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April 27, 2015

Chancellor Bernie Patterson University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point 2100 Main Stevens Point, WI 54481

Dear Chancellor Patterson:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. A staff analysis of the report is enclosed.

On behalf of the Commission, staff received the reports on assessment of general education and student learning outcomes and on distance education. No further reports are required. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2018 – 2019.

For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Specialist, at <u>Inakutis@hlcommission.org</u>. Your HLC staff liaison is Jeffrey Rosen (jrosen@hlcommission.org); (800) 621-7440 x 139.

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT DATE: April 27, 2015 STAFF: Jeffrey Rosen REVIEWED BY: Steven Kapelke

INSTITUTION: University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Stevens Point, WI

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Bernie Patterson, Chancellor

<u>PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION RE: REPORT:</u> Interim reports due 1/15/2015 on (1) assessment of general education and academic departmental student learning outcomes; and (2) institutional resources and institutional processes regarding the planning, budgeting, and assessment necessary for the delivery of distance education.

<u>ITEMS ADDRESSED IN REPORT</u>: The institution's report on the above topics was submitted to the office of the Commission on 1/14/2015.

<u>STAFF ANALYSIS</u>: The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point submitted the two reports under separate cover. The interim report on distance education was crafted in response to the recommendation of an HLC change panel to approve the institution's request to increase its distance delivery bracket to 20%. The Commission's Institutional Actions Council (IAC) while approving the panel's recommendation, stipulated that the institution submit an interim report to monitor progress in specific areas of its distance delivery programs. The University's interim report is supplemented with links to appendices that provide supporting detail; many of the form templates and policy statements are situated in the appendices.

Distance Education Planning, Budgeting, Assessment: The institution's report describes the process it undertook to develop its distance delivery practices and provide a firm foundation for its future growth. The report notes that, until recently, the University had served a traditional student population consisting primarily of 18-22 year old students. It has, however, begun to expand its distance education offerings, initially through the efforts of individual faculty members who wished to serve students in a less "place-bound" environment. As these efforts began to increase, it became clear to the institution that it needed a more systemic approach to its distance learning programming—one that would provide additional support to faculty members, and formalize its policies and practices for distance education.

In September 2012 the University's provost convened a campus committee to "examine, evaluate and recommend campus Distance Education resources and policies." The committee was constituted of a wide-cross section of institutional constituents, including faculty and staff members, technical support specialists, and students. The committee's charge was to research best practices in distance delivery and recommend policies that would support a distance delivery function at the University—within the framework of its strategic and academic plans.

The committee completed its work in the spring of 2013, culminating in a 54-page report in a document titled *Academic Plan Recommendations for Distance Education at UWSP*. (since shortened to *Recommendations for Distance Education at UWSP*.) The report described the challenges the institution faced as it embarked on an enlarged distance delivery program, but also provided a series of 13 recommendations "designed to improve and guide our planning and execution of Distance Education offerings." The report was reviewed within the campus governance structure and endorsed by the Faculty Senate in November 2013.

The report's introduction includes what it terms "the major overarching recommendation" to create a centralized administrative unit that would oversee all aspect of teaching and learning related to distance education.

In response to the recommendations set forth in *Recommendations for Distance Education at UWSP*, the institution has taken the following actions:

- Hired an Assistant Director (AD) of Credit Outreach in the University's Continuing Education Department to coordinate distance education activities.
- Added two new full-time positions—a Distance Education Program Manager (DEPM) and an Instructional Support Specialist (ISS) who is responsible for distance education training for the faculty. (Note: the DEPM position has not yet been filled, but the institution anticipates completing the hiring process soon.)
- Supplemented its instructional support by creating the position of Director of the Center of Collaborative and Interactive Technologies (CCIT) to assist faculty members in the use of learning technologies and "appropriate pedagogies." This position has been filled.
- Created the position of Instructional Technology Librarian to assist faculty members in the most effective use of online resources relative to distance education.
- Established the Distance Education Resource Center (DERC). The DERC is staffed by the institution's two instructional support specialists and, once hired, the Distance Education Program Manager. The DERC is designed as what the interim report terms a "one-stop" resource for students, staff and faculty members. The DERC provides training for the faculty, assistance in course design and instruction in the use of the institution's learning management system Desire2Learn (D2L).
- The DERC staff is currently developing a Distance Education Handbook, which will be completed when the new DEPM has had the opportunity to review it. It is anticipated that the handbook will be completed by the end of May 2015.

