RECOMMENDATION

*Team Visits: Conducting and Hosting an Evaluation Visit, 6th edition*, pp. 33-34

“Findings Leading to Recommendations”

All of the team’s recommendations must be addressed in the institution’s next Periodic Review Report (PRR), which occurs in five years. However, the team can choose to highlight a specific issue that might need to be given additional attention or emphasis in the PRR.

Recommendations Requiring Follow-Up Action: A progress letter…

Chapter Eight: Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning)

pp. 17-18

**Recommendation:** Although there is evidence that many units of the University (a) have articulated expectations for student learning, (b) are regularly engaged in assessing that learning, and (c) are beginning to use assessment results to improve student learning and/or demonstrate that students are achieving key institutional and program learning outcomes, **such practices are not universal.** While getting all units engaged in the assessment of student learning is a formidable task, it is important and well understood. Indeed, in its 2003 PRR Report, the University committed to having “all programs carry out systematic assessment of student learning,” with a target date of summer 2005. The 2003 PRR also indicated that outcomes assessment would be successfully integrated into the strategic and operating plans of the Institution which would then be woven into budget priorities by the time of the 2007 Middle States review. There is no evidence that this is occurring. Although it is implied that student learning assessment informs institutional decision making, there is little to indicate that assessment is being used systematically in the planning and budgeting process. The Team strongly recommends that attention be given to this matter.

**PROGRESS LETTER DUE OCTOBER 1, 2009**

SUGGESTIONS

Chapter One: Standard I (Mission and Goals) and Standard 6 (Integrity)

None

Chapter Two: Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal) and Standard 3 (Institutional Resources)

pp. 7

Recent decisions to make large strategic investments in facilities and technology have created a cultural challenge. Although a University-wide perspective on resource allocation is strategically necessary, not all members of the University community
understand or share this view. Thus we support the recommendations of the Self Study to do more to communicate the Strategic Plan, budget processes, and final budget decisions to faculty and staff. We also suggest that the University, in its next strategic plan, review and assess the adequacy of academic resources, with particular attention to the ratio of tenure-track to contingent faculty, percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty, faculty workload, and the adequacy and suitability of academic facilities. We encourage the University to evaluate the number, breadth, and quality of its programs and activities relative to the resources available.

Chapter Three: Standard 4 (Leadership and Governance) and Standard 5 (Administration)

pp. 9
The President and Provost should consider how to improve communications with the deans and faculty, perhaps instituting more regular meetings with the assurance that all parties would freely express their views to each other and with a commitment to greater transparency.

Chapter Four: Standard 8 (Student Admissions and Retention) and Standard 9 (Student Support Services)

pp. 10
The Visiting Team endorses the Self Study’s recommendations and suggests that the University make appropriate efforts to assess the advising system, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and the Career Center.

Chapter Five: Standard 10 (Faculty)

pp. 12
In addition to supporting the recommendations of the Self Study, the Team urges continued support for the Center for Teaching Excellence. We suggest that Duquesne investigate best practices for support of research at comparable institutions, giving consideration to programs such as a course-release and a sabbatical support fund. We suggest that leadership and faculty collaborate to define expectations and performance standards for the “teacher-scholar” model, that the University provide additional support to the Office of Research to assist faculty in grant writing, that it continue to strengthen existing faculty governance bodies, and that it consider additional structures within which faculty can assist deans and provost in shaping the academic mission.

Chapter Six: Standard 11 (Educational Offerings) and Standard 12 (General Education) and Standard 13 (Related Educational Activities)

pp. 14
The University needs to insist that each department and program (particularly those undergraduate programs for which there are no external accrediting bodies) clearly articulate measurable learning goals for its students that can lead to rigorous assessment
of learning outcomes. Furthermore, we suggest that Duquesne immediately begin assessment of the new core.

**Chapter Seven: Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment)**

pp. 15
The Team suggests that Duquesne consider establishing a central assessment entity. This entity could establish a prioritized, systematic, and coordinated schedule for assessment activities, including measurements and peer review processes; and it could promote sharing of assessment procedures and results across organizational lines. Duquesne should consider adding periodic surveys of staff to its assessment strategies and cycles. In order to broaden Duquesne’s external assessment network and increase the options for comparative analysis, the University should consider an institutional membership in the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium and/or the Catholic Higher Education Research Cooperative (CHERC).

**Chapter Eight: Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning)**

See Recommendation above

pp. 18
To provide focused leadership, direction, and appropriate incentives for sustained effective assessment activity, the Team supports the Self-Study’s call for creating an organizational structure, staffing, and budget within Academic Affairs to focus on assessment of student learning and strengthen ties to institutional assessment, planning, and budgeting. The Team also suggests that the Faculty Handbook’s criteria for course syllabi be expanded to include the listing of student learning goals and that schools’ and programs’ student learning goals be more readily evident and easily available for review.