



Higher Learning Commission
A commission of the North Central Association

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May 6, 2013

Dr. Richard Helton
President
Vincennes University
1002 N. First St.
Vincennes, IN 47591-1504

Dear President Helton:

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

On behalf of the Commission, staff accepts the report on general education assessment. A progress report on the full implementation of the assessment program along with the assessment data that has been generated and acted upon is due on 4/15/2015. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2017 - 2018.

Also enclosed is a copy of the institution's Statement of Affiliation Status, which reflects the actions taken by the Commission. For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Process Administrator, Accreditation Services, at lnakutis@hlcommission.org. Your HLC staff liaison is Timothy Gallimore (tgallimore@hlcommission.org); (800) 621-7440 x 107.

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: May 6, 2013

STAFF: Timothy Gallimore

REVIEWED BY: Katherine C. Delaney

INSTITUTION: Vincennes University, Vincennes, IN

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Richard Helton, President

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION RE: REPORT: A progress report due 4/15/2013 focused on general education assessment.

ITEMS ADDRESSED IN REPORT: The office of the Commission received Vincennes University's report on the above topic on 4/15/2013.

STAFF ANALYSIS: Vincennes University was reviewed for reaffirmation of accreditation in March 2011. At that time, the Review Panel for Reaffirmation recommended this progress report on the implementation of the assessment plan based on the following rationale:

.at the time of this reaffirmation review the institution has yet to develop and report specific data resulting from their assessment activities. The Reaffirmation Panel recommends that Vincennes University create and declare a new Action Project entitled "Implementation of Assessment Plans. The project should be declared no later than April 2011. To allow for Commission monitoring, Annual Progress Reports on the new Action Project should be reported no later than April 15 beginning in 2012 and continue until such time as AQIP and the institution agree that the Action Project can be declared completed.

Further, the panel gave the following advice for the content of the progress report:

As a guide for the institution, the panel suggests that the action project Annual Progress Reports should include not only narrative description of activities but actual data of student learning outcomes. A comprehensive report that addresses the issues would include data on the numbers of students meeting identified learning outcomes in various programs, the number of faculty actively participating in assessment activities, listing of the programs that have assessment data and those that do not, data on the outcomes for General Education requirements, and discussion of how the university will use the reported results to improve student learning outcomes.

Vincennes University submitted an excellent progress report that provided strong evidence of the University's significant achievements in all of the issues noted. A possible exception to this statement was the assessment program for General Education. Substantial progress was being made in general education assessment when two unexpected events occurred: 1) the Provost left the University, and 2) externally, the state of Indiana has recently produced legislation requiring academic programs hours to be reduced: 60 hours for Associate's degrees and 120 for baccalaureate degrees. In addition, the state is now developing a statewide core of 30 hours of transfer general education. These new state initiatives have caused VU to pause and reconsider its general education requirements and outcomes, as it needs both to meet state requirements and align its general

education with other state institutions. Thus, final approval of the drafts of general and liberal education outcomes had essentially been placed on hold for the institution. An outcome of these circumstances was that the current progress report was directed to focus very strongly on the assessment of general education.

The current progress report provided strong evidence that VU faculty have made great strides in implementing a new general and liberal education assessment plan, despite the challenge of working with the State of Indiana's forty-one general education outcomes, just approved December 10, 2012. The plan that will allow the University to establish its own common-learning "identity," integrate the State's learning into the new process, and assess both VU's liberal education outcomes and the State's general education outcomes in the same assessment activities.

The University developed an "Assessment Strategic Plan" that serves as the first goal of the institutional strategic plan. Objective 5.1 is to "Develop university-wide general and liberal education curricular and co-curricular outcomes," and Objective 5.5 is to "Implement a course outline review process." Both objectives express VU's intention to develop a more coherent general and liberal education program, including vetting courses to make sure that faculty members recognize the expectation that they teach to and assess the newly developed institutional learning outcomes.

