

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481

March 31-April 2, 2008

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

A six member review team conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) for continued institutional accreditation.

B. Organizational Context

UWSP was first accredited by the North Central Association in 1916 and maintained this status until 1922. Reaccredited in 1951, the last comprehensive visit was in 1998. UWSP has undergone several name and mission changes: The institution was founded in 1894 as Stevens Point Normal School; in 1927 it became Central State Teachers College; In 1951 the name was changed to Wisconsin State College; In 1964 it became Wisconsin State University; and finally in 1972 it obtained its current name, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

UWSP is one of the eleven comprehensive universities (collectively known as the University Cluster) in the University of Wisconsin System, along with two doctoral institutions and thirteen two-year colleges. All of these institutions are governed by an eighteen member Board of Regents. Each of the institutions does not have its own separate governing board.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

None.

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited

Wausau

E. Distance Education Reviewed

None.

F. Interactions with Constituencies

Academic Affairs Committee (13)
 Accreditation Steering Committee (10)
 Assessment subcommittee (5)
 Assistant Director for Residential Living, Building Services
 Assistant Director for Residential Living, Community Development and Education
 Assistant Director for Residential Living, Student Rights and Responsibilities
 Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic Program
 Associate Vice Chancellor, Personnel and Budget
 Associate Vice President, University of Wisconsin System
 Chair, Faculty Senate and past chair
 Community members (3)
 Curriculum Committee
 Dean, College of Letters and Science
 Dean, College of Natural Resources
 Dean, College of Fine Arts and Communication
 Dean, College of Professional Studies
 Director, Admissions
 Director, Athletics
 Director, Career Services/Academic Advising
 Director, Center for the Small City
 Director, Economic Research Bureau

Director, Equity and Affirmative Action
 Director, Facilities
 Director, Grant Support Services
 Director, Information Technology
 Director, Multicultural Affairs
 Director, Personnel
 Director, Teaching-Learning Resources and University Library
 Executive Committee, Faculty Senate (9)
 Executive Director, UWSP Foundation
 Faculty Affairs Committee - Salary and Budget (6)
 General Education Review Committee
 Graduate Council (7)
 Institutional Research/planning
 Interim Coordinator, Continuing Education
 Open Faculty meeting (21)
 Open Staff meeting (30)
 Open Student meeting (19)
 Program Review subcommittee
 Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
 Regent, University of Wisconsin System
 Student government president and vice president
 Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs
 Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

Resource Room

Annual Report, Albertson University Library 2006-2007
 Annual Report, Center for Academic Excellence and Student Engagement 2006-2007
 Annual Report, College of Natural Resources 2006-2007
 Annual Report, College of Professional Studies 2006-2007
 Annual Report, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Foundation 2005-2006
 Factbook, University of Wisconsin System 2007-2008
 Handbook on Academic Misconduct
 Magazine, College of Professional Studies Spring 2007
 Program Review Self-Study Reports
 The Pointer, student paper, March 27, 2008
 University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Annual Reports 2006, 2007
 University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Catalog 2007-2009
 University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Personnel Rules
 Vision 2015 PowerPoint presentation

Virtual Resource Room Documents (as cataloged)

AA AI 110: Institutional Level Evaluation and Assessment
 AA AP 115: Program Level Evaluation and Assessment
 AA AP 135: Associated Programs (located on the UWSP website)
 AA CI 125: Curriculum and Instruction (faculty roster, syllabi)
 AA FD 140: Faculty, Staff, and Student Development
 AA GD 145: Governance Documents
 AA PL 150: Plans
 AA PO 155: Policies
 AA RF 167: Federal Reporting
 AA AI 110.01: Minority Studies outcomes in the Assessment
 Subcommittee's Eighth Annual Assessment Report 2001-2002, pp. 2-4. (1b,
 2c, 3a, 4b, 4c)
 AA AI 110.02.1: Assessment Subcommittee Fourth Annual Assessment
 Report (2c, 3a, 4a, 4b)
 AA AI 110.02.2: Assessment Subcommittee Fifth Annual Assessment

