

October 22, 2019

TO: Academic and Student Affairs subcommittee of the UMS BoT

FROM: Faculty Representatives to the BoT

Lisa Leduc (UMPI); Patti Miles (UM); Heather Ball (UMM); Tim Surette (UMA);
Clyde Mitchell (UMF); Matthew Bampton (USM)

RE: Faculty feedback regarding Unified Accreditation planning

As part of our role as liaisons between our faculty constituents and the BoT and this subcommittee, faculty representatives have been gathering feedback on the planning documents for moving toward Unified Accreditation.

We very much appreciate the Chancellors' efforts of visiting campuses and meeting with faculty in different forums and venues to discuss the principles and objectives and get feedback. The information we present here is not meant in any way to usurp or demean those vital communications. What we want to present is what we are hearing from our colleagues; positive feedback as well as questions and concerns.

The following information has been gathered on our various campuses through personal conversations, closed faculty meetings, anonymous surveys, as well as on-the-record faculty governance statements/documents. It does not necessarily represent the views and opinions of the individual faculty representatives themselves. We do believe however that we should be offering an alternative vehicle for faculty input to be on the record with the BoT.

Positive feedback on the plan to move towards Unified Accreditation (UA) was a minority of the feedback we received. Common comments included:

- 1) This may save some money and make smaller campuses more viable
- 2) If we truly share all of the larger campuses resources (ie library), as would be required under UA that could be a benefit to smaller campuses
- 3) Currently NECHE has concerns with instances where a campus relies on outside entities for courses and services; a single accreditation umbrella would alleviate those concerns
- 4) It would be nice to get Institutional Research (IR) support

However, the majority of feedback we have received has been about concerns and questions. We will summarize these themes here:

CONCERNS

- 5) Small campuses will lose their voice
- 6) We will lose mission differentiation of smaller campuses
- 7) Small campuses will become satellite/feeder campuses to larger ones and will only get the less prepared students
- 8) There are big implications on the peer review process – we have different standards across campuses (research vs teaching vs service)
- 9) This may limit campus based curriculum development if all similar programs across the system must collaborate

- 10) We have ongoing serious trust issues with any BoT/Chancellor/UMS office initiatives because of bad experiences in the past with top down change
- 11) Assessments of course and program outcomes are difficult as is, it would be unmanageable for an entire system. We would lose the granular information
- 12) Individual accredited programs being forced to combine/collaborate with other non/differently accredited programs on other campuses
- 13) Resources across campuses are not equal (ie library) – NECHE will be looking at that
- 14) One serious issue in one program or one campus could hold up accreditation for all
- 15) Not enough clarity of leadership and decision-making between UMS and campuses
- 16) Have not had the best experiences with centralized IT and HR – do not see how centralized accreditation would be any better
- 17) This is too rushed and poorly defined
- 18) Only lip-service is given to shared governance – recent experiences (Academic Partnerships, Academic Integrity Policy, System Research Plan) tell us faculty will not really be included
- 19) Another UMS initiative that will require extensive investment of time and resources for what might possibly be an abandoned pursuit – resulting in lowered morale
- 20) The Trustees are probably not familiar with the complexity and nuances of the academic accreditation process, it does not make sense to have them be making this decision just based on recommendations from the Chancellors office

QUESTIONS

- 21) If UA takes 2-3 years to develop, what about current timelines for each campus within their own re-accreditation schedule?
- 22) Will we have unified Financial Aid?
- 23) How will UA affect the general education – will it become unified?
- 24) What can be achieved by UA that we cannot do now by using Cooperating Departments (and MOU's if needed)? We can get collaborative programs this way. Also if we implemented the BoT cross-listing policy that would remove another roadblock to collaboration
- 25) Why not just have a centralized IR to help smaller campuses gather data for their own accreditation? Putting resources into IR would seem to be more cost effective and timely than pursuing UA
- 26) Is collaboration going to be mandated?
- 27) How will this impact campus budgets?
- 28) What is the actual cost savings?
- 29) Who will collect the accreditation data? Where will the voice of the small campuses be in that data collection?
- 30) How could NECHE do a visit?
- 31) How (specifically) will you reach the outcomes stated in the UA Recommendation document?
- 32) How will this end competition between programs and campuses?