

NEASC Steering Committee Meeting
November 6, 2009

Present: Jack Kartez, Sally Vamvakais, Roxie Black, Susan Campbell, John Voyer, David Carey, Cathie Fallona, Beth Higgins, Adam Tuchinsky, Matthew Edney, Tom Knight, Dick Campbell, Andy Anderson, Bob Caswell, Jean Whitney, Lliam Harrison, Jerry LaSala, Tom Wood, Luisa Deprez. Sub-committee chairs: James Suleiman, Judy Tizon, Monique LaRocque, Ann Dean, Peter Aicher, and Stephen Pelsue.

Agenda

I. Synopsis of October NEASC Workshop

Five members of the Steering Committee/Sub-committees attended a two day workshop on the NEASC Self-Study. Luisa presented some key points that emerged from the workshop for all members to consider in their deliberations. She will also put together, in a bit more detail, a synopsis of key points from the many workshops held at the workshop and forward it at a later date.

Key ideas:

1. A NEASC Commissioner concluded the two day session with the following reminders about questions the accreditation self-study report should address:
 - a. How is the institution “living” the standards, how does it fulfill its mission?
 - b. How is the data being used to show institutional progression?
 - c. Have you improved since the last visit?

Some of these questions, especially c. above, require that self-study participants carefully read and respond to the 5-Year report and consider Where were then? And where are we now? The Commissioner also encouraged participants to read all the standards so that we may consider concerns, issues, and make connections between and among standards. (See also #4 below)

2. Appraisal and Projection

This, we were reminded, is the most valuable part of the self-study and should be the strongest part of the self-study. This is where the “story” of the institution comes out; where we talk about how we will maintain our areas of strength and how we will address areas of concern. Evidence provides the foundation as well as credibility for both the appraisal and the projections.

Projections must be real, specifically addressing:

What needs to be done – specific, achievable tasks

Who will do it – assignment to a specific person or committee?

When it will be done – time frame within which it will be accomplished

Projections must identify what we can commit to that will promote improvements and sustain strengths over the next few years.

Presentation of evidence is important. Avoid text-dense narrative, use tables and charts where possible to convey data. (See also “Numbers and Narratives” workshop powerpoint previously sent out.)

3. Make sure we affirm what is core/central to us at USM. At the last meeting, David Nutty reminded us of the three key words in our mission statement: regional, comprehensive, public.
4. In reviewing the 2006 letter from NEASC accepting the 5-Year report, the Commission cited the expectation that particular emphasis will be directed in the 2010 report to the University's continued success in
 - a. Implementing and assessing the new general education program scheduled to begin in Fall 2006;
 - b. Achieving the institution's goal for the appropriate balance between undergraduate and graduate education and teaching and research activities; and
 - c. Addressing the evolving strategic plan of the University of Maine System in the fact of significant resource constraints.

These need to be attended to in our upcoming self-study.

II. Other

1. The October workshop group met with President Botman to discuss key ideas from the workshop, encouraging the President to use the NEASC self-study as a lever of change. We also indicated that we were on target time-wise. We shared with her the 3 points from the NEASC Commissioner (see I.I. above) as well as re-emphasized the need for this self-study to be a candid, appreciative inquiry. The challenges we believe that we face are in gathering the necessary evidence, and the positioning of the self-study within forces from inside the university and from outside. It is our expectation that the insights from the self-study be used to move the institution forward and "close the loop" in a number of areas.

III. Discussion of Standards 3, 4, ,5, and II

We had a rather detailed discussion of each standard, with each chair/co-chair/subcommittee chair identifying where they are now in the appraisal and projections phases, what issues/ideas are becoming apparent and/or emerging from the review, what things need to be discussed further with the Steering Committee, and are there things emerging from your review that are beyond the parameters of the standard. Below are very rough notes from the discussion.

Standard 3: Organization and Governance

Comments reveal that while personnel within the organization have changed, the structure of the organization has not; that there is currently a lack of stability within the institution; that over the years we have witnessed an unbridled expansion in infrastructure that is difficult to support – the question that emerges is how do we develop an infrastructure that supports and sustains the institution; that the institution relies heavily on individuals rather than on the organizational structure and because there is no redundancy, when someone

leaves, the ability to keep going in that area also often leaves; and that we are highly decentralized and diffused.

Standard 4: The Academic Program

There are few planning and evaluative processes in place that “close the loop” there is not a lot of projection in some areas; that it is difficult to measure integrity; that there are many documented processes at all levels; and that there is not consistency in policies and processes within the institution: in some places there is a policy and it is carried out, in other places there is a policy in place but it is not being carried out, and in other places there is no policy in place and no process.

Standard 5: Faculty

A hearty discussion ensued regarding faculty. The co-chairs had earlier sent out a write-up of the first 5 “sub”-standards which committee members commented on, providing feedback to the co-chairs. There was also discussion about data discrepancies – no consistency between UMS faculty numbers and USM faculty numbers. There was also some discussion about the need to describe, probably in the Introduction, Muskie’s research focus so as to distinguish it from the predominant teaching, research and service foci of other units.

Standard 11: Integrity

The co-chairs handed out a very complete overview of how this standard was progressing and issues and problems that it was encountering. (Hand-out to be forwarded).

At the December 11th Steering Committee meeting this process of Standards review will continue with focus on Standards 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Respectfully submitted,
Luisa S. Deprez