Report (2c, 3a, 4a, 4b)
 AA AI 110.02.3: Assessment Subcommittee Sixth Annual Assessment Report (2c, 3a, 4a, 4b)
 AA AI 110.02.4: Assessment Subcommittee Seventh Annual Assessment Report (2c, 3a, 4a, 4b)
 AA AI 110.02.5: Assessment Subcommittee Eighth Annual Assessment Report (2c, 3a, 4a, 4b)
 AA AI 110.02.6: Assessment Subcommittee Ninth Annual Assessment Report (2c, 3a, 4a, 4b)
 AA AI 110.02.7: Assessment Subcommittee Tenth Annual Assessment Report (2c, 3a, 4a, 4b)
 AA AI 110.02.8: Assessment Subcommittee Eleventh and Twelfth Annual Assessment Report
 AA AI 110.03.1: AASCU GDR Overview for External Review Team (Draft)
 AA AI 110.03.2: AASCU GDR Team Schedule: 11/02/06
 AA AI 110.03.3: AASCU GDR Team Schedule: 11/03/06
 AA AI 110.03.4: AASCU GDR Review Team Pre-Visit Protocol
 AA AI 110.03.5: AASCU GDR Graduation Rate Study Protocol
 AA AI 110.03.6: AASCU GDR Review Team Pre-Visit Queries and Responses
 AA AI 110.03.8: AASCU GDR Review Team Final Report
 AA AI 110.04: National accreditation by departments and Schools at UWSP (2c, 3a, 4b, 4c)
 AA AI 110.05.1: Results of the National Survey of Student Engagement, 2001 (2c, 3a, 4b, 4c)
 AA AI 110.05.2: Results of the National Survey of Student Engagement, 2004 (2c, 3a, 4b, 4c)
 AA AI 110.05.31: Results of the National Survey of Student Engagement, 2006
 AA AI 110.06: First Year Seminar Evaluations (co-coordinators of First Year Seminar): end of 2006-2007 academic year (2c, 3a, 4b, 4c)
 AA AI 110.07: Evaluation of academic advising (2c, 3a, 4b, 4c)
 AA AI 110.08.2: Alumni Surveys in Assessment Subcommittee's Ninth Annual Assessment Report, 2002-2003, pp 5-6. (2c, 3a, 4b, 5c, 5d)
 AA AI 110.10: Senior Survey of Undergraduate Experiences in Assessment Subcommittee's Eighth Annual Assessment Report, 2001-2002, pp. 4-6. (2c, 3a, 4b, 4c)
 AA AI 110.18: Gen Ed-Verbal and Quantitative Skills (Writing Emphasis): CAAP Writing Skills Test (sophomore/junior and senior) in the Assessment Subcommittee's UWSP Ninth Annual Assessment Report, 2002-2003, pp. 2-3. (2c, 3a, 4b, 4c)
 AA AI 110.25: Gen Ed (Mathematics): CAAP Mathematics Test (sophomore/junior and senior) in the Assessment Subcommittee's UWSP Ninth Annual Assessment Report, 2002-2003, p. 3. (2c, 3a, 4b, 4c)
 AA AI 110.28.2: Gen Ed (Critical Thinking): CAPP Critical Thinking Test in the Assessment Subcommittee's UWSP Seventh Annual Assessment Report, 2003-2004, pp. 3. (2c, 3a, 4b, 4c)
 AA AI 110.58.1: Assessment of General Degree Programs
 AA AI 110.58.2: GDR Assessment Methods and Timeline
 AA AI 110.58.3: Assessment and Program Review Reporting Cycle 2007
 AA AI 110.59: Assessment Plan, Including Mission, Goals, and Objectives
 AA AI 110.60: University of Wisconsin System Accountability Reports pp. 37-40
 AA AP 135.02: Schmeckle Reserve
 AA AP 135.04: Treehaven
 AA AP 135.05: Upward Bound
 AA AP 135.16: Center for the Small City
 AA BU 120.02: Descriptions of administrative structures and faculty/staff

responsibilities (pp. 13-78) (2b)
 AA BU 120.04: Links to Departmental Personnel Policies
 AA BU 120.05: UW System Red Book, 2005-2006 (hard copy found in the library resource room) (1c, 2b, 2d, 3d, 4d)
 AA BU 120.07: Chart of Budget Allocations by Sources of Funds (1c, 2a, 2b, 2d, 3d, 4d)
 AA BU 120.08: Chart of Current Expenditure by UWSP Categories (1c, 2a, 2b, 2d, 3d, 4d)
 AA BU 120.09: Chart of Current Revenues-All Funds by UWSP Categories (1c, 2a, 2b, 2d, 3d, 4d)
 AA BU 120.12: Library Budget Proposal 2007-08
 AA BU 120.13: Instructional Improvement Funding 2007-08
 AA BU 120.13.1: Library Budget FY7
 AA CI 125.06: General Degree Requirements
 AA CI 125.07: BA Degree
 AA CI 125.08: BS Degree
 AA CI 125.09: BM/BFA Degree
 AA CI 125.21: Various Syllabi for GDR Courses
 AA FD 140.05.2: Faculty/Staff Development (University Personnel Development Committee)
 AA FD 140.05.3: Faculty/Staff Development (UW System)
 AA FD 140.05.4: Faculty/Staff Development (Academic Affairs)
 AA FD 140.05.5: Faculty/Staff Research (University Personnel Development Committee)
 AA FD 140.06: Center for Academic Excellence and Student Engagement
 AA FD 140.08: Building Diversity into Courses: summer stipend program
 AA FD 140.10.1: Listing of Past Conferences Sponsored by Academic Affairs
 AA FD 140.12: Grant Support Services Office activities
 AA FD 140.12.1: Extramural Grant Data
 AA PO 155.01: Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects research protocols (pp. 22-25)
 AA PO 155.19: UW System Disability Accommodation Policy
 AA RE 165.05.1: College of Letters and Science Annual Report 2002-2003
 AA RE 165.05.2: College of Letters and Science Annual Report 2003-2004
 AA RE 165.06.014: 2005-2006 College of Professional Studies Annual Report
 AA RE 165.06.07: Department of Clinical Laboratory Science Annual Report 2005-06
 AA RE 165.07.1: College of Natural Resources Annual Report 2002-2003
 AA RE 165.07.3: College of Natural Resources Annual Report 2005-06
 AA RE 165.07.4: CNR Questionnaire
 AA RE 165.08.3: College of Fine Arts and Communications Annual Report 2005-06
 AA RE 165.18: Academic Affairs Assessment and Budget Decisions Report
 AA RE 165.60: Multicultural Affairs Data
 SA AP 215.11.2: New Student Programs-Orientation Annual Assessment Report 2006-2007
 SA EC 220.03: Upward Bound (1b,2a, 2b, 3a, 3c, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a-5d)
 SA GD 225.01: University Handbook (1d, 2b)
 SA PO 245.07: Sexual Harassment Policy (p. 22)
 SA PO 245.08: Discrimination-Free Environment (pp. 23-24)
 SA PO 245.09: UWSP Institutional Review Board (pp. 22-25)
 SA RE 255.06.3: Disability Services Statistics 2005-06
 BA BU 320.06: Technology improvements to classrooms and campus (2a, 2b, 2d)
 BA PL 335.01: The Campus Master Plan : May, 2006 (1c, 2a, 2b, 2d, 3c, 3d, 4d, 5a)
 BA PL 335.02: 2003-2005 Campus Development Plan

