



CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Board of Trustees
July 20, 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY-INFORMATION – Trustees’ Role in NWCCU Reaffirmation of Accreditation (Handout 1)

BACKGROUND: The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) is the regional accreditor for CWU. Regional accreditation differs from specialized accreditation in that, whereas specialized accrediting agencies such as the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) evaluate and accredit specific academic programs (e.g., Safety and Health Management in CWU’s Department of Engineering Technologies, Safety and Construction), regional accrediting bodies evaluate and accredit entire institutions.

Accreditation began as a voluntary process of peer review that colleges and universities used to establish standards for quality educational offerings, institutional integrity, and more mundane (but important) matters of transferring credits earned from one institution to another. Given that this occurred primarily around the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States, when travel was more limited and institutions were less differentiated in their offerings, it made sense that colleges and universities would form these voluntary associations based on region rather than some other factor.

While regional accreditation is still technically voluntary and based on peer review, without accreditation institutions are not eligible to apply for and receive federal funding. This funding includes research grants and student support programs such as the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), GEAR-UP, Upward Bound, Student Support Services, and the McNair Scholars Program – all of which serve CWU students. Moreover, without accreditation, institutions are not eligible for Title IV funding – including federal student loans, Pell grants, work study, and all other forms of federal student financial aid.

It has also been asserted that accreditation entitles institutions to the confidence of the educational community and the public. This, however, has been less the case recently – as the public and elected officials have observed accredited institutions closing because of financial difficulties – and research suggesting that college students are not acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to enter the workforce or be sufficiently prepared for post-baccalaureate education. This has had two primary outcomes: 1) calls for a quality assurance system other than peer review accreditation; and 2) heightened scrutiny of institutions by accrediting bodies. For the time being, however, regional accreditation remains the system in place. Federal and state governments continue to rely on regional accreditors such as the NWCCU to provide academic quality assurance and, more recently, demonstration of continuous institutional improvement grounded in student learning outcomes and program educational objectives.

Please find frequently asked questions regarding NWCCU accreditation here:

<http://www.nwccu.org/Glossary%20and%20FAQs/FAQs/FAQs.htm>.

FALL 2018 EVALUATION VISIT: A NWCCU peer review team will come to Ellensburg in fall 2018 to evaluate the extent of CWU's mission fulfillment based on the Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation adopted in 2010. Trustees are an integral part of this process.

CWU will likely not know who the NWCCU evaluators are or their on-campus meeting schedule until Spring 2018. Typically, evaluators meet with trustees as a group – often over breakfast or lunch. Sometimes these meetings are formal question-and-answer sessions; sometimes the evaluators prefer a more informal discussion. Once CWU knows the team chair and other members of the evaluation team, we will be able to provide specifics about the anticipated meeting with trustees.

TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES DURING REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION: The NWCCU Accreditation Standards reference governing boards in Standard One: Mission and Core Themes, and in Standard Two: Resources and Capacity. These standards are provided below.

Some evaluators will specifically refer to these standards during discussions with CWU stakeholders; others will not. Evaluators will likely be particularly interested in trustees' perspectives on CWU's student profile, mission, core themes, challenges and adaptability, sustainability (both financially and in terms of the quality and competitiveness of academic offerings and student services), and the Board's interactions with faculty, staff, students, and administrators.

Standard One: Mission and Core Themes

The institution articulates its purpose in a mission statement, and identifies core themes that comprise essential elements of that mission. The institution defines the parameters for mission fulfillment and an acceptable extent of mission fulfillment.

1.A – Mission

1.A.1 The institution has a widely published mission statement—approved by its governing board—that articulates a purpose appropriate for an institution of higher learning, gives direction for its efforts, and derives from, and is generally understood by, its community.

1.A.2 The institution defines mission fulfillment in the context of its purpose, characteristics, and expectations. Guided by that definition, it articulates institutional accomplishments or outcomes that represent an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment.

1.B – Core Themes

1.B.1 The institution identifies core themes that individually manifest essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass its mission.

1.B.2 The institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes

Standard Two: Resources and Capacity

By documenting the adequacy of its resources and capacity, the institution demonstrates the potential to fulfill its mission, accomplish its core theme objectives, and achieve the intended outcomes of its programs and services, wherever offered and however delivered. Through its governance and decision-making structures, the institution establishes, reviews regularly, and revises, as necessary, policies and procedures that promote effective management and operation of the institution.

2.A – Governance: Governing Board

- 2.A.4** The institution has a functioning governing board consisting of at least five voting members, a majority of whom have no contractual, employment, or financial interest in the institution. If the institution is governed by a hierarchical structure of multiple boards, the roles, responsibilities, and authority of each board—as they relate to the institution—are clearly defined, widely communicated, and broadly understood.
- 2.A.5** The board acts only as a committee of the whole; no member or subcommittee of the board acts on behalf of the board except by formal delegation of authority by the governing board as a whole.
- 2.A.6** The board establishes, reviews regularly, revises as necessary, and exercises broad oversight of institutional policies, including those regarding its own organization and operation.
- 2.A.7** The board selects and evaluates regularly a chief executive officer who is accountable for the operation of the institution. It delegates authority and responsibility to the CEO to implement and administer board-approved policies related to the operation of the institution.
- 2.A.8** The board regularly evaluates its performance to ensure its duties and responsibilities are fulfilled in an effective and efficient manner.

Questions Trustees Should Be Prepared to Answer

- 1. What do you see as the primary mission of the institution?** Has that mission changed or evolved since the last NWCCU site visit (fall 2009) or since the NWCCU Mid-Cycle Evaluation visit (fall 2014)? Thinking about the institution's future, is the mission likely to remain the same – or change? If the mission is likely to change, how and why do you see it changing?
- 2. What are the institution's core themes?** How do those core themes relate to the institution's mission? Have those core themes changed or evolved since the last NWCCU site visit (fall 2009) or since the NWCCU Mid-Cycle Evaluation visit (Fall 2014)? Thinking about the institution's future, are those core themes likely to remain the same – or change? If they are likely to change, how and why do you see them changing?
- 3. To what extent is the institution fulfilling its mission and core themes?** Where and in what ways is the institution exceeding the expectations it set for itself? Where and in what ways is the institution falling short? What can/should be done to address those shortcomings?

4. Since the last NWCCU site visit, **in what ways has the institution had to adapt to changing circumstances** – in terms of both external and internal factors? How well has the institution adapted to change? Thinking about the future, how well-equipped is the institution to adapt to change?
5. What are the **primary challenges the institution has had to overcome** since the last NWCCU site visit (Fall 2009) or since the NWCCU Mid-Cycle Evaluation visit (Fall 2014)? What are the primary challenges the institution currently faces? What challenges are on the horizon? How do you see the institution addressing and overcoming those challenges?
6. **How do you ensure that, as trustees, you are meeting the requirements of NWCCU Standards 1.A.1, 2.A.4, 2.A.5, 2.A.6, 2.A.7, and 2.A.8** listed above?
7. What is the **nature of the board's relationship(s) with administrators, faculty, staff, and students?**

Submitted:



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APPROVED FOR SUBMISSION TO THE BOARD:



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