Accreditation Matters: A guide to UW-Platteville’s Reaffirmation of Accreditation

About this newsletter

Assessment Matters is a new monthly newsletter published by the University of Wisconsin-Platteville’s Higher Learning Commission Steering Committee. Our purpose is to promote and maintain an open dialogue about the reaffirmation of accreditation process that UW-Platteville is currently undergoing with the HLC. With this newsletter, we’d like to:

1. Open and sustain channels of communication between the HLC Steering Committee and all members of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville community.
2. Provide a forum for academic programs and co-curricular groups to share stories about their ongoing reflective and self-evaluative quality-assurance processes.
3. Inform campus communities of important changes to the accreditation process by clearly communicating the Higher Learning Commission’s expectations, including important deadlines and reporting procedures.

In each issue, we will highlight essential information that is directly related to our accreditation status. Above, you will see the assessment feedback loop and our institutional mission—two items that we should be able to demonstrate are highly interrelated in all of our programs.

UW-Platteville’s Mission Statement

The University of Wisconsin-Platteville provides associate, baccalaureate, and master’s degree programs in a broad spectrum of disciplines including: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; criminal justice; education; business; agriculture; and the liberal arts.

We promote excellence by using a personal, hands-on approach to empower each student to become broader in perspective, intellectually more astute, ethically more responsible, and to contribute wisely as an accomplished professional and knowledgeable citizen in a diverse global community.

Important dates and deadlines

Communities of Practice and Discourse:

Each month, this column will profile a particular academic unit/discipline or co-curricular area, examining the ways members of that community are currently involved in any stage of a self-reflective review process, such as: 1) discussing and agreeing upon established goals and practices, 2) analyzing how well the group’s practices are meeting those goals, and 3) applying the lessons you learned in this process so you can improve your practices.

Call it “closing the loop,” or “continuous improvement,” or even just “learning,” the concept is familiar to all of us, because, as professional members of the university community, we are all already reflective practitioners. And while individual disciplines and fields have their unique ways of looking into the results of whatever it is they set out to do, it’s challenging for us to articulate those efforts to administrators, accreditors, and even colleagues in other disciplines, whose roles take them outside of our own specific fields, outside of the workaday cultures that we truly “live in.”

So, one of the goals of the HLC Steering Committee is to help you draw parallels between your own existing practices and the expectations and language of accreditation as understood by the Higher Learning Commission. HLC uses some very specific (though not really complex) terminology. Here are a few basics:

Accreditation is the process of self-regulation and peer review ensuring that higher education institutions provide high-quality education and continuously seek to improve. This process:

- Assures the public that UW-Platteville meets clearly communicated criteria and regulations
- Ensures that faculty and students are eligible for federal funding

The Open Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation is a status UW-Platteville has earned with the HLC through our successful accreditation history. This established trust with the agency gives us the authority to make our case for quality assurance using the best evidence we can muster, meaning we get to frame our own argument and provide the evidence from practices we are already doing.

Here are the two principle components of our upcoming review:

1. Our Quality Assurance Argument articulates the case for how UW-Platteville meets expectations in the five criteria HLC uses to evaluate us.
2. Our Evidence Files are documents specifically referenced in the quality assurance argument that must be made available to reviewers upon request as support for our argument. Many of these materials are generated by reviews we already do on a regular basis (e.g. the Academic Planning Council’s Program Review Forms, NSSE data, committee reports, etc.).

Four goals of the Core Curriculum Education
(formerly known as General Education)

A rigorous University of Wisconsin-Platteville education in the arts and sciences enables students to:

1. Apply their knowledge to recognize and solve a wide variety of problems
2. Appreciate and create works of excellence
3. Develop an informed perspective on national and international issues
4. Participate ethically and wisely in a diverse society

National Survey of Student Engagement Snapshots

Did you know?

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<th>Engage in high impact practices</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Percent</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>First-year</td>
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<tr>
<td>46%</td>
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<td>58%</td>
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<table>
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<th>Average time spent per week preparing for class</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hours</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>First-year</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.4</td>
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Please direct your inquiries about this newsletter to Dr. James Romesburg, Assistant Professor of English, at romesburgj@uwplatt.edu.

www.uwplatt.edu/hlc