

Western Carolina University

A.K. Hinds University Center
Administrative Program Review

External Review Report

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May 31 – June 1, 2012

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The External Review Committee met with members of the Western Carolina University community, the Division of Student Affairs, and the staff of the A.K. Hinds University Center over a two day period. There was a good representation of faculty, staff and students both directly and indirectly associated with the A.K. Hinds University Center. The meetings were held in the Blue Ridge Conference Center on campus. The members of the External Review Committee would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Jeff Hughes and his staff for the hospitality during our visit. A special thanks to Kim Corelli for all of her assistance in coordinating our travel and overnight accommodations and to Caleb Gray who served as our point of contact during the interview times at the Blue Ridge Conference Center.

The External Review Committee acknowledges that the A.K. Hinds University Center is the first department in the Division of Student Affairs to participate in the external review process as part of the Division's Administrative Program Review. At the end of this report, we will provide an additional series of recommendations in respect to the process. Overall, we believe the process, as established, will provide the University Center and future departments a critical snapshot which will contribute to their ongoing assessment of their respective staff, programs, services and facilities (when applicable).

The External Review Committee members were provided notebooks from the A.K. Hinds University Center (UC) which included an outline of the Administrative Program Review process, a profile of Western Carolina University, expectations of our role as members of the External Review team, and copies of the goals and standards for the Academic Program Review program at Western Carolina University (WCU). A suggested format for this report was also provided and was very helpful in the preparation of this report. In addition, copies of the individual units' internal reviews from Spring 2011 were provided with a current organizational chart of the department. It should be noted that there have been some department changes in respect to personnel between the time of the Spring 2011 internal review reports and our visit to campus. It would have been beneficial to the External Review Team members to have had a more recent set of internal review reports to reflect the most current operations within each unit. It would have also been helpful to have been provided a comprehensive department internal review to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for the complexities of the UC as whole versus through the lens of the respective units which make up the department.

The External Review Committee members arrived on campus on May 30 and conducted a series of interviews over the period of two days on May 31 – June 1, 2012. The schedule provided a wonderful opportunity for the stakeholders of the UC to share their perspective on the UC as a whole and the respective units within the UC. As we did not have a clear understanding on how individuals were invited to participate and what they may have understood of the Administrative Program Review process, we explained our role, encouraged them to speak freely, and to know that our report would only refer to common themes and, when appropriate, specific ideas, suggestions or concerns expressed by identifiable populations like “faculty”, “staff”, and “student employees”, as examples. Meetings with stakeholders were scheduled for approximately one hour in length and provided more than enough time for the members of the External Review Committee to develop an understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the UC, in general. One meeting went approximately 90 minutes and this was with the Associate Director team from the UC. The External Review Committee does not believe that this extra time provided an unfair representation of information, but given their role and the scope of their duties this extra time provided each senior staff member ample time to share their thoughts. Overall, the time provided with stakeholders was sufficient in gaining the insight needed to provide our comments, analysis and recommendations to follow.

The report will provide an analysis in three key areas: program, staff and budget. Each analysis will include overall observations from the interviews and the written documentation provided to the External Review Committee. Following the analysis will be a comprehensive list of recommendations for the department, the Division of Student Affairs and Western Carolina University.

ANALYSIS OF PROGRAM

The University Center at Western Carolina University is clearly a large department made up of several units. During the review process, it became clear that when the UC is mentioned, a wide variety of descriptions were articulated. The department is identified by the following units:

1. **Operations:** This unit provides service to ensure the University Center is run in an efficient and effective manner. In order to meet these standards, the unit must provide a clean environment, make sure rooms are reserved and set up for meetings, operate sound and/or A/V equipment, keep the lights on and make sure the building is maintained.
2. **Programming:** The unit provides programming to Western Carolina University students, faculty, and staff through a variety of off campus trips, campus concerts and shows, movies, student media group assistance and support, art and cultural events, and arcade/recreation events to only name a few.