Program level planning for distance education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point aligns with University of Wisconsin system-wide policies and, in addition, the institution has adopted some policies specific to the UW-Stevens Point, based partly on recommendations in *Recommendations for Distance Education at UWSP*. The two relevant UW system-wide policies are both articulated in Policy ACIS-1.0: one states that UW-Stevens Point is required to seek approval from the UW system for converting any existing programs to distance delivery; the second governs the development of a new degree program intended to be offered through distance education. The second policy seeks to ascertain that the distance education program has sufficient support to be sustained over time.

UW-Stevens Point has, as noted above, developed additional, campus-wide policies for distance education. These have been approved through University governance, memorialized in the *University Handbook*, and include policies on the following:

- Distance education course coding and definitions; these are consistent with the UW System definitions.
- Distance education instructor training. All first time instructors are required to undertake the training, which is offered both online and in person through the DERC.
- Distance education course and instructor evaluations. The policy provides specific guidelines on instructor evaluation by students and learning outcomes assessment in all distance education courses.
- Distance education course development and approval. Specifically, the policy requires that all departments seeking approval for new courses or for revision of existing courses, both specify the mode of delivery and be approved for distance delivery.

The interim report also describes the institution's budgeting, tuition pricing and resource allocation practices for distance education. The positions of the new ISS staff member, the Distance Education Program Manager and the Director for the CCIT have all been funded through reallocation of existing monies, the result of what the report terms "a new entrepreneurial revenue model" that apportions tuition revenue from distance education programs to institutional units that support those programs. These include, but aren't limited to, Information Technology, Admissions and Financial Aid. Colleges and departments also realize a share of this revenue, which encourages the development of distance education courses.

Tuition pricing is "broadly governed" by University of Wisconsin System policy—and more specifically, a section of ACIS 5.4, wherein distance education pricing is addressed. In that regard, the institution is seeking to develop tuition pricing policies that align with System guidelines while enabling it to create a cost structure that is consistent, understandable, competitive and provides support for its online instruction and instructional support. Among the projected elements of this tuition policy are the following:

- Elimination of multiple tuition rates, segregated fees and non-resident tuition
- Pricing online courses outside the credit plateau model
- A standardized tuition rate

The interim report states that UW-Stevens Point has made substantive progress in the area of learning outcomes assessment. As it relates to student learning assessment across campus, the creation of a half-time Assessment Coordinator position is an example of the additional resources made available to the faculty and instructional departments.

With regard specifically to distance education, the institution's position is that assessment for distance education programs is not materially different from the assessment standards for its on-campus programs—though it presents unique challenges for both the student and faculty member. The report notes several items of significance.

- The DERC is available to assist with assessment related to distance education, including examples of "impactful" assessment techniques.
- Students enrolled in online and distance delivered courses evaluate both course and instructor.
- Faculty members teaching online courses are peer evaluated as a standard part of the institution's tenure-promotion process.
- Student learning is assessed in online courses through the collection of data on direct measures of student learning.
- All academic departments, including those who offer distance education courses are required to include data on the assessment of student learning in their 10-year academic program reviews.

The report on distance education concludes by stating that the institution has made good progress in developing and supporting its distance education efforts. The report notes that, in the future, the University hopes to implement other of the *Recommendations for Distance Education at UWSP*. This includes promoting the University's distance education programming through UW System eCampus.

<u>General Education Assessment/Program-level Outcomes:</u> The institution's report on learning outcomes assessment in general education and the development of program-level learning outcomes begins with a brief recent history of the University's efforts in these areas, culminating in the 2012 focused visit. While acknowledging the progress the institution had made with respect to developing an assessment system, the team's report noted that, for the most part, assessment had not been implemented. The team report also cited the inconsistency of program-level learning outcomes.

