Year Seven Comprehensive Accreditation Visit

Daniel J. Bernardo
Provost and Executive Vice President
Washington State University
bernardo@wsu.edu
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)

Washington State University is federally accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)

- One of six regional accrediting bodies for all U.S. institutions of higher education
- Works with the U. S. Department of Education
- Oversees all schools in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington
Importance of Institutional Accreditation

• Non-accredited institutions cannot receive federal or state financial aid for students

• Employers are skeptical of degrees earned from non-accredited institutions

• Graduates of non-accredited institutions cannot stand for licensing exams

• Researchers at non-accredited institutions are usually ineligible to compete for research funds

• Professional accrediting organizations will not consider degree programs that are housed in non-accredited institutions

• Transfer of credit is almost impossible without it

WSU’s Year Seven Visit is scheduled April 9-11, 2018
Valuable Aspects of Accreditation

- Helps align priorities with mission and strategic goals
- Helps direct resources to identified priorities
- Gives the university an accurate and realistic picture of what it is doing well, and what can be improved
- Encourages a focus on educational best practices
As an accredited institution, the upcoming review is to reaffirm Washington State University’s accreditation.

- A complete university review cycle is seven years based on expectations for continuous improvement.
- The 7-year review includes an on-site evaluation.

WSU’s Year Seven Visit is scheduled April 9-11, 2018
Self-Study Report

• At several points during the 7-year cycle, the institution writes a self-study report that addresses required performance standards.
  – WSU’s 7-year report was prepared during 2016-17 academic year, and coordinated through the Office of the Provost.
  – The report is oriented around WSU’s Strategic Plan and advancement toward institutional goals.
  – The report emphasizes the educational mission of WSU, and also includes research and outreach.
  – The Accreditation Report will be available at accreditation.wsu.edu.
NWCCU Assembled Review Team

• Will visit WSU Pullman on April 9-11, 2018 to review the entire WSU system.

• Team consists of administrators, can include staff and faculty from similar institutions (peers).

• The review team gathers information to elaborate on topics in the self-study report.

• Can meet with whomever they like while on campus.

• Following the site visit, the review team will discuss immediate reactions with President Schulz. The review team will follow up with formal report/recommendation to NWCCU.
Five Performance Standards

• Mission and Core Themes: The institution’s activities are guided by a mission statement that includes essential themes.

• Resources and Capacity: The institution has adequate resources and capacity to fulfill its mission and accomplish core theme objectives.

• Planning and Implementation: The institution has formal, flexible, and participatory planning and implementation processes.

• Effectiveness and Improvement: The institution regularly collects data on clearly defined indicators of achievement, analyzes those data, and uses the results to improve performance.

• Mission Fulfillment, Adaptation, and Sustainability: The institution publishes evidence-based evaluations of its performance.
Recommendations from NWCCU

• Recommendations are problem areas or issues that need immediate attention.

• Progress must be documented by a specified date.

• If progress on a Recommendation is not made, NWCCU can increase demands and/or implement oversight, and/or impose an adverse status (warning or probation).

• Addressing Recommendations can require re-prioritization of resources and suspension of university initiatives.

Recommendations can be disruptive; WSU wants to avoid them if at all possible.
Representative Recommendations

- The following are representative examples of recent recommendations received by WSU:
  - Instructed to identify which of its strategic plan metrics are considered “mission essential.”
  - Clarify how strategic plan metrics, and student learning outcomes, relate to mission fulfillment.
  - Strengthen faculty involvement in assessment of student learning outcomes and use of findings for decision making.
Commendations from NWCCU

- WSU can receive, and has received, Commendations for things we are doing exceptionally well.

- Commendations can be received in any area, but are often focused on academics, student supports, technology, strategic planning.

- Commendations are a matter of public record and are shared with the legislature, so they are valuable to earn.
Representative Commendations

• The following are representative examples of recent commendations received by WSU:

  – Thorough communication and explanation of degree program structures and requirements to undergraduate and graduate students.

  – Strong emphasis on assessment of student learning outcomes, on all campuses and in graduate as well as undergraduate programs.

  – A clear commitment to mission-critical goals and movement toward aspirational goals.
Questions

accreditation.wsu.edu
provosts.office@wsu.edu