REPORT OF A VISIT

TO THE

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—MADISON

Madison, Wisconsin

April 12-14, 1999

for the

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
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Worksheet for Statement of Affiliation Status
I. Introduction

This is the report of a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation of the University of Wisconsin--Madison (UWM), conducted by an evaluation team organized by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

The Team visited the University on April 12-14, 1999. During the visit, members of the Team met with and interviewed more than one hundred persons, both as individuals and as members of various groups. These included senior administrators of the University, of the University of Wisconsin System Administration, of the University of Wisconsin Foundation, and of the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, leaders of the New Directions Committee, the University Committee, and of the Board of Regents, other faculty, staff, and students, and two legislative leaders. Most of these encounters were planned, but some were not. The Team also reviewed a broad array of documents and electronically-accessible data prepared by the New Directions Steering Committee and its staff. The key document on which the Team based its review was, of course, the 1999 Accreditation Self-Study prepared by the New Directions Steering Committee. The Team believes that it was able to develop from these sources a comprehensive overview of the state of the University during its brief visit.

The University of Wisconsin--Madison has been continuously accredited by the North Central Association since 1913. The University was last reviewed and its accreditation continued in 1989.
The Team found the University’s Self-Study Report to be thorough, complete, comprehensive, and very well done. It was intended to serve not only as the basis for the present reaccreditation evaluation process but as an integral part of the University’s ongoing strategic planning. It presents an encyclopedic picture of the University that should be useful in many applications. The Team commends the members and staff of the New Directions Steering Committee and its Subcommittees, particularly its Chairman, Professor Joseph J. Wiesenfarth, and its Project Assistant Dr. Elaine Klein, for their excellent work in preparing the Self-Study Report.

The Team also thanks Chancellor Ward, Professor Wiesenfarth, Dr. Klein, and their many colleagues for their hospitality and cooperation, and for arranging an exceptionally well-organized Evaluation Team visit.

In Section II of this Report, the Team reports its findings concerning the University’s satisfaction of the Commission’s General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation. This section also includes summary descriptions of the Team’s views of the University’s strengths and of some concerns expressed by the Team during its visit.

Section III of the Report presents observations and suggestions which the Team hopes may be useful to the University.

Section IV of the Report contains the Team’s formal recommendation concerning reaccreditation of the University of Wisconsin–Madison and its rationale for that recommendation.
II. Evaluation for Affiliation

A. General Institutional Requirements (GIRs)

The General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) are addressed in Part I of the Self-Study Report (SSR). The Team has reviewed each of the University’s responses to the GIRs and finds that they are generally complete and satisfactory. Following are page references to the University’s response to each GIR.

1. *The institution has a mission statement, formally adopted by the governing board and made public, declaring that it is an institution of higher education.*

   SSR, p. 1.

2. *It is a degree-granting institution.*

   SSR, p. 2.

3. *It has legal authorization to grant its degrees, and it meets all the legal requirements to operate as an institution of higher education wherever it conducts its activities.*

   SSR, p. 3.

4. *It has legal documents to confirm its status: not-for-profit, for-profit, or public.*

   SSR, p. 3.

5. *It has a governing board that possesses and exercises necessary legal power to establish and review basic policies that govern the institution.*

   SSR, p. 3.
6. *Its governing board includes public members and is sufficiently autonomous from the administration and ownership to assure the integrity of the institution.*

SSR, p. 4.

7. *It has an executive officer designated by the governing board to provide administrative leadership for the institution.*

SSR, p. 4.

8. *Its governing board authorizes the institution’s affiliation with the Commission on Higher Education.*

SSR, p. 4.

9. *It employs a faculty that has earned from accredited institutions the degrees appropriate to the level of instruction offered by the institution.*

SSR, p. 4.

10. *A sufficient number of the faculty are full-time employees of the institution.*

SSR, p. 5.

11. *Its faculty has a significant role in developing and evaluating all of the institution’s educational programs.*

SSR, p. 5.

12. *It confers degrees.*

SSR, p. 6.

13. *It has degree programs in operation, with students enrolled in them.*

SSR, p. 6.
14. *Its degree programs are compatible with the institution’s mission and are based on recognized fields of study at the higher education level.*

SSR, p. 6.