The University's interim report quotes the *University Handbook* in its description of the assessment philosophy in the institution's General Education Program (GEP):

Assessment within the General Education Program is intended to be a formal process of inquiry into student learning. More than simply an exercise in documenting the level of student achievement within the program, assessment is an exploration of how and why students learn, or fail to learn, within a particular curricular and pedagogical context. It explores both the outcomes that students achieve as well as the processes through which they learn. In this way, assessment should be viewed as an open ended scholarly activity, a collaborative action research project aimed at the improvement of teaching and learning.

In this regard, all Foundation Level instructors teaching First-Year Seminar, Written and Oral Communication, Quantitative Literacy and Wellness were asked to submit course portfolios containing the following:

- A description of how their courses align with their General Education category learning outcomes
- Assessment results of student learning related to at least one of these learning outcomes
- A description of a plan for using these results to make changes that will improve student learning.

The report states that four Faculty Learning Communities were formed—one for each of the Foundation Level instructional categories--each consisting of from four to six members who were responsible for reviewing the submitted portfolios in their category, providing feedback to each instructor and submitting summary comments and recommendations to the Assessment Coordinator. In preparation for this, the University conducted professional development workshops to assist faculty members in the development of the portfolios, all of which would be submitted electronically. The workshops provided training in the use of ePortfolio, offered information on the required portfolio elements and enabled the faculty to practice applying the Course Portfolio Rubric to sample portfolios. Other means of preparation included the development of a rubric that would provide instructors feedback on their individual courses; and a summary report template to be used by the learning communities to supply relevant information to the instructors on the strengths, challenges and areas for improvement in their courses.

The interim report goes on to describe the results of the first group of portfolios that were submitted. The table below shows the number of students enrolled in the respective courses and the number of portfolios submitted for each.

	Oral and Written Communication	First-Year Seminar	Quantitative Literacy	Wellness
ePortfolios submitted:	12	20	18	4
Students enrolled:	854 (oral) 529 (written)	495	968	671

Table 1: Summary of Course Portfolio Submission Data

The report then gives more specific detail on each one of the four GEP categories. The documentation for each category is structured in the same way and includes the following:

- Analysis of the course portfolios
- Assessment findings of the instructors
- Survey data from both course instructors and Faculty Learning Community members
- Rubric data from the Faculty Learning Communities
- Individual feedback from the Faculty Learning Communities to each instructor
- Summary findings and recommendations from each of the four learning communities.

For example, the report notes that eleven course portfolios were submitted in the category of Written Communication, which includes overall assessment of student work from the three Foundation-Level writing courses required of first and second-year students. Although a common rubric was not employed, nine of the eleven contained common elements such as effective use of evidence from textual material and writing free from errors of grammar and mechanics.

Instructors were required to address all GEP Written Communication learning outcomes in their courses but could select which to use for assessment purposes in the portfolio. Nine of the instructors chose to assess one and two assessed all three of the outcomes.

The table below presents a breakdown of what percentage of instructors assessed each of the GEP Written and Oral Communication Category Learning Outcomes:

LO#	Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:	Percentage
LO 1	Identify basic components and elements that shape successful writing such as topic, purpose, genre, and audience	36%
LO 2	Compose an articulate, grammatically correct, and organized piece of writing with properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience	50%
LO 3	Critique their own and others' writing to provide effective and useful feedback to improve their communication	45%

In the area of Oral Communication, one course portfolio was submitted, which included the assessment of student work from all 36 sections of Communication 101, the communication class required primarily of first-year students. A common syllabus was used for all sections of the course and, as with the writing component, instructors were expected to address all GEP Oral Communication Learning Outcomes in their courses, the Division of Communication determined that the same learning outcome would be used for assessment purposes in all sections, as evidenced in the table below, which shows that Learning Outcome two was employed by all course instructors.

