



April 5, 2019

Dear President Ramaswamy,

We are concerned by the recent proposed changes to standards put forward by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Our concerns center on three key areas of change, as well as the revision process.

Shared Governance

Shared governance is variously defined by many parties, yet, at its heart represents an alignment of priorities across many university levels. This alignment serves to strengthen the ability of a university to achieve its primary goal, that of educating and providing opportunities for its students. The alignment of priorities should be achieved through various avenues, the most straightforward of which is the incorporation of faculty voice in matters that bear directly on them. This incorporation of faculty voice in university governance (as listed in current standard 2.A.1), the role of faculty in curriculum design, approval and implementation (as listed in current standard 2.C.5) as well as the role of faculty in the selection of peers (also current standard 2.C.5) are all key aspects of the alignment of priorities for a functional university. While the proposed standards do mention consideration of faculty and staff voice, it is our opinion that the wording proposed (proposed standard 2.A.5) represents a lowering of expectations that will result in weaker university governance. This weakening of shared governance will ultimately compromise the ability of universities to provide quality education to students.

Academic Freedom

The complete removal of any reference to academic freedom is highly problematic. Protection from internal and external influences (as listed in current standard 2.A.27) and promotion of an environment of open exploration (as listed in current standard 2.A.28) represent the cornerstone of a university's existence. Further, the expectation of fair, accurate and objective scholarship on the part of faculty (as listed in current standard 2.A.29) bolsters the respect and trustworthiness of an institution. The protection of academic freedom is critical to the production of scholarly work as well as educating students. We are concerned that these standards have been removed in the proposed version. We recommend the inclusion of these three fundamental aspects of academic freedom in the new standards proposal.

Faculty Senate

400 East University Way • Ellensburg WA 98926-7509 • Office: 509-963-3231 • Fax: 509-963-3204
Barge, room 409 • Web: www.cwu.edu/faculty-senate
EEO/AA/TITLE IX INSTITUTION • FOR ACCOMMODATION E-MAIL: CDS@CWU.EDU



Human Resources

In addition to our concerns surrounding shared governance and academic freedom, we are also concerned about the removal of two standards related to human resources. In the current standards, expectations of opportunity and support for professional growth (as listed in current standard 2.B.3) as well as expectations for appropriate responsibilities and workloads (as listed in current standard 2.B.5) form a foundation for accreditation in the area of human resources. Excellence at a university can only come from the inclusion of these opportunities and expectations for faculty and staff. It is difficult to see how an institution could fulfill its mission without both of these expectations to promote employee competence and sustainability.

Revision Process

Finally, a significant amount of work by faculty and administrators was required to determine the differences between current and proposed standards. Although the content in the proposed standards is generally acceptable, we were most concerned about the current standards which were excluded. In the interest of transparency and efficiency, we strongly recommend that future standards proposals be provided with a mapping between current and proposed standards to make the review by member institutions less time-intensive and more productive.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed standards, and thank you for extending the deadline to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Amy Claridge".

Amy Claridge
Faculty Senate Chair
*On Behalf of the Central Washington
University Faculty Senate, Endorsed
April 3, 2019*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Katherine Frank".

Katherine Frank
Provost/ VP Academic and Student Life

Faculty Senate

400 East University Way • Ellensburg WA 98926-7509 • Office: 509-963-3231 • Fax: 509-963-3204
Barge, room 409 • Web: www.cwu.edu/faculty-senate
EEO/AA/TITLE IX INSTITUTION • FOR ACCOMMODATION E-MAIL: CDS@CWU.EDU