May, 2014

Wright State University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. As part of maintaining accreditation, Wright State programs and processes are periodically reviewed to ensure institutional quality and integrity. Wright State will be undergoing the 10 year Reaffirmation of Accreditation in the 2015-2016 academic year. These monthly newsletters are part of our campus preparation for the upcoming re-accreditation visit by informing the campus community of the goals and process of accreditation.

The April newsletter shared the first five of The Higher Learning Commission’s ten guiding values for the accreditation process. These values focused on the primacy of education in the role the university and a commitment to the continual improvement of the education programs. The remaining guiding values focus on ethics, sustainability, and the peer review process itself. These guiding principles are incorporated into the Criteria for Accreditation, which will be presented in future newsletters.

From The Criteria for Accreditation: Guiding Values

The Commission expects that institutions have the standards, the processes, and the will for quality assurance in depth and throughout its educational offerings.

6. Integrity, transparency, and ethical behavior or practice

The Commission understands integrity broadly, including wholeness and coherence at one end of the spectrum and ethical behavior at the other. Integrity means doing what the mission calls for and not doing what it does not call for; governance systems that are freely, independently, and rigorously focused on the welfare of the institution and its students; scrupulous avoidance of misleading statements or practices; full disclosure of information to students before students make any commitment to the institution, even a commitment to receive more information; clear, explicit requirements for ethical practice by all members of the institutional community in all its activities.

7. Governance for the well-being of the institution

The well-being of an institution requires that its governing board place that well-being above the interests of its own members and the interests of any other entity. Because the Commission accredits the educational institution itself, and not the state system, religious organization, corporation, medical center, or other entity that may own it, it holds the governing board of an institution accountable for the key aspects of the institution’s operations. The governing board must have the independent authority for such accountability and must also hold itself independent of undue influence from individuals, be they donors, elected officials, supporters of athletics, shareholders, or others with personal or political interests.

Governance of a quality institution of higher education will include a significant role for faculty, in particular with regard to currency and sufficiency of the curriculum, expectations for student performance, qualifications of the instructional staff, and adequacy of resources for instructional support.

8. Planning and management of resources to ensure institutional sustainability

The Commission does not privilege wealth. Students do expect, however, that an institution will be in operation for the duration of their degree programs. Therefore, the Commission is obliged to seek information regarding an institution’s sustainability and, to that end, wise management of its resources. The Commission also watches for signs that an institution’s financial challenges are eroding the quality of its programs to the point of endangering the institution’s ability to meet the Criteria for Accreditation. Careful mid- and long-range planning must
undergird an institution’s budgetary and financial decisions.

9. Mission-centered evaluation

The Commission understands and values deeply the diversity of its institutions, which begins from the diversity of their missions. Accordingly, mission in some degree governs each of the Criteria. The Commission holds many expectations for all institutions regardless of mission, but it expects that differences in mission will shape wide differences in how the expectations are addressed and met.

10. Accreditation through peer review

Peer review is the defining characteristic of accreditation and essential for a judgment-based process in a highly complex field. But self-regulation can be met with public skepticism. Therefore, peer review for accreditation must: (1) be collegial, in the sense of absolute openness in the relationship between an institution and the peer reviewers assigned to it as well as between the institution and the Commission; (2) be firm in maintaining high standards, not mistaking leniency for kindness or inclusiveness; and (3) be cognizant of the dual role of peer reviewers in both assuring and advancing institutional quality.

From: The Criteria for Accreditation: Guiding Values

Higher Learning Commission