The Educational Futures Task Force used the document to describe the philosophy of a liberal education at VU and tied University-wide goals to the institutional mission:

As a premier learning institution, Vincennes University is committed to liberal education that fosters intentional learners who are empowered to thrive in the 21st century as they enter the workforce or further their education. Through student-centered collaborative and integrative experiences, they attain the breadth and depth of skills and knowledge necessary to flourish in their personal and professional lives and to contribute as responsible citizens in their local, national and global communities.

The group also produced the following outcomes, most of which have been worked into VU's new plan:

Upon graduation, VU students will be able to:

- Engage in articulate expression through critical reading and effective written, oral, and digital communication.*
- Gather, assess, organize, and apply information from various sources.*
- Apply quantitative reasoning and a variety of numeric data to solve problems in a variety of disciplines.*
- Make informed judgments about the physical and natural worlds.*
- Make informed judgments of aesthetic and literary expressions.*
- Analyze human behaviors and the interactions among individuals, groups, events, institutions, and cultures.*
- Evaluate ethical behavior as an individual and as a member of local and global communities.*
- Apply wellness concepts to improve the quality of life for themselves and others.*
- Apply critical and creative thinking skills to solve problems*
- Employ effective and responsible teamwork and workplace skills.*
- Develop self-evaluation skills to set goals for personal and professional growth.*
- Integrate knowledge and perspectives of different disciplines to answer complex questions.*

A strong influence on the assessment plan (and the chief reason why this report does not include specific assessment data for the newest outcomes being assessed) is the impact of the new Indiana Commission for Higher Education state-wide plans for programs and general education. Specifically, the Indiana CHE has limited total hours in programs and mandated state-wide general education

outcomes. Because of the limits on total hours, a reconfiguration of the general education hourly requirements for each of VU's degrees has been completed as of May 2012. Additionally, Senate Bill 182 mandated that all institutions' general education programs use the same outcomes. The outcomes were developed via state-wide committees to address the following distribution categories of two types, three "Foundational Skills": written communication, speaking and listening, and quantitative reasoning; and three "Ways of Knowing," scientific, humanistic and artistic, and social and behavioral. The outcomes were not completed and distributed to state institutions until December 10, 2012.

The state's goals of limiting program hours and developing state-wide general education outcomes created a number of challenges for VU, preventing VU from producing general and liberal education assessment results and improvement plans for this report. First, VU had to add electives into its general education in order to allow for a certain amount of "double-dipping": general education offered by some majors could be treated as both major program and general education credits.

VU's *General and Liberal Education Plan* marries the state's new general education outcomes with VU's commitment to liberal education and the newly approved liberal education outcomes. The plan creates an efficient way to assess all the outcomes while allowing VU to maintain its own mission and vision-driven identity: "Vincennes University is a premier learning institution, widely recognized for leadership in innovation and delivery of successful educational experiences."

VU elected to map the new state-wide general education outcomes to VU's liberal education outcomes and VU adaptation of the AAC&U Value rubrics.

During the October 25, 2012, VU faculty officially approved the following five Liberal Education Outcomes:

- Students who complete Vincennes University Common Core requirements will be able to:
- Engage in articulate expression through critical reading and effective written, oral, and digital communication.
 - Apply quantitative reasoning and a variety of numeric data to solve problems in a variety of disciplines.
 - Evaluate ethical behavior as an individual and as a member of local and global communities.
 - Apply critical and creative thinking skills to solve problems.
 - Integrate knowledge and perspectives of different disciplines to answer complex questions.

VU's liberal education plan requires that all courses on the newly developing University Core Curriculum be vetted to ensure they engage students in the three skills: critical, ethical, and integrative thinking. Because VU's new degrees do not all require a minimum of three hours from each of the state distribution categories (the AS, Career and Technical degree does not include a humanities requirement), VU faculty approved an approach that defines common learning and the core courses in terms of the liberal education skills. All VU graduates will be assessed for their critical, ethical, and integrative thinking skills, as well as communication and quantitative literacy skills.

