The University of Wisconsin-Platteville has been continuously accredited for 65 years—since 1951—by the Higher Learning Commission and its predecessors. Because of its strong history, UW-Platteville is eligible to use the “Open Pathway” for reaffirmation of accreditation, which requires institutions to complete an assurance argument and a site visit at the conclusion of a 10-year cycle.

In preparation for the Oct. 24–25 site visit by the HLC, a steering committee with broad representation from UW-Platteville’s campus community completed the assurance argument, which articulates how the university meets the HLC’s evaluation criteria and substantiates the claims with documented evidence files.
University committed to continuous improvement

Improvements since 2006

In the 2006 HLC Evaluation Team Report, a number of actions were identified for organizational attention. Since that time, UW-Platteville has:

- Increased diversity on campus while decreasing achievement gaps between demographic groups
- Developed and implemented the current institutional Strategic Plan
- Expanded university-wide involvement with—and transparency in—the budget process, while still maintaining a favorable financial position
- Continued to develop a culture of assessment of student learning and instituted a biannual review process of graduate program assessment efforts
- Initiated a process for assessment of the General Education curriculum and created a new General Education Committee to oversee that curriculum and assessment

Expectations

The UW-Platteville HLC Steering Committee believes that the university meets all criteria and core components for the reaffirmation of accreditation by the HLC.

UW-Platteville believes strongly in continuous improvement and values the HLC accreditation process as one important tool in that effort. Having a team of outside experts review the institution and its operations is an opportunity to get clear feedback on how we can improve, and where to focus efforts in the future.
Criterion 1

**MISSION**
The institution’s mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution’s operations.

After a collaborative development process, UW-Platteville’s current mission statement was approved by the Board of Regents in 2014 and guides the operations of the university, including academic programs, student support services, and budgetary decisions. The mission reflects the institution’s tradition of empowering students to achieve excellence through providing a personal, hand-on education.

UW-Platteville recognizes that the existence of a diverse, cross-cultural community of students, faculty, and staff who bring a multiplicity of perspectives and voices is pivotal to the mission’s goal of preparing students to contribute to a diverse, global society. As such, the institution has set up processes and support structures to encourage and foster a diverse and inclusive campus climate.

**Strengths**

- The university’s mission statement was developed through a collaborative process and reflects the institution’s values, allowing it to be embraced across the university and incorporated into academic programs, support services, and operating procedures.
- The racial and ethnic diversity of students has more than doubled in the past 10 years; and that of employees continues to steadily increase.
- Over the past 10 years, several resources have been created or re-envisioned to foster an inclusive, supportive environment including the Patricia A. Doyle Center for Gender and Sexuality, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, University Bias Incident Team, and Wright Center for Non-Traditional and Veteran Students.
- The university has made great progress in increasing the retention rate of underrepresented minorities and closing the equity gap between URM and white students.

**Strategic Opportunities**

- The university has forged strong relationships with businesses and industries in the tri-state area, as demonstrated through the growing bi-annual career fair. The institution also engages in strategic academic planning to respond to industry needs, such as the recently created dairy science and sustainable and renewable energy systems majors.
- While the university has made significant progress in the recruitment and retention of URM students in the past 10 years, the institution will continue to strive for excellence in this area. During the 2016–17 academic year, the chief diversity officer has been asked to place a special emphasis on addressing campus climate.
- As UW-Platteville’s current mission is relatively new, having been approved in 2014, the university continues to publicize it in new ways and incorporate it even more directly in student life and academic affairs.
UW-Platteville’s commitment to integrity is rooted in its mission, which empowers each student to become ethically more responsible. A number of federal laws, state statutes, and UW System policies establish and ensure compliance with ethical standards, as well as provide outlets for anonymous reporting of any perceived breach in these standards.

The university emphasizes transparency and is accountable to its students and the public in a variety of ways, and publishes information on requirements, costs, and faculty and staff on its website and in the catalog.

UW-Platteville is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in learning—ideas that are foundational to the institution’s mission and ingrained in the values of the Board of Regents.

**Strengths**

- Established codes of conduct govern all university constituents, from the Board of Regents to faculty and staff, as well as students.
- The institution operates with transparency by participating in a voluntary system of accountability through the College Portrait Program and fulfilling open records requests pursuant to UW System administration and state statutes.
- The statutory mission of the UW System specifically recognizes that the search for truth is foundational to each institution’s purpose, and the university encourages free expression of ideas in search for the truth.

**Strategic Opportunities**

- Recognizing the importance of providing an affordable, accessible education to its students, UW-Platteville strives to provide current and prospective students with accurate and full information on all costs, including dining and living expenses, as well as financial aid counseling.
- UW-Platteville strives to find the most effective way to ensure all policies are up to date and accessible to all constituencies. The opportunity exists to explore creation of an online policy library and improved communications surrounding policies.
Criterion 3

TEACHING AND LEARNING: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

UW-Platteville ensures the currency, quality, and consistency of all courses and programs through institutionally-established review processes and advisory council input. It ensures relevancy to student interests and regional needs, as demonstrated by eight new programs implemented since 2005.

