This is the sixth of a nine-part series highlighting each accreditation standard.

The latest Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities Accreditation Handbook begins with this rationale for the process: “Accreditation is a process of recognizing educational institutions for performance, integrity, and quality that entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public.” By undertaking this voluntary effort, Linfield assumes responsibility for demonstrating how the college fulfills and achieves – or plans to achieve – expected levels of performance within the context of our mission.

As a community, then, we are tasked to report on and evaluate Linfield according to nine standards identified by the Northwest Commission. Each of those standards consists of related performance measures, some of which overlap. The various members of the Accreditation Steering Committee oversee the discussions and assessment efforts related to each standard and have already formed working groups to investigate college practice in their assigned areas.

Standard Six – Governance and Administration

Accreditation Standard Six assesses the college’s entire governance system. That means it ranges widely to include the board of trustees, the various administrative tiers, the faculty, and the student body.

Standard Six seeks to ensure that the authority, responsibilities and relationships among the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff and students are clearly described in a constitution, charter, bylaws or other policy document, and that all groups understand and fulfill their respective roles. The system of governance should make provisions for the consideration of faculty, student and staff views and judgments in matters where those constituencies have a direct and reasonable interest. The system of governance should make provisions for the consideration of faculty, student and staff views and judgments in matters where those constituencies have a direct and reasonable interest. The system of governance should make provisions for the consideration of faculty, student and staff views and judgments in matters where those constituencies have a direct and reasonable interest.

Board-related Elements:

This standard expects the board to provide broad-based oversight of the institution. The board should regularly consider and approve the college mission, along with any substantive changes to institutional mission, policies or program. It is responsible for the selection of a chief executive officer charged with the proper administration of the institution. Published board policies should make clear how the CEO is selected, appointed and evaluated.

The board should include adequate representation of the public interest and should not over-represent the employees of the institution in its membership. The president should not be the board chair. Policies should be in place that provide for continuity within the board and changes in board membership.

The board should act as a committee of the whole, with no member or subcommittee acting in its place except by formal authorization. The board’s duties, responsibilities, ethical conduct requirements, structure and operating procedures should be clearly defined in a published policy document.

The board should regularly evaluate its own performance and revise its policies as necessary to ensure that it upholds its responsibilities effectively and efficiently. The board approves the academic and administrative structure to which it delegates responsibility for successful management of the college. It should ensure that the institution’s organization and staffing reflect its mission, size and complexity.

Standard Six also sets forth the board’s role in fiscal matters (including approval of the annual budget and the college’s long-range financial plans) and its oversight of regular fiscal audits. The board should be knowledgeable of the...
institution’s accreditation status and be involved, as appropriate, in the accrediting process.

Administrative elements:
This standard asks whether the chief executive officer’s responsibility to the institution is full time. It expects all administrators to be professionally qualified for their clearly defined duties and calls for regular evaluation (accordingly to published procedures) of their ethical and effective handling of those responsibilities.

College administrators should provide effective educational leadership, ensure timely decision-making, facilitate cooperative working relationships, promote coordination within the institution, and encourage open communication about shared goals.

Institutional advancement activities [i.e. Linfield’s College Relations activities] should clearly and directly relate to and support college mission and goals.

Institutional research administrators should ensure wide distribution of their research to inform institutional planning and decision-making.

Policies for administrative and staff appointment, evaluation, retention, promotion and/or termination should be published, accessible, and periodically reviewed. Salaries and benefits should be adequate to attract and retain competent personnel in a manner consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.

Faculty elements:
In speaking about the faculty, Standard Six states that “The role of faculty in institutional governance, planning, budgeting and policy development is made clear and public; faculty are supported in that role.” In this regard, it intersects heavily with Standard Four (Faculty).

Student elements:
Standard Six makes the same statement regarding the student role in college governance. It thus intersects in substantive ways with Standard Three (Students).

Standard Six also rests upon a policy statement which speaks to Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination as follows: “Educational institutions should contain within their environment the essence of the qualities they endeavor to impart, including the essential of nondiscrimination. They have a responsibility to develop selection and promotion standards and procedures based on principles which consider qualities, aptitudes, or talents simply as they pertain to the requirements of the position, with due regard for affirmative action. Institutions are expected to review their policies and procedures regularly to determine their validity in keeping with these principles.”

