and unify all efforts across the institution. We continue to employ sound data collection methods; solid fiscal management; intentional, mission-based administration; and constant awareness of our environmental context.
- We are moving forward with our new model of integrated strategic planning, priority-setting, and budgeting. Consistent with a cross-cutting theme of our Self-Study, it will be important to evaluate the effectiveness of these new processes, and to use those assessment findings to inform continuous improvement.
- We continue to explore new funding resources to attain greater stability and flexibility in the face of significant decreases in State support.
- We continually seek and respond to regional needs by developing new degree programs, and by providing specialized services and facilities that serve our community.
- Our facilities are aging rapidly in a time of unprecedented financial pressure. A new facilities master plan will help us prioritize maintenance projects.
- Most academic departments and programs have basic mechanisms in place to assess student learning, and all are working to refine their assessment strategies. In parallel, we need to strengthen our strategy for assessing student learning in our General Education program.
- Most instructors express the opinion that our current approach to General Education is too rigid and complex. We are, therefore, in the process of redesigning our GE program.
- We need to develop and implement an improved system for providing feedback

from the periodic review process to both academic and non-academic departments and units, and for ensuring that such feedback is actively used to guide continuous improvement.

Criterion 3: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

- Our deep commitment to excellent teaching is inseparable from our parallel commitment to student learning, and pervades all aspects of our academic programming.
- On most nationally-normed exams and other assessment measures, we are competitive with the outcomes of our UW System and Carnegie peers.
- We have adopted a new set of Liberal Education Learning Goals and Outcomes, and most departments and many units have articulated specific student learning outcomes. The effective assessment of student learning is a high priority. Several departments and programs, especially those accredited by professional organizations, have mature and effective assessment systems. We need to strengthen our assessment of student learning more broadly, however. To this end, in consultation with HLC's Assessment Academy, we are developing and implementing new plans and procedures for assessing student learning in the majors, in general education, and in co-curricular programs.
- We are building on our existing assessment system and have made specific plans for forward movement, striving to build a campus-wide culture of assessment. Specifically, we are moving toward classroom-embedded assessment strategies (in addition to institution-level measures already in place), and working to ensure that assessment findings are actively and continuously used to strengthen effective teaching and student learning.
- As we redesign our General Education program, we will build in systematic processes for assessing student learning in GE courses.

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- Building upon the solid foundations established by our former Network for Excellence in Teaching, our new Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, provides a rich array of professional development offerings to help faculty and instructional academic staff members excel in the classroom.
- Consistent with a cross-cutting theme of our Self-Study, many faculty and instructional academic staff members cite heavy workloads as preventing them from participating in professional development programs and activities.
- In line with our institutional mission, we need to clarify relative expectations for teaching effectiveness, scholarly productivity, service, and academic advising, by making explicit the clear and consistent message that effective teaching is the highest priority for faculty members.
- Library services, computing services, learning spaces, learning skills remediation, and many other supportive resources focus on facilitating student learning. UW-Eau Claire has an extensive array of programs and services for special populations and a broad range of student development programs.
- The Advising Task Force proposed a system to evaluate and reward effective advising, increase training for advisers, and use available technology to shift toward a more forward-focused emphasis in advising. We need to follow through on those recommendations.
- Our Office of Student Affairs and Dean of Students, and our Office of Research and Sponsored Programs organize, lead, and oversee many of our programs and policies that support the responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge.
- Preparing our students to live and work in a society that is global and technological is one of our greatest strengths. Building on this strength, we seek to facilitate even broader student participation in Study Abroad opportunities.
- We are working energetically to welcome and nurture diversity — in all its many facets — and consider this an imperative. Toward this end, we need to:
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of our Cultural Diversity requirement.
 - Support faculty members in their efforts to infuse diversity issues into their courses.
 - Gather data to learn how UW-Eau Claire is perceived by potential students and the general public in terms of its climate for diverse learners.
 - Develop a vigorous plan for attracting and retaining students, staff members, and faculty members representing the full spectrum of diverse backgrounds, and for ensuring that once they arrive, we actively welcome them and devote sustained effort to supporting their success and quality of life as members of our community. We need to set forth the clear expectation that all members of the University community share responsibility in this regard.

Criterion 4: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

- UW-Eau Claire is an institution with a deep commitment to a life of learning. In general, there is good support for professional development for many members of the faculty and staff, but we challenge ourselves to provide access to professional development opportunities for members of our Administrative and Professional Academic Staff and members of our Classified Staff that are commensurate with those afforded to students, faculty members, and instructional academic staff members.

Criterion 5: Engagement and Service

- We provide a vast array of services to our community and region, both through our Service-Learning requirement for students, and through the service activities of our faculty and staff. Our responsiveness to community needs is a decided strength.
- UW- Eau Claire devotes considerable effort to learning what our

constituencies want and need from the University. We respond by developing educational offerings, attending to regional workforce needs, providing valuable services, and through numerous other avenues.

- Our Continuing Education unit collects a wealth of information about the educational needs and interests of professionals and community members, and designs its offerings in express accord with those findings.
- Our CALL program actively solicits community and regional requests for volunteer assistance, publishes a directory of all such requests, and works actively to facilitate the matching of willing volunteers with agencies that need their help.
- Our Career Services unit actively seeks information from regional business and organizations about their needs for interns and prospective employees and matches students with prospective employers that need their skills.
- Our alumni and members of college, department, and unit advisory boards help us keep our finger on the pulse of the needs and expectations of the community and the broader region we serve. Individual faculty and staff members notice and respond to community needs in a wide variety of less formalized ways.
- Our Continuing Education unit and our Service-Learning program systematically evaluate the extent to which services and educational offerings provided by UW-Eau Claire are effective and valued by our constituencies. We can improve further by systematically evaluating the effectiveness of our other services, where feasible.
- We need to develop a system for reporting our extensive service activities to internal and external constituencies — perhaps via a published annual report of community engagement projects and services.