



CHAPTER 3

Response to the 2000 Comprehensive Review and Visit

“When it comes to program assessment, university faculty love to whine by expressing skepticism about efficacy and cynicism about motivation. Certainly efforts to estimate program success are bedeviled by potential pit falls. . . . Despite such caveats, my colleagues and I are motivated by data and the possibility that a database of student achievement can be used to make informed decisions about curricula and program issues.”

—Mark Stayton, *Chair,
Department of Molecular Biology*

The 2000 reaccreditation report suggested that the university should actively address concerns expressed about nine areas:

- Gender and ethnic diversity of the faculty
- Low compensation for faculty and staff
- Enrollment decline and recruiting
- Collaboration between the Alumni Association and Institutional Advancement
- Insufficient library resources
- Improvements in graduate education
- Institutional standards for purchase and support of software and hardware
- Stabilization of new and replacement funding for information technology purchases
- Consistent implementation of assessment

In this chapter, we discuss and assess the university’s actions related to each of these areas.

GENDER AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF THE FACULTY

(Core Components 1b, 2a, 2d)

In Chapter 2, we discussed several diversity initiatives, including establishing a pool of funds to encourage hiring women faculty and faculty of color and a permanently funded visiting position in African American and diaspora studies. The university also hired a new employment practices officer in 2004, who was elevated to the position of associate vice president for diversity in 2008. In 2008, the university joined the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE). The first institutional report included some valuable information sorted by race and gender regarding perceptions of tenure-track faculty. A group of faculty and staff reviewed and interpreted the results, which were presented to the Board of Trustees in fall 2008. (See Chapter 4 for further discussion.) (1b)

By 2008, faculty gender balance and ethnic diversity had moderately improved. Women accounted for 18 percent of full professors, 35 percent of associate professors, 41 percent of assistant professors, and 36 percent of total full-time instructional staff. This represents between a 4 to 7 percent increase in each category since 1999. In 2008, 9 percent of tenured or tenure-track faculty members were people of color compared to 5 percent in 1999. While these data reflect some progress, the gender and ethnic diversity of the faculty is still an issue that commands attention in the university's strategic plan. (2a, 2d)

“Salary equity, listed as a concern in the 2000 report, has been the subject of careful review by the provost and vice president for academic affairs.”

LOW COMPENSATION FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

(Core Components 2b, 2c)

The 2000 reaccreditation report noted that “compensation for faculty and staff lags behind that of peers.” Using the American Association of University Professors’ *Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession* as a measure, in 1999-2000 faculty salaries were well below the average of public doctoral universities: 74 percent of the national average for professor, 82 percent for associate, and 90 percent for assistant. While the university still lags behind the average for U.S. public doctoral universities, there has been significant progress. By 2008-2009, these numbers improved to 88 percent for professor, 93 percent for associate, and 96 percent for assistant. (2b)

These improvements can be attributed to two factors: 1) a more robust economy in Wyoming resulting in more regular state appropriations for salary raises, and 2) special efforts to address faculty compensation. Following a top priority request to the 2006 Wyoming State Legislature, the university was able to administer senior faculty raises in 2007 and 2008, in addition to the regular raises for all faculty and staff. In 2009, despite the economic downturn and attendant budget reductions, Governor Freudenthal explicitly instructed the state agencies to not forego the FY 2010 budgeted salary increases as part of their reduction strategies. As a result, the university proceeded as planned with salary increases in spring 2009.

Salary equity, listed as a concern in the 2000 report, has been the subject of careful review by the provost and vice president for academic affairs. The provost reviews faculty

and academic professional salary data each year in conjunction with the administration of raises, paying particular attention to the salaries of women faculty and faculty of color to ensure they do not systematically fall behind the salaries of male and Caucasian peers. To ensure this review remained continuous, in 2006 the Office of Academic Affairs employed an independent consultant to statistically analyze salary equity for academic personnel. The analysis indicates that salary differences are largely reflective of the salaries of different disciplines, not gender inequity. (2c)

ENROLLMENT DECLINE AND RECRUITING

(Core Components 2a, 2b, 5c)

The 2000 report stated that “enrollment declines have reduced some program areas below the level required for critical mass” and that “successful recruitment and retention strategies are lacking at graduate and undergraduate levels.” The report also noted that undergraduate and graduate enrollment had decreased during the previous 10 years (17 percent and 9 percent, respectively). The evaluation team commented that the five-year enrollment goal of 13,000 students might not be reasonable given the expected decrease in the number of Wyoming high school students.

