



# INTRODUCTION





**I**N THE 10 YEARS SINCE THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–

Milwaukee (UWM) was last reaccredited in 1995, higher education has experienced significant changes, notably including economic expansion and contraction; increasing expectations that graduates be prepared to participate in a diverse, globalized society; the simultaneous infusion of federal research dollars and stiffer competition among universities for these awards; decreasing state support nationally for public higher education; a greater reliance on information technology; and an increasing emphasis on assessment and accountability. While all of these trends are reflected in this Self-Study, a focus on assessment and accountability—on educational outputs (i.e., student learning outcomes and other evidence of institutional effectiveness) rather than inputs (i.e., human and physical resources, curriculum)—is what most differentiates this report from its predecessors.

The demand for accountability in educational institutions has been widely expressed by constituents including students, parents, board members, the general public, and state and federal legislators, and it has been felt across all educational levels. The currently proposed revision to the federal Higher Education Act, which would make accreditation reports more widely available to the public, is one example of the accountability trend in higher education. In the state of Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin System has been publishing its own annual Accountability Report since 1993, tracking key indicators of success such as student retention and satisfaction across all of its campuses.

UWM's accrediting body, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), has also embraced outcomes assessment. The NCA's criteria for accreditation were revised in 2003, resulting in the following fundamental shifts<sup>1</sup>:

From inputs and resources to results, outcomes, performance;

From teaching to teaching and learning, intended broadly for students and employees;

From autonomy to connection and interdependence;

From a look backwards to a future focus; and

From uniformity/stratification to distinctiveness, flexibility, and differentiation.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Delving into the New Criteria, NCA Annual Meeting presentation, available at <http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/restructuring/NewCriteriaRegWkshopRev.ppt>

The concept of stewardship underpins both the new NCA criteria and other calls for educational accountability. The parameters of UWM's stewardship (defined as the University's effective use of resources to achieve societally beneficial ends) are set forth in our mission documents and are fully elaborated in Chapter III, "Mission and Integrity." As a consequence of the University's distinctive mission, the interpretation of the accreditation criteria and the examples of evidence used to support reaccreditation reflect UWM's position in the UW System, in Milwaukee, in the state, and in national and international arenas as a major public research university.

## Organization of the Self-Study Report

The Self-Study follows the order and outline of the NCA criteria, with the addition of this introductory chapter, a second chapter providing an overview of UWM, and a concluding chapter that summarizes the Self-Study's recommendations and identifies opportunities for UWM's future advancement. The five chapters that detail how the University is meeting the NCA Criteria are structured as follows:

- 1 Introductory overview
- 2 Evidence of UWM's alignment with the Core Components of the NCA Criteria
- 3 Discussion
- 4 Looking Forward—a concluding segment that addresses pending developments and envisions how the adoption of recommendations might help the University better fulfill its mission

The Self-Study is also available online at [www.selfstudy.uwm.edu](http://www.selfstudy.uwm.edu). The web-based version of this report provides access to 14 appendices, team reports, and additional supporting materials.

## Goals of the Self-Study Process

The Steering Committee and the Self-Study teams were charged with preparing for UWM's reaccreditation. They operated under the guiding principle that their work would be of long-term use to the University, not only in meeting the requirements for accreditation, but also in assessing progress toward goals and mapping a future direction for the institution. The Self-Study process has prompted in-depth discussions about development of meaningful measures to assess the University's activities, and it has highlighted ways in which we can benefit from additional data or more consistent data collection to guide decision making.

The portrait that results from this institutional self-reflection will also serve as a resource for UWM's new Chancellor, Carlos Santiago. Although he started his tenure at UWM relatively late in the Self-Study process (July 2004), the Steering Committee has actively sought his input on the Self-Study draft and its recommendations, with the express goal that the Self-Study reflect UWM's past and address its future.

## The Self-Study Process

The Self-Study process was structured to ensure broad participation. Five teams were created, one for each of the five criteria. The teams were led by faculty members whose names were forwarded to the Provost through the governance process. The 100 team members were drawn from across campus and included representatives from every school, college and administrative division, faculty members, students, and classified and academic staff.

