ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

University of Wisconsin-Platteville
Platteville, Wisconsin

December 4-6, 2006

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

The Team visited the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in Platteville, Wisconsin for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation.

B. Organizational Context

The University of Wisconsin-Platteville (UW-P) is located in southwestern Wisconsin about 25 miles from the Iowa and Illinois state lines. It is one of 13 publicly supported comprehensive universities in the University of Wisconsin (UW) system. UW-P has a clearly defined niche within the UW system. UW-P's programs trace their roots to education and mining, the focus of two institutions that later merged and evolved into the university.

UW-P enrolls about 6,000 students, over 90% of whom are Wisconsin residents. Nearly half live on campus, and 95% are undergraduates. About 97% of the undergraduate population is white, non-Hispanic. The graduate student population is more ethnically diverse with about 84% being white, non-Hispanic.

The University's operating budget has not seen significant increases over the past several years because of state economics. Like other UW institutions, UW-P has looked to entrepreneurial strategies to increase expenditure levels. The University's success with the Tri-State Initiative and distance education is infusing the campus with funds for new initiatives and faculty positions.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

University of Wisconsin-Platteville had no unique aspects to this visit.

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited

The Team visited the campus in Platteville, Wisconsin

E. Distance Education Reviewed

The Team reviewed on-site and web-based distance education programs. These included online master's degree programs in Project Management, Engineering, and Criminal Justice; online bachelor's degree programs in Business and Criminal Justice; and off-campus programs in Education.

F. Interactions with Constituencies

The Team met with the following individuals and groups:

Administration
1. Board of Regents member
2. Chancellor  
3. Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
4. Director, General Education and Assessment Coordinator  
5. Assistant to the Assistant Chancellor for Student Affairs and Director of Student Services  
6. Dean, College of Business, Industry, Life Science, and Agriculture  
7. Associate Registrar  
8. Director, Personnel and Affirmative Action  
9. Assistant Vice Chancellor for Information Services, Karrman Library  
10. Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Education  
11. Dean, College of Engineering, Mathematics, and Science  
12. Director, Admission and Enrollment Services  
13. Director, Physical Plant  
14. Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of the Graduate School  
15. Assistant Chancellor for Student Affairs  
16. Director, Multicultural Educational Resource Center  
17. Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services  
18. Director, Community University Partnerships  
19. Director, Distance Education  
20. Director, Teaching and Excellence Center  

Committees  
21. Assessment Oversight Committee  
22. Graduate Council  
23. University Undergraduate Curriculum Commission  
24. Academic Standards Committee  

Faculty  
25. President and Vice President of Faculty Senate  
26. Open meeting (about 40 faculty members in attendance)  
27. Former Chair of the Assessment Oversight Committee  

Academic Staff  
28. Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary of Academic Staff Senate  
29. About 40 academic staff in open meeting with faculty  

Students  
30. Open student meeting (27 student government and organization leaders)  
32. Representatives of Student Advisory Board for distance education  

Community  
32. Five representatives of Community University Partnerships  
33. Representatives of Alumni Advisory Board for distance education  

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed  

UW-P Self-Study Documents  
1. 2006 Self Study Report Prepared for the Higher Learning Commission
Assurance Section

2. UW-P Handbook
3. UW-P Undergraduate Catalog
4. UW-P Graduate Catalog
5. 1997 Report of a Visit to UW-P for the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

UW-P Planning Documents
6. UW-P Strategic Plan 2002
7. UW-P Strategic Plan 2006
8. Strategic Plans:
   a. College of Liberal Arts and Education
   b. College of Engineering, Mathematics, and Science
   c. College of Business, Industry, Life Science, and Agriculture
   d. School of Graduate Studies, 2005
   e. Information Technology 2006
   f. Distance Education
9. UW-P Plan 2008 Phase II
10. Governor's Grow Wisconsin Initiative
11. Facilities Master Plan

UW-P Internal Documents
14. UW-P Assessment at UW-Platteville (Assessment Plan)
15. Assessment Plan, 2005 Update
16. Majors Assessment Plans (various)
17. Assessment Flowchart
18. Nine Year History of New Freshmen Student of Color Enrollment
19. Multicultural Education Resource Center Purpose Statement
20. UW-P Accountability Report, 2005-2006
22. Faculty Senate Agendas and Minutes 2004-2006
23. Improvement of Learning Committee Minutes
24. Tri-State Initiative Plan
26. Computer Replacement Plan
27. Table of Organization Charts 2006-07
28. Fox Valley Collaborative Degree Program
29. Financial Statements, 2004 and 2005
30. Faculty Senate Minutes (Various)
31. Distance Learning Center document on mission, outcomes, and evaluation matrix
32. Summaries of activities of Student Advisory Board for distance education
33. Summaries of activities of Alumni Advisory Board for distance education
34. Undated Final Report of study on Conducting a Noel-Levitz Assessment on Online Learning
35. Checklist for UW-P Course Design Standards for Distance Education, 2006
36. Academic Advising Survey
37. Academic Year Report for University Academic Advising, 2004-2005
II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

