WASC Accreditation at UCLA

The Accrediting Commission of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is responsible for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of schools offering the baccalaureate and higher degrees in California. WASC accredits institutions, not individual programs. This voluntary, non-governmental, accreditation is a distinctive characteristic of American education; in many other countries, the maintenance of educational standards is a governmental function.

WASC accreditation is required for an institution to receive Federal financial aid funding; thus it is essential for all of UCLA’s academic programs, even those that seek specialized accreditation. The accreditation process occurs over a five-year period and is formally initiated by writing and submitting the Institutional Proposal, which for UCLA is due May 1, 2006.

WASC seeks demonstration of the institution’s “core commitments” to institutional capacity and educational effectiveness. This is accomplished by having the campus provide basic information about students and degree programs (these facts are posted on a UCLA-WASC website) and by ‘observing’ the campus work on broad educational issues important to its own improvement.

Many universities and colleges use the accreditation process to accelerate institutional improvement and change, to develop and sustain effective educational programs, and to assure the educational community, the general public, and other organizations that UCLA has met high standards of quality and effectiveness.

UCLA’s most recent accreditation experience was valuable for the campus. In 1998, when WASC’s standards were under review, we used an experimental model to investigate and move forward on three topics: Diversity, General Education, and Performance Indicators. Now, under WASC’s new standards, we have again chosen to employ WASC’s Special Theme approach and to choose themes of value to UCLA.

The Draft Institutional Proposal (dated 10/19/05) was the work of the WASC Steering committee, an administrative committee of faculty and administrators from across UCLA’s disciplines. It is a required document that establishes the specific basis for the review, and WASC must agree to our proposed approach. It sets the stage for a process that will extend into 2009; during this period, external teams consisting of peers from other institutions will visit and review UCLA. This model of a faculty led and administratively supported effort on themes of great academic importance to UCLA will be employed throughout the multi-year process.

A detailed timetable of WASC report activities is posted in Appendix D; highlights include:

- Spring 2006: UCLA's Institutional Proposal is due.
- Fall 2007: Capacity and Preparatory Report is due.
- Spring 2008: WASC review team visits campus for the Capacity Preparatory Review.
- Fall 2008: Educational Effectiveness Report is due.
- Spring 2009: WASC review team visits campus for Educational Effectiveness Review.

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