15. *Its degree programs are appropriately named, following practices common to institutions of higher education in terms of both length and content of the programs.*

SSR, p. 6.

16. *Its undergraduate degree programs include a coherent general education requirement consistent with the institution’s mission and designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry.*

SSR, p. 7.

17. *It has admission policies and practices that are consistent with the institution’s mission and appropriate to its educational programs.*

SSR, p. 8.

18. *It provides its students access to those learning resources and support services requisite for its degree programs.*

SSR, p. 9.

19. *It has an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or a public audit agency at least every two years.*

SSR, p. 10.

20. *Its financial documents demonstrate the appropriate allocation and use of resources to support its educational programs.*

SSR, p. 11.
21. *Its financial practices, records, and reports demonstrate fiscal viability.*

SSR, p. 12

22. *Its catalog or other official documents includes its mission statement along with accurate descriptions of*

- *its educational programs and degree requirements;*
- *its academic calendars;*
- *its learning resources;*
- *its admissions policies and practices;*
- *its academic and non-academic policies and procedures directly affecting students*
- *its charges and refund policies; and*
- *the academic credentials of its faculty and administrators.*

SSR, p. 12.

23. *It accurately discloses its standing with accrediting bodies with which it is affiliated.*

SSR, p. 13.

24. *It makes available upon request information that accurately describes its financial condition.*

SSR, p. 13.
The Team finds that the University of Wisconsin--Madison meets the twenty-four General Institutional Requirements of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

B. Criteria for Accreditation

This subsection of the Team Report begins with a discussion of "the most salient, distinguishing strengths and concerns" observed and expressed by the Team in the course of its visit. These strengths and concerns are then used as the basis for the Team's evaluation of the University's satisfaction of the Criteria for Accreditation.

Strengths

By any of the standards conventionally used to assess the performance of major universities, the University of Wisconsin--Madison continues to rank among the nation's (and the world's) leading research universities. It has maintained its position among the top recipients of federal research and development (R&D) funding in an increasingly competitive national arena. It regularly ranks among the top two or three public research universities in total R&D expenditures. In what is generally recognized as the most reliable national assessment of the quality of graduate programs (the National Research Council's 1995 evaluation), the University placed 16 of 39 programs in the top 10 and 35 of 39 in the top 25. It is among the nation's top two or three producers of Ph.D.s. The faculty generally exhibit intellectual enthusiasm, good morale, and an attitude of strong
engagement with and pride in their university. Most students with whom Team members spoke were very pleased with their academic programs and most other aspects of their lives as members of the University community. Non-faculty staff are able and seem extraordinarily dedicated to the University. The senior leaders of the campus and of the University System are generally highly regarded by the faculty and staff, and that internal view is mirrored by the external view from the U.S. university community.

Among the University's major achievements of the past decade is a substantial enhancement of the quality of the undergraduate experience through the establishment of residential learning communities, efforts to improve academic advising, and other examples of increased attention to undergraduates. This has been achieved with no apparent concomitant erosion in the traditional strength of the University's graduate programs.

Substantial progress has been made in the area of student outcomes assessment. In 1995, the University submitted to the Commission an Assessment Plan in response to the 1993 Commission Statement on Assessment of Student Academic Achievement. Subsequently, it was informed that the plan meets the Commission's current expectations for an evaluation plan. Building on work that began in the late 1980's, the University has since been working assiduously to implement the plan. Its progress to date is summarized in a September, 1998 report of the University Assessment Council, Student Outcomes Assessment at UW-Madison: Report for the 1997-98 Academic Year. Several members of the Team have examined this and other materials and have met with the Council. Their judgment is that the University's progress in this area, although still incomplete, is
substantial. The University has developed admirable support and guidance materials for those engaged in crafting assessment plans, and has an acceptable system for connecting bottom-up efforts with mid-level and top-level evaluators of the plans. Penetration of faculty "buy-in" on assessment and adoption of specific implementation plans are somewhat spotty. Results are excellent in some areas and mixed in others. Significant examples exist of changes in courses and departmental practices as a result of the assessment activities. On the whole, the University's assessment project is judged to be good, though much remains to be done.