BA PL 335.02: Departmental mission, vision, values, and priorities statements (1a, 2c, 2d, 3a, 4d)
 BA PL 335.03: UWSP Emergency Management Plan (2d, 5a)
 CO BU 415.05: Budget Letter from Chancellor-2005
 CO MN 425.01: Minutes of Cabinet meetings (1d)
 CO PL 430.01: Chancellor's Vision 2015 (1a, 1b, 1c)
 CO PL 430.02: UWSP Core Mission Statement: University Catalogue (1a, 1b, 1c)
 CO PL 430.03: UWSP Select Goals and Responsibilities: University Catalogue: (1a, 1b, 1c)
 CO PL 430.04: The University Campus Master Plan (1a, 2a, 2b, 2d, 3c, 3d, 4d, 5a)
 CO PL 430.05: Diversity Plan 2008 (1b, 1e, 2a, 2c, 2d, 3a, 5a)
 CO PL 430.06: Diversity Plan 2008- Phase II (1b, 1e, 2a, 2c, 2d, 3a, 5a)
 CO PO 435.01: UWSP Equal Employment Opportunity/ Affirmative Action Policy (pp. 17-20)
 CO PO 435.02: UWSP Consensual Relationships Policy (pp. 20-21)
 CO PO 435.03: UWSP Sexual Harassment Policy (p. 22)
 CO PO 435.03.1: Sexual Assault Report Form
 CO PO 435.04: Discrimination-Free Environment Policy (pp. 23-24)
 CO PU 440.01: UWSP Home Page (1a)
 CO PU 440.02: University Catalog (1a, 1c, 1e, 2d, 4b, 4d)
 CO PU 440.03: Campus Directory (1d)
 CO PU 440.07.1: Equity and Affirmative Action Publication (Diversity demographics) (1e)
 CO PU 440.07.2: Equity and Affirmative Action Publication (GLBT information) (1e)
 CO PU 440.07.3: Equity and Affirmative Action Publication (Sexual Harassment Training) (1e)
 CO PU 440.07.4: Equity and Affirmative Action Publication (EAA Office FAQs) (1e)
 CO RE 445.09: Progress Report to the HLC, 2/21/01
 FG AS 511.04 Assessment Subcommittee (2c, 3a, 4a, 4b)
 UW PO 725.03: Administrative Code of the Board of Regents
 UW PU 730.01: UW-System Factbook
 UW RE 735.01: University of Wisconsin System Accountability Reports (1d, 1e, 2b, 3d, 4d)
 UW RE 735.02: University of Wisconsin System Plan 2008 Update and Report
 OS PU 830.08: "Economic Opportunity Study for Central Wisconsin", Centergy North Star Economics Inc. 10/17/06
 OS ZZ 840.01: International Student's e-mail AUG2007

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point initiated the preparations for the self-study upon the appointment of a new Chancellor, Linda Bunnell. Co-coordinators Associate Vice Chancellor Steve Bondeson (Academic Affairs) and Assistant to Vice Chancellor Bob Mosier (Student Affairs) were charged with the initiating the self-study process in September 2004. In winter 2006 an Accreditation Steering Committee was formed and they approved a timeline by April 2006. This was subsequently presented to the Cabinet and the Faculty Senate. By summer 2006 the Virtual Resource Room was in development and the first accreditation newsletter was published that fall. In fall 2006 accreditation websites were in development and a team from AASCU was engaged to review the General Degree Requirements of the institution. The Criterion Task Forces also started to meet by September 2006. The Accreditation Committee attended the HLC meeting in 2006 and 2007. Over the past three

years, UWSP self-evaluation and analysis involved various constituency groups. Data available to the team via the Virtual Resource Room included various types and sources of data. The self-study process was well-documented including the use of newsletters and the website. There were numerous opportunities for various constituencies to provide feedback.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

The self study provided the team is detailed, descriptive, and comprehensive. The supplementary material, in particular the resources available online and ahead of time via the Virtual Resource Room, contributed to the teams' initial assessment that the self study was inclusive and the self study process open. This was confirmed in team member meetings with internal and external constituency groups. In addition, the conclusions and self-evaluations in the self study report as well as discussions with different campus groups revealed a campus candor in the process and subsequent report.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The team considers the response of the organization to previously identified challenges to be adequate.