We are pleased to report that the university’s enrollment has reached at least 13,000 total students since fall 2003, with the exception of 2007 when numbers fell slightly below that number. With current enrollment at over 13,000, undergraduate enrollment has increased by 14 percent since 1999 with an increase of 8 percent on the Laramie campus. Outreach School enrollments increased 86 percent. Graduate and professional enrollments increased about 30 percent since 1999. (5c) Tables 3.1 and 3.2 provide additional detail about headcounts by site and student level.

Of the total number of students enrolled in classes, three-quarters attend classes on the Laramie campus. The remaining 3,000 students are enrolled in either distance programs exclusively or at the University of Wyoming Casper College Center. Projected increases are attributed to the recent economic downturn as well as to the state’s legislatively endowed student scholarship program (see Chapter 5). (2a)

As described in the 2000 report, the university was in the process of reorganizing its student recruiting efforts with a new focus on enrollment management, based on demographic trends as well as organizational capacity. The vice president for student affairs now oversees the Enrollment Management Council, the Center for Advising and Career Services, and the Offices of Student Financial Aid, Admissions, the Registrar, and Student Educational Opportunity. Other actions include the following:

- The permanent addition of \$500,000 to the annual enrollment management budget in 2002 to support student recruiting, marketing, and process improvement. (2b)
- Expanded program and course offerings and delivery by the Outreach School. (5c)
- Increased graduate student recruiting efforts, closely coordinated with the academic colleges. (2a)

Table 3.1. Headcounts by Site

Fall 1999 to Fall 2008			
Fall	Laramie	Outreach (including UW/CC)	Overall
1999	9,476	1,650	11,126
2000	9,459	2,284	11,743
2001	9,759	2,643	12,402
2002	9,854	2,912	12,766
2003	9,938	3,224	13,162
2004	9,991	3,216	13,207
2005	9,757	3,369	13,126
2006	9,979	3,224	13,203
2007	9,963	2,912	12,875
2008	10,041	3,065	13,106
10 Year Change	6%	86%	18%

Source: Office of Institutional Analysis

Table 3.2. Headcounts by Site and Student Level

Fall 1999 versus Fall 2008			
	Fall 1999	Fall 2008	10 Year Change
Laramie Campus			
Undergraduate	7,592	8,212	8%
Graduate/Professional	1,884	1,829	-3%
Outreach (including UW/CC)			
Undergraduate	830	1,391	68%
Graduate/Professional	820	1,674	104%
Overall			
Undergraduate	8,422	9,603	14%
Graduate/Professional	2,704	3,503	30%
TOTAL	11,126	13,106	18%

Source: Office of Institutional Analysis

COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AND INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT

(Core Component 5b)

In 2000, the university discussed the need for strong support and cooperation from alumni and alumni organizations for the success of its institutional advancement. The site visit team noted “this support and cooperation has not yet been established.” In 2007, cooperation dramatically improved when President Buchanan led the reuniting of the University of Wyoming Alumni Association with the university. The Alumni Association now reports to the vice president for student affairs. (5b)

Recognizing the need to connect the university to outside communities, the Office of Institutional Advancement and the Alumni Association are collaborating with the support of the Division of Information Technology to implement an online alumni community to strengthen alumni connections and to provide alumni with professional and social networking opportunities. This should facilitate efforts to improve external relations.

INSUFFICIENT LIBRARY RESOURCES

(Core Components 2a, 2b)

Since 2004, the University Libraries have made significant progress on issues outlined in the 2000 reaccreditation site visit report. To support educational quality, the annual library collections budget increased 166 percent from \$2.9 million in 2000 to \$7.7 million in 2008, which is unprecedented in the library environment. (2b) To meet the immediate needs of a 10 percent overall university budget reduction (see Chapter 10), the collection budget was reduced in 2009 by \$2 million of a recent \$4.3 million annual legislative increase. The university is committed to restoring the collection budget increase through tuition increases and legislative funding during the next few years. (2b)

The libraries strengthened their partnerships in the state and region by joining the Wyoming Libraries Database (WYLD) project. This initiative enables all 23 county libraries, 43 branch libraries, 48 school districts, seven community colleges, the university, and several others to provide joint purchasing of statewide databases and improved interlibrary loans. In addition, the university joined Prospector, a unified catalog of 23 academic, public, and special libraries in Colorado and Wyoming. With a single search, patrons can borrow materials from other libraries, with delivery to Laramie in two to three days. In many cases, the libraries can deliver materials in electronic form even more rapidly, providing exceptional support to distance and off-campus academic programs. (2a)