3. Leadership/Student Involvement/Greek Life: The unit provides WCU students, faculty, and staff with resources and opportunities to experience leadership opportunities and experience a holistic educational experience. This unit also has an academic department partnership and plays a significant role in delivering the Leadership minor.
4. Base Camp Cullowhee: The unit provides students, faculty, and staff (and other community members) with a variety of outdoor program opportunities including off campus recreation trips, skills clinics, equipment rentals, and group development activities.

All of these units within the UC work collectively to function as one in meeting both the core competencies as describe by the Association of College Unions International and the standards for College Unions as listed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS). In addition, University Center programs and services have been accurately tied to goals, outcomes, and documents used by both Western Carolina University and the University of North Carolina System. These include UNC Tomorrow, the Western Carolina University Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), Western Carolina University mission, and the Division of Student Affairs mission.

As the External Review Committee took a close look at the programs and services offered through the UC, we were very impressed with information that was presented. Each of the units within the UC is currently working to provide excellent student programming and services. These units appear to be successfully working toward and meeting the mission and objectives of both the individual unit and those of the University Center as a department. In addition, the units and the department are successfully working towards the missions and goals of the Division of Student Affairs and WCU.

A common theme through the various discussions with constituents: the UC is doing a great job meeting the expressed needs of the students, faculty, and staff that are engaged with existing UC programs and services. The department assesses what these groups want/need, and makes program improvements/changes based on these findings. However, there is a large population of WCU students, faculty, and staff who are not currently taking advantage of the UC programs and services. It appears that members of the community who are not actively involved do not have a voice in what programs and services are offered by the UC or in how improvements can be made to those programs and services.

By taking into account the needs/wants of currently underserved populations, the UC may achieve a much higher attendance at programs and events and meet needs of additional constituencies that are not being reached at this moment. All discussions seemed to indicate that even with current resources, the department should be able to meet the needs of individuals on the campus, although some programs might need to be cut or others added.

All of the units within the University Center appear to at least do some type of assessment, either formal or informal throughout the year. Predominantly, these surveys seem to gauge student satisfaction or simply collect demographic information of program/service participants. Constituents believe that the UC contributes to student learning, yet learning outcome assessment seems to be missing from many assessments described and conducted by staff. In addition, it appears that the University as a whole does a variety of assessments that could provide insight to UC staff, but results from these assessments (NSSE, BSSE, FSSE, etc.) do not appear to be shared down to the department level for use in program planning. Throughout the review process, discussions with UC staff lead us to believe that while assessments do take place and some improvements are made to the program based on these assessments, this is an area that should receive some attention in order to help the University Center achieve exemplary status.

ANALYSIS OF STAFF

The personnel in the UC received consistent high marks from across a diverse group of stakeholders. Based on the internal review reports, discussion with staff and the leadership within the department, it appears that the staff is good with many great qualities. The staff was articulate, knowledgeable of the need to connect to academic programs, and demonstrated strong loyalty to the department and the division. There is consensus amongst the External Review Committee that the professional staff of the UC is committed to working with students in partnership to create strong programs and services for the entire campus community. The challenging part of the interviews was that the student staff feels less connected than the front line professional staff that appears to feel less connected than the Associate Directors and the other direct reports to the director. There appears to be less of an understanding of the philosophy as to why all of these units make up the UC as one department the further you are away from the director.

In providing an analysis of the staff, we were left to review the Internal Review reports which were over a year old. There had been some changes to the full time staff and the organizational chart which were explained to us verbally. We were not provided an Internal Review of the director's staff/office, so it is difficult to look at the entire department. It would have been helpful to view resumes from each full-time staff member to gain a greater understanding of their depth of experience and possible knowledge for the areas within the UC.

From the outside looking in, stakeholders are impressed with the staff and the amount of successful programs they are able to produce and facilitate. There is an overwhelming understanding of the amount of work that is created by the staff in the various offices. While there appears to be a similar general understanding amongst the staff, it was not consistent in regard to peers fully understanding what others do. This is not uncommon across a division given the focus of the various departments; it is critical for a large department not to let silos

grow within the department to give the perception of separate units not connected by mission, vision, goals and purpose.

