

August 18, 2014

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Dave Kieda, Co-Chair, Dean, Graduate School
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Keith Bartholomew, Associate Dean, College of Architecture + Planning
Mark Bergstrom, Associate Dean, College of Humanities
Alexa Doig, Division Chair, College of Nursing
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Paul Gore, Director of Institutional Research, Office of Budget and Institutional Analysis
Rich Ingebretsen, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, College of Science
Hank Liese, Associate Dean, College of Social Work
Jennifer Mabey, Assistant Dean for Postdoctoral Affairs, Graduate School
John McNary, Director – Campus Design & Construction, Facilities Management
Annie O’Brien, Director – Education, Continuing Education
Karen Paisley, Faculty Athletics Representative, College of Health
Monty Paret, Associate Dean, Honors College
Mark Parker, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Affairs, David Eccles School of Business
Sarah Projansky, Associate Dean for Faculty & Academic Affairs, College of Fine Arts
Wayne Samuelson, Vice Dean for Education, School of Medicine
Mark St. Andre, Assistant Dean, Undergraduate Studies
Kathryn Stockton, Interim Associate Vice President, Diversity and Equity
Brenda Valles, Senior Research Analyst, Diversity and Equity
Cathleen Zick, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, College of Social & Behavioral Science
STUDENT PARTICIPANTS – TBA

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to ask you to serve on the self-study team that will guide the preparation of our written report for accreditation with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). The report is officially known as our “Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report.” The self-study effort will take place throughout 2014-15, culminating in the completion of a draft report by May 1, 2015. The report will then be broadly reviewed, edited, and finalized during Summer 2015 and submitted to NWCCU in August 2015.

As you know, the accreditation process is vital for the campus. The self-study is an opportunity to take stock of our performance, both showcasing our achievements and identifying areas for enhancement.

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A culture of continuous evaluation and improvement will indeed strengthen the University of Utah, and the accreditation self-study provides an excellent process through which we can continue to improve the institution. NWCCU President Sandra Elman's statement on the purpose of accreditation notes (NWCCU website):

Accreditation is an intensive process of institutional [self-study](#) and [peer evaluation](#). Accreditation offers a unique opportunity for all members of the institution – faculty, administrators, staff, students, alumni, and board members – to participate in a focused process that results in ongoing institutional improvement. Following this institutional review or self-study, a committee of peers conducts a comprehensive onsite evaluation.

[Institutions](#) accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities are distinguished by their demonstrated ability to meet broadly accepted higher education standards of quality. The value of accreditation is not limited to quality assurance alone. Accreditation also fosters public confidence in the institution's ability to fulfill its stated mission and goals, facilitates student mobility between institutions, and enhances an institution's credibility with its peers. It provides effective mechanisms for creating institutional vision and enhancing programmatic and financial viability and effectiveness.

Collectively, the [members and staff](#) of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities strive to maximize the benefits of accreditation to enrich teaching and learning, ensure academic quality, and encourage continuous improvement. In so doing, we pledge to promote innovation, respect institutional autonomy, recognize the distinct character of individual institutions, and honor the rich diversity among the accredited institutions within the Northwest region.

For additional information about the accreditation process and standards, please refer to the NWCCU website:

<http://www.nwccu.org/Standards%20and%20Policies/Accreditation%20Standards/Accreditation%20Standards.htm>

Associate Vice President Martha Bradley Evans and Dave Kieda, Dean of the Graduate School, have graciously agreed to serve as co-chairs of this important campus effort. I hope that you will be able to join us in this task. Your expertise and insights will help us develop a self-study that truly reflects both the current state of our campus and our aspirations for the future. If you are not able to serve, could you please let us know by August 25, 2014 (via email to Scott McMurtrey, scott.mcmurtrey@utah.edu). If we do not hear from you, we will assume that you are able to serve. An initial meeting will be scheduled very soon after the beginning of the semester.

Best wishes,



Ruth V. Watkins, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

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c: Members of the Council of Deans
President David W. Pershing