

## **HLC 2001 Team Report Overview**

### **Strategic Planning**

The need for a strategic plan for the campus that links academic priorities, directions and needs to financial planning and operations is evident. (21)

However, as with the assessment of student achievement, there exists no recognized campus-wide plan and no design for the systematic review of programs and services. This deficiency has been recognized by the institution, and the provost has been charged with the development of an institutional strategic academic plan. (62)

There was minimal evidence of integral use of data in decision-making at the institution. An institutional strategic plan would provide direction and help prevent individual units such as colleges from steering their own course, possibly in a direction detrimental to the institution as a whole. (62)

Efforts are needed to develop an institutional process for academic strategic planning that includes procedures for program review and the assessment of student achievement. The plan should be tied to the mission and purposes of the institution. College- and unit-level strategic plans should be closely linked to the central plan. (63)

Despite significant real accomplishments across the spectrum of its activities, the institution faces challenges in implementing a full program of assessment, in bringing together strategic planning efforts into an institutional plan, in managing growth in enrollment and in graduate programs which strains faculty and staff resources, in maintaining the physical plant, and in evaluating its academic programs. (71)

Because of the conspicuous lack of institutional direction, support, and monitoring for assessment of student academic achievement, and because of several years of planning without completion of a strategic plan, the team recommends that a visit focused on these two areas be made in the fall of 2005. (71)

### **Alumni**

As the alumni association's efforts have a very direct effect on the development program, a more effective structure might merge the alumni association activities with development efforts. (22)

### **Instructional Technology**

The flow of innovation and upgrades in instructional technology requires careful planning and a steady flow of resources. For example, funds have recently been allocated to create additional technology-equipped classrooms, but there are no recurring dollars for maintenance and upgrades, despite expectations of instant technical support. (26)

### **Academic Skills Center and Writing Center**

The greatest challenge appears to be maintaining the quality and variety of services for a growing student population without increasing staff and budget resources. (26)

Evaluation of services provided is also needed to support improvements. (27)

### **Center for Teaching and Learning**

At a time when the institution is encouraging faculty to improve instruction and make more use of computers in their teaching, the center needs sufficient staff to provide guidance. It appears that the administration values the services provided, but campus growth is stretching the limits of what can be done for students and faculty. (27)

### **Libraries**

Staffing shortages limit what can be accomplished in service to their constituencies; and cataloging, processing of materials, and instruction are all short-changed as a result. (29)

The most striking deficiency of the library system is the setting of the Archives and Regional History Collections Library. . . Its [East Hall] condition is deplorable. Plaster and paint are falling as a result of roof and steam leaks, and several areas are closed because of the resulting lead hazard. There appear to be active roof leaks. (30)

### **Assessment**

The team wishes to emphasize the importance of utility in the planning and implementation of institutional assessment plans. What an institution does in the area of assessment must be viewed as useful by the institution. The heavy emphasis on the administration of the COMP exam by the previous assessment office may have led to its discontinuation as well as to some campus-wide lack of respect for assessment as a useful activity. (33)

Because of the institution's failure to carry out its planned program of assessment, and because of the resulting conspicuous lack of assessment activities and the lack of a culture of assessment and maturity in many of the assessment activities being utilized, the team will recommend further monitoring of the recently planned assessment initiative through a focused visit. (33)

### **Lee Honors College**

The information from these sources, [audit of student records to monitor progress, faculty feedback, a graduation survey, student focus groups and input from the executive board of the Honors Student Association; student satisfaction survey] however, does not provide adequate feedback about the extent to which students have developed the skills and understandings they are expected to attain. This information is needed for the planning process to maintain strengths and correct weaknesses. Many of the seniors complete a thesis, an existing product that could be used as one component of an assessment plan. (36)

Without strategic planning and an adequate assessment program, there is no formal planning body and process to determine the college's future viability and effectiveness. (37)

### **The Graduate College**

The self-study report suggests that data on graduate study are thin. The university should track its graduates and evaluate program strengths and weaknesses on a regular cycle. (39)

On the other hand, much remains to be done. Graduate stipend levels and numbers need to be increased to compete nationally. Graduate program review needs to be established on a continuing basis, and tracking graduates' success is an important element. The criteria for graduate faculty status needs attention. (40)

### **OVPR**

Solid institutional research is needed to illuminate the consequences of research planning. (40)

### **College of Arts and Sciences**

There is a need for university-wide enrollment management. Departments with heavy general education responsibilities and significant increases in the number of majors feel swamped and worry about short-changing students. Chairs and faculty are concerned that graduate stipend levels are not competitive with those of peer institutions. There is a concern about resources to support the new Ph.D. programs and the additional undergraduate students. (41-42)

### **College of Fine Arts**

Students believe that programs in the arts are not well integrated with requirements in the College of Education. Students complained vigorously about receiving incompatible advising from the two colleges and about inability to reconcile requirements. Space for the various parts of the Art department was reported to be scattered and inadequate. (43)

### **Haworth College of Business**

The team advises that dependence on technology will require coordinated planning to assure timely replacement and dependable operation and that increased emphasis on the development and retention of academically qualified faculty will require monitoring of the balance between course-load requirements and research expectations. (44)