LO#	Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:	Percentage
LO 1	Identify basic components and elements that shape successful oral presentation such as topic, purpose, genre, composure, and audience	0%
LO 2	Compose and deliver an articulate, grammatically correct and organized oral presentation using appropriate communication technologies as well as properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience	100%
LO 3	Critique their own and others' speaking to provide effective and useful feedback to improve their communication	0%

The table below shows the summary data—combined for purposes of instructor anonymity--from Oral and Written Communication Course Portfolio Rubrics compiled by the Faculty Learning Community and uploaded into D2L for instructor review.

Table 2: Summary of Course Portfolio Rubric Data from Written and Oral Communication Faculty Learning Community

	Written and Oral Communication	Meets Expectations	Developing	Does Not Meet Expectations	No Level Selected	Optional Element Not Included
1	Course Syllabus	100	0	0	0	0
2	Explanation of Alignment	70	10	20	0	0
3	Outcomes Measured	80	0	10	10	0
4	Description of Activities Assessed	90	10	0	0	0
5	Rubric (Optional)	60	10	0	0	30
6	Description of the Criteria	80	20	0	0	0
7	Summarize Assessment Results	60	40	0	0	0
8	Charts, Graphs, and/ or Tables (Optional)	60	0	0	0	40
9	Results from Other Feedback Mechanisms (Optional)	10	20	0	30	40
10	Samples of Student Work	90	10	0	0	0
11	Plans for Improvement	80	10	10	0	0

The assessment results represented in the table above in the category of Written and Oral Communication enabled the reviewing learning communities to conclude that greater emphasis needed to be placed on "Explanation of Alignment" and "Summarized Assessment Results."

In Oral Communication, the results showed that the average score on the oral presentation for the 793 students was 87%--which may have been skewed slightly by several students who received zero, a function, probably, of not participating due to absence or other reasons.

Because different rubrics were employed by the faculty in Written Communication, the assessment results were not easily aggregated. The report states, however, that grades and/or ratings awarded by instructors indicate that the majority of students are meeting or exceeding expectations of selected learning outcomes.

The table below provides a summary indication of the proposed changes to the assessment process in Written and Oral Communication.

Focus of Change	Percentage
Curriculum (What is taught)	0%
Instruction (How it is taught)	50%
Assessment (How student work is assessed)	50%

Some of the specific changes suggested include the following:

- Increasing in-class time on assigned project for additional instructor feedback
- Requiring instructor approval for the project topic to assure adequacy of available resources
- Adding examples of work for students to review and discuss
- Increasing the use of the learning management system, D2L, for peer and instructor feedback
- Applying assessment criteria consistently across course sections

Again, the University's interim report provides the same structure—described above--for each of the four Foundation-level categories—Written and Oral Communication; First-Year Seminar; Quantitative Literacy; and Wellness.

The report's summary states that "implementation of the GEP assessment process for the Foundation level went extremely smoothly, especially given that it was an entirely new GEP for our campus and the assessment process had never been implemented before...." Further, indications are that alignment between course learning outcomes and GEP category learning outcomes was "solid" and a "strong" connection exists between student work chosen for assessment and the GEP learning outcomes.

The results of the first GEP assessment have generated a feedback loop that has enabled the institution to analyze its general education assessment practices. Based on a number of factors including consideration of the course portfolios that had been submitted, reported assessment results, and feedback from Foundation Learning Communities, changes were recommended for assessment policies and procedures for Year Two of the GEP Assessment Cycle, which will feature different instructional categories at a more advanced level of student learning. Some of these changes have already been implemented, including convening an increased number of informational sessions for "Investigation Level" instructors and department chairs. These have been offered earlier in the assessment cycle than those for Foundation Level instructors.

Also, the report provides a detailed list and description of further recommendations for "General Education Program/Committee Procedures." These include, but are not limited to, the following:

Reconvene all four Foundation Level Faculty Learning Communities this fall, along with representative instructors and General Education Committee members, to follow up on the assessment results and recommendations for changes/improvement, including:

1. Review and suggest any needed revisions for learning outcomes in each category based on the results of Foundation Level assessment. A suggestion might be to streamline the number of learning outcomes to two in each category, which would make it possible for instructors to assess student learning of all category learning outcomes through one or two well-chosen course assessments, a recommendation from the Faculty Learning Communities.

