

2-16-2005

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Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "02/16/2005 - Team Gives Glowing Reports Recommends EIU Reaccreditation.pdf" (2005). 2005. 37.

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NCA Team Gives Glowing Report, Recommends EIU Reaccreditation

Feb-16-2005

A North Central Association accreditation team unofficially recommended another 10-year accreditation for Eastern Illinois University during the presentation of an overwhelmingly positive report Wednesday.

"This is the best recommendation we could have received," said EIU President Lou Hencken. "Terms such as, 'We found a true sense of community,' and one of the most positive NCA visits I have ever been on' were typical of the glowing report that we received."

The NCA team, comprised of administrators and faculty from other universities, delivered its findings during an exit interview on Wednesday, the third final day of its campus visit.

The presentation was an unofficial version of what the team plans to include in its written report. It will take about a month for the team to write the document before it is sent back to the university for correction of any factual errors. Once it is finalized, it will be given to the NCA for review. A final decision from the full Higher Learning Commission of the NCA will be made in the fall.

"They were extremely impressed with our students, the working relationship between the faculty and students, the way the university handled the budget crisis,' the way we have addressed deferred maintenance, and our developing culture of philanthropy' (fund-raising efforts)," Hencken said.

The team also praised the Board of Trustees' involvement with the university and support of the administration; shared governance; investments in technology; and efforts to provide services to the community, including library services, continuing education, Peace Meal and Greek student outreaches to schools.

In addition, they found that all of the concerns that were raised in the 1995 NCA Report have been satisfactorily addressed.

The committee also made some recommendations, including continuing the effort to improve assessment of student learning, though they noted that progress has been made since the 1995 report.

They also pointed out the need to continue to address deferred maintenance and suggested updating the university's mission statement.

Carol Anderson, NCA team chairwoman, praised the preparation, kindness and helpfulness the team members observed at EIU.

Hencken thanked Bob Augustine and Jill Owen, co-chairs of the university's NCA Self-Study effort, for their work on the report that the NCA team received. Anderson said the report was "very well done," "informative" and "an accurate reflection of who you are."

"We were pleased that the visitors noted that the university has created a strong community of learners and that the university has forward-looking leadership," Augustine said. "It was gratifying to learn that the site visitors admire Eastern's retention and graduation rates and that the institution's commitment to its general education curriculum is serving our students well."

The NCA team evaluated the university on five criteria: mission and integrity; preparing for the future; student learning and effective teaching; acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge; and engagement and service.

"In the review of each of the five criterion, many positive items were mentioned as evidence of our satisfying them," said Blair Lord, provost and vice president for academic affairs. "We are, of course, delighted with this assessment, but the longer term value to Eastern actually will follow from the advice and counsel these external reviewers have provided to guide us in strengthening further this excellent institution. I offer my heartfelt appreciation to the many individuals at Eastern who assisted us through this process."