A policy statement about Collective Bargaining as it relates to the accreditation process does not apply to Linfield College.

Supporting Documentation for Standard Six (an incomplete list):
• Board and committee membership, with background statements on each Board member
• Organization charts and tables of both administrative and academic organizations
• Articles of incorporation and bylaws
• Board policy manual
• Administrative position descriptions
• Staff Handbook
• Salary data and benefits for administration and staff
• Constitutions or bylaws of faculty and staff organizations
• List of currently active committees and task forces
• Reports to constituencies, include the public
• Charter or constitution of student association

To learn more about the accreditation process, or to read the 1998 report, 1999 interim report or the 2003 visit report, or to see other materials that are available about the accreditation, go to:
http://www.linfield.edu/accreditation/index.php and click on “Resources.”
First Draft of Self Study will soon be available

The Accreditation Steering Committee will release the first public draft of Linfield’s self-study on Monday, March 31. This means that the draft, which will be distributed electronically, will thus be available for community review, with multiple ways to provide feedback on it until April 18.

Respondents may send their comments to a designated accreditation website (address to be announced with the draft). Readers may also use a designated email address to forward their advice. The Accreditation Steering Committee will also hold open meetings on both the McMinnville and Portland Campuses to discuss the draft (dates to be announced). Any member of the Linfield community is welcome to attend.

All members of the community are asked to review the draft and send along comments if they so choose. Since it is a lengthy document, any reader should feel free to focus on the standards that are of most interest. Notes from each of the open meetings, as well as all written feedback, will be shared with the community as part of the revision process that will begin after April 18.

In addition to open meetings, the Accreditation Steering Committee will invite several specific groups within the college’s governance structure to respond directly to the draft. The Faculty Executive Council, the President’s Cabinet, the Administrators’ Leadership Council, the Linfield Employees Association Executive Committee, and the Cabinet of the Associated Students of Linfield College will all be asked to weigh in on the draft’s depiction of their sector of the institution or any other section on which they would like to provide feedback.

What will be released to the public on March 31st is best described as the narrative backbone of the college self-study. However, this text represents only one (very significant) part of what the college will present to accrediting teams—these will not be fully compiled until the summer. In addition, some required charts and tables accompanying various standards will not be complete in time for inclusion in the first public draft. Keep in mind that the newly released Fall 2007 Linfield Fact Book will serve as a central exhibit for the college, as will the 2008-09 college catalog (all the more reason for that catalog to receive a thorough review by each contributing office and department!). Similarly, each academic department has a binder ready and waiting in the Office of Academic Affairs for programs wishing to start compiling their own exhibits now. Anyone with questions about the exhibits that will be compiled should contact Dan Preston, Jennifer Ballard, or Barbara Seidman.

Further details about meeting dates and feedback processes will accompany the draft’s release on March 31.

Members of the Accreditation Committee

Chair: Barbara Seidman; co-chair Dan Preston

Standard I: Institutional Mission
Co-chairs: Planning Council members Bernie Turner (trustee) and Dr. Chris Keaveney (MLA)

Standard II: Educational Program
Co-chairs: Dr. Barbara Seidman (Interim Dean of Faculty) and Dr. William Millar (REL)

Standard III: Students
Chair: Dan Preston, Dean of Enrollment Services

Standard IV: Faculty
Co-chairs: Dr. Brenda DeVore Marshall (TCA) and Dr. Pam Wheeler (NUR)

Standard V: Library/Information Resources
Chair: Susan Whyte, College Librarian

Standard VI: Governance and Administration
Co-Chairs: FEC chair Dr. Amy Orr (SOAN) and Dr. Liz Atkinson, Associate Dean of Faculty

Standard VII: Finance
Chair: Greg Copeland, College Controller

Standard VIII: Physical Resources
Co-chairs: John Hall, Facilities Director, and Dr. Jeff Summers, Associate Dean of Faculty

Standard IX: Institutional Integrity
Chair: Pam Jacklin, J.D. (trustee)

Committee Staff
Jennifer Ballard, Assistant Registrar for Institutional Research