

According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), “‘Accreditation’ is the primary means of assuring and improving the quality of higher education institutions and programs in the United States.”¹ UCA’s institutional accreditor is the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The HLC evaluates and monitors its member institutions through comprehensive evaluations (typically every ten years), focused evaluations (as dictated by institutional change), and a variety of reports, ranging from annual data updates to issue-specific reports as required. UCA’s last comprehensive evaluation took place in April 2000. The next comprehensive evaluation visit is scheduled for March 8–10, 2010. Between now and the visit in 2010, UCA’s HLC2010 Self-Study Steering Committee (SSSC) will publish this monthly update for the campus.



On Our Plates

Task Force chairs presented highlights of their task force reports to the other members of the SSSC in an extended meeting on July 8. These reports are now being polished for final submission to the committee. The SSSC now begins to develop, on the basis of the task force reports, institutional responses to the five criteria for accreditation. Links:

- :: Schedule: <http://www.uca.edu/panda/hlc2010/#timeline>
- :: Task forces: <http://www.uca.edu/panda/hlc2010/taskforces.html>
- :: Projected self-study outline: <http://www.uca.edu/panda/hlc2010/ssoutline.html>

Focus on a Decade Ago: UCA Strengths & Challenges in 2000

The comprehensive evaluation process is one that provides both evaluation and consultation to the university. In its Report of a Visit to University of Central Arkansas (April 9-12, 2000), the team of seven consultant-evaluators offered extensive advice/consultative suggestions for institutional improvement. Their report in addition noted “numerous pinnacles of excellence” at UCA and drew special attention to six strengths, including this observation: “The student body is the best testimony to the excellence of the current University performance.”

The team’s report also identified three challenges (or concerns): (1) lack of comprehensive long-range planning and communication about planning; (2) lack of organizational clarity and well-understood governance relationships; and (3) insufficiently flexible evaluation and reward systems for the “differing employee needs to best serve . . . [UCA’s widely differing] student populations.” UCA’s HLC2010 self-study must respond to each of these concerns. Link:

- :: Summary of the Visiting Team Report, 2000: http://www.uca.edu/panda/hlc2010/2000_team_report_summary.pdf

Accreditation Resource Links

UCA – University of Central Arkansas

- :: HLC2010: <http://www.uca.edu/panda/hlc2010/>
- :: Accreditors: <http://www.uca.edu/ubulletin/01/103.html> (link to the *Undergraduate Bulletin*)
- :: Strategic Framework: http://www.uca.edu/panda/sti/uca_strategic_framework.pdf (see especially UCA’s Mission and Principles)

HLC – Higher Learning Commission

- :: Home: <http://www.ncahlc.org/>
- :: Overview of Accreditation: http://www.ncahlc.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=83&Itemid=111
- :: Directory of Affiliated Institutions: http://www.ncahlc.org/index.php?option=com_directory&Itemid=192

CHEA – Council for Higher Education Accreditation

- :: Home: <http://www.chea.org/>
- :: Informing the Public about Accreditation: http://www.chea.org/public_info/

¹ Council for Higher Education Accreditation, “Talking Points: Accreditation, Students and Society.” February 2009. Online at http://chea.org/pdf/2009_Talking_Points.pdf.