

Template for Developing Lines of Inquiry (Offsite Review)

Directions: This form is to be completed by the team at the conclusion of its daylong Offsite Review of the institutional report and supporting materials. The form will be sent to the institution and a response to section IV will be sent back from the institution eight weeks in advance of the Accreditation Visit. This form can be in a bulleted list, outline or narrative format.

OFFSITE REVIEW (OSR)

Institution under Review: Notre Dame de Namur University

Date of Review: October 27-28, 2014

Team Chair: Ann McElaney-Johnson

The Offsite Review team recommends the following actions be taken:

Proceed with the Accreditation Visit scheduled in: March 24 – 27, 2015

Reschedule the Accreditation Visit to: _____

The reason(s) the Team recommends rescheduling the visit is/are:

Outline

I. Overview of the lines of inquiry.

This document identifies four lines of inquiry for the Accreditation Visit (AV) that are derived from the institution's Report. In addition, this document includes questions or issues the team discussed during the Offsite Review (OSR) that may be pursued during the visit. The team does not expect or invite a written response to these questions before the Accreditation Visit.

The only written materials that the team expects from the institution before the visit are those listed in Section IV: "The team requests that the institution supply the following additional documents and information before the Accreditation Visit."

II. Commendations. The team commends the institution for the following accomplishments and practices:

- a. The substantial amount of work done to get to the place where the university is today. NDNU's financial turnaround is impressive.
- b. The significant and good work that has gone into preparing the Institutional Report. The report reflects transparency and integrity in responding to past WSCUC concerns. Good awareness of strengths and challenges.
- c. Excellent clarity of mission: community engagement and diversity. The university community knows who they are and what they want for students. Good alignment between mission, learning outcomes and students served. Regarding students, SSI and NSSE data are studied.
- d. Significant efforts and commitment in developing ILO's, PLO's and rubrics.
- e. Good summary of the university's self-review under the Standards.
- f. Excellent use of outside resources for institutional change; the HSI grant is particularly noteworthy.
- g. The Report indicates that faculty members have been engaged in conversations about student performance (setting goals for programs, designing assessment protocols, etc.).

III. Lines of inquiry. The team has identified the following lines of inquiry for the Accreditation Visit:

- a. Governance.
 - i. We are aware that the university is working on a new Governance Handbook, building on the work of the Governance TaskForce. The Report notes the improved climate on campus, although "challenges remain" (p. 10). Later (p. 14), under the rubric of "Areas Needing Continued Attention," the Report includes "continued attention to clear

communication and shared governance.” We look forward to discussing the “challenges” that remain and what activities are involved in “continued attention.”

- ii. We would like to explore in more detail the “revitalization” of the Board of Trustees.
- iii. During our visit, we would like to see examples of how the university responded to WSCUC’s recommendation regarding “communication, collaboration, and consultation,” including how faculty have been involved.
- iv. Since the 2006 WSCUC visit, the university has developed a number of plans (for example, Strategic Plan, Academic Plan, Enrollment Plan) that include goals and benchmarks. We would like to learn more about your experience of monitoring progress on these plans.

b. Student success.

- i. The university is doing well in terms of retention and graduation rates for some populations. Are there strategies that could be applied to other populations?
- ii. Concerning the Director of Student Success and Retention, we hope to learn more about how this office functions within the university (e.g., how it works with faculty and staff offices, the Registrar, etc.). What are some programming successes and challenges the university is facing in this area?
- iii. We want to examine and explore with the university how graduation rates are being addressed. For example, how does the university foster persistence in achievement through graduation (e.g., with faculty advising, career counseling, etc.)?

c. Assessment of Student Learning. (Questions related to processes, capacity for ongoing work, and demonstrated achievements and outcomes of the work.)