2. Specifically, revise First-Year Seminar category learning outcomes. This was the recommendation from instructors and Faculty Learning Community members alike, as trying to teach and/or assess six learning outcomes turned out to be difficult and unwieldy. Based on the learning outcomes that were assessed when given the choice, the one focused on critical thinking and information literacy and the one focused on developing a plan that demonstrates the student's responsibility for their own education seemed to be the top choices of the instructors.

In the same way, the report provides lists of recommended changes in policy and faculty development, based on the data provided by the first round of GEP assessments.

<u>Department and Program-level Outcomes</u>: The UW-Stevens Point interim report provides a description of the institution's efforts to address concerns expressed in the 2012 team report about program learning outcomes—and specifically, the lack of consistency in these across the campus and the use of direct measures of student learning.

First, the Assessment Subcommittee of the Faculty Senate conducted a series of meetings and workshops for academic departments to prepare them to employ direct measures in their assessment practices. Examples of rubrics, reports and course assessments were used during the workshops and these resources were also made available online. The Assessment Subcommittee also provided feedback to departments as they completed each stage of the process.

The interim report then provides details about the series of actions taken to ensure that all departments were compliant in identifying student learning outcomes and assessing these. These efforts include the following:

- The Assessment Subcommittee revised the Program Assessment Report guidelines and format.
- Developed a "Next Steps" section for the Program Assessment Report feedback rubric to address follow up issues with departments.
- Assigned assessment liaisons from the Assessment Subcommittee to every department or program.
- Held meetings with departmental representatives as an assessment report follow-up to answer questions and provide guidance for their assessment work.
- Provided written feedback to all departments—for those submitting either a full assessment report or an HLC Interim Assessment Report.
- Created an Annual Department/Program Check-In Assessment Form, which is shown below.

Annual Department/Program Check-In Assessment Form Assessment Subcommittee

Date:			
Name of Department/Unit:			
List of Programs (majors/conce	ntrations) housed in the De	partment/Unit:	

Name of the Chair	Phone Number	E-mail Address	

4.

Assessment Plans	Status	
Are your program learning outcomes (PLOs) current?	□ Yes	No
 If not, will you be submitting a revised version to the Assessment Subcommittee (AS) this academic year? 	C Yes	D No
is your Curriculum Map current?	□ Yes	No
 If not, will you be submitting a revised version to the AS this academic year? 	C Yes	No
Are you using direct measures, such as in-course assignments or exams, to assess student learning related to your PLOs this academic year?	C Yes	D No
 If not, in which academic year do you plan to use direct measures to assess student learning? 		
Are you using indirect measures, such as surveys, to assess student learning related to your PLOs this academic year?	C Yes	D No
 If not, in which academic year do you plan to use indirect measures to assess student learning? 		
Do your assessment plans for this academic year follow the scheduled 5-year assessment Timeline / Cycle included in your last full assessment report?	C Yes	D No
 If not, please briefly explain bellow: 		

ĺ	Assessment Workshops & Support		
ĺ	Would you be interested in assessment workshops this academic year?	□ Yes	No
ĺ	 If yes, please indicate bellow areas/subjects of interest or support required: 		
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Do you have any questions or comments for the Assessment Subcommittee?

The Assessment Subcommittee thanks the Department/Program for your continued efforts to assess student learning and to ensure that all UWSP enjoy a meaningful and enriching learning experience.

The interim report notes that, as of July 2014, 91% of all departments and programs have met the requirements for collecting data for and analyzing the results of at least one direct measure of assessment of student learning. The report states that the institution anticipates 100% compliance by the of the 2014-15 academic year. Table 1, below, provides a graphic representation of the University's program-level assessment efforts--including the articulation of program learning outcomes and the identification of direct measures of student learning.



Table 1: Part I (1-3) and Part II (4-6) in July 2014

The interim report notes that nine programs submitted completed Program Assessment Reports in Fall 2013. This aligns with the institution's "Reporting Cycle for Program Assessment Reports." One of the nine reports indicated that the department did not apply direct measures of student learning in its assessment efforts and was asked to submit a supplemental report—HLC Interim Report—as a result. With the submission of the supplemental report, the program was deemed to be in compliance.

