

Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Continuing Accreditation

Site Visit Dates: April 18-20, 2011



HLC Self-Study and Beyond

COEHS Update Agenda – Robbie Teahen, Academic Affairs

1. Overview of accreditation standards and self-study process
2. Brief highlights of the Report Findings
3. Discussion

The Criteria and Topics:

The HLC continuing accreditation team will evaluate Ferris holistically using five main criteria for accreditation (along with each of the core components, for a total of 21 dimensions – reference website):

- Criterion 1: Mission and Integrity
- Criterion 2: Preparing for the Future
- Criterion 3: Student Learning and Effective Teaching
- Criterion 4: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge
- Criterion 5: Engagement and Service

Get more information here: <http://www.ferris.edu/hlc/core.htm>

Also considered in HLC's evaluation criteria are these cross-cutting themes:

- Future Oriented; Learning-Focused; Connected; Distinctive

A Changing Environment – *areas we expect will receive additional scrutiny*

- Increased scrutiny of distance education (online)
- Increased scrutiny of Federal Compliance Issues (authentication of student identity, transfer, transparency, complaint processes, financial aid practices)
- Heightened attention to *planning, diversity, assessment*, governance, general education, and finances* (these are the most common follow-ups)
- More attention to *“additional locations”* – assuring comparative levels of student and staff support
- Alignment of *use of data* (especially about student learning) with strategic plans and mission achievement

*When using the term “assessment,” the HLC is referring to the assessment of student learning, especially direct measures.

Purposes of the FSU Process

As a result of the HLC Continuing Accreditation Self-Study Process, the following outcomes are driving the process, to be rolled out in reverse order.

1. **Celebration:** Successful reaccreditation effort, with multiple areas of commendation and recognition of exemplary practices and programs with no follow-up requirements
2. **Awareness:** Enhanced knowledge among all stakeholders concerning our services, programming, strengths, challenges, and opportunities

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3. **Data Use:** Increased emphasis upon the use and transparency of data/information to inform planning and service and program improvements
4. **Action:** Movement to address identified challenges through existing or ad hoc university processes
5. **Mission Focus:** Expanded focus on Ferris’ mission and goals, including student success and our values of collaboration, excellence, diversity, ethical community, and learning, and opportunity.

Simplified Timeline:

- 2007 Continuing accreditation self-study committees formed in the fall of 2007--Steering, Criterion, and Data Committees—5 committees including 120 members.
- 2008 Criterion Committees began inventorying, collecting, reviewing, and making meaning of data. Preliminary findings provided a basis for campus-wide surveys, the results of which informed draft reports.
- 2009 In late August 2009, Criterion Committees submitted draft reports to the report writer/editor (Sandy Balkema) and the HLC Steering Committee.
- 2010 In August 2010 the draft Self-Study report is provided to President’s Council and the report was posted for the entire university community on September 10, 2010. The current version will always be found here: <http://www.ferris.edu/hlc/selfstudy>
- 2010 November 1 is the last date for submissions to the self-study, as we will go into final editing, formatting, and printing.
- 2011 By mid-January the report must be sent to the HLC Staff Liaison for his review prior to being sent to the team.
- 2011 By February 18, 2011, the printed/bound report must be in the hands of the team, with all supporting documents – appendices, handbooks, weblinks, etc.
- 2011 HLC Team visits campus April 18 – 20, 2011

Key Findings and Keeping Informed

Refer to pages 26 – 32 in the Discussion Guide. Beginning on page 33 are questions for you to consider regarding the self-study findings. You will find the discussion guide on the website, along with the current version of the full self-study, where you should click the link for “self-study draft.” Keep apprised of Ferris’ progress at: <http://www.ferris.edu/hlc> where we regularly post meeting minutes, update reports, newsletters, information about the student film competition, and more. Send comments to: hlcselfstudy@ferris.edu

Types of Questions that HLC Site Visitors MAY Ask Faculty Members

Every team and each individual on that team develops their/his/her own questions – but there are typically themes to the types of questions that different groups will get. Some will be general questions, such as the strengths/opportunities questions. Others are more specifically directed at items the team read with interest and/or has questions about. The questioning of the team often *suggests items about which they may have concerns*. The following are examples of what I might choose to ask faculty in a college like yours, after having read the self-study, knowing a limited amount about the institution from that reading, and my review of their website, where most visitors will have reviewed minutes, policies, etc. Items in *bold italics* are the themes I expect you will hear, even though the exact question will be different. Time will preclude exploring all of these, but expect 8-10 questions. With a potentially large faculty group, the interviewers may ask faculty to place responses to some questions on half sheets of paper so that each person’s voice is heard and responses can be anonymous.

1. Describe *faculty governance* processes at Ferris.
2. How do you assure the *quality* of your *curriculum*?
3. I note that you are seeking accreditation for your teacher education programs. Why have you not sought this earlier, and what prompts you to be at this point now?
4. What did you learn from your Education self-study process?
5. How were you involved in the HLC *self-study process*?
6. Provide some examples of ways in which you have used *data from assessment* in each of your programs to *improve students’ learning*.
7. In what ways are you involved in achieving the university’s *mission, vision, and core values*?
8. How is the faculty involved in *strategic planning* for the university?
9. Which of the *self-study findings* do you believe are the most important reflections of Ferris in 2011? In what ways?

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10. What most concerns you or surprised you in the *report's findings*?
11. What are the greatest *strengths* of this institution?
12. What are the greatest *challenges* facing this institution?
13. What do you know about the *success* of Ferris in assuring students' *learning*?
14. How *effective is the faculty evaluation system* at Ferris? If it is highly effective, what makes it so? If not, what needs to change?
15. As professionals, with the meaning embedded in that term, how do faculty hold each other *accountable* for *assuring quality* and *continuous improvement* in academic programming and services?
16. Michigan has been in the economic doldrums for several years. How has that situation impacted this institution, and what will you need to do to position the University and your programs for the *future*?

Last Visit's Findings

Findings of the last HLC visit (March 2001) will be central in the review this time and the adequacy of our progress will be evaluated. The areas noted then for improvement were these:

1. Progress report was required by 2004 regarding status of merger with Kendall, including general education, curriculum, governance, and budgeting. The HLC subsequently accepted this report as meeting the requirements.
2. Inconsistency in administration and expectations across departments related to general education, particularly rigorous application of criteria for designating general education courses. Self-study concludes that this concern has been adequately addressed.
3. Resolve differences in general education requirements between FSU and Kendall. Self-study finds that the general education was reported to be different at the time of the progress report and this was not raised as a continuing issue.
4. University should develop an institutional replacement cycle for technology infrastructure as well as upgrades to software, programs, staffing, and training. The self-study concludes that this concern has been appropriately resolved.



“Quality is or should be the central issue in the higher education enterprise.”

Source: Setting Quality Standards in Higher Ed
September 9, 2010
By **A. Lee Fritschler**
Inside HigherEd