The Self-Study teams were charged with collecting data that address the NCA's Criteria for Accreditation; aligning the Self-Study with UWM's strategic aims; communicating progress toward reaccreditation back to the campus community; preparing the institutional Self-Study; and planning for the site visit in 2005. The main steps in the campus process are summarized as follows:

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### Involvement of Governance Groups

Given the importance of shared governance to UWM's organizational culture, the Steering Committee felt that it was imperative to engage with governance groups such as the Faculty Senate, the University Committee (the executive committee of the Faculty Senate), the Academic Staff Committee, the Academic Planning and Budget Committee, the Graduate Faculty Committee, and the Academic Program and Curriculum Committee. In addition to governance representation on the Self-Study teams, special sessions were scheduled for the governance groups with the Steering Committee to discuss the Self-Study process, key issues facing the campus, team organization and charges, and strategies to increase the effectiveness of the Steering Committee's communication and coordination with the governance groups. These meetings took place over the fall of 2003, culminating in an endorsement from the Faculty Senate, whose resolution regarding the Self-Study process reads as follows:

The Faculty Senate affirms the critical importance of the NCA Accreditation Team's work in preparing the Self-Study report. In order to achieve the most lasting benefit for the University from this substantial effort, it is expected that members of the Team will engage in a collaborative process with faculty governance committees. This process will be coordinated by the University Committee, with a goal of building broad consensus and ownership by the faculty of the resulting report and its recommendations.

**Rationale:**

This motion is the result of a meeting between the University Committee and the NCA Accreditation Team Steering Committee. It is being proposed to formally connect the NCA Accreditation Team's work with UWM faculty governance.

This commitment to open communication has helped ensure broad awareness of the activities of the Self-Study teams, and has set the stage for data collection, the production of team reports, and the campus launch of this Self-Study.

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## Data Collection

Throughout the fall of 2003, Self-Study teams analyzed the accreditation criteria. Their discussions raised questions that could be answered with existing data; they also asked questions whose answers required new data or data that needed to be "refreshed" for the Self-Study.

Requests for new or updated data were addressed in one of two ways: first, requests particular to a campus office were sent out on an individual basis (e.g., a question on space utilization went to the space planning unit in the Office for Resource Analysis).

The second approach to data requests involved questions that cut across all or some levels of the campus structure. For questions such as how hiring decisions supported campus priorities, the Steering Committee needed aggregate data from, for example, all Deans or all department chairpersons. For these crosscutting questions, the Division of Information and Media Technologies (I&MT) created a web-based survey that all relevant parties were requested to complete. Web surveys for Deans, department chairpersons, center directors, and program directors were created. Survey responses were accessible to teams through a web-based reporting tool that allowed team members

to access the data by question, by responding unit, or by the team asking the question.<sup>2</sup>

The quantitative and qualitative responses to the web surveys constituted a major source of information for this Self-Study, and a review of the data collected has already initiated discussions about regularizing data collection in some areas such as scholarly productivity. The University is currently implementing a web-based system that will enable faculty members to enter their own yearly activity reports (for the accreditation survey, data were entered at the department level).

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## Team Reports

Typically, the teams broke into subteams, and each subteam tackled a core component of the criteria. The subteam reports, which were produced over the summer of 2004, were collated to produce team reports. These reports formed the core of the Self-Study, although there is not a one-to-one correspondence. The Self-Study, although crafted from the team reports, was edited for consistency, and duplicative material was removed to create a single narrative that tells UWM's story.

Each team report identifies the University's strengths as well as its challenges pertinent to the criterion under consideration. Discussions focusing on identified challenges are underway with governance groups.

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## Self-Study Launch and Campus Review

The campus launch of the Self-Study draft included the following venues for soliciting input:

- A September 2004 kick-off event for the accreditation teams;
- The formation of reading groups from the schools and colleges to provide a close review of the draft;
- Presentations to the University Committee, the Academic Staff Committee, the Student Association, the Academic Deans Council and key community advisory groups; and
- An announcement on the UWM home page, inviting students, faculty, and staff to review the web-based version of the draft.

The inclusive nature of UWM's Self-Study process was designed to make this document as authentic to UWM as possible and to ensure that the Self-Study is a valuable springboard to future action.

<sup>2</sup> Sample surveys and access to the reporting tool are online at [www.selfstudy.uwm.edu](http://www.selfstudy.uwm.edu).