UW-P used a broad-based approach to the self-study process bringing together representatives from various sectors of the campus. It developed guidelines for the self-study process and a website for disseminating information about the process and its importance to the University. Through the course of the interview process, the Team would frequently meet individuals who worked directly on a criterion for the self-study report.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

The Team found that the report accurately reflected the activities of the campus in most respects and served the University well in making the case that the criteria for continued accreditation were met. Like the 1996 Team, however, the current Team found the report to be highly descriptive and lacking in analysis. In particular, the discussion of assessment failed to show how UW-P is effectively using the results of student learning outcome assessment programs to improve student learning.

The move towards electronic storage and availability of assessment plans and the outcomes of assessment demonstrates an openness of the process; however, most postings are relatively recent. The HLC Team had to spend extensive time searching for the evidence of student learning and evidence of program improvement through documents that were not available electronically or in the resource room.

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

Requirements were fulfilled.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The Team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information.

IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

A. 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

   - Commitments related to high academic expectations, degree programs on the undergraduate and graduate levels, distance learning, scholarship, and service to a diversification of students, faculty, and staff are clearly spelled out and disseminated in primary public publications to prospective students and other constituencies. The mission of the organization is stated clearly in public documents available to all major constituencies and provides concise descriptions of priorities and goals.

   - This commitment to diversity is readily apparent in mission documents and in unique initiatives and programs focused on strengthening a campus climate sensitive to and supportive of people from all cultures and backgrounds. Faculty, staff, students, and administrators voice their recognition and appreciation for the diversity priority included in its mission documents. Mission documents and institutional practices make clear the organization’s strong commitment to a diverse student body, faculty, and staff.

   - The organization’s colleges, programs, and units align their missions and goals with the institutional mission and priorities. Internal and external constituencies know the University’s mission, the people who are served, and the general goals and values. It is clear from the people interviewed and from the organization’s documents that the mission is understood and garners a high level of support. This understanding and support of the mission pervades UW-P.
From the system level and in the view of members of the state's Board of Regents, the specific mission and direction of the organization is clearly authorized and supported. Members of the key administrative leaders are well qualified based on years of collective experience, training, and a self-acknowledged ability to work as an effective team. Chief administrators, deans, and leaders of the governance groups are guided directly by the stated mission and priorities. Faculty, staff, and students publicly express their appreciation for the communication that facilitates the shared governance model at the organization. UW-P's governance and administrative processes promote collaboration and the effective fulfillment of the mission.

The Team reviewed published policies and procedures and interviewed a variety of people on campus regarding the organization's operations, fulfillment of stated purposes, the nature of its interactions with internal and external constituencies, and the extent of its knowledge of and adherence to regulations. The documents and the testimony assured the Team that the organization operates in an ethical and fair manner. It is clear that the organization publishes and follows fair policies and acts with integrity.

As a regional comprehensive university, UW-P is charged with developing and delivering programs that address workforce needs of Wisconsin. UW-P fulfills this mission in part by offering off-campus programs in Business, Project Management, Engineering, Criminal Justice, and Education that are targeted for nontraditional learners.

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

None

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

None

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

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.
B. 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

- The history and heritage of the institution are reflected in its current mission and honored and incorporated into the planning process. The current strategic plan makes explicit reference to the institution's mission. Specifically, current plans and planning priorities are linked to the institution's historic mission as a normal school/teachers college and secondarily as the Wisconsin Mining School which merged in 1955 and became a regional comprehensive university with a significant technological focus. UW-P continues to focus on the needs of the Wisconsin and the Tri-state region it serves. Evidence includes instituting the Tri-State Initiative (TSI) focusing on technology-based programs for which UW-P is well known as well as comments from community members.

- The institution's strategic plan and the associated strategic plans of the operating units reflect and are responsive to the planning directions established in the state's Grow Wisconsin plan and the UW System plans as well. They focus on and are responsive to the workforce development and economic development needs of the southwest region of the state and the wider tri-state region. The Tri-State Initiative and the Engineering Collaborative are clear examples of institutional responses designed specifically to meet these externally identified regional needs.

- While located in a very homogeneous region of the state culturally and ethnically, the UW System's Plan 2008 and UW-P's institutionally-based responses to this plan provide well-specified actions with explicit assignments for accountability to diversify the faculty and student-body and to improve the campus climate for those from under-represented ethnic minorities.