### **College of Education**

Sangren Hall, which houses the college, was built in 1964 and is in great need of renovation. . . . New faculty lines have not kept pace with the increases in enrollment. This has led to an increased reliance on part time faculty. This situation is exacerbated by the increased focus on research and outreach activities. . . . As the college faculty and staff are increasingly pulled in different directions, an additional concern is that current support of and collaboration with the public schools might be negatively impacted. . . . An additional concern, as stated in the self-study, is that the outreach activities are largely uncoordinated and lack integration. (46)

### **College of Engineering and Applied Sciences**

However, similar faculty development was not evident regarding the conduct and management of research and graduate programs where there is an increasing need. (49)

Students would benefit from a broader range of mentoring, including graduate education opportunities and methods and more extensive and structured training in teaching skills for graduate teaching assistants. Students voiced concerns regarding the availability of the Computer-Aided Engineering laboratory. An investigation of the need for longer operating hours is warranted. Faculty exhibit some workload strain resulting from the increased emphasis on research and graduate programs coupled with a limited decrease in undergraduate teaching load. (49)

### **College of Aviation**

The college is advised to continue its effective planning and analysis of needs and operations and its effective implementation. College and university leadership should identify and agree on a funding plan for the college. (50)

### **College of Health and Human Services**

Challenges include further increasing the number of underrepresented minorities among the students, faculty, and staff; obtaining additional public and private monies to meet the identified needs and support the planned activities in the college in teaching, research, and service; and

development of a college-wide database of pertinent assessment information to complement the institutional office of assessment. (51)

### **Division of Continuing Education (Extended University Programs)**

Currently there is no comprehensive strategic plan for development of each of the centers, nor is there an adequate assessment plan. The program mix is a product of individual initiatives taken over time by the administration, continuing education and center staff, and academic departments in response to demand and funding opportunities. (53)

If expansion of off-campus graduate programs is to occur, creative solutions to the problem of increased faculty load must be developed. Visibility of the regional centers in university marketing and publicity should be increased, given the percent of WMU graduate credit they produce. (55)

WMU should develop a comprehensive assessment and strategic plan for continuing education, distance education, and the regional centers. The institution should clarify and strengthen roles of academic units and leadership in providing advocacy, oversight, and budgeting for regional center programs, giving the units a higher stake in delivery and outcomes. Off-campus faculty should be offered development programs that focus on adult learners at off-campus locations. (55)

### **International Affairs and Haenicke Institute for International Studies**

Although International Affairs has made plans for student recruitment and the development of twinning programs through 2010, only a modest amount of assessment appears to be occurring. Focus groups are held following orientations for international students. Although progress reports for students in the twinning programs are developed, there appears to be no overall evaluation of the programs themselves, and the programs appear to be mostly the result of individual entrepreneurial efforts. (56)

The area studies programs do not appear to be functioning, and it is reported that about one-third of the faculty hired through the international initiative have resigned. The institute identifies lack of resources as one barrier to continued globalization of the curriculum. In addition, priorities need to be developed to identify areas to receive increased emphasis. (56)

Although several twinning programs have been developed in different countries, to date the role, scope, shape, and success of these programs has not been assessed. While the old area studies have not attracted students for several years, as yet no new programs have been developed, or even planned, to replace them. (57)

Although both areas occupy the same building, there appears to be no formal interaction between International Affairs, which is in Academic Affairs, and Multicultural Programs, which is in Student Affairs. (57)

### **Division of Student Affairs**

While significant progress, in relative terms, has been made since the 1991 NCA visit, there continues to be a serious deficiency in appropriate resources for the division to accomplish its purpose and achieve its vision. Student life must remain a central focus for strategic planning across all divisions. (58)

Among the division's areas of concern is the Sindecuse Health Center where there appears to be a leadership vacuum that is contributing to a demoralized staff and an organization in disarray. (59)

The decision to merge the two offices serving the disabled student population should provide greater effectiveness and efficiency. . . . It is recommended that a careful review be made to determine the appropriate level of professional and clerical support needed to provide quality support services. (59)

Consideration should be given to making the [Bernhard] center one that students identify as their special place. (59)

### **Division of Intercollegiate Athletics**

While the WMU division of intercollegiate athletics was certified by the NCAA in 1999, additional progress must be made in gaining gender equity (see data above). . . . There is both need and opportunity to increase the total revenue derived from intercollegiate sports at WMU. (61-62)

### **NCA Affiliation**

The undergraduate catalog includes the institution's NCA affiliation status but does not have the Commission address and telephone number. The graduate catalog lacks the reference. In future, all appropriate documents will reference NCA affiliations and will incorporate the address and telephone number. (65)

### **Institutional Change**

WMU is reminded to be vigilant in making certain that approval is obtained from the Higher Learning Commission in advance of implementation for any such program in the future. . . . [Reference here is to the MBA program in Singapore, offered with the cooperation of the Center for American Education.] WMU may not initiate any other international degree program or any degree program outside the state of Michigan without prior approval from the Higher Learning Commission. (66)