

## **DRAFT Accreditation Process**

UAF has a self-study due in early 2011, and will have a site visit in Fall 2011. NWCCU has a new accreditation process and standards. The new accreditation process would normally take seven years to complete, but UAF will need to complete it in the next two years. As yet, detailed standards have not been prepared; all that is available is an outline. The new standards are projected to be complete in February 2010.

The new NWCCU accreditation process can be summarized as ‘plan, implement, assess, improve’. The accreditation process is based on UAF’s mission, and our report to the commission must show that we are fulfilling our mission. Documentation is essential at each step. So goals, plans and their implementation need to be developed with those requirements in mind.

The first step (“Standard One”) is to identify and communicate a clearly defined institutional mission and core themes within that mission. (Themes are simply the most important parts of the mission). “Institutions are expected to identify goals and intended outcomes, each with assessable indicators of achievement, for its mission and for [each of] its core themes. These indicators are the foundation for assessment of achievements and effectiveness”. (NWCCU accreditation workshop materials)

### **A. Process for Standard One:**

1. UAF wide committee will be selected to identify the themes, and associated goals and outcomes, and develop the assessment plane including indicators. In doing this they need to use existing planning documents (recall, our last full accreditation review was in 2001), but they should also modify the theme and goals as needed to reflect changes in the institution. Also, earlier documents were not written with this new accreditation process in mind, and so we need to think how to recast the themes and goals so that we can do the required assessment and analysis.

The UAF-wide committee members would consist of Dean of the Graduate School, Assistant Provost (representing General Studies and cross-university student success initiatives), and one representative from each school or college or research institute or CES (senior faculty who is also a member of the unit committee, described below) and the Library and the Museum, plus a representative from Faculty Senate, staff council, and ASUAF plus staff from critical areas (admissions and advising center, IT). Research will be included, but the approach is still under consideration; research may have a separate, oversight group as well. Broad (faculty, staff, student) input would be obtained through forums and surveys.

Examples of themes include Research, Baccalaureate Education, Graduate Education, Workforce Development, Community-Based Education, Outreach and Extension [Note 2/25: After discussions the draft list has been changed to Research, Creative Activity, and Scholarship; Baccalaureate Education; Graduate Education; Workforce Development; Community-Based Education; and Community Engagement and Economic Development]. Obviously, there will be areas of overlap, no matter what themes are chosen. We should aim for a limited number of themes, because each one will be the focus of considerable effort and reporting. Research is clearly an important part of our

mission but has not been a focus of accreditation reviews, before. The Provost and VCR are discussing how best to include it in this process.

2. School or college (or Library or Museum or research institute) committees will develop plans for their units. The composition will vary somewhat because of differences in unit organization, but one approach would be to include a faculty representative from each department (or equivalent), a couple of at large representatives, and appropriate staff such as recruiter, advisor, academic managers, etc. Their first task will be to help identify campus wide themes, goals, outcomes, and means of assessment. They will then need to decide how their unit contributes to each theme and select a representative to representatives to each theme group.

Standard One should be completed by the end of Fall semester 2009. However, themes and many of the goals and outcomes should be identified by then end of Spring, 2009. This is important because the themes will structure much of the rest of the effort.

B. Process for Standard Two. Standard Two is similar to the old accreditation standards, in that it is a report on capacity in areas like faculty and facilities and support services. I anticipate that each unit committee will gather the required information and submit it to a writing committee selected from the Campuswide committee. The writing committee will be charged with the summary and analysis. Analysis needs to focus on how capacity is or is not sufficient to allow UAF to fulfill its mission, as expanded by the themes and goals.

C. Process for Standards Three and Four. The Campuswide committee (above) will organize itself into subcommittees for each theme, since the reports are organized by themes. The members of the subcommittees will be members of larger theme groups, that include unit representatives, and so will provide the connection between these committees and the Campuswide group.

The Standard Three document would need to include elaborated goals; an implementation plan, and an assessment plan for each theme.

Theme groups need to identify cross-cutting issues from the unit inputs, and make sure they are addressed as appropriate for a particular theme. For example:

- a. Retention and especially graduation rates.
- b. Core curriculum (will have input from existing committee)
- c. Interdisciplinary programs
- d. 'General Studies' students
- e. Undergraduate research
- f. Honors and special programs
- g. Advising (input from Transition committee)
- h. IT, libraries and other academic infrastructure issues
- i. Etc.

D. Process for Standard Five. This section is intended to build upon all of the previous work to provide a summative evaluation of how well the University is fulfilling its mission, whether it can sustain its performance in the future, and whether and how it can adapt to change. This section will be the responsibility of a subcommittee of the Campuswide committee, but will be discussed and reviewed by the whole group.