The Curriculum and Academic Affairs Committee also agreed to work with an additional committee structure in order to speed the process of further defining and clarifying the liberal learning intended by the new outcomes and to speed the implementation process so assessment data could be gathered in the 2013-14 academic year.

- A document was developed to define the duties of the new “Liberal Education Committee” and the yet to be formed “Basic Skills Committee.”
- Faculty on the Liberal Education Committee were given release time for the spring so they could refine the rubrics, map state general education outcomes to the dimensions of the liberal education rubrics, develop model assignments, lead professional development, and approve critical thinking assignments for the new UCC Courses. These advisory faculty are supposed to broaden the understanding and support for the instruction and assessment of the new outcomes.
- Two additional documents were produced, one that defines the roles of the University Core Curriculum Committee and the Assessment Committee in the new learning and assessment process, and another document that defines the roles of advisory committees within the divisions offering general education.
- A flowchart of operations was developed, and recognizing that faculty will need time and professional development to prepare them for both teaching and assessing the liberal education skills, VU has established a timeline for implementation of the instruction and assessment, beginning with critical thinking.
- The UCC Committee also developed a course vetting form. As part of that form, faculty wanting to add either Liberal Education or Basic Skills courses to the UCC list must commit to doing professional development and working with the Liberal Education and other committees to validate their courses are meeting liberal education goals.
- One final CAAC action was the approval of new common course outline and syllabi templates that reflect VU’s basic skills, liberal education, and state general education outcomes.

All of these documents were appended to the progress report.

The progress report articulated a number of issues that remain to be addressed before the assessment plan will be fully operational, including an effective "division of labor" to address the implementation tasks, ongoing professional development, assessment of technology needs to adequately implement the assessment program, and a clear articulation of expectations for faculty.

Staff comment: Vincennes University has accomplished a great deal in the past year to address the need to effectively assess its general education/liberal education programs. At the same time, it has balanced the need to satisfy the state's expectations for assessing the new state-wide common core and general education outcomes. The University is commended for its success in addressing and accomplishing such a wide-ranging and heavy assessment agenda.

In order to give the University the time and space it needs to effectively implement the assessment plans and to begin to collect and analyze assessment data in the next year, the Commission will not call for the next assessment report for two years, due 4/15/2015. Given the strong history of the development of the assessment program at the University, it is anticipated that the next report on the full implementation and collection of data from the assessment program will yield great insight and actionable information that will again strengthen the academic achievement of the University's students and its programs.

STAFF ACTION: Accept the report on general education assessment. A progress report on the full implementation of the assessment program along with the assessment data that has been generated and acted upon is due on 4/15/2015. The institution’s next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2017 - 2018.

STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

VINCENNES UNIVERSITY
1002 N. First St.
Vincennes, IN 47591-1504

Affiliation Status: Candidate: Not Applicable
Accreditation: (1958- .)

Nature of Organization

Control: Public
Degrees Awarded: Associate's, Bachelor's

Conditions of Affiliation:

Stipulations on Affiliation Status: Out of state offerings are limited to courses offered at various sites within the United States. Baccalaureate offerings are limited to the following: Education-Secondary Mathematics Concentration; Education-Secondary Science Concentration; Education-Special Education, Mild Intervention; Health Care Management; Homeland Security and Public Safety; Nursing RN to BSN Completion Option; Technology.

Approval of New Additional Locations: Prior Commission approval required.

Approval of Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs: The institution has been approved under Commission policy to offer up to 20% of its total degree programs through distance education. The processes for expanding distance education are defined in other Commission documents.

Accreditation Activities: Progress Report: 04/15/2015; Report on the full implementation of the assessment program, along with the assessment data that has been generated and acted upon.
Systems Appraisal: 2015 - 2016;
AQIP Quality Checkup: 2016 - 2017;

Summary of Commission Review

Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2010 - 2011
Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2017 - 2018
Last Date of Information Change: 05/06/2013