



Preparing for the HLC visit

Shared Governance Forum
October 17, 2023



Introductions

The HLC Assurance Report Drafts were made available to the University community for feedback on 9.19.2023. The feedback window was 9.19 - 9.29

The purpose of the report, as we understand it, is to accurately represent what goes on at SE. It was collaboratively written to address the criteria required by the Higher Learning Commission.

Members of the Faculty Senate spent time with one or more of the draft documents to provide feedback to Administration and craft questions which would enhance our understanding of the content of the report in order to prepare for the HLC Committee visit in November.

HLC Criteria

1 Mission

2 Integrity, Ethical and Responsible Conduct

3 Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

4 Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

5 Institutional Effectiveness, Resources, and Planning

Feedback for Administration Regarding:

- Inaccuracies in how policies or practices are described in the narrative
- Redundancies that could be deleted to address word count limit.
- Lack of clarity
- Lack of sufficient evidence to support the claim.

Draft Criterion 1: Mission

Institutional Mission

Southeastern Oklahoma State University provides an environment of academic excellence that enables students to reach their highest potential. By having personal access to excellent teaching, challenging academic programs, and extracurricular experiences, students will develop skills and habits that promote values for career preparation, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning.

Draft Criterion 1: Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

A. The Institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

B. The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

C. The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission for the constituencies it serves.

Draft Criterion 1: Mission

Questions/Concerns:

Section 1.A.2 Is this a fair conclusion to draw from Faculty Survey results? Is the survey structured in such a way to support the claim that “most faculty believe that the University continue to focus on its fulfillment of the mission statement?”

Section 1.C.1 Talks about the diversity of SE. Our diversity comes primarily from the Native American students, SE’s collaboration with the Choctaw Nation, and a trend to increase diverse representation in faculty and staff. What other underserved populations are we working to attract?

Criterion 2 Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

- A. *The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.*
- B. *The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.*
- C. *The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.*
- D. *The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.*
- E. *The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff, and students.*

Draft Criterion 2: Integrity, Ethical and Responsible Conduct

Questions/Concerns:

- There is an over-reliance in this draft upon the structures and policies determined by OSRHE and RUSO; discussion of practice informed by these policies at SE is minimally addressed.
- It is not clear that the process/policies in place support ethical behavior and practice for administration, faculty and staff. However, we could offer specific reference to programs such as the Honors Program that requires students to take a course in ethics in order to graduate and that virtually all majors at SE allow students to take (PHIL-2223) Ethics as a humanities elective that will fulfill a portion of their General Education requirement. We not only adhere to ethical principles and practices at SE, but we teach them quite broadly.

Draft Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

- A. The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.
- B. The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
- C. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.
- D. The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

Draft Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

Questions/Concerns

- Does growth (due to Academic Partnerships) equate to quality?
- Rigor is minimally addressed in the narrative.
- 3.B.3 Does every program engage students in the collection, analysis, and communication of information in the discipline? Evidence?
- 3.C.2 - Enrollment has steadily increased, new positions to support program growth count both faculty and staff to this end, but the section is focused on faculty hires. Hires for faculty =22; staff =29. Is it appropriate to address staff hires here? Are the faculty full-time?
- Does the University consider SOLD to be quality professional development for staff to support teaching and learning?

Draft Criterion 4: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

- A. *The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.*
- B. *The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.*
- C. *The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.*

Draft Criterion 4: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

Questions/Concerns

- AP (Academic Partnership) is referenced with University Councils and Committees that provide oversight for rigor - why include it specifically?
- Do POAR reports directly address “assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals?” The discussion in this section doesn’t seem to get to that point specifically. How do the rankings connect with student performance?
- How do the ETS Profile Exams provide information about academic performance that is attributable to instruction at SE? How are students chosen?
- Concern section 4.B.3 lacks development and relies heavily upon OSRHE and HLC verbiage with little detail.

Draft Criterion 5: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources, and Planning

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

- A. *Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.*
- B. *The institution's resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.*
- C. *The institution engaged in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.*

Draft Criterion 5: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources, and Planning

Questions/Concerns

- IAC role has been restricted to POAR review in practice - this is a narrower role than is offered in the draft. (P.3)
- To what extent do employees make use of tuition waivers for their own professional development? (P.9)
- How were updates to the network infrastructure funded? (P. 10)
- Concerns about the characterization of the transition to Canvas. (P. 11)
- Regarding resources - additional hires (AVPs and Deans) are not addressed. (P. 13)
- Drop in reserves in FY 2022 & FY2023 (P. 18)
- Strategic Planning Committee is not mentioned in the 22-23 or 23-24 APPM - Ad Hoc rather than regular structure.

Discussion

Trends across the drafts regarding the work/function of the faculty:

- Faculty Senate must do a better job of making expectations clear for the University Councils and Committees in the hopes that the charges provided to those bodies will be addressed as articulated in the APPM and referenced in the HLC drafts.
- In several cases, SE as an institution relies heavily upon HLC, OSRHE, and RUSO policy without providing institution level processes/details which would likely enhance clarity.
- Throughout the document imbalance regarding the discussion of particular components seems glaring. This may be an opportunity to explore areas that lack detail as areas for improvement.

Feedback for Administration Regarding:

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