- Given the financial challenges of the State of Wisconsin and the level of external "control" of appropriated resources, UW-P's resource base is, nevertheless, adequate, although hardly bountiful. Budget documents confirmed by discussions with senior administrators attest to this adequacy. The institution also has been creative and strategic in seeking alternative "discretionary" revenue streams, most especially from the Tri-State Initiative, distance learning, and a maturing development operation with a growing base of professionally successful alumns from which to augment traditional revenue streams.
Faithfulness to the directions identified in Strategic Plans together with a centralized budgeting process and an institutional willingness to proceed have allowed UW-P to make entrepreneurial investments in strategic initiatives, including the Tri-State Initiative, international education initiatives, and other student engagement initiatives, some modest redistributions to college and department of operating funds, and "investments" in personnel expenditures to augment faculty salaries and hire a few additional faculty members.

The institution intentionally develops its human resources. As a regional comprehensive institution, the focus of faculty responsibility is on effective teaching. Employment processes and evaluation processes provide evidence and support for the primacy of teaching. Opportunities for faculty development in the area of teaching effectiveness and recognition for quality teaching are provided. Both internally and externally, funding has been provided to recognize and reward good teaching. Evidence of this includes the Teaching Excellence Center; the Curriculum Improvement Fund; and the UW System initiatives of the Faculty College, Teaching Fellows, and Teaching Scholars programs.

The institution's planning process, as described by members of the Strategic Planning Commission and faculty leaders, has been somewhat "informal." Specifically, it has flowed from the Chancellor and his Administrative Cabinet to a periodically convened ad hoc Strategic Planning Commission followed by broad discussion with governance groups. Nevertheless, the process has been and remains grounded in UW-P's mission as evidenced by the specific references to mission in the Strategic Plan and direct feedback from members of the Commission.

Members of the various senates and governance instrumentalities, the organized alumni, and the small group of community members all stated that they are consulted and invited to provide feedback during development of previous Strategic Plans. While the formal processes do not indicate a specific directive or means for this feedback and consultation, it is clear it is a part of the deliberative process.

UW-P demonstrated commendable foresight and planning in developing graduate programs that are delivered at a distance. Recognizing the value of graduate education to the institution and the difficult realities of developing and maintaining resident graduate programs, the institution deliberately developed distance education graduate programs based on state workforce needs and faculty strengths. These programs are outcomes focused and comply with best practices for distance education instruction.

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

In the past, evidence in support of the success of strategic initiatives has not been
extensive or systematic. The UW System requires an annual Accountability Report which presents some general information, basically "dash board" indicators. The Strategic Planning Commission members also indicated that when specific strategic initiatives were being considered in the past, the UW System Office provided some assistance in assembling supporting data such as market data. More comprehensive data/evidence demonstrating that operational objectives can be and are being met are necessary.

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

None

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

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

C. 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
   - Team interviews, reviews of undergraduate and graduate catalogs, and reviews of websites show that the University has developed appropriate learning outcomes for all educational programs.
   - Various exhibits, such as reports, research projects, committee minutes, and interviews reveal that the University is conducting assessment at the program and institutional level.
   - From the review of various committee agendas and minutes and meetings with faculty leadership and University administrators it is evident to the Team that the results of the assessments of student learning are regularly reviewed by all levels of the institution. There is evidence that these results are being utilized to improve teaching and learning on campus.
   - Through interviews with administration, faculty, and students as well as the examination of mission statements and student learning outcomes the University has demonstrated that it values and supports effective teaching.
The Distance Learning Center provides outstanding support to students and faculty engaged in distance learning. The Center provides a single point of access for student learners where they receive administrative and technical support, and access to student services, library resources, and course materials. The Center assures that best distance education practices are implemented across the curricula it supports and seeks to constantly improve the e-learning environment for students.

The Team has concluded from its review of various committee meeting agendas and minutes and meetings with members of the Assessment Oversight Committee and the Academic Planning Council, that the institution has systems in place to insure the quality of its programs and review and update the quality assurance processes to maintain quality into the future.

Through the teaching excellence center, the institution supports and recognizes the scholarship of learning, fostering a climate that enhances student learning and strengthens teaching effectiveness.

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

- While several committees and offices review and respond to assessment activities, UW-P relies on informal and less systematic approaches to implement changes in general education.

- The reduction in state support has caused the institution to engage in some faculty hiring practices such as the significant increase in hiring non-tenure track faculty which need to be carefully examined by the institution. The unintended consequences of this practice may be far reaching. The institution is aware of this challenge and has plans to address it with the hiring of 12 new tenure track faculty during the next academic year. The Team encourages UW-P to continue to monitor the use of non-tenure track faculty and to determine the long-term impact on instructional and other academic issues.

