NEASC Re-Accreditation Report: Progress and Challenges

Strengths

• Widely understood and accepted mission
• Accepts and seeks out “best practices” in operations
• High quality academic programs that continue to improve
• Facilities expanded and enhanced to increase quality
• Use of Self-Study and data to affect improvement
• Strong support from external constituents
Challenges:

Enrollment growth through recruitment and retention essential to continued financial health
Recent initiatives:
- Increase enrollment by 3% per year, reaching 5,000 students in four years
- More effective use of student financial aid
- Creation of Enrollment Services Division
  - Streamline and make more student-friendly procedures across Enrollment/Retention areas (admissions, registrar, bursar, academic advising, financial aid and IT)
  - Automate forms
  - Install Customer Relationship Management software

Budget outlook for remainder of FY13-14 and FY14-15
Challenges:

Ongoing attention to retention and graduation rates necessary
Recent initiatives:

- Increase first to second year retention by 4% in the next two years
- Increase six year graduation rate
- Bridges Program
- MAP-Works
- Learning Commons
- Math Emporium
Challenges:

Not all stakeholders feel same urgency about assessment

Plans to address:

Engage entire university in strategic planning

Enrollment and retention are everyone's job
Challenges:

Stronger data infrastructure needed; strengthen Institutional Research capacity

Plans to address:

- Hired an enrollment analyst
- Strengthen university Institutional Research function
- Coordinate with BOR Institutional Research efforts
Challenges:

Strategic planning should go forward; alignment with system planning necessary

Plans to Address:

WCSU Strategic Planning process, 2014-2015

Goal: Enhanced relevance and continuing viability
Strategic Plan

Strategic Planning Inputs:
- NEASC report findings
- Environmental scan
- Assessments of relevance of 2007 strategic directions
- Assessment of relevancity of WCSU mission
- Branding research

Resulting in:
- Preliminary SWOT analysis
- Gap analysis of 2007 mission plan vs. 2014 realities tested and informed by
- Inclusive public engagement of stakeholders
- Development of scenarios

Producing:
- Approval of revision of Western mission and strategic vision
- Development of actionable strategic plan with concrete goals and 5-year horizon
- Strategic framework for development of next iteration of facilities and Master Plan

Strategic Planning Process and Timetable:
1. Organization of a Strategic Planning Committee, co-chaired by Ann Addison and Dan Barrett - early 2014
2. Environmental scan and assessment of relevance - by Fall 2014
3. Public engagement and review - Fall 2014
4. Results of branding research - end of Fall 2014
5. Drafting of mission, vision and plan - Spring 2015
6. Review and approval of mission, vision and plan - Fall 2015
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Focus on Student Success

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