- i. Program Review. During our visit we would like to hear about the pros and cons of the current process and see samples of changes based on program review.
- ii. Graduate and Online programs. What is the status of assessment for graduate and online programs? How does the university articulate student learning outcomes, map these into the curriculum, and use direct methods of assessment? For these programs, how does the university evaluate the sufficiency of numbers of faculty, library and information resources, and capacity? What are the differences in expectations at the M.A. and Ph.D. levels?
- iii. Faculty. We would like to discuss faculty involvement in assessment, in terms of expectations, development and training, and workload. On the one hand, the Report notes, “the critical work of assessment requires time beyond that which can be expected of full-time faculty members” (p. 41); on the other hand, the Report also notes, “We have established a faculty-driven assessment infrastructure” (p. 40). We would like to explore how

faculty members see the value of conversations around student achievement.

- iv. How would members of the university community describe the culture of assessment, and where do they hope to grow their practice of assessment?
- v. ILO assessment. What is the status of developing and assessing the ILO related to Mission, Values, and Engagement? Related, what are the takeaways about process following the University Week activities?
- vi. Co-curricular assessment. There are ten co-curricular programs. How does the culture of assessment (4.1 in the Report) become implemented in these programs? How are survey data (e.g., NSSE) used?
- vii. How does the university define academic rigor and enhancing academic reputation? As a related question, we would like to discuss the role of grade analysis within and across programs—is it used for faculty evaluation, assessment?
- viii. Evidence of EQI's. During our visit, we would like to see two of these.

d. Finances and sustainability.

- i. Enrollment management.
 - 1. The university experienced a 2% drop in enrollment for Fall 2014. We will be interested in your assessment regarding why this may have occurred, the current steps taken in response, and the plans in place in the event of future lower than expected enrollment.
 - 2. Diversifying and increasing enrollment of Hispanic students seems to be the key enrollment strategy. As noted above in III.b.2, we would like to discuss if the university has alternative strategies for increasing enrollment.
- ii. Capital improvement management. In studying the Report, we would like to pose the following questions for further discussion during our visit:
 - 1. The university has in place plans for facilities utilization and for information technology. Are there any updates or changes to these plans?
 - 2. What is the state of deferred maintenance currently?
 - 3. Has the capital improvement plan changed since the July 2013 Moody's report?
 - 4. What are the options being considered for space management and expansion of physical capacity?
- iii. Human resources plans.
 - 1. How does the university assess its progress with regard to the Human Resources Plan (2013-2018)? What are areas for concern, if any?
 - 2. What are the plans to support faculty recruitment and pay in light of "fiscal responsibility" (per self study)?
- iv. Endowment planning.
 - 1. What is the advancement plan?

2. Regarding the rate of return on endowment development work, we noted that the university spent \$1 million to raise \$1.7 million. We welcome your reflections on this.
3. Where is NDNU in its stated plans to build an alumni database?
- v. Online program development. How does the university evaluate the capacity for online programs in terms of faculty adequacy and/or student services?
- vi. What is the budgeting process? P. 14 of the self-study cites “continue improvement in budgetary decision making processes, alignment of resources, etc.” We welcome a discussion of how this is being addressed.
- vii. How does NDNU plan to implement the recommendations of the Faculty Compensation/Excellence Task Force?

- IV. Request for additional documents and information. The only written documents and information the team expects before the visit are listed in this section. The team does not expect or invite a written response to any of the questions posed or issues raised in other sections of this form. The team requests that the institution supply the following additional documents and information before the Accreditation Visit:
- a. Samples of Program Assessment Plans.
 - b. Update on items that are listed but not yet available on the website.
 - c. A link to the Academic Freedom Policy on the website.
 - d. A link to the Diversity Policy on the website.
 - e. If it is ready, a copy of the new Strategic Plan.
- V. Individuals and groups to meet during the visit. The team requests that the following groups and individuals holding the specified positions be included on the schedule for the Accreditation Visit. In developing the schedule for the visit, the team may identify additional individuals or groups with whom they wish to speak.
- a. Assessment Council.
 - b. Planning Council.
 - c. Budget Council.
 - d. A random group of faculty members.
 - e. Two programs, undergraduate and graduate, that have completed program review.
- VI. In summary, the team looks forward to receiving these documents and to visiting the campus in March 2015.