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

None

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

Recommendation of the Team
D. 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

- UW-P has developed and disseminated internal and external funding opportunities for student and faculty scholarship and research. There are many varied outlets for student and faculty research, including departmental presentations, web-sites, poster exhibits, traditional research paper presentations at conferences, and journal reviews.

- Since the UW-P emphasizes applied research, faculty members jointly collaborate with students on research and service-related projects having high visibility in the southwest region of Wisconsin. The Teaching Excellence Center (TEC), coordinating activities with the University of Wisconsin System Office of Professional and Instructional Development, provides Scholarship of Teaching and Learning activities for faculty. TEC functions with the Assessment Oversight Committee (AOC) to identify and provide faculty development needs and programming.

- The University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UUCC) receives course applications for general education credit approval and applies a protocol consistent with UW-P mission also emphasizing teaching effectiveness practices. It regularly reviews and re-certifies courses for listing as approved general education credit.

- The AOC and UUCC have examined assessment projects focused on general education courses and linkages with university goals and programs.

- Graduate programs, both residential and distance education, are subjected to review by departments offering courses and degrees, Graduate School Council, and the Distance Learning Office.

- UW-P demonstrates a commitment to providing a liberal education through general education requirements for all students. Expected outcomes for general education are described in the University catalogs and web pages.

- UW-P has policies and procedures affirming self-governance procedures found in program review in departments, programs and distance learning programs. Academic programs have a regularized cycle of review by faculty committees.

- The UUCC has established a requirement that all syllabi list learning outcomes.
and recommend that faculty discuss the outcomes in the initial class meeting with students.

- The relevance of curricula for academic programs delivered at a distance is continually assessed using a number of tools, including course evaluations, surveys, and focus groups. The results of assessment are used to inform decisions about the effectiveness of meeting curricular outcomes and have been used as the basis for making substantive changes in the engineering and project management programs. UW-P demonstrates effective use of continuous improvement strategies in evaluating and improving its distance education programs.

- Faculty valuing the application of instructional material has facilitated service learning and fostered collaborative research activities with students. The research is a response to community and regional needs. Student participation in the projects has provided opportunities to develop job related skills and personal recommendations for future employment.

- Several documents affirm a commitment to ethical conduct in research and instructional activities. An Institutional Review Board, policies on misconduct in scholarly research, UW-P employee handbook, faculty research committee, and policies governing student life have applicable behavioral standards.

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

None

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

None

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

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.
E. 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

- As the mission and strategic plans state, UW-P identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways that are valued by each. UW-P has a long-standing tradition of engagement. Evidence demonstrates significant progress and response from numerous departments to its constituents, especially the Community University Partnership initiated in 1999 by University of Wisconsin-Platteville and the University of Wisconsin System Cooperative Extension. UW-P utilizes needs assessment descriptive processes such as surveys and focus groups. This joint endeavor created a regional learning center to integrate faculty, students, staff and community members to implement projects beneficial to the UW-P and the community. The Pioneer Involvement Center provides UW-P an opportunity to identify community program needs that are then developed as service learning opportunities for students. More students are engaged in participating in co-curricular activities such as student organizations, student governance groups, sports than are students at other UW System institutions according to survey data.

- Students, faculty, and staff at UW-P have a variety of opportunities to heighten their understanding of ethnic, culture, and gender diversity through Multicultural Educational Resource Center (MERC), partnership with Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU), performing and visual arts, the ALLIANCE of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, straight, and questioning students, and Patricia A. Doyle Women’s Center. These examples offer specific resources and opportunities for UW-P students and staff to engage and expand the southwest Wisconsin mindset of cultural diversity. Guest speakers and alumni are invited to campus to speak so students can hear from diverse workers in their field of study and meet newly admitted students of color. Additionally the Office of Continuing Education (OCE) provides innovative ways to reach out to diverse populations looking to further their careers. UW-P demonstrates attention to the diversity of the constituencies it serves.

- UW-P has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities. Both students and faculty identify projects started and in progress in a six county area surrounding UW-P, including engineering projects and building projects, such as the house built annually for Habitat for Humanity. UW-P has six units and many staff positions dedicated to connecting the University to its constituents. Additionally departments and programs have courses in which instructors and students work with regional communities and organizations to apply course content through class projects and co-curricular activities which engage students in service learning opportunities.

- UW-P actively engages constituents of its distance and continuing education programs in planning and assessment. Student and Alumni Advisory Boards
evaluate and provide feedback on all aspects of distance education programs. Faculties involved in distance education programs are fully engaged with professional societies and organizations that oversee certification standards in their respective disciplines. Quality and relevance of service to distance learning communities is adequately assured through active engagement of appropriate constituencies.