There has also been progress toward achieving greater diversity in the campus community, though much remains to be done in this regard. The relatively homogeneous population of Wisconsin makes this effort especially challenging for its University.

These improvements have "put flesh on the idea of making the University a learning community," strengthened the morale and engagement of the faculty involved in the initiative, and strengthened Wisconsin citizens' high regard for their university.

These and other initiatives and achievements, including several major capital projects, have been substantially aided by the University's continuing and increasing success in attracting private support and in joint efforts with industry. The University of Wisconsin Foundation's annual gift revenues are now around $110 million. The Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation serves as the University's independent technology transfer arm. It is one of the nation's first -- perhaps the first -- such entity. Its assets permit it to transfer $15-20 million annually to the University, mostly through the Graduate School, to foster research and graduate education. The University is currently
“spinning off” about eleven new companies per year. These two foundations are among the University’s most important assets as it struggles to maintain its preeminence in the face of significant financial and competitive challenges.

These strengths and achievements have been buttressed and driven by continuing attention to strategic planning by campus leadership. Both the current and the immediate previous reaccreditation self-study processes were treated as integral parts of this ongoing process. The 1989 reaccreditation process was followed by an influential executive report for the University, *Future Directions*, prepared by the committee that developed the self-study report for that reaccreditation. (The Team was informed that the University intends to follow the present reaccreditation with a similar strategic document.) Chancellor Ward and his colleagues have been engaged in active planning during the intervening decade. *Future Directions* was used as the basis for a 1995 strategic planning document, *A Vision for the Future: Priorities for the UW-Madison in the Next Decade*. The present self-study report describes a variety of follow-up reports and implementation actions based on *A Vision*. While we will suggest below some ways to improve and enhance this intensive and extensive planning process, it must nevertheless be considered one of the University’s strengths.

The University has long been known for its strength and breadth in international studies. This emphasis is evident in the presence among the four major priorities of *A Vision* of “Joining the global community.” The University’s commitment to continuation and enhancement of its strengths in this area is evidenced by the establishment of the
International Institute, a collaborative federation of many existing programs, both new and old.

Those are but a few of the strengths of an extraordinarily good and quite robust university. It is rather remarkable -- and a bit of a puzzle, actually -- that a state of such modest size and wealth has managed to build and to maintain for so long such a truly world-class institution. As one of the Team members observed, "This is a state and a university that delivers far beyond its resources." Several possible reasons suggest themselves. First, Wisconsin got an early start. It is significant that the first major act of the first legislature of the new State of Wisconsin in 1848 was to found the University of Wisconsin. Second, the long tradition of the "Wisconsin Idea" that the borders of the University are the borders of the State, one of the best articulations of the land-grant spirit of the Morrill Act of 1862, has built a solid foundation of state-wide popular support for the University. And third, the University has developed one of the strongest American examples of a faculty-centered culture that prizes intellectual independence, creativity, and quality. These are strengths to be treasured and built upon. But, in the rapidly evolving world that characterizes this turn of the millenium, they also contribute to the sources of some concerns the Team encountered during its visit. These are our next subjects.

Concerns

Many of the concerns encountered by the Team are closely related to the strengths described above. In some cases they are essentially the obverse of corresponding strengths.
The most salient concerns the Team encountered are so tightly intertwined that they can be considered aspects of a single overarching concern. The Team detected repeatedly with a variety of UWM groups and individuals what might be characterized as a muted but widespread angst and uncertainty about whether the principles and practices that have made the University great can continue to keep it great in a changing local, state, and global competitive environment. The Team sees three major factors contributing to this concern. They are the continuing constriction of state funding, the high level of internal administrative inflexibility induced by both internal and external bureaucratic regulation and control, and some negative aspects of the University’s powerful (and often beneficial) tradition of reliance on individual and small-unit autonomy and initiative.

1. **Continuing stringently limited state funding support.**

In its 1996 study, *A Study of the UW System in the 21st Century*, the Board of Regents noted that, “Although state spending on the System was 14% of General Purpose Revenues at the time of merger (1971), it is now 9% of GPR, and that support will continue to decrease to no more than 8% by 2004.” Major reasons for this decline are, as in many other states, increased competition for state resources from correctional institutions, health care assistance, and K-12 schools. But the Board also noted that “Legislators do not support an increase in state taxes to support the UW System; further, they believe that increases in university-generated revenue will cause GPR support to be reduced; they support increases in non-resident tuition; and, finally, they worry that cutting programs as a result of fiscal constraints will reduce access to state residents.”
That last point leads to what one University official described as "a compulsive (state) commitment to low tuition" (for state residents).