D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment

Notices appeared in different formats including an e-mail sent out to the community soliciting third party comments.

Requirement fulfilled. Three comments received.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information and found the institution to be in compliance with those requirements.

IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY. The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point operates under three mission statements: the University of Wisconsin System Mission Statement, University Cluster Core Mission Statement, and the select UWSP Mission Statement. The mission statements are readily available on the university's web site and catalog.
- UWSP staff affirmed at an open meeting and in informal conversations that the mission is a pervasive idea. Statements such as: "it is a shared value of students first" and: the view here is "everyone is an educator" from the custodian to top management were typical. This widely held view contributes to students' feeling of being valued and supported.
- The UWSP admissions process and standards, including consideration of ACT scores, class rank, applicant statement and recent academic performance, admit a student body that is academically qualified. This contributes to retention and graduation rates.
- There appears to be a general institutional commitment to serve a diverse student population as evident in the university's programs and initiatives including the Multicultural Leadership Development Series and the Native American Center.

- Faculty governance is strong and faculty participation is evident on campus committees, task forces, and in institutional decision making.
- UWSP demonstrates a commitment to integrity and ethical practices through a number of policies, procedures and codes of conduct. As an example, the university has an Institutional Review Board to guide research on and with human subjects. UWSP has adapted training modules for human subjects research developed by the National Institute of Health. The modules cover the legal, ethical, and procedural issues relevant to human subjects research. The contacts for human subjects research are a faculty member and a second faculty member who is on administrative assignment (as the Associate Vice Chancellor).
- Student government is an active participant in the governance process as demonstrated in membership on committees including the Academic Affairs Committee and the Accreditation Steering Committee.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- Although there has been a significant commitment and measurable results in recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, partly due to the transition in the Office of Equity and Affirmative Action, similar results in the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff have not been achieved.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None noted.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up is recommended

CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- University of Wisconsin Stevens Point is in sound financial condition as evidenced by review of budget documents, the System Wide Financial Statement, UWSP component financial data and reported financial ratios, The University maintained this status in an environment of scarce/declining state resources. This may be compounded in the near future by the current slow economy's impact on state revenues.
- Financial reports evidence very strong growth in the UWSP Foundation's assets through successful fund raising. This provides needed funding for scholarships and other activities and will prove critical to future development of the University.
- The University's budget processes are increasingly outcome and future directed and less based on incremental change. Decisions are driven by academic considerations of demand for programs, enrollment and necessary resources. The result is more effective allocation and reallocation.
- Planning processes are starting to become more institutionalized as evidenced by

documents that demonstrate awareness of mission, vision and values. A broad range of stake holders, both from within the University and external constituencies, are involved in strategy development and planning.

- The campus has committed itself to sustainability. This is evidenced by the Chancellor's support of the AASCU initiative, the HLC self study, the campus master plan and conversations with campus constituents. All indicate a campus cognizant of the environmental and financial implications of sustainability. Energy conservation and environmental sensitivity are pervasive guides to decisions. This will result in lower long term costs and a more limited adverse environmental impact.
- University of Wisconsin Stevens Point has active and forward thinking facilities planning efforts and documents including a Campus Master Plan, Residential Life Facilities Plan, a Capital Investment Plan, Accessibility Improvement Plan and a Building Maintenance Plan.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point has made commendable progress towards institutionalizing planning. However, there have been significant changes in the competitive environment including the lifting of enrollment caps at select campuses of the University of Wisconsin including UWSP. Based on interviews with constituency groups, there appears to be uncertainty as to whether the changes will have a significant impact on UWSP. UWSP would be well advised to engage in more comprehensive planning activities including an enrollment management plan and an academic plan that includes an examination of faculty resources as well as support services (e.g.. library).
- UWSP has begun to examine general education requirements. The university is encouraged to continue to examine its General Degree Requirements (GDRs) as the large credit number appears to have a negative impact on course availability for students and the diminishes the ability of the institution to develop undergraduate programs particularly in professional and accredited areas. Students reported some degree of dissatisfaction with the GDRs and they note that they do not recognize the value or intent of the GDRs. As the university evaluates the GDRs it is encouraged to connect these requirements to university learning outcomes and to articulate its curricular commitment to liberal education to students.
- UWSP has yet to develop an intentional approach to the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff. The university and its leadership is public in its support of increasing diversity but has not developed specific strategies. The hiring of a permanent director of affirmative action and equity should help but the institution is advised to develop comprehensive strategies that involve a range of campus constituencies as well as the external community.
- The self study, and discussions with several faculty and administrators from across campus, indicated that faculty salary levels are not competitive; the long term practice of holding to a campus generated hiring salary schedule that incrementally increases has over time created some inconsistencies with market. This process has apparently been constrained by system allocations for salary increases, although it appears some schools within the system have avoided some of the variance from the market noted at UWSP. A comprehensive review of faculty salaries by discipline, experience and rank that is then compared with regional bench mark institutions is recommended. With this data in hand current practice can be assessed and strategies developed for optimal faculty compensation.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None noted.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met: No Commission follow-up is recommended

CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- Review of documents including the Virtual Resource Room and interviews confirm that faculty and academic leaders share responsibility for the curriculum. The sense of ownership and responsibility that faculty feel for the curriculum is one of the institution's strengths. Yet the university community needs to recognize the importance to keep abreast of changing state needs.
- University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point recognizes the centrality of teaching through its mission statement and promotion and tenure policies. This was reconfirmed in interviews with faculty. UWSP recognizes faculty who have excelled in teaching through the Chancellor's University Excellence in Teaching award. In addition, UWSP provides continuing professional development opportunities for its faculty as well as constantly improving classrooms and laboratories.
- UWSP proactively maintains and improves its learning environments. There is a well funded laboratory improvement project, 90% of classrooms are "smart", and there is an innovative "virtual computer lab" available.
- UWSP maintains a relatively low student to faculty ratio, an achievement given the relative scarcity of resources and a high percentage of courses taught by tenure track faculty. This commitment to undergraduate education is recognized and appreciated by students. Several student government and activities leaders commented on how faculty engagement was material to their satisfaction with the institution.
- University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point has committed to effectiveness in teaching and learning by developing internal grant programs and the recent creation of the Center for Academic Excellence and Student Engagement and earlier, the creation of the Tutoring Learning Center.
- UWSP is committed to providing a global learning experience for its students with approximately 20% participating in one or more study abroad opportunities. There are multiple international academic offerings and a growing number of international students.
- UWSP consistently ranks in the higher end of the system's evaluation of student advising. The campus appears to have committed general academic and faculty advisors.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- UWSP has identified thirteen learning outcomes linked to the General Degree Requirements. However, as identified in the AASCU review of the General Degree Requirements and confirmed in subsequent interviews, there was little communication between the General Degree Requirement subcommittee and the Assessment subcommittee. UWSP would be well advised to examine and put in place a process that ensures appropriate assessments and reviews for all academic program and curricula.

- General Degree Requirements compare unfavorably to other UW schools from the point of view of transfer students; this may limit the recruitment of otherwise qualified transfer students.
- 3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**
- While University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point has made progress in assessment of student learning, assessment is inconsistent across campus including assessment of the general education core and graduate education. Programs with discipline specific accreditation are more likely to have more developed assessment and feedback mechanisms to continually improve performance. This includes the collection of data required by accrediting bodies and the use of such information to make curricular changes. This is also true in some non-academic units notably Student Affairs that tries to improve services through analysis of survey results. However, in a review of the supporting documentation and interviews with the assessment committee, it became apparent that the current campus culture does not appear to fully embrace assessment as an important ongoing and open campus-wide initiative. Benchmarked assessment programs typically focus on the impact of the entire institutional experience including the general education program and specific program of study in the discipline on student learning outcomes
 - As part of its assessment activities, UWSP conducts regular academic program reviews. However, based on material reviewed and subsequent interviews, there is perceived inconsistency among academic programs in terms of format, data collected, and content in program reviews. Until recently, such activities and results of the review were considered confidential and not shared except in summary format with university leadership. The usefulness of such summary information without the appropriate context is questionable. In addition, the confidential nature of the previous process would make it difficult to develop and sustain a consistent and open campus wide assessment program.
 - UWSP has taken important steps toward the goal of a philosophically consistent General Education program. As a result of the AASCU review, a General Education Review Committee was formed to develop a comprehensive assessment program. UWSP would be well advised to continue the development of such a program, and of the implementation of direct and indirect, cognitive, and affective assessment measures of the outcomes of General Education at UWSP.
- 4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met: Commission follow-up is recommended.

Focused visit on assessment with a particular emphasis on the assessment and subsequent revision of the General Education program and General Degree Requirements by 01/30/12.

CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE.

The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- UWSP provides an environment that is supportive of the value of learning and celebrates academic achievement. This includes financial support of students through undergraduate research grants and support to present research through venues such as the College of Natural Resources Student Research Symposium as well as faculty recognition through University Excellence in Teaching, University Scholar, and University Service Awards.
- UWSP allocates funds that reflect the priorities of the institution. The Annual Financial Reports indicates increasing investments in Instruction, Academic Support, and Student Services. As examples, there is support at the departmental, collegiate, and university level for faculty presenting at academic conferences. In addition there is institutional support for developing curricular (Diversity Project; Curricular Redesign Project for Online Courses) and pedagogical innovation (Podcast Project; access to The National Teaching and Learning Forum). At the college level, the College of Letters and Science faculty are supported by offering four separate grants programs, including an Enhancement Grant program that allows faculty to create academic opportunities to “enhance students’ educational experience.”
- Students report satisfaction with learning environment and commented on the quality of teaching and faculty engagement with students across a number of majors. There appears to be a conscious investment in student development, both in curricular and co-curricular terms. Students appear to be strongly engaged in a range of recognized social, academic and affinity groups.
- The University self-study describes a program for staff development through internal grants to enhance skills and professionalism. This is in addition to tuition and fee remission for course work at the University. The effectiveness and importance of the program was affirmed in the open session with staff, individual casual conversations, and by the Director of Grants.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point provides undergraduate students with a strong liberal arts and science foundation through the General Degree Requirements. However, as pointed out in the AASCU report and confirmed in subsequent interviews, there is concern on the potentially negative impact of the 55 credit requirement on the development of new professional programs and the transfer of students to UWSP. The limitations of the above-referenced curricular requirements are related to a large credit burden and somewhat unexamined purpose of general education at UW-Stevens Point. Clearly there is a commitment to liberal learning. However, the university needs to define, structure, and assess general education in a more purposeful way in order to communicate relevance and interconnectedness of these requirements to students.
- UWSP has experienced a significant drop in graduate education. This has been attributed to a number of reasons including the decentralization of graduate education. In addition, a significant number of courses are being co-listed as junior/senior level and graduate courses. With the projected decline in incoming freshmen in this region, UWSP would be well-advised to take steps to strengthen graduate education and link it more closely to the ongoing planning initiatives.
- The current approach to graduate faculty status needs to be thoroughly evaluated. At present, best practices as articulated by the Council of Graduate Schools, have not been met. While the minimum requirements of an earned terminal degree and full time faculty appointment are present, the institution would be well-advised to further distinguish graduate faculty status from regular faculty status based on teaching and advising of graduate students as well as a documented, ongoing engagement with scholarship and creative activity appropriate to the discipline/program. In addition, at most institutions, graduate faculty status is typically reviewed on a regular basis at both the program and institutional levels.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission