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

While the University has seen significant increase in student diversity as a result of the TSI program, the University can continue efforts to foster a diverse social climate through efforts such as MERC. The University would benefit from additional monitoring of their diversity efforts, including its general education requirements.

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

None

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

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Affiliation Status

No change.

B. Nature of Organization

1. Legal status

No change.

2. Degrees awarded
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
   No change.

5. Other visits scheduled
   None

6. Organization change request
   No change.

D. Summary of Commission Review

Timing for next comprehensive visit: academic year - 2016-2017

Rationale for recommendation:

The University of Wisconsin-Platteville presents evidence that it satisfies the five criteria for accreditation. Its mission is clearly stated, understood by its constituencies, and appropriately supported with resources. UW-P acts with integrity. Strategic planning processes guide institutional decision making and reinforce key values of the University. UW-P considers itself primarily a teaching institution and demonstrates that it is fulfilling its educational mission. It actively promotes a life of learning for its constituents and fulfills its commitment to knowledge in ethical and responsible ways. UW-P builds strong and meaningful partnerships that are mutually beneficial. After reviewing the evidence, the Team concurs that the University satisfies all five criteria for accreditation.

The Team recognizes the success that UW-P has achieved in building a strong institution and establishing effective procedures for ensuring that it can continue to achieve its educational mission well into the future. It also recognizes the progress in
the area of assessment, UW-P's understanding of the work to be done in this area, and
the dedication of resources for this effort, including the hiring of someone designated to
oversee this effort. The Team therefore recommends that accreditation be continued
with the next comprehensive evaluation visit to occur in the 2016-2017 academic year.
ADVANCEMENT SECTION

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I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

For 140 years, the University of Wisconsin-Platteville (UW-P) has provided post secondary programs in Education and Engineering (established 1907). It became a comprehensive university in the University of Wisconsin System in 1971 and is one of the twenty-six institutions seeking funding from the Wisconsin legislature. The institution is performing well in all areas related to the criteria for accreditation. UW-P leadership has made several key strategic decisions that have contributed to the financial stability and effectiveness of the institution. Investing in distance education and the Tri-State Initiative are notable examples. The institution has adequately addressed areas of concern from the previous accreditation site visit and has made substantial progress in institutionalizing continuous assessment and improvement. UW-P is very well connected with key constituencies in Southwest Wisconsin and is involved in an impressive array of outreach activities. The emphasis on service learning activities involving students is an outstanding example of how UW-P serves the greater community.

Like other public colleges and universities in the United States, UW-P has experienced reductions in state allocated funding in recent years. As reflected in the self-study information, UW-P has responded to these cuts in a variety of ways. UW-P has been able to increase other sources of revenue through specifically the Tri-State Initiative, online distance learning graduate programs, and fundraising, to assist in mitigating state budget cuts so that the University can continue to offer first-rate educational experiences. The plan for the Tri-State Initiative also includes a gradual growth plan. The Team congratulates the University for its creative financial and growth plan.

A second strategy for handling the budget reductions has been to implement cost savings measures while affirming a commitment to quality education and the historic roots of the institution, engineering and education. Prior to the last visit, the University restructured the colleges into three units. The Team believes that this action has had a considerable impact on general education, and will discuss this in more detail later in this report. Another measure has been the increased use of academic staff, especially in liberal arts, rather than tenure track faculty in response to the departure of approximately seventy five percent (75%) of the tenured faculty during the past ten years. About one third of the faculty is now considered academic staff. As the revenues for the initiatives identified above increase, the University is beginning to hire more tenure track faculty.

The Team congratulates UW-P on the stable leadership offered by the Chancellor and the Executive Council. Many administrative persons have had lengthy experiences in various positions; a pending change in leadership in the Chancellor's office may provide an opportunity for further creative decision making and discussion regarding a sustainable model and a financial plan. Many examples were given from students, faculty, and other constituents for opportunities of shared governance decision making.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

A. Participation in Shared Governance Processes
As presented in the Self Study and in the supporting documents provided the visiting Team, UW-P has an ample number of governance instrumentalities and committees. At the formal level, many opportunities for shared participation in institutional decision making appear to exist. It was noted, however, by a number of those with whom Team members spoke that it was not always easy to get these groups fully staffed or to enlist the participation of faculty and staff in campus governance deliberations. With the substantial demands of faculty and staff workloads, it is understandable that it is difficult for faculty and staff to participate and that small numbers of volunteers assume the various leadership opportunities. It is, nevertheless, important for the institution to engage faculty, staff, and students broadly in the governance of the institution.

