Introduction

The town hall meeting began with a very basic introduction to what WASC is, and why the new reaccreditation process developed by WASC is so important to the University. It was explained that through reaccreditation, Woodbury would continue not only with a stamp of institutional approval from its peers, but also continue to be eligible for essential federal funding.

WASC Reaccreditation Process

The way in which the reaccreditation process has changed was explained. In 2001, WASC began a new approach wherein institutional accountability came to the forefront of reaccreditation. WASC is therefore attempting to help institutions of higher education in setting their own standards in contrast to having them imposed. In order to achieve a successful demonstration of accountability, Woodbury needs to establish measures of success that are informed by accurately collected data.

The presentation continued with an explanation of where the University is in the process of reaccreditation. As it stands, Woodbury is in the midst of a comprehensive self-review that is informed by feedback gathered from a wide range of constituencies. From collected feedback, an “institutional proposal” is being created that will explain to WASC what the University’s intentions are with regard to fostering and sustaining quality institutional change.

Next, the presenter explained the next steps in the process, the “Capacity and Preparatory Review” and the “Educational Effectiveness Review.” The “Capacity and Preparatory Review” was described as the phase of the process when it is demonstrated that the University has the resources needed in order to achieve the goals it sets forth in its institutional proposal. The “Educational Effectiveness Review” was described as the “crux” of reaccreditation. It is the time when the University demonstrates its educational quality assurances.

The presentation continued with describing the four themes that had been decided upon during this early phase of the reaccreditation process. The themes included:

- Educational Identity:
  Recent change and emerging notions of identity need to be evaluated. The University is in need of collaboratively determining who we are and where we are headed as an institution.

- Teaching Effectiveness:
  The University is aware that it has a dedicated faculty and innovative modes of instruction. This needs to be more than just anecdotally evident. Data must inform the University’s demonstration of its educational effectiveness.
• Student Success:
  Woodbury has a vested interest in its students. Hard evidence must inform processes in producing successful students. The idea of what a successful student means for the University must also be determined.

• Institutional Alignment:
  Resources and their deployment must accurately reflect what Woodbury is an institution of higher education. Woodbury must remain accountable to its students in providing a quality education.

Some questions and concerns were raised after the presentation. First it was asked, “What factor does assessment play in all of this?” It was answered that assessment is built into themes two and three. Next it was asked, “What is realistic with regards to resources?” Several answers were given by a number of community members including: definitions must be determined through research; actions must be put in place in order to define what a successful student is; capacity will inform what resources are available and what resources will be needed. Next, the question was asked, “Will accountability extend beyond the curricular?” This was determined as a point that should have more elaboration in the process.

The meeting was concluded with a brief description of the website.