The Self Study Report notes that "Since 1990-91 any net increase in tax-generated support of the university has been limited to funding the taxpayer share of the standard state compensation plan; not a single tax dollar has been available to serve any other university purpose."

Capital facilities funding trends show similar features. Between 1991 and 1997 less than a third of the cost of the University's capital projects was contributed by the state, down from well over half during the previous six years.

2. An uncommonly high level of state-policy-related regulation and bureaucratic constraints accompanied by a high and counter-productive degree of administrative inflexibility.

These are reflected in many ways. As the Self Study Report notes, "The negative impact of no net increase in taxpayer investment in university programs during this period of time, therefore, has been exacerbated by restrictions imposed on the use of any funds provided." Apparently, it is the habit of state political leaders to earmark substantial parts of new appropriated funds for specific uses in detail.

The Legislature sets expenditure maxima for the University which severely constrain the Regents' ability to use their tuition setting authority to meet urgent University needs.

The University lacks authority to carry over unexpended appropriations.
The University lacks independent bonding authority and the state's bonded debt limit is capped at a very low percentage of its operating budget.

A tradition of constraining salaries of senior University (and System) officials by comparison with those of senior state officials has left the former at highly noncompetitive compensation levels relative to national market levels. (That the University has managed to recruit and retain leaders of the nationally recognized quality and distinction that it has seems near miraculous.) The Team cannot speak authoritatively to the question of whether faculty salaries are similarly noncompetitive, but suspects that they are.

The University is bound by a state civil service system that not only imposes unnecessary impediments to effective human resources management, but also appears to have created a rule-dominated mind set throughout the institution's middle management that fosters resignation to things as they are, always have been, and therefore must always be, and stifles initiative in seeking creative change.

3. **The dark side of the University's tradition of strong individual (especially faculty) initiative and small-unit (e.g., departmental) autonomy.**

The University of Wisconsin-Madison is an extraordinarily decentralized institution. As one Team member put it, "Here the academic bottom line is decided at the bottom." And as one faculty member put it, "We believe in Darwinian selection." While the Team acknowledges and agrees that this institutional style has been a major factor in establishing the University's preeminence, the Team joins with many members of the
UWM community in wondering whether maintaining this style might not come at the price of greater institutional risk in today’s climate of fast-paced change in higher education.

Three examples, chosen from among many, will illustrate what led the Team to focus on this question.

The University’s General Library System is one of the largest in the nation. Chronic limitation of revenue from state appropriations and tuition, together with constantly escalating book and journal costs, have placed this library system under extreme stress. (Similar problems are common in most research universities across the nation.) Strong Library System leadership has led to impressive responses to that stress. Nevertheless, one must wonder at the fact that there are more than forty libraries on the UWM campus, many not under the management of the General Library System. The Team heard complaints of inadequate funding for information technology (IT). One of the Team’s members looked into this issue in some detail and found that IT has several organizational homes on the campus, including the General Library System. He was unpersuaded that overall spending on IT is unusually low, though it undoubtedly falls short of what might be needed or desired, but he did note some redundancy among the various organizational units supporting the total campus information infrastructure, i.e., the libraries plus computer and network services. The Team questions whether the University has a comprehensive strategic understanding of its total future information infrastructure needs and effective control of the resources currently supporting it.

One of the most rapidly growing areas of biological research focuses on the brain. President Bush declared the 1990’s “The Decade of the Brain,” and the University’s
School of Medicine has identified neuroscience as one of its primary foci. By no means all of UWM's faculty in the field are in that school, however. They are distributed across many campus organizational units. Brought together in a coherent focused neuroscience research enterprise, these scattered intellectual resources would constitute a veritable scientific powerhouse. Faculty leaders have struggled for more than a decade to do just that, but without success so far.

