Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

- What it is and why we care
- “Old” accreditation process
- New Open Pathways Quality Initiative process
- UW’s QI Report - First Year Seminar Implementation
HLC – What and Why

In order to receive federal support, public post-secondary institutions are required to have accreditation from their regional accreditor:

• Since 1913, UW has been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC, formerly the North Central Association)

• The HLC is our “US Department of Education gateway.” That means they watch over and vouch for the quality, rigor, robustness of our curriculum, student support, governance, finances.

• Ongoing updates to HLC from UW – annually and significant changes.
“Old” Accreditation Process

• Ongoing – annual report, significant changes reported
• Reaffirmation of status every 10 years
  – Create body of evidence in self-study report
  – Submit to HLC and host visit just prior to reaffirmation
  – Very intense, but did not incentivize continuous improvement or behavior required for it.
“New” Process – Open Pathway

• Regular monitoring
• Checkpoint at year 4/10 (called an Assurance Review)
• Quality Initiative – design & implement significant & bold project intended to allow institutions to take risks, aim high, & learn from success, partial success, even failure.
• Comprehensive evaluation at end of 10 year cycle
Open Pathway and UW’s QI

Proposal: Implementation of First Year Seminar

• Part of redesign of UW’s University Studies Program (USP) to USP 2015

• All UW students must take – and pass – in their first year and cannot be a college or major requirement

• Must be taught by faculty (not grad students, not temp hires) with at least 2 years of experience; class size < 25; must have options from every college

• Must meet “critical and creative thinking” student learning outcomes, promote design thinking, and be approved by USP committee
FYS Learning Outcomes

1. Access diverse information through focused research, active discussion, and collaboration with peers;
2. Separate facts from inferences and relevant from irrelevant information, and explain limitations of information;
3. Evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and reliability of conclusions drawn from information;
4. Recognize and synthesize multiple perspectives to develop innovative viewpoints;
5. Analyze one’s own and others’ assumptions and evaluate contexts when presenting a position; and
6. Communicate ideas in writing using appropriate documentation.
UW’s Quality Initiative Proposal

• Incentivize and provide assistance to a broad swath of faculty to design dozens of sections of a brand new course.
  – Experienced faculty may still not have a lot of experience in teaching first year students, so must provide significant development support.
  – Must have enough approved sections of this new course over an academic year to accommodate every incoming freshman. Every section must meet required student learning outcomes.
  – Do this in a few months.
UW’s Quality Initiative Proposal

• Collect as much data as possible.
  – From students
  – From faculty
  – From advisors
UW’s Quality Initiative Proposal

• Solve problems – quickly – inherent in a massive new change in curriculum.
  – What if a student fails once? Twice? More?
  – What if students try “wait it out.”
  – What if faculty or departments or colleges do XYZ that’s “not allowed” by policy?
Specific QI Goals and Results

- **Goal:** Develop enough courses for entire incoming class
  - AY 2015-16 estimated need: 71 sections
    - AY 2015-16 actual offered: 93 sections
  - AY 2016-17 estimated need: 76 sections
    - AY 2016-17 actual offered: 94 sections
  - Fill rates: 90% +
Specific QI Goals and Results

• Goal: Offer wide range across UW taught by experienced faculty
  – Each college is given a “section quota” based on their incoming student class.
  – 91% of faculty teaching the course have 2+ years of experience; 56% of faculty teaching the course have 10+ years of experience
Specific QI Goals and Results

• Goal: Develop a comprehensive plan for evaluating initiative and carry it out.
  – Multiple surveys and evaluations administered; quick problem solving based on evidence collected
  – Worked with our learning-management system (LMS) vendor, Canvas, to design tool to collect anonymized student work across all sections
  – Faculty working group assessed this work to determine progress in mastering critical/creative thinking.
Specific QI Goals and Results

• Overall: More successful than we’d imagined in range and quality of offerings, but:
  – Continue to mainstream use of LMS by faculty and students so we can make assessment more systemic and simple
  – Continue to provide options we’d not even dreamed of at proposal phase.
  – Examine learning outcomes (ability of one class to meet all?) and course caps
  – Incentivize development opportunities for instructors
  – Integrate FYS into a full-blown First Year Experience that helps students learn to not only be successful in the classroom, but beyond.
### Open Pathway 10-Year Cycle

**Transition Map for Institutions with PEAQ Reaffirmation Visits in 2019-20**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle Year</th>
<th>Institutional Activities</th>
<th>Peer Review</th>
<th>HLC Decision-Making¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>Institution may contribute documents to Evidence File</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>Assurance Review Waived</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>Institution may contribute documents to Evidence File</td>
<td>Period to submit Quality Initiative Proposal</td>
<td>Review Quality Initiative Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>Period to submit Quality Initiative Report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>Period to submit Quality Initiative Report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>Conduct Comprehensive Evaluation (with visit)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Action on Comprehensive Evaluation and Reaffirmation of Accreditation²</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>Submit Comprehensive Evaluation Materials³</td>
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</tbody>
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**Timeline:**

- **UW QI proposal accepted 2015**
- **UW QI Report submitted Jan. 2017**
- **UW begins preparing for evaluation visit**