General education learning outcomes were revised within the LEAP framework in 2012, aligning with the institutional mission, unifying all baccalaureate programs, and providing students a broad foundation of knowledge and skills essential to the 21st century learner.

UW-Platteville provides a wide range of services and support for student success, as well as a rich learning environment for all students, both on campus and at a distance.

Strengths

• Institutional efforts have led to clearly articulated learning goals for every academic program and revision of the General Education learning outcomes.

• More than 60 percent of academic programs offer courses with learning objectives related to students developing international and cultural awareness; in the most recent Post-Graduate Placement Survey, students report the greatest gains in these areas and knowledge of arts and sciences.

• The university has extensive human and physical resources supporting its mission of providing a personal, hands-on education with a 21:1 student to faculty ratio and 404 faculty and staff instructors actively involving students in scholarly and creative work and community partnerships.

Strategic Opportunities

• Recent budget reductions have required a multi-faceted response in order to mitigate impacts on students, faculty, and staff. As the institution continues to move past these reductions, a focus on the student experience and identifying appropriate support for faculty and staff will be critical.

• The university continues to focus efforts on improving issues related to faculty hiring, compensation, and retention. This includes the institution’s increasing reliance on part-time and non-tenure-track instructional staff since 2005.
**Criterion 4**

**Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement**

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Since the university’s last reaffirmation of accreditation in 2006, UW-Platteville has significantly increased its focus on effective use of program and general education assessment.

In 2012, the university adopted new general education learning outcomes that align with the Liberal Education and America’s Promise outcomes.

In 2014, the university implemented a centralized reporting system and required all academic programs to report their missions, student learning outcomes, and assessment methods and results. This centralized reporting encourages regular review of results and supports data-informed decision-making. Several co-curricular and administrative units also report assessment results through this centralized system.

**Strengths**

- In keeping with the institutional mission of promoting excellence, all undergraduate programs undergo an in-depth program review every six years through a process overseen by the Academic Planning Council, which reports annually to Faculty Senate.

- The University Undergraduate Curriculum Commission undertook an effort to explicitly connect the university’s general education courses with the 24 general education outcomes. When the revised general education curriculum was implemented in 2014, a four-year cycle was established to support the assessment of all general education outcomes.

- In 2015–16 the Graduate Council approved an improved process requiring more detailed reports that accommodate a comprehensive review of every graduate program’s assessment plans.

- Since fall 2014, a formalized program to support co-curricular planning and assessment was implemented across several co-curricular and academic support units.

**Strategic Opportunities**

- Assessment of the general education learning outcomes is still in its infancy; however, the institution utilizes a variety of university-wide and course-specific assessments to determine the efficacy of this program. Faculty Senate recently accepted a recommendation to establish a new General Education Committee that will monitor and make recommendations on the general education curriculum.

- Recognizing the need to further improve data oversight and access, a data governance initiative has been created that includes a Data Governance Steering Committee and the Data Stewardship Council. The senior leadership serves on the steering committee. Directors from various functional areas serve on the council, including the registrar, chief diversity officer, information security officer, provost’s designee, the director of information systems and reporting, and the director of institutional research.
Criterion 5

RESOURCES, PLANNING, AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The institution’s resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

In recent years, decreased state allocations and tuition freezes have required that UW-Platteville be innovative in taking control of its own destiny while continuing its tradition of providing an affordable education. The continued reduction of state funding also highlights the crucial need for the institution to have a budget model that allows for more strategic and flexible allocation of funds.

The UW System Board of Regents sets policies and rules for governance and admission standards, reviews and approves budgets, and establishes the policy framework within which the institution operates. UW-Platteville administration, faculty, staff, and students value the process of shared governance, and believe decisions should be made through open dialogue and collaboration.

Strengths

• While the process has been hindered by two rounds of cuts to state allocations, compensation—specifically for faculty—has remained a priority to the institution. A modest increase to faculty salary was implemented in 2016.

• The creation of the UW-Platteville Real Estate Foundation, Tri-State Initiative Program, and several cost-recovery and revenue-generating units have had a profound impact on the university’s ability to control its own destiny.

• In July 2016, the university engaged in some reorganization in order to better align existing services, programs, and resources with the university’s commitment to student success. This includes the creation of the Division of Enrollment and Student Success.

Strategic Opportunities

• Because the most recent strategic planning process was intentionally designed to include multiple constituencies, the identified strategic priorities function as shared institutional values. Moving forward, communication and operationalization of these priorities are opportunities for growth.

• In fiscal year 2016–17, the university rolled out a new Responsibility Centered Management budget model as a shadow system, to be fully implemented in fiscal year 2017–18. The new model will allow increased flexibility due to its decentralized decision-making process and its emphasis on providing more resource control to the academic colleges.

• Particularly for faculty, the university continues to identify opportunities for addressing pay compression and inversion. This will continue to be an area of strategic opportunity due to its impact on morale, recruitment, and retention of qualified personnel.