follow-up.

None noted.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met: No Commission follow-up is recommended

CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, under the leadership of Chancellor Bunnell has actively engaged and responded to the needs of the community. Through the Chancellor's Advisory Board, community and business leaders are actively engaged and provide input into proposed institutional initiatives such as the Wausau initiative.
- UWSP serves as an important cultural center and provides an array of lectures, concerts, art shows, and theater productions from both the campus community and the local community. This commitment is further underscored by the prominent role of the arts in Vision 2015 and the renovated Noel Fine Arts Center.
- UWSP has created numerous opportunities to serve the community through student participation in service learning and various volunteer efforts. This enables the students to sharpen their professional skills while providing assistance to the community.
- UWSP provides numerous opportunities for students and faculty to become engaged global citizens through its study abroad programs. UWSP is second among University of Wisconsin campuses with 18% of the students participating in study abroad.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- UWSP maintains a campus climate that is generally receptive to diversity. However, the absence of an orientation program for both faculty and staff inhibits the campus' ability to be truly welcoming. In addition, the absence of a critical mass of faculty and staff of color may inhibit the ability to recruit and retain students. The relative lack of such employees may also create an additional service burden on faculty of color as well as senses of isolation. UWSP is encouraged to develop broader mentoring and support connections to address lingering issues that were reported, including the communication of stereotypes and inconsiderate/ unconscious messages directed from majority to minority colleagues.
- UWSP faculty members do not appear to have been trained in effective faculty recruitment and search strategies to build diverse applicant pools. Training as well as specific recruitment programs (cluster hiring, developing "home grown" faculty and staff) could support the university's goals with respect to building a more diverse faculty and staff.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None noted

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up is recommended

V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Affiliation Status

No change

Rationale for recommendation: The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point continues to meet all criteria and conditions for accreditation

B. Nature of Organization

1. Legal status

No change

2. Degrees awarded

No change

C. Conditions of Affiliation

1. Stipulation on affiliation status

No change

2. Approval of degree sites

No change

3. Approval of distance education degree

No change

4. Reports required

Progress Report: None required

Monitoring Report: None required

Contingency Report: None required

5. Other visits scheduled

Type of Visit: Focused visit

Topic(s) and Timing: Assessment with a particular emphasis on the assessment and subsequent revision of the General Education program and General Degree Requirements (January 2012)

Rationale and Expectations:

The team recommends a focused visit because assessment has been a continuing concern dating to the 1989 visit. While progress has been made, it has been driven by discipline-specific accreditation not by an ongoing and sustained campus-wide effort. Data collection efforts and subsequent analysis and use of such information needs to be institutionalized. UWSP should be much further along in implementing a campus wide assessment effort.

The team also recommends that particular focus be put on the assessment and revision of the General Education program and General Degree Requirements (GDRs). As a result of a recent AASCU review, a General Education Review Committee was established to develop an assessment program. Due to the inconsistency in sustaining past assessment efforts, the team recommends that the revisions to the General Education program and the GDRs and the assessment program developed resulting from the AASCU review be evaluated.

6. Organization change request

None

D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

None

E. Summary of Commission Review

Timing for next comprehensive visit (academic year – 2017-2018)

Rationale for recommendation: The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point continues to meet all criteria and conditions for accreditation. There are no conditions that warrant an earlier visit for a comprehensive visit.

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Stevens Point, Wisconsin

March 31-April 2, 2008

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Over the past few years, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point has seen the percentage of its budget funded by the state decrease as state revenues in general face continued pressures. Despite this nationwide trend, UWSP has managed to develop and implement an impressive plan to maintain and improve campus facilities as well as renew technology on campus.

However, it was evident to the team that while there have been strides made in developing other sources of revenue including fundraising, some basic operational funding issues remain. In particular, faculty compensation as it relates to competitiveness will continue to be a concern as UWSP continues to try and be the leader in providing a quality education experience for students in Central Wisconsin. Thus it becomes more important for UWSP to continue to find ways to improve revenue sources while providing a consistent and quality educational experience.