It is also important for those who are not members of formal committees to have a stake in campus decision making. Providing informal means for these voices to be heard and counted will be important to ensure an inclusive and broad involvement by campus constituencies. The Team suggests that the organization identify ways to encourage and to solicit more faculty and staff participation in University activities. One group currently not defined as a participant in the shared governance processes is the classified staff. While they are represented by their union, its focus is almost exclusively on wages and working conditions and not broader campus matters. Finding a means for their inclusion would be worth considering.

There appears to be duplication of the function of some University committees. The institution would probably benefit from a review of the functions of the various committees and a possible consolidation. This would make it easier to staff these committees and create a leaner and more functional system of governance.

While the formal organization includes the position of department chairperson, these positions seem to have little or no function in the decision-making process regarding representation of faculty. The University may want to explore the role of the department chair in decision making.

B. Strategic Planning

In the past, campus leadership relied on their collective wisdom and observations along with some support from the UW System Office to examine data and analyze trends. An institutional research office, a critical component for academic planning activities, has been minimized due to budget constraints. Though UW-P has enjoyed success in its planning processes, the linking of strategic planning with explicit environmental scanning and both internal and external data should become more intentional. A more formal and deliberate effort to collect and analyze data would be useful as a means to examine trends closely and, most important, to provide that information to others in the shared governance deliberations concerning new initiatives and ideas. With the addition of a new institutional researcher, the Institutional Research office is now positioned to play a key role in achieving more data-driven processes in the future.

Moreover, while the directions and decisions based on past strategic plans have been appropriate and successful for UW-Platteville, the entire process of developing and revisiting the institution’s strategic plans flows largely from the Chancellor’s Office and
the Administrative Cabinet. For such planning to be sustained through inevitable and future leadership changes for any institution, a formal and deliberate system for planning would be beneficial to ensure future direction and sustain planning.

Finally, while the degree of centralized budgeting has been helpful in allowing for strategic investments in new revenue generating initiatives, the extent to which the divisions and operating units are provided discretionary funds will affect the number of entrepreneurial initiatives possible at these organizational levels. This is particularly important for distance education programs. The growth of these programs has been remarkable, and they have generated significant revenue for the institution. Their continued success, however, will require substantial reinvestment to enable them to adopt emerging delivery technology and remain competitive with other programs. Current efforts to provide those funds through the foundation and other sources are commended and encouraged.

C. General Education

It is often true that students, particularly those pursuing professional degrees, do not easily embrace general education coursework. It takes special efforts to help them understand the value of this coursework which is at some remove from the focus of their studies for their degree. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data were particularly clear on the unenthusiastic support of general education by the students. Some students with whom the Team spoke also questioned the value of general education. A limited number of students at the open meeting with students, on the other hand, strongly advocated for general education. Nevertheless, the difference between a technical degree and a college degree is marked by the extent to which students are exposed to areas outside their major as well as inside their majors. That balance between general studies and major studies is critical for students seeking a college degree. Professions, such as AICPA, ABET, and others, have not only realized the critical importance of general education, but often mandate a liberal arts requirement. Intentional efforts to connect general education to the degree programs and similar efforts to help students through advising and counseling to understand the value of general education appear warranted.

The Team recognizes that many factors may contribute to student perception, and some of these factors are beyond the control of the University. At the same time, the Team believes that the last reorganization and restructuring of the liberal arts college and departments at UW-P has significantly reduced the influence of liberal arts courses to simply “service courses” and resulted in a devaluing of general education. The combination of Liberal Arts with Education and the move of some of the traditional liberal arts disciplines to professional colleges, while attractive, do appear to have devalued the role of general education and requires additional efforts for general education to be valued as a vital part of the undergraduate experience. Further, while fund raising initiatives have provided discretionary resources for six programs, they do not appear to have bolstered the liberal arts programs. Current discussions on re-establishing the College of Education seem to continue this trend. The Team believes that in a holistic sense, the trend of devaluing general education could have a negative impact on the overall quality of education provided by the University. If UW-P desires to integrate the liberal arts with professional programs and document the outcomes, this college may
need greater support and resources. It will also be important to have continuity in the Liberal Arts and Education dean's position.

It also appears warranted for the campus to engage in conversations about the role faculty play in supporting and advocating for general studies. Faculty ownership of general education and its value is important to encourage its embrace by students. Rather than an essential part of a liberal arts education, general education becomes a course to be "taken to meet a requirement" and allowing students to enroll in "job related courses." In some cases, faculty advising students reinforce this perception, and many students by-pass "service courses" to quickly graduate. Assessment of liberal arts outcomes (general education), is devalued or perceived to be a labor intensive activity with few positive outcomes for students or faculty.

