

UK's Accreditation: Reaffirmation of Your Tremendous Work

April 11, 2013

Dear Colleagues and Students,

This morning, members of our administrative leadership and I met with members of the team reviewing our process of reaffirmation from The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

Although a final report will not be issued for several months, the site team was effusive in its praise of our efforts and, most importantly, of the commitment they see at the University of Kentucky to creating a culture of excellence that places students first.

In particular, the team made six commendations that underscore this culture across our campus:

- 1) Our clear and compelling commitment to our land-grant mission. That mission, as we know here, is part of UK's DNA. It suffuses everything we do and is one of the pillars of excellence that has made this place so remarkable for nearly 150 years.
- 2) Our bold Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which seeks to instill the importance of communication across the campus in its many forms and mediums. Years ago, long before I joined the UK family, our faculty and staff led the effort to reimagine what a core curriculum must include so that it better prepares our students for lives of leadership, meaning and purpose in a global, interdependent economy. Our QEP – which our students have dubbed “Presentation U” – recognizes that communication across existing and emerging mediums and technologies is a critical component in whether our students will succeed.
- 3) The inclusive process of our Quality Enhancement Plan. The site review team noted the involvement in creating and beginning to implement the QEP was broad-based, involving students, faculty and staff throughout the campus. It's the kind of commitment I see exemplified at UK every day. A diverse – but in some ways increasingly small – world requires collaboration. Those who succeed in such a world won't recognize barriers of language or geography. The residential research campus that prepares students for that world won't see disciplines or departments as lines of demarcation, but rather as a world of discovery and learning to explore together. We are fostering that culture at UK.
- 4) The outstanding senior team that led our efforts toward reaffirmation. Many people from across our campus led this effort. But, in particular, I want to cite the leadership of Heidi Anderson, Vice President for Institutional Research, and Professors Diane Snow and Deanna Sellnow. Heidi has been the point person on our reaffirmation for more than two years and Professors Snow and Sellnow have led our Quality Enhancement Plan. Their work has been tireless, steadfast, and simply outstanding. All three have full-time and important jobs on our campus. The work of accreditation, while profoundly

- important, involved hundreds of hours of work and stress beyond the rigors of their daily responsibilities. Our institution is indebted to them for their efforts.
- 5) Our senior administration, which received high marks for effective leadership and marshaling of resources during unquestionably tough economic times. I know, better than most, that such commendation is a direct reflection of all of you – our faculty, staff and students, who have remained devoted and fixed with focus on our aspirations as an institution to provide the education, research and service that changes lives and transforms communities for the better.
 - 6) Finally, the quality of our faculty and staff and their efforts in providing high-quality education beyond our Lexington campus that is focused on student success. The site team traveled to our facilities in Hazard and Morehead and conducted a conference call with those involved with our MBA program in Greece. The review team was uniformly impressed with the quality of our faculty and staff, the facilities we use and the way we are harnessing technology to ensure quality in course delivery and instruction.

Indeed, out of nearly 100 different standards for review, the site team found only one area of “recommendation,” which we will address in short order before a final report is issued by year’s end.

There is an ancient proverb I recite from time to time because of the timeless truth it conveys: “We sit in the shade of trees we did not plant ... We drink from wells we did not dig ... We profit from persons we did not know.”

The process of reaffirmation we have been engaged with reflects that truth in profound and powerful ways. At the administrative levels, people like President Lee T. Todd, Provost Kumble Subbaswamy, Executive Vice President Frank Butler and Vice President Connie Ray have moved on to new positions and challenges. But their labors and passion for this place over many years help set the stage for our success today.

Faculty and staff leaders – more often than not without recognition or pay – thought about, debated and transformed our curriculum to create even more focus on how students learn and succeed in the midst of seismic changes in our world and economy.

Our Board of Trustees also devoted time and energy to this process, reviewing our plan at key points along the way. Board Chairman Dr. Britt Brockman spent time with the site review team this week as well, providing a strong signal of the commitment and engagement this board has in the life of the university and in helping set a powerful direction for us going forward.

We have spent much time in recent months and years thinking about and planning for how to transform our campus infrastructure – the buildings where students live and learn and where faculty and staff do their work. That work is important and will continue.

But even as we construct new facilities, the process of reaffirmation should remind us that at our core, what makes UK so special is our people – the faculty and staff who teach and discover with skill and commitment and the students who learn and lead with promise and passion.

Our people embody the Kentucky Promise we made to those who came before us. Our people will make that Promise as real and relevant for those who will follow in the generations to come.

Thank you for all you do to ensure our institution endures and moves forward.

Eli Capilouto
President