## Summary of UWM's Accreditation History

UWM underwent its first accreditation review in 1969, when the University was fully accredited through the master's level.<sup>3</sup> Two focused visits on extending accreditation to the doctoral level were made in the early 1970s, and doctoral accreditation was granted in 1975. The next review was held in 1985, and full accreditation, without stipulation, was granted in May of 1985. UWM's last NCA accreditation review occurred in November of 1995.

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### The 1995 Report of the NCA Evaluation Team

The NCA voted to continue its accreditation of UWM in response to the NCA evaluation visit to the campus in April of that year. The NCA evaluation team concluded that “the University meets all of the GIRs (General Institutional Requirements) and all five accreditation criteria, and continues to be a basically healthy and dynamic institution.” As a result of the evaluation, NCA recommended the full 10-year interval (2004-05) until the next comprehensive visit. The evaluation team did, however, recommend that a focused visit be added “for the purpose of evaluating progress made by the University in the strategic planning process.”

The 1995 NCA accreditation review occurred at a time of declining enrollments, state funding, and faculty size. The NCA examiners posed questions about how the University would respond to these trends. Their report emphasized the University's urgent need for a campus-wide strategic planning process, the strained and ineffective communication among campus stakeholders, and the University's inadequate progress in diversifying the University.

The NCA report made 14 suggestions for the University to consider and recommended a focused site visit in 1998 “for the purpose of evaluating progress made by the University in the strategic planning process.” The report stated that the lack of a planning process jeopardized the University's ability to accomplish its mission and strengthen its educational effectiveness. The report also emphasized that the site visit would focus on evaluating the planning process, not just a planning report.

The NCA recommendations aligned with ongoing campus activities and conversations that were beginning to address the need for more comprehensive long-range planning.<sup>4</sup> The NCA report gave additional impetus to this trend, and over the next three years following its publication, UWM developed a university-wide strategic plan, evaluated its degree array, and adopted a plan to increase campus diversity (treated in more detail in “Criterion 2”).

<sup>3</sup> For the interval between 1956 and 1969, UWM's was considered accredited by virtue of the accredited status of its founding institutions; see “UWM Overview” for more information on UWM's early history.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the 1986 publication task force report “*UWM and the Future of Metropolitan Milwaukee*.”

## The 1998 Focused Site Visit

UWM's Institution Report for the focused site visit detailed the strategic planning process and the development of accountability measures. The report also commented on enrollment issues (including enhanced recruitment and retention efforts), improvements in the budgeting process, and steps to improve communication across campus.

The NCA report noted the “substantial progress” that UWM had made in the areas of strategic planning, communication, and enrollment/budget management. The report also indicated five “challenges needing continued attention”:

- 1 The need to transform the plan into a “fully iterative strategic planning process”
- 2 The 1997–98 Program Array Review (PAR) process seemed to lack documentation of student achievement and to have raised unrealistic expectations<sup>5</sup>
- 3 The continuation of strategic planning would require broad support with the upcoming change of Chancellor
- 4 The importance of broad acceptance for integrating research, teaching, and service within a premier research university
- 5 The state and system environment makes strategic planning difficult to the point that “the University operates in an environment in which long delays in implementing needed improvements are clearly harmful to the institution’s ability to function effectively”

These challenges, and UWM’s responses to them, are detailed in “Criterion 2.”

The team also offered a series of suggestions as advice on following up on the progress to date. The specific suggestions were:

- 1 To involve students in the consultation and information gathering phases of decision-making processes
- 2 To evaluate and address student concerns regarding campus image and reputation
- 3 To integrate the PAR results and an assessment of student academic achievement in all program reviews
- 4 To supplement the PAR process with a review of all service and administrative programs and offices

<sup>5</sup> The PAR process is described in “Criterion 2.”

- ⑤ To reexamine institutional research allocations in light of the vision statement
- ⑥ To enhance communication by tightening the committee and governance structures, upgrading computer resources, and making more information available online
- ⑦ To reexamine the role and status of instructional academic staff

These points are addressed in “Criterion 2” as well, but are also addressed throughout the Self-Study, in discussions, for example, of governance structures and processes, the Black and Gold Commission, program review, campus technology, and the University’s hiring and other resource allocations in support of research, instruction, and engagement activities.