Turning to a very different field, the arts, one again finds distinguished faculty in the arts distributed among many different academic units on the campus. As one of our Team noted, "In one way this diffusion is good – in an ideal world, an art presence would be felt everywhere." However, in such circumstances "communication and the kind of energy this generates becomes almost impossible," and collaboration in matters great (e.g., support of the Art Museum and music and theater performances) and small (e.g., balancing teaching assignments with student demand) can be stifled by bureaucratic barriers. The Art Museum, incidentally, is for the University a major teaching and research facility and for the region a major cultural resource. (It is one of only two comprehensive art museums in Wisconsin.) A new Arts Institute has recently been formed as a coordination and public information center. Whether this will ameliorate the deleterious effects of the fragmentation of the arts at the University remains to be seen, but one might be forgiven for wondering whether establishment of a School of Fine Arts would be an unthinkable objective.

To several of the Team members, the University of Wisconsin–Madison seems rather like an academic analog of a near-ideal gas. It is composed of atoms (faculty) and
molecules (departments) that interact only weakly with one another and, when unconfined, diffuse in all directions. The academic temperature is pretty high, so the diffusion is relatively rapid. There is also some collective motion of the entire ensemble in a direction determined by a pressure gradient imposed by some combination of University and System strategic leadership and outside political and social forces, but this seems to be relatively slow. To the Team it seems fair to ask whether the current resultant pressure gradient is adequate to move the ensemble in the correct direction at an optimal flow rate. We suspect the optimal rate is probably nearer than it now is to the rate at which a transition from smooth (laminar) flow to turbulent flow would occur. As one University official put it, "The institution needs to develop a more collective ethos that goes beyond the boundaries of departments."

Some members of the Team expressed reservations about the usefulness of the analogy above, in the (undoubtedly correct) belief that it would mean little to many readers of this report. The Team's Chairman has elected to include it in the report because the University's senior leaders are scientists and may find it apt. For other readers, it may be helpful to observe that the University's challenge in balancing the contending forces of individual faculty autonomy (academic freedom) and collective needs and goals at many levels from the departmental to the University level is similar to the challenges our society often faces in balancing individual rights with collective needs and authorities at all governmental levels from local to federal. In the Team's opinion, this University would benefit from shifting that balance a bit toward the collective.
These "salient, distinguishing strengths and concerns" lead us to the Criteria for Accreditation

The Criteria

I. The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

The University clearly meets this criterion. Its purposes and priorities are described and elaborated in the strategic planning documents referenced above, and summarized in a chart on page 18 of the Self Study Report.

II. The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purpose.

The University is, as noted above, very well endowed with human resources. As also noted above, its financial and physical resources, though generally impressive, are currently rather tightly constrained. The Team has noted some concerns about aspects of the organization of these resources. Nevertheless, it is clear from the stellar overall performance of the University that it adequately meets this criterion.

III. The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.
As with any great institution, the University's vision and its goals extend beyond its present actual performance, but that present performance clearly meets this criterion at a very high level.

IV. The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

The University can certainly continue to accomplish its purposes and has amply demonstrated through, for example, its strategic planning process and its ability to cope successfully with a variety of externally imposed constraints, its intention and capacity to strengthen its educational effectiveness. It clearly meets this criterion.

V. The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.

The University clearly meets this criterion. For example, the internal and external communication materials (e.g., catalogs, etc.) examined by the members of the Team appear to be accurate and thorough in their depictions of the University and its programs.

The Team finds that the University of Wisconsin–Madison meets the five Criteria for Accreditation of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

III. Observations and Suggestions for Institutional Improvement
The observations and suggestions presented in this section are advisory and intended only to be helpful to the University. Some come from extensive discussions among the Team members. Others come from individual Team members. The inclusion of the latter here implies at least tacit endorsement by other members. No attempt is made to distinguish between the two types. Implementation of these suggestions is not a requirement of the University’s reaccreditation.