The libraries have focused on improved services through the merging of catalogs, through software improvements that allow for integration of searches, and through the streamlining of questions to reference librarians. Other improvements include increased marketing of services, enhancement of services for outreach and distance students, the establishment of an advisory board for community relations and fundraising, and increased library instruction. (2b)

In fall 2009, the university completed the \$50 million addition to and renovation of the Coe Library. The addition enables the libraries to achieve their goals of research integration, student and faculty collaboration, instruction in information literacy, and partnership with associated units such as the student computer labs, the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning, the Writing Center, and the Learning Resource Network (LeaRN). University funding has been utilized for the transformation of the former Science and Technology Library into the Library Annex. (2b)

IMPROVEMENTS IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

(Core Component 1d, 2b, 3a, 3c)

The 2000 report cited the need for “closer connections, joint efforts, and regular interaction” between the Graduate School and the research office. The team also recommended reviewing the achievement of graduate faculty to ensure that they maintain a “consistent research component” to their work. Several joint programs sponsored by the Office of Research & Economic Development and the Graduate School were developed, including a Graduate Student Symposium for graduate student research presentations and numerous workshops on ethics and other topics. (3c) To encourage more robust graduate student recruiting, the university added health insurance to the standard state-funded graduate assistantship package in 2002. In the same year, the university instituted a higher-level stipend for PhD students to encourage departments to recruit higher caliber graduate students. (2b)

With the elimination of the administrative functions of the Graduate School in response to budget reductions in 2009 (see Chapters 8 and 10), the provost charged the Graduate Education Taskforce to address how these administrative functions should be carried out. (1d) As a result, the Offices of Admissions and Student Financial Aid, with oversight from the Office of Academic Affairs, assumed administrative staff support for recruiting, admissions, and assistantship payment for graduate programs. The provost oversees issues related to program quality, assessment, student recognition, faculty mentoring, and allocation of graduate assistantships. (3a, 3c) Pertinent to the 2000 report, the Office of Research & Economic Development collaborates with the Office of Academic Affairs on issues related to graduate assistantship reallocation, graduate student orientation, and human subjects compliance issues. This collaboration positively impacts the faculty research enterprise and graduate student education.

INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS FOR PURCHASE AND SUPPORT OF SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE

(Core Component 2d)

To achieve quality control and economic benefits as well as to assure effective technological operations, the 2000 site visit team advised a commitment to standardization of hardware and software. As a first step, Academic Plan II and Support Services Plan II first called for the review of hardware and software standards. In 2004, the university contracted with RSM McGladrey to review and provide recommendations for hardware and software purchases, standardization strategies, and staffing. The university has made ongoing progress on software and hardware standardization with implementation of some RSM McGladrey recommendations and consideration of others not yet implemented but incorporated in support services plans. Among other recommendations implemented was the creation of the Technology Planning Council, chaired by the vice president for information technology, which provided clear linkages between the university’s information technology expenditures and its planning and budgeting processes. In 2009, the university began centralizing the purchase of hardware and software as well as consolidating staff

support for institutional information technology. All general information technology employees will report to the Division of Information Technology. The Technology Planning Council, the centralization of technology purchasing, and the consolidation of employees will create and enforce institutional technology standardization. (2d)

STABILIZATION OF NEW AND REPLACEMENT FUNDING FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PURCHASES

(Core Components 2a, 2b)

The 2000 report noted the use of “income from the telecommunications operation . . . to subsidize the development of the network.” Because the income from telecommunication operations declined precipitously with growth in student cellular communications, the Division of Information Technology (IT) “sustained a substantial budget cut.” To combat these financial issues, the evaluation team recommended several cost saving strategies including the standardization of software and hardware purchases and the reduction of IT-supported platform types and software. (2a)

After the 2000 report, various cost saving mechanisms were instituted to assist in funding the university’s data network. These provided only minor savings. Until 2006, the shortfall in data network funding continued to be offset primarily by annual one-time university allocations. In 2006, the university made a request for permanent network funding to the Wyoming State Legislature, which approved recurring funding in an amount sufficient to cover the annual shortfall and ensure adequate resources to achieve quality. (2b) The standardization described in the previous section is expected to bring significant savings to the university’s technology expenditures and provide better overall management.

CONSISTENT IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSESSMENT

(Core Components 1a, 1d, 2c, 3a, 3b, 3d)

The 2000 report recommended the integration of student affairs into the assessment process, better sampling procedures for institutional surveys, the merging of institutional and survey data “to provide a richer set of findings and more in-depth analysis of results,” and increasing faculty understanding of assessment to promote varied assessment methods. The university’s progress in developing an assessment culture that focuses on improved student learning outcomes as a core principle can be described as steady and consistent since 2000. (3a) Specific strategies to move the institution forward have ranged from allocating additional resources for staff and small internal grants to creating institutional processes that address assessment issues on a systematic basis. In this section we describe the university’s commitment to creating a culture of assessment and provide a summary of strengths and challenges. Further discussion about assessment of student learning can be found in Chapters 7 and 8.