Recent changes in the competitive environment in Wisconsin public higher education can provide an avenue for more forward-looking state institutions the ability to strategically grow enrollments. This has to be balanced with the goal of maintaining quality academic programs through a well-crafted enrollment management plan and a comprehensive assessment program. UWSP can benefit from such a strategy at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.

UWSP benefits from experienced, energetic, and forward-thinking institutional leadership as well as the willingness to explore ways to continually improve the overall student learning experience. This is expected to help buffer some of the external pressures that are expected to increase with expected changes in funding and demographics in the region.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

A. Assessment

University of Wisconsin Stevens Point had responded to concerns regarding assessment that had been raised by the team conducting the comprehensive review in 1998. With commendable candor, both in the self-study report and in campus visits during this team's visit to the campus, UWSP personnel have acknowledged that the institution has found it difficult to sustain and build on the progress noted by the team conducting the focused review.

This visiting team notes that the HLC assessment mandate was first issued in 1989 and is almost two decades old. After on campus interviews and document reviews, the team has concluded that the institution needs to give more attention to assessment in order to make it campus wide, effective, and embedded.

Identifying and seeking collaboration with benchmark institutions that are actively engaged in making improvements in their assessment strategies and activities may help sustain and expand the institution's perspectives on assessment. Commission staff that manage the HLC Assessment Academy (OASIS) may be helpful in offering suggestions in this regard. Further, the team recommends that the campus consider establishing or strengthening a central director or coordinator of assessment processes and feedback so that the students of UWSP will have the benefit of programs of study that have been continuously improved through assessment feedback.

B. General Degree Requirements (GDR's)

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point has General Degree Requirements that significantly exceed those of any other college or university known by members of this team. Whatever the nature of the institution or the good rationale there was at the time the GDR's were first put in place, those requirements put UWSP outside the mainstream of American higher education to an extent that is not advantageous to either the institution or its students. During the visit no one

affirmed nor attempted to offer evidence that the institution has a distinct and positive reputation because of the GDR's. No one affirmed that students come to UWSP because of the high number of GDR's; to the contrary, the team was told the GDR's make UWSP unattractive to transfer students because two-year college counselors tell their students "you will lose hours" if you transfer to UWSP.

The institution is now classified as a comprehensive university with numerous baccalaureate degree programs outside the arts, humanities, and social sciences which do not comfortably fit into campus wide baccalaureate requirements that include such a high number of GDR's. One would expect that UWSP would always have a strong general education component as do most accredited four-year institutions across the country—and, indeed, the Higher Learning Commission requires a general education core. However, as a comprehensive university in a changing economic and demographic environment, UWSP will become a more complex institution, with expanded graduate and professionally-oriented programs which respond to 21st century societal needs. The existing GDR's are unnecessarily constraining the ambitions of UWSP and its response to the changing needs of the central Wisconsin region and the state.

Most campuses find overhauling general education requirements a challenging undertaking. Nonetheless, this campus has made a good start in addressing GDR's through inviting, receiving, and responding to the AASCU report. The AASCU report illustrates the advantages of including persons or organizations outside the university when evaluating a major curricular issue.

In addition to seeing a good start, the team also found on the campus a cordial and positive relationship among faculty and between faculty and the administration which exceeds that found on many other campuses. This backdrop of community also bodes well for the effort to address GDR's. At the same time, the campus is encouraged to involve outside experts extensively as doing so tends to reduce emotion, interpersonal conflict, and increase objectivity. Moreover, evaluation of general education should involve more than the campus community. It should involve external stakeholders. The institution exists to serve them, not those who have the good fortune to work at UWSP.

C. Advancement

At the time of the team's visit, the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point was in the quiet phase of a comprehensive fundraising campaign. UWSP and the Chancellor are to be commended for this initiative. With state revenue declining as a percentage of the budget, with tuition rising and therefore becoming a higher barrier to student access, it is forward-looking for UWSP to seek significant financial support from other sources, including private donations from alumni, friends, foundations, corporations, and others. The university has retained a recognized consultant to conduct its campaign feasibility study and to guide preparation for the campaign. The campaign has the benefit of a substantial alumni database, a basic and necessary asset.

Private fundraising requires much patient, detailed, and systematic hard work with optimal use of limited human resources. The team would raise only one question in connection with the fundraising campaign: would the development officers now placed in the colleges be more productive if they were moved to the UWSP Foundation office? Experience elsewhere suggests that at a campus that is in the first stages of serious fundraising that such officers will be more productive—make more calls, be better prepared for visits to prospects, raise more dollars—and be more accountable if part of a centralized team whose members can still devote significant attention to specific colleges and other academic units.

D. Academic Program Review

Academic program review is an integral part of an institution's curricular processes. A well-designed program review process enables universities to strengthen, redirect, or close programs that exist already. UWSP has a program review process with many attractive

features: it is cyclical, it has been in place for a number of years, and it has buy-in across the institution.

Nevertheless, we think that UWSP could improve its program review process by studying models used at other universities, where because the criteria are more specific, there is external validation, the reports more comprehensive, and the resultant data more plentiful, the reports and recommendations have greater utility in the planning process.

