

# ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER, 2011

## "The Who, What, Why, and How of Accreditation."

Wabash College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Wabash will be reviewed for reaccreditation in 2012-2013, and we anticipate a site visit from the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission (NCA-HLC) in October 2012.

### WHO IS THE NCA-HLC?

**The Higher Learning Commission (HLC)** is one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States. The Higher Learning Commission accredits degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions in the North Central region. For more information, please see <http://www.ncahlc.org/About-HLC/about-hlc.html>.

### WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation is external validation that an institution does what its mission says and meets the agreed upon criteria for higher education, described at <http://www.ncahlc.org/Information-for-Institutions/criteria-for-accreditation.html>. The accreditation process includes an extensive institutional review every ten years. The review is based on a comprehensive self-study performed by the institution, a site team visit, and an evaluation of how the college meets the standards for accreditation. Besides assessing formal educational activities, accreditation evaluates such things as governance and administration, financial stability and planning, admissions and student services, institutional resources, and relationships with internal and external constituencies. Wabash has been accredited by the HLC since 1913.

### WHY IS ACCREDITATION IMPORTANT?

- The re-accreditation review should be a process to improve the education we offer to students. The self-study should identify our strengths, challenges, and opportunities and help Wabash plan for the future. This should lead to refinements and improvements in our work as an institution.
- Accreditation also is a mark of credibility and signifies the worth of a Wabash degree. Just as we would pause at recommending that a student apply to a non-accredited graduate or professional school, a lack of accreditation would negatively affect how Wabash is perceived. Such credibility is particularly important for external audiences such as prospective students and their families.
- Accreditation is necessary to be eligible for federal and state financial aid programs. Without accreditation, our students would be ineligible for some federal grants and loans. The U. S. Department of Education's relationship to accreditation is explained at <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation.html>.

### WHEN AND HOW IS THIS HAPPENING?

The Accreditation Committee leads the self-study process and coordinates the integration of reaccreditation components into the regular operation of the college. We are using a much smaller committee than many institutions, so we rely upon input from standing committees, departments, trustees, administrators, and individuals. The Accreditation Committee has already been in contact with many in the community, including meeting with administrative areas of the college in Spring 2010, working with departments on student learning goals in 2010-2011, providing an overview of the accreditation process to trustees in May 2011, working with senior staff on ten-year assessment reports and supporting documents, and contacting individual faculty and staff members for assistance in assessing various college programs and committees. This past spring and summer, Accreditation Committee members drafted content outlines for each accreditation criterion and began a review of supporting documents. This fall, the Accreditation Committee will continue to revise, expand, and review content outlines while highlighting supporting documents and evidence as we begin to write the self-study.

### HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

In the coming months we will continue to be in contact with you about accreditation. That contact will include of a series of newsletters that explain the accreditation criteria and progress of the self-study, additional requests for information and support and, starting in the spring, invitations for review and feedback of the self-study. We will complete and disseminate the final report in July 2012.

If you have questions, suggestions or concerns we invite you to contact a member of the Accreditation Committee: [Bobby Horton](#), [John Lamborn](#), [Todd McDorman](#), [Julie Olsen](#) and [Ann Taylor](#).