

Accrediting committee's visit to WKU successful

Shelby Rogers 18 hrs ago



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File photo of Cherry Hall Mike Clark/HERALD

WKU is one step closer to passing its reaccreditation by the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), meaning the university would retain the financial and academic benefits of being an accredited university.

Administrators have been planning for the SACSCOC review for more than two years. The process acts as a sort of university census, occurring every 10 years. Successful reaccreditation means eligible students can receive federal financial aid, such as Pell Grants, and allow faculty a stronger platform for verifying the validity of their research.

SACSCOC administrators toured campus last week for onsite reaffirmation, a major step in the accreditation process. Prior to the committee's visit, the university prepared an intensive paper report explaining how it fulfilled SACSCOC's lengthy standards.

President Gary Ransdell announced the successful visit via email on Friday.

“The Committee was highly complimentary of all aspects of their visit, from the efficiency of the arrangements to the quality of the campuses and, most of all, the hospitality of everyone they met,” Ransdell said in the email.

Richard Miller, vice provost and chief diversity officer, was on the advisory committee that met with SACSCOC members throughout the process. He said the committee worked with the SACSCOC onsite team to schedule visits with administrators, students and faculty, and tour the regional campuses.

“It’s a wonderful process,” he said. “It gives us an opportunity to give us a close look at the things we do, if we’re making progress towards compliance or there’s a red flag that we need to do things different. It’s a wholesome, very healthy process thorough internal review.”

While the reaccreditation visit was successful, the formal process isn’t over. Ransdell noted in his email that SACSCOC made two recommendations, but the fixes were small.

One asked to “present clearer examples of assessment-driven improvement of academic programs,” Ransdell said. The second note requested that WKU change a small part of the “Evidence & Argument” Quality Enhancement Plan.

“To only have two only pretty modest presentations is a real testament,” Ransdell said. “We were confident [going into the evaluation] because of the previous off site analysis... we had a little bit of time to address those no surprises.

These responses are due Sept. 9, 2015, according to Ransdell’s email. A formal decision will then be made in December.

Miller noted smaller check-ups will occur throughout the 10 year gap between reaffirmations.

“There’s also a ‘mid-year’ process every five years, and you have to provide documentation for a certain number of standards,” he said. “It’s not the 90 plus addressed every 10 years but there are some we have to address.”