

Accreditation Chronicle

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Self-Study— Not Just Another Project

Issue Highlights

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The Importance of Accreditation:

- Provides an opportunity to thoroughly evaluate the University.
- Maintains the quality of education for all students.
- Attracts qualified personnel, which improves our educational offerings.
- Protects from undue government influence on how we operate.

A self-study is required to maintain our accreditation. Accreditation assures those with whom Cedarville University interacts that this institution is mission driven, plans for future needs, provides a quality education to students, encourages the pursuit of knowledge, and provides excellent services to our constituents. On a more practical level, it assures prospective students considering Cedarville for their education that their degree will be recognized by employers and graduate schools. In addition, the federal government requires that the financial aid it provides to students only be used at accredited institutions. Therefore, every ten years, Cedarville University must seek reaccreditation from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association, a private, regional accrediting agency. Continued on **Page 2**.

No Stone Left Unturned

The Self-Study Report will not be complete without your input. The Steering Committee and Criterion Subcommittees have been soliciting information from offices and individuals in a variety of ways over the past two years. This September will be the final opportunity you have to participate in the evaluation process and we need you to take advantage of it. The Site Team will evaluate Cedarville University on campus-wide participation. Continued on **Page 3**.

Not Just Another Project cont. (from page 1)

WE ARE TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WE FULFILL THE CRITERIA, WHILE STILL ACKNOWLEDGING AREAS THAT COULD BE IMPROVED. ULTIMATELY, THE SELF-STUDY IS A REQUIREMENT FOR ACCREDITATION, BUT IT IS ALSO A PROCESS WILL BENEFIT ALL OF US THROUGH OUR PARTICIPATION.

As part of the reaccreditation process, we complete a self-study and its subsequent report. This report is a comprehensive evaluation of the university according to five key criteria. The HLC requires that this report to be evaluative and candid. We are to demonstrate that we fulfill the criteria, while still acknowledging areas that could be improved. Since continuous improvement is a hallmark of a quality institution, the Commission wants to know that we are aware of such areas and involved in addressing them. The Self-Study report is followed by the Site Visit, scheduled for March 19-21, 2007. The Site Team will review the report and then visit campus to verify that the evidence they examine warrants our conclusions. The team will also evaluate campus-wide involvement in the self-study process and knowledge of the Self-Study Report findings. The Site Team then makes a recommendation to the HLC regarding our accreditation status. This recommendation is part of a final report which also reviews areas where Cedarville is excelling and areas where we can further enhance the institution. Ultimately, the Self-Study is a requirement for accreditation, but it is also a process will benefit all of us through our participation.

Who is the Self-Study?

Fran Campbell and Fred Merritt

Kudos go out this issue to Fran Campbell, Registrar, and Fred Merritt, Director of Financial Aid. For two years we have been asking them to supply data, verify information, clarify federal laws, and review chapter drafts. In the meantime, they have both served on criterion subcommittees. In spite of their already full schedules, they have been responsive to our requests and provided assistance beyond what we have asked. We would not be where we are right now on this project without their help. It is the investment of people like Fran and Fred that will make this Self-Study successful.

No Stone Left Unturned cont. (from page 1)

According to the *Handbook of Accreditation*, “An effective self-study... maintains regular and effective communication links with organizational constituencies. Constituencies are informed and involved; they provide frequent input and feedback. When the evaluation team reaches the campus and holds informal interviews in faculty and administrative offices, discusses the organization with staff, and chats with students in the dining areas or classroom hallways, it discovers that all of them know about the process and its results.” (pg. 5.2-1)

More importantly, this is an opportunity to examine our institution and find ways to do what we do even better. You can take part in this final review through the following means. As of August 11, 2006, the five criterion chapters will be made available on the Accreditation website (www.cedarville.edu/accreditation or click on Accreditation & Assessment under Quick Links on the web page). Executive summaries of each chapter will help you choose which chapters to read first. During September, you are invited to attend meetings for faculty, staff and students. Some will include lunch and others will include snacks. All will have gifts and door prizes to thank you for your investment of time. Future announcements will be made with the times and places, so be watching. The meetings will give you an opportunity to supply vital input for this report. Please plan to read one or more of the chapters and attend one of the meetings.

“WHEN THE EVALUATION TEAM REACHES THE CAMPUS AND HOLDS INFORMAL INTERVIEWS IN FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES, DISCUSSES THE ORGANIZATION WITH STAFF, AND CHATS WITH STUDENTS IN THE DINING AREAS OR CLASSROOM HALLWAYS, IT DISCOVERS THAT ALL OF THEM KNOW ABOUT THE PROCESS AND ITS RESULTS.”

Accreditation Amusement—Delayed for future issues...

Food and prizes will be part of the fall meetings and to encourage participation, some reading recommendations are listed below. If you cannot attend a meeting please direct feedback to Dr. Thomas Mach, Self-Study Coordinator via email by September 22, 2006.

Everyone: History & 1

Academics: chp. 3 & 4

Advancement: chp. 5

Business: chp. 2

Christian Ministries: chp. 5

Enrollment Mgmt.: chp. 5

Student Life: 4 & 5

The Final Phase: A Time to Engage

THIS FEEDBACK IS THE FINAL OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE INPUT FOR THE SELF-STUDY REPORT AND WILL BE USED IN THE FINAL REVISION PROCESS AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER.

The final phase of the Self-Study Report has arrived. Chapter drafts were written last Fall Semester and passed through several rounds of revisions during Spring Semester. The next state of review involves everyone on campus. Throughout September, each individual will be invited to a series of campus meetings designed to provide feedback to the Steering Committee on the chapters. This feedback is the final opportunity to provide input for the Self-Study Report and will be used in the final revision process at the end of September. Such participation will be evaluated during the Site Team visit in March through personal interviews and group discussions.

Updating of data and revisions will be completed by October, with the Board of Trustees reviewing the report at their Fall Semester meeting. The entire document will then be sent to Marketing Services by November 1, who will organize the complete layout. In late December or early January the final Self-Study Report will be printed. Hardcopies and electronic copies on DVD will be shipped out to the Site Team in January. This provides the Site Team with two months to study our report prior to the Site Visit date, March 19-21, 2007. These next few months will be very busy for everyone, but the end is in sight.



For more information about the NCA, visit their web page at www.ncacasi.org.

Cedarville University
251 N. Main St.
Cedarville, OH
45314

To CONTACT US

Dr. Thomas Mach
Self-Study Coordinator
937-766-7936
macht@cedarville.edu

Mrs. Carla Gaines
Assistant to the Coordinator
937-766-4469
gainesc@cedarville.edu

Look! We're on the web!

www.cedarville.edu/accreditation

- * Self-Study links
- * Assessment links
- * Self-Study timeline
- * And much more...

