This is the last of an eight-part series highlighting each accreditation standard. This edition focuses on Standard Nine – Institutional Integrity.

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 Nine – Institutional Integrity

Standard Nine requires the college to adhere to ethical norms in representing itself to its constituencies and the public. These norms operate at the board and administrative levels but also in the areas of teaching, scholarship and service central to faculty activity, as well as in the treatment of students, faculty, and staff. Linfield’s relationships with regulatory and accrediting agencies also come under the purview of Standard Nine.

With Standard Nine as the evaluative lens, Linfield must demonstrate that its representatives at all levels exemplify and practice high ethical standards in their enactment of their duties. This extends to all dealings with students, the public, and external agencies. Thus the college should regularly evaluate and (when necessary) revise all policies and procedures that foster integrity throughout the institution.

Of interest to readers of Standard Nine will be a review of the accuracy and consistency of the college’s self-representation to its constituencies, the broader public, and prospective students, through its catalogs, publications and official statements.

Compliance with Standard Nine requires that the college define conflict of interest policies and prohibit conflict of interest on the part of the governing board, administrators, faculty and staff. Finally, Linfield’s policies and practices must demonstrate commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge in ways consistent with its mission and goals.

Policy Statement (9.1) on Institutional Integrity makes clear that the institution should seek to identify and communicate truth in all contexts—operationally and intellectually. In the realms of teaching and scholarship, Linfield should foster the free examination of data, encourage the questioning of assumptions, and rely on evidence. Students and faculty should function in an atmosphere devoid of harassment which would hinder individuals or the college from pursuing essential work.

Toward this end, college trustees and administrators must protect faculty and students from inappropriate or destructive pressures. For their part, faculty must distinguish personal conviction from proven conclusions and present relevant data fairly to students. Students also play a role in the cultivation of academic freedom: they should judiciously sift through and question the information provided them in classes or research, thus becoming actively involved in the intellectual life of the insti-
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ted as it pursues its academic mission.

The policy acknowledges that an institution may hold to a particular social or religious philosophy; so too may individual faculty members and students. In the process of open academic inquiry, however, individuals and the institution must allow everyone the same freedom to pursue truth. Moreover, college constituencies must recognize the distinction between the pursuit of truth and commitment to particular truths.

The policy ends with this statement:

“All concerned with the good of colleges and universities will seek ways to support their institutional integrity and the exercise of their appropriate autonomy and freedom. In particular, the regional commissions, which have a particular responsibility to look at an institution in its totality, will always give serious attention to this aspect and quality of institutional life so necessary for its well-being and vitality.”

Required Exhibits for Standard Nine are:

1. Statements or policies on academic freedom.
2. Statements or policies on conflict of interest.
3. Policies guaranteeing fair treatment of faculty, administration, staff and students.
5. Code(s) of conduct, statement(s) of ethical behavior.

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, Director of Institutional Research

To learn more...

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.”