E. Advising

While UWSP ranks among the higher rated institutions in terms of student advising, students and staff report concern about the unevenness of academic advising. As the university appears to have recently connected faculty advising to the obligations/duties in teaching, the university would be well advised to develop an intentional and evaluative program to enhance and measure faculty advising. The efforts of the academic advising task force commissioned by the previous Provost do appear to have been integrated at the college level.

The development of even more effective faculty advising could be assisted by increased training in the use of the degree audit tool. The Student Academic Advising Center would appear to be the natural unit for training but the academic advisors carry a large advising load (reported to be 250-275 students).

F. Graduate Education

UWSP is encouraged to examine the practice and parameters of undergraduate/graduate cross-listed courses. While best practices in graduate education suggest that the cross listing of 400/500 courses should be limited, UWSP further schedules and delivers courses that are cross listed between 300 level courses and graduate courses. These cross-listing practices appear to be uneven and not used in all programs.

UWSP is encouraged to develop a comprehensive approach to graduate education. The current decentralized model does not encourage an institutional investment in graduate education nor does it have a defined leader or champion to advocate for existing or proposed graduate programs, support for graduate education (including graduate assistants or in terms of faculty load), or the development of an enrollment management goal for graduate education. A broader working group of faculty, staff (particularly the library and information technology) and administrators may be needed to develop a vision for graduate education. UWSP is encouraged to connect graduate education plans within the framework of university strategic planning and enrollment management.

G. Enrollment Management Plan

The institution will benefit from a carefully crafted strategic enrollment management plan that is comprehensive in nature as a means of preparing for the future. Such a plan will address many challenges from transfer students to course accessibility to graduate student enrollment among other such salient issues.

An integral part of such a plan is a retention module. An important component of such a module is a well conceived and developed academic advising program. The University will be well served to address concerns expressed, from many quarters, about the advising procedures and practices.

In its quest to enhance and strengthen retention and graduations rates, UWSP will be well advised to consider the value of a required university-wide freshmen seminar. While a freshmen seminar, in itself, is not the answer to a complex challenge, it is a tool among the many other valuable initiatives developed by the University which is committed to fostering student success.

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS,

AND/OR PRACTICES

A. Textbook rental program

The team applauds the textbook rental program at UWSP. With the concern over the continued escalation of the cost of higher education including textbooks, the team commends faculty, staff, and administration for helping to contain the costs of attendance through a valuable textbook rental program that contributes in significant ways to addressing this challenge.

B. Facilities

The team commends the institution for the renovation of the student center and other capital improvements. Dreyfus University Center is valued by students as a gathering place that enhances campus life and provides much needed office space to an active and engaged student body. In addition, the eight year plan for improvement of residential facilities coupled with a planned and funded addition of up to 500 beds of suite living facilities is an example of a comprehensive facility condition assessment and careful plan for capital investment. Other manifestations included the University's "rolling" six-year request for bond funded major projects and consistent success in garnering major repair and replacement project funds from biennial operating funds from the State of Wisconsin.

C. Sustainability and Environmental Sensitivity

The University is proactive and in many respects a leader in environmental care and progressive planning in its facilities operations, management and planning. The "low hanging fruit" of energy conservation and active management have been "business as usual" at UWSP for some time. While continuing these practices the University has moved on to environmentally sensitive designs for renovations and improvements. The University is also included, with a select number of state facilities, to move in the next five years of the "fossil grid" for energy needed on campus. This is an aggressive plan but one that an institution with the long term commitment in evidence at UWSP is likely to achieve.

D. Cultural and Intellectual Resource

Community members noted that the cultural and performing arts programs at UW-Stevens Point are a boon to the community and an important feature of the institution. At the time of the visit, UWSP was hosting an art exhibition that was open to the community. UWSP has also actively provided outreach and training to the community through off-campus sites, such as in Wausau and Fond du Lac.

E. Technology

The institution is a technologically advanced campus. There is a regular computer replacement program (approximately every 4 years), most classrooms are "smart" classrooms, and faculty and staff have pools of money and support to acquire specialized software relevant to their teaching and research. The remote computing lab is an innovative and responsive approach to students who predominantly live off campus. The relationship between faculty and information technology appears to be quite positive and the director of information technology communicates an understanding of the computing and technology needs of faculty (supporting classroom use; laboratories; units that require non-standard set ups, including Apple computers and software). The university has invested to create and assure that university web sites are ADA-compliant and there are ongoing training and support for departments to develop and maintain effective and compliant websites. Many faculty use the D2L web product to support academic instruction and a growing number of courses are taught full on line or via a hybrid environment. Students appreciate these options.

F. Overall Comments

The 2008 team would like to close its report to comment on the whole-hearted commitment of the faculty, staff, and senior leadership led by Chancellor Bunnell to developing a supportive learning environment that is student centered. Such sentiment is reflected both in documents reviewed by the team and by comments expressed by many students.

It is the sentiment of the team that the evolving synergy between academic affairs and student affairs will prove to be an invaluable asset to the institution. The faculty, despite heavy teaching loads, is engaged in the lives of students outside of the classroom in the many co-curricular opportunities developed by a dedicated staff in Student Affairs.