

Year One Peer Evaluation Report

Seattle University

Seattle, Washington

April 25, 2011

A confidential report of findings prepared
for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

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Roster with names and titles of the chair and evaluators

Chair Dr. Marvin Henberg, President of The College of Idaho

Evaluator Dr. Dawn Gallinger, Director of Institutional Effectiveness of Carroll College

Evaluator Dr. Matt Lucas, Provost and Executive Vice President of Corban University

Introduction

The Year One Report had a number of important strengths. It was well written and outlined the mission, vision, and values and their relationship to the five (5) core themes. It provided a detailed articulation of an acceptable threshold of mission fulfillment and further provided clear objectives and indicators of achievement for the core themes. It is not clear in the document how broadly participatory campus stakeholders were in the development of the core themes and identification of the objectives and indicators.

The University has aligned its core themes with the following five strategic priorities: Academic Excellence; Engaging the World; Catholic, Jesuit Character; Formation for Leadership; and Investing in the Excellence of Our Faculty and Staff. These five strategic priorities serve as the core themes.

Progress on Recommendations from Most Recent Evaluation

A January 25, 2011 letter from the NWCCU required the University to take appropriate action to ensure that Recommendation One of the fall 2010 Comprehensive Evaluation Report be addressed and resolved in the Year One Report. Recommendation One stated:

1. The 2005 Regular Interim Evaluation Report called on the University to "...solidify its proposed Assessment Plan, (to) develop a coordinated system for data collection and interpretation, and (to) clarify how continued oversight will be managed." Although progress has been made in particular areas, such practices are not consistently implemented or monitored across all units and programs of the University. In short, the University still has not yet met the requirement of a true culture of student learning outcomes assessment. Given the Commission's history of concern regarding this matter, the evaluation committee strongly recommends immediate action on the part of the University to address these deficiencies (Eligibility Requirement 12; Standard 2.B.1, 2.B.2, 2.B.3, and Policy 2.2).

The University has taken several steps to address this recommendation:

1. The Office of University Planning developed a draft document: "Framework for Systematic Assessment of Learning Outcomes." This framework included appropriate standards for assessment of learning outcomes, practices that involve all academic programs and ensure accountability, and policies that ensure comprehensive participation.
2. To address data collection and interpretation the University took a three-tiered approach. Data is collected and reviewed at the program, school/college, and institutional levels. Deans and Vice Presidents are responsible for overseeing the collection of assessment data for programs under their management. To assist with this process, each Dean

appoints an assessment coordinator. Institutional oversight is provided by the Assistant Vice President for University Planning.

3. To address the continued oversight of assessment the University assigned the duties to the Provost. The Office of University Planning is responsible for ensuring that data for all assessment efforts are collected and maintained. In the future, the availability of discretionary funding to programs may be contingent on successful assessment efforts.
4. Additionally, the University is undergoing a revision of the core curriculum with anticipated implementation beginning fall 2012. As part of the core curriculum revision, the Director of the Core is now a full-time budgeted position.

The University is commended for its progress on the creation of a framework for systematic assessment of university, academic program, and co-curricular learning outcomes. The institution has established an aligned, integrated system of educational goals, core learning outcomes, undergraduate learning objectives, academic program learning outcomes, and indicators of core theme achievement. The intentionality of the linkages amongst the outcomes and objectives and supportive assessment structures and mechanisms indicate an improved culture of assessment.

Eligibility Requirements

While Eligibility Requirement 3 is addressed throughout chapter one of the report, Eligibility Requirement 2 was not addressed. Understanding the request to write an executive summary of the Eligibility Requirements associated with this report was a late addition to the guidelines, the institution is encouraged to follow the guidelines released on March 2, 2011 to ensure its next report addresses the Eligibility Requirements as noted in the Year One submission guidelines.

Section One

Standard 1.A Mission

Seattle University clearly articulates its mission, vision, and values and has used them to provide direction for the institution's efforts, particularly setting strategic priorities, which guide resource allocation, curriculum development, and program review.

The evaluators commend the University for its five (5) institutional outcomes and characteristics that it considers to constitute acceptable thresholds of mission fulfillment. The outcomes are based on the University's mission of educating the whole person, professional formation, and empowering leaders for a just and humane world. These outcomes have clear modes of measurement and where applicable, specific peer and national benchmarks. These five outcomes define mission fulfillment in the context of the University's purpose, characteristics, and expectations.

Section 1.B Core Themes

Seattle University identifies five core themes that represent strategic priorities intended to direct the fulfillment of the University's mission in the new decade. The report provides sufficient

rationale to justify the selection and importance of each theme. The University believes that the integration of strategic planning with self evaluation strengthens and benefits both processes. The evaluators caution the institution to focus on both current activities and strategic priorities as it may be difficult to determine the *current* extent of mission fulfillment if the indicators rely too heavily on strategic initiatives that are designed to focus on the institution's future.

The report clearly identifies objectives that support each of the core themes. For each of the core theme objectives there is evidence of indirect indicators of achievement and of the fourteen (14) objectives, three (3) do not have any direct measures of achievement. The University is complimented for its inclusion of direct indicators of achievement in each core theme. *Core Theme Two: Engaging the World* includes number of students who participate in education abroad (indirect) and inventories of intercultural competencies (direct) as indicators of achievement.

Compliment: The University is complimented for its identification of both direct and indirect indicators for each of the core themes.

Summary

Seattle University has taken positive steps to respond to its one Recommendation from the 2010 Comprehensive Evaluation Report. The Year One Report also provides a thorough overview of the mission, core themes, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating the accomplishments of the objectives of its core themes.

Commendations

1. The evaluators commend Seattle University for its progress on the creation of a framework for systematic assessment of university, academic program, and co-curricular learning outcomes. The intentionality of the linkages among the outcomes and objectives and supportive assessment structures and mechanisms indicate an improved culture of assessment.
2. The evaluators commend Seattle University for its five institutional outcomes and characteristics that it considers to constitute acceptable thresholds of mission fulfillment. These outcomes have clear modes of measurement and where applicable, specific peer and national benchmarks. The University is reminded that the indicators should reflect both current activities and strategic priorities in order to evaluate mission fulfillment.