



Academic Quality Comprehensive Plan

Highlights

Assessment is a major focus with respect to the general studies program and academic programs. The University has adopted LiveText as the tool for assessment report submissions and rubric scoring. Training has been provided to faculty. The General Studies Assessment Committee reviewed eight general education courses to determine how the courses address general studies goals and if the courses are using appropriate general studies student learning outcomes. The Assessment and Accreditation Committee assists programs that are preparing assessment updates as part of the five-year program review process. The Committee has greatly improved assessment sharing and communication among faculty and administration. There is evidence that the assessment loop has been closed.

Career Pathways Comprehensive Plan

Highlights

The plan includes strong academic support. Focus on connecting efforts with graduate education offerings at WV institutions with established Masters degree offerings. Noted job placement (pending) and/or educational placement arrangements with local entities.

Concerns

West Liberty's career pathways components seemingly address the needs of student in select academic majors more thoroughly than other majors. Efforts are notable, but many have not been implemented campus-wide. Details on efforts to assess the success of initiatives are limited.

Collaborative Access Comprehensive Plan

Highlights

The institution outlines creative student access initiatives, including: "High School Invasion." This pilot initiative with K-12 brings WLSU faculty into John Marshall High School to teach various lessons. Additionally, the institution is currently implementing a new CRM system, which should prove beneficial if used appropriately.

Concerns

The reviewer is concerned about the decrease in HC student enrollment since 2011-12. The reviewer is also concerned about the decrease in the number of low income students enrolled.

Critical Regional Issues Comprehensive Plan

Highlights

Noteworthy initiatives include: testimonials and partnerships through a graphic design course, dental hygiene program, and P-12 partnerships with students and parents.

Concerns

Measuring impact of critical regional issues - for example if those non-profits would have worked with a firm to do

design services/social media campaigns, how much money would it have cost? What is the value of a volunteer? (refer to https://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time)

Recommendations / Requests / Other Notes

As an anchor institution, shared facilities and resources are part of the lifelong learning strategy. Also consider collaboration to identify areas of need - <http://community-wealth.org/strategies/panel/anchors/index.html> can provide additional research/best practices. Faculty may be interested in research about student engagement available through the Gallup-Purdue Index: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/168848/life-college-matters-life-college.aspx> How is WLU measuring the number of students/staff/faculty serving, the hours they are serving, and where they are serving? Is it possible for other faculty/students to implement similar service-learning methodologies being used in graphic design and dental hygiene?

Degrees Awarded Strategy

Highlights

The institution has met its formal Compact Goal by sustaining growth in the number of bachelor's degrees awarded. The university has had success with peer mentoring and has expanded the pilot to include biology and chemistry. Introducing new majors and publicizing student success has helped increase enrollment. The institution will continue to promote STEM and the success of their graduates. By now requiring all students taking Biology 124 to participate in the Active Study section the institution has eliminated the initial implementation challenges. A 2015 assessment showed that students in the Active Study course outperformed those not in the course despite initial math ability.

Developmental Education Strategy

Highlights

Early positive results in co-requisite courses.

Recommendations / Requests / Other Notes

The institution is fully committed to full implementation of co-requisite math and English. Continue implementation of activities.

Enrollment Strategy

Highlights

The institution has formed recruiting and retention teams in each of its academic colleges. As this is the first full year of implementation, the impact of this initiative on enrollment will not be realized until next year at the earliest. West Liberty is also actively working with to implement Radius, a customer relations management system.

Concerns

West Liberty University has experienced declines across most enrollment measures. If the current trends continue, it is unlikely that the institution will meet its 2018 targets.

Faculty Scholarship Strategy

Highlights

The institution is commended for its continuation of a mini-grant program in a challenging budget environment.

Concerns

The review team is concerned about the elimination of the faculty development budget for 2015-16 and the loss of course release time for faculty scholarship, although the budget was restored in 2017 at a reduced amount.

Financial Aid Comprehensive Plan

Highlights

The institution has seen a decrease in default rate from 18% to 10%. The institution is incorporating financial literacy and financial aid education into pre-enrollment activities and first year experience courses. The institution is gauging the success of its initiatives using a variety of metrics, including default rate, satisfaction surveys results, and test scores. The institution is utilizing resources that are offered by HEPC for default management services.

Concerns

With declining numbers in upcoming graduating classes and its impact on the default rate, the institution may consider incorporating one-on-one exit counseling or in person counseling to stress student loan repayment options and how to contact student loan servicers. Incentivizing students to participate in exit counseling may help (some institutions have prize drawings, for example).

First Year Retention Strategy

Highlights

Hilltopper Academy continues to evolve. With implementation of co-requisite developmental education courses students have been divided into STEM and non-STEM groups and given a specialized curriculum, helping more students feel prepared for the academic challenges ahead. Retention committees within the four academic colleges have continued to develop strategies to help students succeed in their given discipline.

Concerns

Although connected to Hilltopper Academy, it is not clear how the team building activities are directly related to student retention. Relationship building with other students, staff and faculty are critical for students to develop a sense of belonging to an institution, but it is not immediately clear here how these events translate into a longterm relationship or are tied to other activities. In the future, it would be helpful to have some additional information on how these Academy activities connect to academic success.

Recommendations / Requests / Other Notes

Out-of-state students continue to underperformed at West Liberty with respect to retention. It will be interesting to see if additional social programming will improve those rates.

Graduate Student Success Strategy

Highlights

The university continued efforts to create a graduate program culture and infrastructure. An Office of Graduate Studies was expected to be in place in fall 2016 with the responsibility of creating an overall graduate studies mission and vision statement. The Graduate Council revised policies that address faculty responsibilities for professional activity and service and online course obligations. A Graduate Student Association was formed. A Graduate Student handbook is scheduled to be available during the 2016-17 academic year. A procedure was developed to guide the appointment of graduate assistants.

Graduation Rates Strategy

Highlights

The university has remained on schedule to implement DegreeWorks for all students. The Registrar's office has had success implementing the software for May 2016 graduates. The institution has continued to offer opportunities to create community across the campus.

Progress Toward Degree Strategy

Highlights

The institution references its 15-to-Finish efforts

Concerns

Data about the impact of 15-to-Finish are limited. The reviewer team requests that the institution include this information in the 2017 update.

Research and Development Strategy

Highlights

While West Liberty is not required to provide Research and Development strategies and activities, they have provided this information. According to the metric chart, faculty at West Liberty were awarded nearly \$0.5M in external funding in FY2015. The institution provides faculty development funds that may be used for publication costs, attendance at scientific meetings, and grant-writing workshops.

Concerns

To have received this much external grant funding, the number of publications seems low at only 23.

Student Loan Default Rate Strategy

Highlights

The institution has seen a decrease in default rate from 18% to 10%. The institution is incorporating financial literacy and financial aid education into pre-enrollment activities and first year experience courses. The institution is gauging the success of its initiatives using a variety of metrics, including default rate, satisfaction surveys results, and test scores. The institution is utilizing resources that are offered by HEPC for default management services.

Recommendations / Requests / Other Notes

The institution may consider looking at the 10% of students who default and their characteristics and develop strategies to assist those students.