D. Diversity

The visiting Team noted the detail and specificity of Plan 2008 which had clear operational goals and responsible campus administrators assigned to assure implementation. While there are effective programs and initiatives in place, it appeared from campus-based data and was reflected in comments from faculty, staff, and students that there remained a critical need to assertively pursue diversity for the campus. The rural location of UW-P will always present a challenge in attracting individuals from diverse backgrounds. Because of this, additional actions will have to be taken, and they will have to be sustained over many years. Good plans will only be as good as their execution.

E. Funding

It is clear that the State of Wisconsin is unlikely to increase significantly its level of general fund support in the foreseeable future. This, of course, is the situation in most states these days. Because of this, UW-P will have to look creatively at securing additional revenue streams to augment those from the state and from tuition. The Tri-State Initiative is one example of a creative approach to the funding challenge. The enlargement of the "development" function also augers well. The latter will need further augmentation to generate the levels of private donations which will be needed in the future. In general, creative and entrepreneurial approaches will be needed.

F. Faculty Issues

The visiting team was impressed with the commitment and enthusiasm of the faculty, both the tenured/tenure-track faculty and the non-continuing faculty. They see themselves as being there for the students first and foremost. They also face demanding teaching and work loads. In difficult financial times, it is unlikely that there will be great changes in this picture, but a thorough review of faculty assignments to keep the burdens as manageable as possible is necessary. At regional comprehensive institutions like UW-P there is also the tension between faculty teaching and the place of traditional research, particularly as newer faculty with stronger motivation for research join the University and seek recognition for their scholarship. It is important for faculty to
stay engaged with their disciplines. This can take many forms, but some support for faculty engagement with their scholarship will keep the faculty renewed and refreshed.

Finally, the matter of salary levels is similarly a continuing challenge. In the parlance of economics, more is always preferred to less, but the reality, of course, is that attracting and retaining quality faculty requires a reasonable level of competitiveness with compensation. Salary compression, too, is an issue requiring continued study and action plans.

G. Assessment of Learning

Student learning is a commonly articulated desired goal expressed by faculty and administration at UW-P. Assessment of student learning has occurred since the early 1990’s. However, the past HLC team found that “assessment in general education and degree programs is still very uneven in planning, implementation and results. Evidence for graduate study assessment is particularly lacking.” Contrasting these observations is a UW-P Assessment report 2005. It presents a detailed assessment plan and committees providing oversight to assessment activities. While these are necessary components for assessment of student learning, there appears to be a discrepancy between the plan and documentation of student learning outcomes having an influence on teaching and learning.

The missing link is feedback into teaching and learning activities in the classroom, program, and institution. This seems to echo the concern expressed by the prior team who found “there should be more discussion about the links between general education and professional programs and students should also be involved and informed.” While numerous committees are charged with or respond to assessment activities, there appears to be no formal process to bring about changes in classes, programs, or general education. It is recognized that several committees focus on assessment activities. Both UUCC and AOC are actively involved in assessment of student learning. It is laudatory that UUCC reviews syllabi for student outcomes; however, does the feedback result in changes to the teaching and learning activities in the courses, and, do courses have an influence on professional program courses? In fact, the observation from 1996 seems applicable: “A number of largely uncoordinated individual activities and measures range from inputs to outputs.” It was revealed that academic teaching staff are generally not involved in assessment of student learning. The Team estimates that approximately one third of the faculty is not doing assessment while twenty to thirty percent of tenure-track faculty has direct involvement in assessment activities. Some evidence of curricular change was found, but no clear connection with teaching and learning was found. The recently appointed assessment director is providing leadership essential for the adoption of classroom assessment activities. As a visible spokesperson, he provides critical consultative assistance to faculty and University committees. It is clear; the office does need additional resources to continue integrating assessment into student learning. (Linking the Assessment director position with the faculty development office may help promote knowledge and skill development across the tenure track and academic teaching staff.) Assistance arises from numerous committees who established protocols to review courses and programs. Documentation of changes arising from assessment is needed.
For a culture of student learning to be deeply embedded in an institution, incentives and recognition should become a part of the overall approach to assessment. Incentives which are designed to encourage both individual faculty and departmental participation should be considered. In addition, a student learning/assessment newsletter could be published on the web and serve as a vehicle for both recognizing student learning and excellence in teaching as well as bringing recognition to departments who are actively engaging in the assessment of student learning.

The University could benefit from some discussion about the concept of life-long learning and the assessment of it. This is clearly a priority of the institution as well as HLC but demonstrating that this is taking place requires some ongoing discussion and effort.

H. Advising

It was clear to the team that UW-P has strong educational programs that focus on quality. The Team noted, however, that student advising within those programs is inconsistent. While the Advising and Career Exploration Services office serves students overall, data indicate some departments have not focused on advising nor has emphasis been placed on linking general education curriculum to the professional programs. Additionally, students perceive that advisors do not understand general education or professional programs requirements. UW-P should continue to offer faculty resources to improve student advising. The University provides a rich array of services and students and faculty both would benefit from a more focused approach in promoting these services to faculty and sharing evidence of their effectiveness in helping students.