- **State Funding.** As we have noted, the state of Wisconsin’s funding for the University and the System has been tightly limited for a decade or more, and current projections for the near future are not optimistic. Nevertheless, the Team believes that redoubled efforts ought to be made to reverse the current trend. The University’s popular support among the citizens of Wisconsin is historically strong. It can justly argue that it is the key factor in the state’s future economic development. Wisconsin’s leaders may not fully appreciate and understand that their university has made their state a luminous feature on the global map of academic excellence, that is to say, the state’s premier asset in the new and very competitive global knowledge-based economy. It has an unequalled record of stellar performance with limited resources. And, for all the very real constraints on the state’s ability to increase investment in its university, other states have shown that “where there’s a will, there’s a way.”

- **Tuition.** Notwithstanding Wisconsin’s historical commitment to low tuition, the Team believes that the state should be persuaded to allow the University to explore the possibility of increasing its tuition revenues. This might be done through differential tuitions for high-cost programs or through general tuition increases accompanied by
increased need-based student financial aid using a portion of increased tuition revenues. The putative relationship between tuition level and access should be thoroughly analyzed and tested to determine the extent to which it really exists. In business terms, the University is offering a premium product in high demand at bargain-basement prices. One way or another, Wisconsin’s citizens cannot forever evade paying something closer to fair market prices for what they are getting. If they won’t do it with taxes they will have to do it through tuition. The only long-term alternative is diminution in the University’s quality, and that would be disastrous both for the state and for the rest of the world.

- **Management Flexibility.** The University’s and the System’s current efforts to reduce the extraordinarily high degree of bureaucratic regulation and micromanagement imposed by the state are incremental. That is, they are attempting to chip away at the problem, one issue at a time. This may be the only feasible way to approach it in the Wisconsin political environment, but the Team would suggest that some consideration be given to mounting a comprehensive campaign to eliminate bureaucratic and policy constraints wholesale. Such a campaign would be consistent with the general national trend toward deregulation in both public and private sectors that has characterized the past several decades. Universities in some states have been successful in doing so, particularly in hard financial times, under the rubric, “If you can’t give us more money, then give us the flexibility to manage better what you can give us.” In at least one state (Maryland) the legislature has recently done both. It has declared the University System of Maryland a “public corporation,” with authority to establish its own
independent personnel and procurement policies and procedures. (The System’s Regents already have authority to set tuitions and to issue revenue bonds.) At the same time, it established the goal of increasing the percentage of state General Funds (equivalent to Wisconsin’s General Purpose Revenues) devoted to higher education from about 11 percent to 15.5 percent over a four-year period.

- **Strategic Leadership and Planning.** The University deserves commendation for its continuing attention to strategic planning and to such matters as benchmark standards and performance accountability. Much has been done, but much remains to be done. The Team believes that certain elements of this strategic enterprise deserve more attention. First, strategic planning must be informed planning. The better the planning information base, the better the planning. We therefore strongly recommend that the University consider reinforcing its capacity for environmental scanning (What’s going on outside the University that might affect it?) and for institutional research (What’s really going on within the University?) Such information must be generated under the auspices of a central office, but so long as all parties to institutional governance take responsibility for ensuring its validity and quality, and it is freely and openly available to all parties, it can only strengthen the University’s planning and governance processes at all levels. Second, there needs to be increased recognition that some issues can only be detected and dealt with from the top down (or, perhaps preferably, the center out) rather than by essentially voluntary bottom-up initiatives. Only the institution’s leaders can insist and ensure that the entire campus community comes to grips with the institutional implications of strategic information and plans. Third, “buy-
in" and informed implementation by all stakeholders (i.e., all members of the campus community as well as external clienteles such as alumni and donors) are essential to the success of strategic planning and change. Achieving both buy-in and informed implementation will require continuing attention to process and procedure at all levels. All this will require continuing attention to improving communication among all parties. Despite more than a decade of concerted effort in strategic envisioning, planning, and implementation, the Team encountered faculty, staff, and even the occasional administrator who were blissfully unaware that anything of this sort was going on in the University.

- **Governance.** The University is justly proud of its strong tradition of shared governance. The Team feels compelled to note, however, that the real focus of the present governance structure is the traditional troika of governing board, administration, and faculty. While there exist formal mechanisms for participation by students and staff, the Team found some evidence that these members of the community do not feel fully engaged, particularly in the strategic planning enterprise. This seems to be especially true of the academic staff. While they praise the executive leadership of the campus for seeking and giving attention to their advice and views, they do not feel they have been fully engaged in strategic planning. Many feel they could and should be more involved in planning and development activities at their own departmental and office levels. We suspect the University is failing to make use of a valuable resource. We were almost universally impressed with the ability, enthusiasm, and the dedication of the academic staff with which we met. They are certainly
important stakeholders who are deeply committed to the continuing vitality of the
University. To broaden shared governance by engaging them more fully in shaping its
future can only strengthen the University's shared governance system.

