
APPENDIX 2.5

Written clarification from Student Affairs on efforts to evaluate services

Accreditation Questions or Corrections on Matters of Fact

Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support Services

May 9, 2008

Dr. Eileen Coughlin, Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support Services

Page 37, third paragraph

Current language: "Facilities are generally in good condition."

Suggested correction in language: "Other than Carver Gymnasium, the facilities are generally in good condition." The cover letter of the 2007-2017 Capital Plan and 2007-2009 Capital Budget Request provided to the accreditation team lists Carver as second in priority order for major capital funding and states that "electrical and mechanical systems have exceeded their useful life, structural seismic upgrades and disabled access improvements are needed, and gender equity issues require attention." Page 25 of that report shows Carver Gymnasium as a rating of poor in all categories including shell, interiors, services, and equipment and furnishings.

Page 38, Concern

There was a concern stated on page 38 under Standard Three that indicates that, "The division has not systematically evaluated student services and programs and used the results from these evaluations as a basis for change (3.B.6). While some departments have evaluated student services and programs, many have not done so. It was not apparent that results from the evaluations were readily used for change."

We are seeking clarification of this concern based on information (provided below, and attached) that was included in the self-study and exhibits. It is not factually correct to indicate that many of our departments have not evaluated programs and services. The list below is extracted from our written submission under Standard Three, as examples of the Division's assessment efforts and use of data to implement change. The materials submitted provided examples in the great majority of departments – 12 of the 16 referred to in the self-study – with specific references to implementation in many of the examples.

During the campus visit, no questions were posed to any member of the Student Affairs Division to clarify or otherwise seek information regarding assessment or utilization of results. Additional information on the remaining departments would have been provided had questions been asked regarding the submission of materials.

In the self-study, we identified our desire to take our assessment and planning efforts to a new level in which every area has formal training in outcomes-based planning tied to a curricular approach. Based upon our research, very few Student Affairs divisions in the country have established division-wide learning outcome based teams. Our Division Assessment Resource Team (DART) is presenting a half-day pre-conference workshop at the upcoming International Assessment and Retention Conference so that others can learn from our approach. The team's

invitation to present at the conference is indicative of the level at which we are perceived by colleagues.

This is a commitment to a higher level of learning outcomes which we aspire to achieve, and should not be confused with a lack of assessment or data-driven improvement in our current planning efforts.

In holding ourselves to these higher aspirations, it appears that our long history of assessment may have been overlooked.

The following represents specific examples of assessment data used to shape decision-making, as cited in Standard Three of the self-study report and provided to the committee:

- Non-enrollee survey—Admissions
- Quality of life survey—University Residences
- Survey of college unions—Viking Union
- Annual development survey—Career Services
- National college health assessment—Health Center
- External consultant assessment—Financial Aid
- External consultant assessment—Bookstore
- Student voice survey—Primary Prevention and Wellness
- Accreditation assessment/review—Counseling Center
- Utilization data—Counseling Center
- External consultant assessment—Campus Recreation
- Quality assurance program—Financial Aid
- Retention data (OIART)—Student Support Services
- Average credits data (OIART)—Academic Advising

Extraction from our report on student assessments

- **Page 3•10 - 3•11:** “Qualitative and quantitative assessment data have helped Division departments make many improvements in the programs and services they provide, including:
 - The development of an online Transfer Course Equivalency Guide, to help community college students transferring to Western. The guide, searchable three ways, provides equivalency information for specific courses, as well as for subject area, academic college, and/or General University Requirements.
 - The development of an online advising tool—the Curriculum, Advising, and Program Planning (CAPP) Degree Evaluation—that enables students and advisors to evaluate completed course work relative to degree requirements.
 - The development of automated transfer articulation which generates a course by course equivalency for students transferring to Western and, when combined with the CAPP Degree Evaluation, helps students determine what requirements they must complete to graduate with a specific major.
 - The development of a new Financial Aid website that enables students to apply for short-term emergency loans, perform job and scholarship searches, print needed forms, and access financial aid status and award information online.
 - The creation of a half-time Graduate and Pre-Professional Advisor position, to better meet the needs of Western students who plan to attend graduate and/or professional school.
 - The development of an outreach advising model in Academic Advising that assigns entering undeclared students a professional advisor who works with them from Summerstart through their declaration of a major. The model also assigns advisors for students on academic warning/probation, as well as for those who have reached 120 credits and not yet declared a major.
 - The addition of a half-time Family Outreach Manager and expansion of the Parent Connection Group in New Student Services/Family Outreach to better meet the needs of parents and family members of Western students.
 - The addition of a full-time academic advisor in Academic Advising and Career Services to provide more intensive advising for undeclared students.
 - The addition of a full-time academic advisor in Student Outreach Services to serve first generation and low-income students.
 - The creation of online health services—including virtual visits, online prescription refills, and Ask the Doc (a feature of the Student Health Center’s website that enables students to ask a health question anonymously)—to better meet students’ needs.
 - The creation of an online “Countdown to Western” checklist for all entering freshmen and transfer students, that enables them to keep track of their on-campus housing status, as well as whether or not transcripts and measles clearance have been received.

