

NCA Accreditation Update

J A N U A R Y 2 0 0 6

Wayne State University has been accredited since 1915 by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, one of the six regional agencies that accredit U.S. colleges and universities at the institutional level. Accreditation provides assurance to the public and to prospective students that standards of quality have been met.

A team from the Commission will visit Wayne State February 12-14, 2007 to evaluate whether the university continues to meet the requirements for accreditation.

CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE

Like puzzle pieces in the bigger picture, the way Wayne State University finds itself embedded in the larger community will ensure its long-lasting presence and contribution to its constituents.

During the NCA self-study process, the WSU community's activities related to Criterion Five, Engagement and Service, will help determine the degree to which the university and its constituents are in sync related to their collective goals and overall purpose. As Criterion Five sub-committee chair Loreleigh Keashly said, the university must find how it serves the community, but also look for deeper connections. "For Wayne State, do we think we're embedded as fully part of the community?" she asked. "Universities are often seen as ivory towers, but it is not true. We draw from and contribute to the community."

Keashly said many academic institutions have recently been grappling with engagement and are trying to discern what engagement looks like to their organizations and constituents. "The NCA requires that WSU understand itself as engaged and think about how other people would know that," she said. "We have tremendous pride as an urban institution, which plays a big part in engagement."

The NCA self-study process is a time to examine and reflect upon being involved and finding ways to articulate those successes that contribute to the community. "An institution not only needs to say it is engaged, but it must gather evidence and draw a picture of it by taking WSU's perspective and combining it with how others see the university," she said.

Keashly said a primary challenge facing the university is discovering how to learn about such a complex organization and what it does. However, she said it is one

the university can readily take on. One evidence-gathering method being used to learn about and demonstrate WSU's commitment to community engagement is identifying and cataloging the university's community-based programs. Another method being used for the engagement and service section of the NCA self-study is multi-level surveys. Data on organized programs and activities are being gathered through a web-based survey of program directors that will be distributed in January 2006. Information on faculty, staff and students' individual contributions will be gathered in collaboration with the Office of Community Relations, Office of the Dean of Students, the Honors Program and Schools and Colleges later in the Winter term. Information collected through these surveys will be a critical element of WSU's documentation of engagement and service for the NCA self-study report. Therefore, extensive efforts are being made to ensure active participation throughout the campus community.

According to Keashly, the benefits from this process will live well beyond the NCA study because they will provide the foundation for an ongoing database of the university's community engagement efforts. The new database will offer a comprehensive view of the university's community involvement. It will also help identify places where coordination between WSU and its constituents could result in an even farther reach into the community.

Keashly said WSU faculty and staff are always developing and using skills beyond their roles in the classroom and the office. From development, training and representation in the community to the ways students are introduced to their fields outside the classroom, there is a substantial exchange between WSU and its



The NCA Accreditation Update newsletter will be compiled and distributed monthly beginning in November 2005 to February 2007 when the NCA self-study and site visit have been completed. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide information to the Wayne State community about the self-study and reaccreditation process and to address issues related to these efforts. We invite you to forward any suggestions you have for topics to be addressed in future updates. Suggestions can be sent to:

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WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY



constituencies. Job shadowing, co-op programs, internships, practica, organizational service projects and co-curricular programs (e.g., alternative spring break, where students rehabilitate communities) all provide rich opportunities for students to get hands-on experience while contributing to the world outside of WSU.

By compiling information on engagement and service, WSU will be able to facilitate not just the NCA self-study, but also better define and meet WSU's challenges and goals. "We're about creating opportunity and facilitating capacity for both WSU and its constituents," Keashly said.

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An engaged university develops mutually beneficial partnerships with our community as catalysts for the social, cultural, economic and educational enrichment of the region. Characteristics include:

- Providing technical assistance in research and best practice elements and developing infrastructure that supports such activities
- Capacity building and leadership development in community members; provide vision and problem-solving expertise to facilitate development.
- Assessing needs
- Providing expert knowledge by sharing expertise
- Creating a nexus of researcher-practice interests
- Fostering clinical training opportunities, field education sites, internship possibilities; support and encourage student service in the community; ensure service learning courses offer "real world applicability"
- Offering alternative pathways to teaching, getting a degree and other desirable outcomes
- Communicating/raising awareness of resources available to partners and make them accessible to the community (e.g., the Planetarium, Museum of Natural History, geological collection and the Museum of Anthropology)
- Developing interest, skill and motivation toward careers and various professions and disciplines via programs with area high schools
- Partnering between area-focused groups on campus and those in the community (e.g., MOT and the American Ballet Theatre and Department of Dance; CLAS and Detroit Science Center; Music and DSO, MOT)
- Offering provisions for services such as health care and for entertainment and cultural activities such as theatre (No Fear Shakespeare, Bonstelle Theatre), dance, athletics
- Developing technologies and practices critical to partners (e.g., Engineering)
- Building bridges and connections to various communities

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