- **Middle Management.** One of the unfortunate consequences of the state-University
civil service system was observed by several Team members as a pervasive civil service
mentality among members of the administrative support staff, especially at the
departmental level. This is manifested in expressions of belief that the system must
always work the way it does because the rules say so, even if there's no apparent good
reason for it. Many support staff seem resigned to awkward, clumsy, and pointless
procedures simply because they don't think they'll ever change. Surgical removal of
the University from the state civil service system would help greatly, but whether or
not that is feasible, a campus-wide initiative to revitalize the human resources
environment with staff development mechanisms designed to foster and reward
initiative and creativity would be a high-return investment, in our opinion. As one of
our Team put it, if the UWM is really to be all it can be, its administrative services
must be as good as its academic programs, i.e., its administrators must be as good as
its faculty. The seeds of such a situation abound on the campus, but they need a little
more water, fertilizer, and cultivation.

- **Interdisciplinary Programs.** As most research universities have done for decades now,
the University is struggling with the inconvenient fact that "the universe is not
organized like a university." That is, many -- perhaps most -- of the new frontiers of
intellectual exploration are in areas that do not fit tidily within the traditional university
disciplinary department structure. Universities have responded to this situation in many different ways, including organizing extra-departmental centers and institutes, joint faculty appointments, etc. Still today, however, these are commonly seen as awkward appurtenances to the "normal" departments, whence come most faculty's administrative support and rewards. The UWM tradition of strong local autonomy seems particularly resistant to such entities. University initiatives like clustered faculty appointments are therefore all the more to be commended. In the belief that much of the future of the research enterprise lies in interdisciplinary collaboration, the Team urges the University to continue to explore ways to strengthen its interdisciplinary efforts.

- **The Graduate School.** The Team repeatedly encountered praise for the Graduate School (and Research Office) as a supporter of graduate research and education, a patron of interdisciplinary initiatives, and a source of good things generally. This may be partly due to the fact that, unlike most of its counterparts in other research universities, the Graduate School disposes of very substantial funding in its role as conduit for large annual fund transfers from WARF to the University. It also appears to be a very effective organization blessed with good leadership. We would encourage continuing reliance on it, with the *caveat* that the campus should not be allowed to view it as bearing the sole responsibility for fostering interdisciplinary programs. It can and should be only one valuable partner in what must be serious joint enterprises. One other note: We heard that the University of Wisconsin Foundation is internally structured to reflect existing departmental and college units. This seems potentially
counterproductive in the cases of needy new interdisciplinary initiatives involving several departments or colleges. Perhaps the Foundation ought to have some sort of internal "special initiative" group with appropriate fund-raising staff.

- **Graduate Students.** The graduate students with whom we met seem generally enthusiastic and pleased with their lives and work. They seem very interested in programs that would expand and extend their professional development in areas outside the traditional graduate research training leading to traditional jobs in academe. A reinvigorated graduate student council could be a significant partner in developing such programs, together with the Graduate School. The Graduate School has evidently been friendly to the idea, but might pursue it more aggressively.

- **Undergraduate Students.** The undergraduate students we met also generally seem enthusiastic and pleased with their experiences in the University. As we have noted above, the enhancement of the undergraduate experience for some students through the establishment of residential learning communities must count as one of the University's major achievements of the past decade. The challenge here will be to take what appears to be a very successful pilot effort and scale it up to include more students. Such an exercise in "mass customization" will entail substantial costs and more far-reaching rearrangement of expectations for faculty and staff. It may be unrealistic to expect extension to all undergraduate students, but some universities have managed to provide such experiences to as many as a third of their undergraduates. There may also be alternative ways to achieve some of the same ends at lower cost. One Team member described a freshman colloquia program which
successfully does so. We did hear some negative comments about the very large size of many freshman and sophomore courses, and the difficulty of getting to know a few faculty well enough to engender well informed letters of recommendation for seniors. Student services generally seem to be well regarded. However, the decentralized and widely dispersed character of the University extends also to student services. There seems to be a need for some organizational mechanism that can, through horizontal function coordination, present a portfolio of student services integrated with undergraduate education in accordance with the vision priorities of the University.