The institution's assessment results are aggregated by combining data from the full Program Assessment Reports and the HLC Interim Assessment reports; all departments and programs were responsible for completing one of these reports. The data show that 100% of the programs assessed at least one program-level learning outcome (PLO) during the 2013-14 academic year with 44% assessing more than one.

The report also provides information about the institution's plans to continue the development of its assessment efforts, citing what it terms a "three-pronged approach to assure continuity of assessment efforts on campus." Each of these three areas—Sustained Assessment; Professional Development for 2014-16; and Assessment Subcommittee Efforts—contains a list of multiple initiatives.

The following Table 2 below provides a comprehensive graphic representation of the University's progress to date in the development and assessment of program-level learning outcomes. The table shows the number of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) measured, criteria used, course levels assessed, and future plans.

Table 2: Aggregated Program-Level Assessment Results 2013-2014

Number of Program Learning Outcomes Measured	Out of 3	2 programs
One PLO measured	18	56%
More than one PLO measured	14	44%
Direct Measure Criteria Used		
Analytic (Value) Rubric	21	66%
Holistic Rubric	3	9%
Assessment Criteria / Checklist	11	34%
No Rubric or assessment criteria	1	3%
Course Level(s) Assessed		
Early 100-200	12	38%
Middle 300+	22	69%
Final 400/ Capstone	15	47%
Across all course levels	5	16%
Future Assessment Efforts Planned		
Immediate Actions Taken	7	22%
Future Actions Intended	26	81%
Continue Current Plan	5	16%
Focus of Future Assessment Efforts Planned		
Changes in Instruction	21	66%
Changes in Curriculum	7	22%
Changes in Assessment	14	44%

<u>STAFF COMMENT:</u> The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point interim report provides substantive evidence that the institution has made substantive progress in its efforts in developing an effective learning outcomes assessment system in general education—and in identifying and articulating program-level learning outcomes across its academic programs. The institution's work in these areas in thoughtfully conceived, and indications are that this work is well supported within the University.

The interim report also adequately addresses the concern expressed by the 2012 visiting team regarding the institution's distance education programming. The University's efforts in the development and formalization of its distance education programming have been thorough and well planned.

The reports are comprehensive and, generally, provide appropriate information regarding distance education and learning outcomes assessment. Although it would have been useful to have been provided some additional specific documentation regarding rubrics and specific data about student performance within the report's narrative, the report is clear with respect to the very detailed nature of the institution's work on assessment. The institution is to be commended on its efforts and the quality of its interim report.

It should be noted that UW-Stevens Point's efforts in both distance education and general education learning outcomes assessment are still in early stages. The Commission urges the institution to continue giving strong attention to these areas.

<u>STAFF ACTION:</u> Receive the reports on assessment of general education and student learning outcomes and on distance education. No further reports are required. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2018 – 2019.

STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point 2100 Main Stevens Point, WI 54481

Affiliation Status:	Candidate: N/A Accreditation: 01/01/1916 - 12/31/1921; 01/01/1951		
	Nature of Organization		
Control: Degrees Awarded:	Public Associates, Bachelors, Doctors, Masters, Certificate		
	Conditions of Affiliation:		
<i>Stipulations on Affiliation Status:</i>	Programs at the doctoral level are limited to the Doctor of Audiology degree, delivered in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin-Madison.		
Approval of New Additional Locations:	Prior Commission approval required.		
Approval of Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:	Approved for distance education courses and programs. The institution has not been approved for correspondence education.		
Accreditation Activities:	Open Pathway, Quality Initiative Report: 08/31/2018 Open Pathway, Quality Initiative Proposal: 08/31/2016		
Summary of Commission Review			
Year of Last Reaffirmation	of Accreditation: 2008 - 2009		

Year for Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2018 - 2019

Last Date of Information Change: 04/27/2015

Accreditation Note: None.

Name Change:

Central Teachers College to Wisconsin State Normal School (1951) to Wisconsin State College at Stevens Point to Wisconsin State University-Stevens Point (1964) to University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (1972)