MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 4, 2005

TO: University Community

FROM: Kenneth R. Nielsen, President

SUBJECT: WASC

As President of the University, I want everyone in the community to be aware of the process we are beginning for the reaccreditation of the University. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) has developed a new procedure, which is outlined in the enclosed document. The ongoing review of the university and our delivery of an educational product is something that will involve everyone within the community. Therefore, I am asking for your support and your active help in this important project.

Basically, we are moving into continuous evaluation of the University and our ability to deliver and measure what we are saying in our mission statement.

We have been very successful in the past accreditation visits with the help of our faculty, administration, staff, students, alumni and trustees.

Students have become very sophisticated consumers along with their parents. They look carefully at the stated purposes of the university and how the university is evaluated by outside groups, including WASC.

I have always promoted the idea as a University, that we must do everything possible to help our students become successful in all aspects of their lives. With your help and with your good work, we will fulfill this objective and help our students achieve the American Dream.

Thanks for your help and I look forward to working with all of you.

Enclosure
The WASC review involves three phases: Institutional Proposal, Capacity Review, and Educational Effectiveness Review

Phase one: The Institutional Proposal (Due October 2005)
This sets the plan for the other accreditation reviews by offering three to five projects on which the university will focus for the next four years in order to advance. The proposal involves the following, which subsequent reports must demonstrate:

1. The project goals are the essential ones for the institution to advance (Proposal)
2. Our resources are focused on achieving those goals (Capacity)
3. We will be able to demonstrate that we have met the goals (Educational Effectiveness)

WASC, like all accreditation agencies, now makes a single powerful assumption: The goal of any college or university is student success.

In reviewing universities, WASC examines two implications of this assumption:

1. The university creates a culture of student learning that is supported in the activities of all academic and non-academic departments.
2. The university has a culture of assessment that allows it to measure the success of its students learning and other activities throughout the institution. These are outcome measures, not input ones. The capacity and effectiveness reviews require we document these.

The proposal itself will establish projects that will embrace both implications and that in doing so will advance the institution and its mission.

Who must be involved in forming the proposal?

WASC demands that we put faculty at the center of the process and that we document their participation.

However, they also demand that the entire community be involved:

» Faculty
» Administration
» Staff
» Board of Trustees
» Students
» Alumni
Timeline and Process in Arriving at the Proposal

Note: throughout the process the community as a whole is kept informed of progress, usually using a web space.

January The Starter Gives the Signal
To launch the accreditation process university representatives attend WASC workshop

February Getting Organized
WASC Accreditation Coordinator, consulting with VPAA, establishes Steering Committee
Steering Committee takes initial organizing steps
1) identifies the stakeholders and the groups to be involved (usually already established bodies, such as standing committees)
2) circulates to the groups common documents

March General Discussion
Groups of stakeholders identify potential themes

April Focusing on the themes
Steering Committee attends WASC conference in San Diego
Steering Committee culls and organizes themes and circulates back to groups for further ideas

May Preparing for the initial draft
Steering Committee begins preparation for the draft:
1) Reviews feedback
2) Selects 3-5 major themes
3) Organizes writing teams
   • Selects team facilitators
   • Establishes writing timeline
   • Develops guidelines for writing teams
   • Assigns a Steering Committee member to assist each of the Teams
   • Determines appropriate stipend for writing team members where appropriate

July Draft pieces submitted and put together
Writing teams submits 3-5 page drafts on themes
Steering Committee reviews writing teams’ drafts and discusses other important elements to include in Proposal

August Institutional Proposal draft prepared and circulated
Material compiled, edited and “tweaked” into a 10-page proposal document by VPAA
VPAA E-mails to all faculty, administrators and student leaders

September Draft discussed and dialog renewed
Focus group meetings held to discuss each theme
Campus-wide meeting to discuss institutional proposal
Institutional Proposal draft revised
• Notes from focus groups and other feedback given to VPPA–

October Formal Institutional Proposal (including tables, catalogs, etc.) sent to WASC

DMR 2.4.05