

WESLEYAN  
UNIVERSITY

Michael S. Roth  
President  
229 High Street  
Middletown, Connecticut 06459-0290  
860 685 3500 Fax: 860 685 3501  
mroth@wesleyan.edu

January 23, 2013

Patricia O'Brien, SND  
Deputy Director of the Commission  
NEAS&C  
209 Burlington Road, Suite 201  
Bedford, MA 01730-1433

Dear Patricia,

Wesleyan is grateful to the Visiting Committee for its thoughtful, candid, and helpful evaluative report following the meetings on campus with our students, faculty, and staff. We respond here to the highlights of that report, and in particular to areas for improvement identified by the Committee.

We begin with student learning outcome assessment. The Committee made two recommendations in particular: first, to have a point person for collecting and maintaining learning outcome information, and second, to better integrate the assessment efforts of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. We agree, and have established a formal assessment committee, which will oversee general education assessment and the integration of the assessment efforts of individual academic programs and, where appropriate, those conducted by Student Affairs. The chair of this committee will serve as point person.

The realization during the self-study process that we needed to better assess student-learning outcomes led us to focus on the role of faculty advisors in guiding student itineraries and assessing the degree to which students are meeting their intellectual goals. A task force on faculty advising has just completed its report, concluding that inequities in advising can best be rectified, and pre-major advising strengthened, by adjusting the assignment of pre-major advisees in light of the number of major advisees for each faculty member, limiting the number of advisees for junior faculty, and several technical changes. These recommendations will now be debated by the faculty as a whole, along with the work of the Committee on Service (which is examining the imbalanced distribution of the workload of faculty in general). The Committee on Service's final report is due by the end of spring semester.

With respect to other aspects of planning, we are pleased to have been commended by the Committee on the level of participation and our efforts generally, while recognizing that, since the Committee's site visit, one particularly hard decision (with respect to our financial aid policy) has received increased criticism. Some students and alumni have disapproved sharply of our decision to become need-aware with respect to roughly 10% of the applications for admission, and we continue to make efforts to increase awareness of the rationale for this decision. The financial information that led to this decision and a history of the discussions about it have been published on our website. With the support of President Roth, students formed "The Student Budget Sustainability

Patricia O'Brien, SND  
January 23, 2013

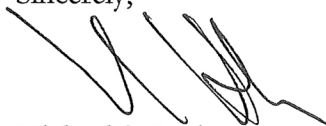
Task Force” to evaluate the suitability of this change in admissions policy. That task force interviewed Cabinet members and others in an effort to look at other cost-saving options and seek administrative efficiencies, and recently it submitted its preliminary and not un-dramatic suggestions. It awaits feedback from administrators before making final recommendations.

Ensuring a diverse student body is part and parcel of the financial aid issue, and the Committee concluded its report by exhorting the university to continue its historic commitment to diversity. Since the site visit, a student forum *Diversity University: In Theory and In Practice* increased campus awareness of how we have fallen short of our expectations for a truly inclusive campus culture, and this spring the administration will report on progress made in improving interactions between Public Safety and students, increasing the scope and intensity of the *Making Excellence Inclusive* program on campus, and enhancing town-gown connections to increase opportunities for positive interactions between the campus and Middletown. Among faculty, there is also a groundswell of support for better understanding of such issues as sexual harassment and hurtful behavior stemming from insensitivity to differences based upon race and socio-economic background. Faculty, students, and the administration are all moving forward, if sometimes on separate tracks, to make our campus more inclusive.

The Visiting Committee pointed to a number of areas at which we will take a closer look. One is the lack of visibility on campus of the graduate programs. The presence of graduate students is one Wesleyan’s distinguishing features, and yet the role they play seemed to the Committee to be understated. We will look for ways to increase awareness in the larger campus community of the contributions made by graduate students. The Committee also suggested that we be on the lookout for problems stemming from the budgetary cuts and staff reductions of previous years, especially in the library, which seems to us good advice. The library –encouraged to do more with respect to outcomes assessment – is exploring use of the HEDS survey assessing student skills in using information resources in assignments and research, tracking (together with Connecticut College and Trinity College) student e-book use, and planning to conduct further MISO surveys to better understand satisfaction of students, staff and faculty with library and ITS systems and services.

It has been two years since Wesleyan embarked upon its self-study, and much has been learned from the discussions of the standards committees, from the writing of the report (including suggestions from NEASC), from the discussions with the members of the Visiting Committee during the site visit, and from the Committee’s evaluative report. We take heart from the fact that responses to our efforts to be honest with (and about) ourselves have been generally positive, and more important, we find reinforcement in our view that the goals we have set for ourselves are appropriate, ambitious, and attainable.

Sincerely,



Michael S. Roth

MSR/lal