For more than a decade, the university has been seriously and actively engaged in the assessment of student learning. The Office of Academic Affairs provides the leadership for and general oversight of the university’s student learning assessment efforts. (1d) The

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overall university strategy has been to provide resources, incentives, and encouragement to the faculty and academic departments, steering away from strategies that are viewed as punitive or dismissive of long-standing faculty practices. In doing so, the university continues to build a faculty-centered assessment of student learning. (3b)

In 2000, the university formed the University Assessment Coordinators Committee, which includes dedicated representatives from the seven colleges, the Office of Academic Affairs, the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning, the Outreach School, the Division of Student Affairs, the University Libraries, and the Office of Institutional Analysis. The committee meets regularly to discuss various assessment matters, to plan and offer assessment workshops, to review applications for annual assessment assistance funding, and to provide feedback on department and program annual assessment reports. (3b) As a result of the committee's work, each college within the university has its own assessment expert.

In 2004, as part of the second five-year cycle of academic planning, all units developed their five-year plans for 2004-2009. The Office of Academic Affairs charged each academic program to craft a detailed plan for assessing student learning. As faculty and academic leaders worked together to guide curriculum, the goal was for each academic department to complete one assessment cycle by 2007. (1d) In spring 2005, academic affairs hired a part-time university assessment specialist to provide additional resources for faculty and to assist in creating more university-wide visibility of assessment goals. The university assessment specialist frequently meets with faculty and departments, providing advice and strategies to advance their assessment efforts. Other assessment initiatives include an annual Fall Assessment Forum (which has occurred regularly since 2005), various assessment related workshops offered through the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning, an assessment Web site, and a semi-annual university assessment newsletter. (1a) In addition to these institutional efforts, many academic disciplines and programs participate in some type of program accreditation or discipline-specific review process. (2c)

The Division of Student Affairs has also implemented assessment efforts for the co-curriculum. In 2007, eight division-wide learning outcomes were identified. Each department within the division determines which of the learning outcomes it will promote, creates programs related to the learning outcomes, and evaluates its efforts in its annual report. (3d)

The university's work to create an assessment culture is not without challenges. The university has experienced mixed results when it comes to implementation of the comprehensive assessment plans created in 2004. Nearly all programs have adopted learning outcomes and are moving ahead with assessment. The institution's progress is less consistent in the documentation of assessment cycles: using information about student learning to drive changes in the curriculum. Some departments have forged ahead as models for the university. The greatest challenge for many others, however, is to analyze and use the results of their assessments for improvement. (2c, 3a) Overall, the university's efforts can be best characterized as achieving numerous pockets of excellence, with some departments and programs still needing improvement.

CONCLUSION AND KEY FINDINGS

The University of Wyoming has made significant progress on the issues identified by the HLC during its last review, although progress has varied by issue. All issues identified by the HLC are part of the university's current academic plan. This record reflects the university's history of identifying and achieving its goals and emphasizing the needs for continual improvement in these areas. While all of the issues identified in the last review are important, the following four were deemed significant:

- **The university remains committed to increasing the diversity of its faculty.** While some progress has been made, there is more to accomplish in this area. This issue is discussed more fully in Chapter 4. (UP 3 Action Items 34, 35, and 36)
 - **The university maintains its commitment to the University Libraries because they are imperative to providing a rich learning environment to students and faculty.** The university is working to restore funding lost as a result of recent budget reductions as soon as possible. The budget reductions are discussed more fully in Chapter 10. (UP 3 Action Items 15, 83, and 84)
 - **The university is redefining how it delivers services to graduate students given recent decisions to disperse the administrative functions of the Graduate School.** The Graduate Education Taskforce has been charged with making recommendations on how and what changes should be made. Work of the taskforce is ongoing and discussed more fully in Chapter 8. (UP 3 Action Items 61, 62, and 63)
 - **The university has institutionalized its assessment processes, but it has yet to build a culture of assessment that consistently scales from the unit level to the institutional level to translate evidence of learning at the course, program, and institutional levels into documented curricular improvements.** The university aspires to build a culture of assessment that is as firmly embedded as the university-wide planning processes. This issue is discussed more fully in Chapters 7 and 8. (UP 3 Action Items 21, 22, and 63)
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