I. Communication for improved shared governance

The Team found a perception that communication between administration, faculty, and staff on developing new initiatives needs improvement. Additionally, classified staff perceive they are not part of the shared governance model that UW-P enjoys. It is suggested that administration work more closely with the faculty, staff, and student leadership to identify ways to discuss campus issues and develop initiatives that address those issues.

J. Leadership Development

The University is approaching a critical crossroads in the next few years. The likelihood that the current leadership team will leave or retire is highly probable. In addition, the loss of senior faculty over the past several years also exacerbates the impact of this critical transition. The Team strongly encourages the institution to invest in an intensive effort to develop the next generation of both administrative and faculty leaders to insure the ongoing stability, viability, and success of UW-P.
Several items worthy of note were identified by the visiting team. The success and future prospects of the Tri-State Initiative (TSI) have been noted several times in this report already. TSI is a creative way to identify a new source of students and, hence, tuition funds to offset the weakened levels of state funding support. The Engineering Collaborative is another initiative showing that the organization is pursuing creative ways to meet the educational and workforce development needs of UW-P's region.

In terms of the educational experience, both the effort to build the Study Abroad program and the significant involvement of many faculty and students in Service Learning are worthy of special mention. Several members of the visiting team spoke longingly of their desire to have similarly successful efforts on their home campuses. These efforts speak to UW-P's focus on students, which was articulated by virtually all with whom team members spoke.

The Team was also impressed with the long history of community partnerships seen at the University. Community leaders gave eloquent testimony of the mutual benefits that resulted from these partnerships. They view the University as a responsive collaborator that will serve their communities in ways that provide important educational experiences for students. The Team commends the University for this commitment to community engagement.
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-PLATTEVILLE
1 University Plaza
Platteville, WI 53818

Affiliation Status: Candidate: Not Applicable
Accreditation: (1918-22; 1951-)

PEAQ PARTICIPANT

Nature of Organization

Legal Status: Public
Degrees Awarded: A, B, M

Conditions of Affiliation:

Stipulations on Affiliation Status: None.
Approval of New Degree Sites: Prior Commission approval required to add off-campus sites beyond the University service area, and in Wuhan, China.
Approval of Distance Education Degrees: No prior Commission approval required to offer online degree programs.

Reports Required: None.
Other Visits Scheduled: None.

Summary of Commission Review

Year of Last Comprehensive Evaluation: 2006 - 2007
Year for Next Comprehensive Evaluation: 2016 - 2017
Date of Last Action: 04/25/2007

Name Change:
Wisconsin State College and Technical Institute to Wisconsin State University-Platteville (1964) to University of Wisconsin-Platteville (1972)
ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-PLATTEVILLE
1 University Plaza
Platteville, WI 53818

Enrollment Demographics (by headcount) (HLC Posted: 04/04/2007)

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Educational Programs (HLC Posted: 04/04/2007)

Leading to Undergraduate degrees: Associate 1 2
Bachelors 43 888

Leading to Graduate degrees: Masters 7 194
Specialist 0 0
First Professional 0 0
Doctoral 0 0

Certificate Programs: Pre-Associate 0 0
Other Undergraduate 6 8
Post-baccalaureate 5 28

Dual Enrollment (HLC Posted: 04/04/2007)

Headcount in all dual enrollment (high school) 10

Off-Campus Activities (HLC Posted: 04/04/2007)

In-State: Campuses: None
Sites: Janesville (UW-Rock County) ; Menasha (UW-Fox Valley)
Course Locations: None

Out-of-State: Campuses: None
Sites: None
Course Locations: None

Out-of-U.S.: Campuses: None
Sites: Wuhan, China
Course Locations: None

Distance Education Certificate and Degree (HLC Posted: 04/04/2007)

B.S. in Business Administration Internet
B.S. in Business Administration Correspondence
B.S. in Criminal Justice Internet
M.S. in Criminal Justice Internet
M.S. in Project Management Internet
M.S.E. Adult Education Video/CD ROM
M.S. Adult Education Internet
Certificate (grad) in Advanced Project Management Internet
Certificate (grad) in Engineering Management Internet

HLC Posted: 04/30/2007
Printed: 05/02/2007
ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-PLATTEVILLE
1 University Plaza
Platteville, WI 53818

Certificate (grad) in Project Management
Certificate (undergrad) in Food Marketing
Certificate (undergrad) in Human Resource Management
Certificate (undergrad) in International Business
Certificate (undergrad) in Leadership and Human Performance

Internet
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