- Diversity. The University has been working steadily for several decades to increase the diversity of its faculty, students, and staff. It has had some success, but the effort must still be characterized as a "work in progress." As an example, the establishment of the Multicultural Center in large modern facilities is said by some students of color to have increased their satisfaction and comfort levels, but others report they would like to see other tangible improvements in the campus environment for such students. We can only suggest that the University keep this issue high on the priority list in its plans for the future.

- Information Infrastructure. We have noted above that the total information infrastructure of the University, i.e., the libraries and the information technology units, mirrors the rest of the institution. It is extraordinarily decentralized and dispersed. In a sense this is desirable and only to be expected in the new age of networked information services. But in another sense it makes it almost impossible for University leaders to comprehend and properly manage this critically important driver of the
institution's future. The library system's resource deficiencies are documented in the self study report. Some campus users suggested there were comparable deficiencies on the information technology side. The Team's experts couldn't really tell, despite considerable investigation, and we doubt that the University's leadership can really tell either. This situation leads us to suggest that the University complete the planned strategic plan, including the entire information structure, as quickly as possible.

Libraries have been the hearts of universities for the past thousand years, and digital information infrastructures will be their nervous systems for as far as one can see into the future. In a world in which a new generation of technology comes along every eighteen months, there is little time to waste.

- **The Arts.** We were informed that the city of Madison has recently received a $50 million gift to build a new performing arts center in the city. The magnitude of the gift suggests that this will be a splendid cultural resource for the city and the region. Given the distinction and scale of the University's arts faculty and programs, there would appear to exist here a golden opportunity for mutually beneficial interactions between the University and its community.

- **Globalization.** One of the four goals of *A Vision* is "joining the global community."

During the Team's visit to Madison we were given copies of a report of the Governor's WITCO Task Force on International Education, *How to Create a Global Generation in Wisconsin for the 21st Century*. This appears to us to be another golden joint-enterprise opportunity for the University to build on its historical strength in international education by joining with the Governor and the state to implement the
recommendations of the Task Force. Doing this will inevitably involve moving substantial elements of the University into Cyberia (more commonly known as cyberspace). We note that the University of Wisconsin System has begun to build a bridgehead there under the leadership of Michael Offerman, Dean of UW-Extension’s Center for Learning Innovation. This System initiative did not receive substantial attention in the Self Study Report or during the Team’s visit, but it ought to be considered a significant asset in the University’s globalization efforts.
IV. Team Recommendations and Rationale

The Team's recommendations for action, including its recommendation to continue the accreditation of the University of Wisconsin--Madison, are shown on the attached Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status. The Team's reasons for recommending the continuation of the University's accreditation until 2008-09 follow:

The University of Wisconsin--Madison is one of the nation's finest land-grant research universities. It has a long history of academic distinction based on an outstanding faculty supported by dedicated and skilled administrative leaders, strong alumni and citizen communities, and a state with high expectations and regard for its University. It is an altogether splendid institution, one most academics would be pleased and proud to be a part of.

It is also an institution at risk. This is not a unique circumstance. Most great universities these days are at risk, due to the combined effects of chronically limited resources and new, sometimes unprecedented, demands and challenges. The specific nature of each university's circumstances differ. Each must respond strategically and with unaccustomed alacrity to its own circumstances if it is to continue to be great. Can the University of Wisconsin--Madison do this? Unquestionably, yes! For a century and a half it has found ways to pursue and achieve excellence despite impediments. One is reminded of Kurt Vonnegut's short story, *Harrison Bergeron*, in which he describes a society so fixated on equality that it requires its ballet dancers to wear heavy weights on their legs to prevent them from leaping higher than the average person can. The University of Wisconsin--Madison is wearing some heavy weights, but somehow it manages to perform
impressively nonetheless. What might it be able to do without the weights? The Team fervently hopes the University and its state can join forces to find out.