(See Exhibit 3.7: Completed Assessment Reports)”
- **Page 3•22 - 3•23:**”Admissions engages in the ongoing evaluation of on-campus recruitment efforts—campus tours, Discovery Days, the Western Fall Experience, and Western Preview—and conducts an annual surveys of students who are admitted to Western but choose not to attend. It also conducts a bi-annual survey of enrolling students. Data collected through these means enables the office to more effectively shape its publications

and messages, and keep current with the changing expectations of prospective students and their families. Results from the surveys are used to improve Admissions programs and services... (see Exhibit 3.16: Sample Admissions Survey.)”

- **Page 3•24:** “In response to evaluations, the Office of New Student Services/Family Outreach is exploring the expansion of Summerstart from a one-day program to a two-day program; this would provide increased opportunities for addressing student concerns about course registration...”
- **Page 3•30:** “The Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management plays a key role in working with the Registrar’s Office to interpret enrollment headcount, student credit hour, and full-time equivalency data, which, in turn, is used to schedule classes and ensure that adequate space is available, particularly in General University Requirement courses. Enrollment headcount and student credit hour data is also used by the Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management, in partnership with the Enrollment Planning Group, to determine how many freshmen and transfer students should be admitted each year, to meet institutional and state enrollment targets.”
- **Page 3•32:** “Based on feedback from students and families, the Financial Aid Office has made several changes in the way information is made available and delivered. As a direct result of assessment efforts, all financial aid forms are now available online, via the Financial Aid website. Also, in response to student feedback, the office has revised their enrollment requirements for graduate students...to better fit the graduate curriculum and students’ needs.”
- **Page 3•35:** “Western has implemented several changes as a result of recommendations made by these groups, including: the practice of assigning all undeclared freshmen an advisor during Summerstart or Orientation; the creation of the *Major Guides*; the development of a set of guiding principles for advising; and the development of two new online tools for students—the Transfer Course Equivalency Guide, and a Curriculum, Advising, and Program Planning Degree Evaluation.”
- **Page 3•36:** “In response to the increasing number of Western students who have expressed an interest in pre-professional programs, a half-time advising position was recently created to work with pre-professional students and students planning to enroll in post-graduate programs...”
- **Page 3•38:** “Of the students seen at the Counseling Center in 2005-06, 13% reported a past suicide attempt, 23% reported past or current bingeing/purging behavior, 30% reported a history of violence or abuse, and 20% reported past or current self-injury. In response, the center has doubled the size of its pre-professional training program and begun to offer more psycho-educational workshops, to increase the number of students [it] is able to serve.”
- **Page 3•40:** “To meet students’ [increased] demand for residential living, the university has rented off-campus space and developed alternative temporary housing in townhouse-style apartments.”
- **Page 3•47 - 3•48:** “Through the ongoing assessment of local and national trends, the bookstore is able to alter merchandise selection, buying patterns, staffing, and operations in response to these challenges.”

- **Page 3•59:** “Assessment responsibilities have been built into the job description of the Special Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support Services, and the Division is in the process of developing a Division-wide, outcomes-based assessment plan. For the last decade, assessment has been an ongoing topic of conversation within the Division and, as evidenced by the numerous assessment data cited in this self-study report, Division staff continue to make good use of assessment in every aspect of student support services. “

In addition to the examples cited above, the report outlined numerous committee reviews and/or invitations for public comment from the campus community as an additional mechanism of assessment, as was done with the Student Code revisions, the academic advising study group, and the leadership study group. Numerous materials were provided in the display room, including consultant reports, which support our assessment efforts in these areas.

In reviewing our materials, it became apparent that while we identified our current programs, our aspirations toward excellence may have diminished the inclusion of the aforementioned efforts, thus making it easy for a reader to take our self-criticism and future aspirations as a lack of current assessment efforts despite our factual representation of current efforts.