

## **Higher Learning Commission Accreditation Update**

### **April 26, 2007**

Dear Members of the Campus Community:

The North Central Association/Higher Learning Commission process continues as the 2006-2007 academic year draws to a close. Final reports of the five criteria committees and the diversity subcommittee are due at the end of May. This summer, the self-study coordinators, assisted by the steering committee, will synthesize the committee reports and draft a comprehensive self-study document. A draft will be distributed for campus-wide feedback early in fall semester. The final document must be completed during fall semester, with the site visit scheduled for February 18-20, 2008.

As part of the self-study process, a campus climate survey was administered during spring 2007. The purpose of the survey was to “identify some of the University’s strengths and challenges and make recommendations for addressing those challenges.” The survey was distributed to more than 1100 full-time faculty, staff, and administrators on campus, 500 of whom returned it, for a response rate of 45%.

Preliminary results of the survey have been tabulated and are being shared with the accreditation committees. Initial review of the results indicates both causes for encouragement and areas for improvement. For example, respondents agreed that interactions among students and faculty are a high priority at YSU. There was agreement that the University’s mission is clearly and broadly defined; and that it is understood and supported. The activities and commitments of YSU are viewed as congruent with its mission. Also encouraging are the attitudes expressed by respondents that they are satisfied with their jobs, that their immediate supervisors understand their concerns, that faculty and support staff have positive work relationships with each other, and that diversity is an important priority at YSU.

Results also indicate a number of areas where improvement is needed. Respondents disagreed that the Board of Trustees and upper-level administration understand faculty, staff, and student concerns. They also disagreed that there is effective communication to facilitate University governance processes and activities; that the University supports the concept of shared governance; that employees and students are sufficiently involved in campus decision-making; and that relationships and morale are improving.

Campus climate surveys are one of many sources of information gathered during the self-study process. The self-study coordinators are currently conducting a more detailed analysis of the results, including disaggregating responses by employee group and length of service at YSU. Written comments are being compiled for review. After these additional analyses are complete, the survey results will be housed with the committee reports and other self-study documents in the accreditation resource room in 313 Tod Hall.

One of the purposes of the self-study process is “to involve the University community in productive dialog about substantive institutional issues.” There will be opportunities for ongoing discussion about the survey results, internal challenges, and external threats such as financial constraints, the political environment in Columbus, and uncertainties related to the structure of higher education in Northeast Ohio. All of these issues require thoughtful analysis and must be discussed in the self study. The future of YSU, as well as a successful re-accreditation, depends on our ability to focus on our common educational mission, build on our strengths, and collaborate to address differences and challenges constructively.

Thanks to all members of the campus community for your interest and participation in the accreditation process.

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