

Sent on 4/25/18

Dear UNI Community,

Along with other universities across our region, the University of Northern Iowa is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). As you know, accreditation is vital for our successful operation and requires a campus-wide effort. Among other things, accreditation assures that our students have access to federal funds, including grants and subsidized loans.

UNI is part of HLC's Open Pathway accreditation process, which has four requirements. First, we must complete a project (called a Quality Initiative Project, or QIP) and report on it by August, 2019. Second, we must engage in a comprehensive self-study, or "assurance argument," and submit it in the summer of 2020. Third, we must compile and submit thousands of pages of documents to demonstrate compliance with federal regulations. Finally, we will complete an on-campus visit with HLC peer reviewers during the 2020-2021 school year.

Our reaccreditation effort is overseen by a [steering committee](#) chaired by [Kristin Moser](#) (Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness) and [Scott Peters](#) (Associate Professor, Political Science). The steering committee is comprised of co-chairs of seven separate committees, each corresponding to a specific HLC evaluation criterion or requirement. All told, about 100 faculty members, staff members, administrators and students serve on these committees. We are grateful to all those who volunteered; we had more volunteers than we had space on the committees, which speaks volumes about the UNI community's willingness to serve.

The reaccreditation process and criteria have changed substantially since our last self-study and site visit in 2010-11. Under pressure from the federal government, the HLC is scrutinizing particular areas connected to student success. These include assessment of student learning in both curricular and co-curricular activities, and assuring the academic rigor of courses and programs across all modes of delivery (in-person, online, on-campus, off-campus).

Additionally, HLC today places a greater burden on universities to demonstrate compliance. Every claim within our assurance argument must be backed by evidence demonstrating our effectiveness. We know from discussions with colleagues at other universities that HLC peer reviewers have been randomly auditing syllabi as one method of verifying compliance with expectations about learning outcomes and academic rigor.

We are off to an early and successful start to this process. Our QIP, titled ["Enhancing Service Learning At UNI"](#) is already well underway. The other committees have spent this spring learning about their areas and in the fall they will gather evidence to support

our claims of effectiveness.

If you are contacted by someone asking for your help gathering evidence required by HLC, please do your best to help in a timely manner. We will regularly update campus on our progress over the next two years leading up to the site visit. Please visit [accr.universityofcalifornia.edu](https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/accr/accr.html) for additional information about the committee and our process to date.