There is a general care for the professional development of the staff. Based on the internal review documents it appears a great deal of pride goes into the training of student employees who also appear to serve in traditional leadership positions. It is also apparent to the External Review Committee that the staff is engaged in their respective professional associations as participants, presenters and leaders. The ability to recruit, retain and promote the best staff is to also support their professional development both on campus and in the profession.

The following question was asked, “Does the UC have the right staff in the right positions to make the necessary changes to meet the growing needs of the students, the campus community, and the expectations of the new strategic plan?” The initial response from the majority of the individuals asked was yes with some degree of hesitation. In looking at the functions of the entire UC operation, there was agreement that there are many talented staff members. However, depending on how the scope and mission may change, there was some concern on the transferability of some skills sets to meet a broader level of services and programs. Through strategic planning process, the UC will determine its direction over the next 3 – 5 years and this process should include an assessment of the skills and competencies needed from their staff to be successful. Currently, the staff is positioned to be successful within the scope and mission of existing programs and services.

ANALYSIS OF OPERATION FACILITIES AND BUDGET

The External Review Committee took a tour of the various venues where units of the University Center have operations. We took an unplanned visit to Base Camp Cullowhee and The Cat’s Den to explore the space after meeting with the students. We were not able to gain access to the facilities as they were locked; our assessment is based on what we were able to see and what stakeholders had shared with us during the interview process. We also had the opportunity to visit the Old Student Union which houses the student media outlets, the University Center, the Recreation Center to view the climbing wall managed by Base Camp Cullowhee, and the Blue Ridge Conference Center.

The following are initial observations of these facilities as expressed by various members of the campus community and noted by the members of the External Review Committee:

1. There is a need to have extended hours and more selection of the food options in the University Center. This was noted as a concern by all constituents for access to food service during the week and especially late night and over the weekends. Students were

very vocal about this point in respect to options for food service and along with access to food service during programs and services coordinated by them and others.

2. Although the work space for the Student Media Groups is sufficient in the Old Student Union, not many of the constituents knew how to connect with them. There was not any noticeable signage that indicated this was the location of the various student media outlets or that the facility was operated and managed by the University Center. Many members of the campus community, specifically faculty and staff, did not remember that the Old Student Union was associated with the UC and or that student media was an area of oversight for the professional staff of the UC.
3. Base Camp Cullowhee and The Cat's Den both appear to have adequate space to operate their programs. Similar to student media, many members of the campus community did not recall where Base Camp Cullowhee is housed and that they are a significant program of the UC operation. The students affiliated with these programs expressed a disconnection with the UC due to their location and the lack of presence of UC staff and student leaders/employees who are not associated with these specific programs. There is a need for a better store front and signage leading to the facility both from the road and the residence halls. While the signage that is on the building helps, especially for Base Camp Cullowhee, there was still a feeling that more could be done to help identify the units housed in this building and their affiliation with the UC.
4. The staff and the students who are housed in the Brown Building along with the staff and student organizations who provide programming at the facility all expressed concern with the external area around and leading to the facility. Specifically, The Cat's Den needs some additional lighting to help alleviate some safety concerns of students visiting this location at night. Given the number of students who live around the Brown Building in the residence halls, the lack of lighting appears to be a deterrent for using the space for programming in the evening. This was reiterated by campus partners both in and outside of the Division of Student Affairs.

The overall impression of the facilities managed by the UC is that they are adequate to fulfill its mission and current scope of duties. It should be noted that we did not speak with student leaders or students from organizations not associated with or housed within the UC. This may have provided another insight on the physical space of all of the locations and specifically the AK Hinds University Center. The facilities under the management of the UC appear to be well maintained and clean. While ideally all of the units which are part of the University Center would be located in the center, the space currently housing the Student Media outlets, The Cat's Den, and Base Camp Cullowhee meet the existing needs and expectations of these operations.

The overall impression is that the unit does have a budget that is adequate to fulfill its current mission and scope. The units are funded from two different sources; an allocation from the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and the Activity Fee designated to the University Center. There

did not appear to be any abnormal swings in program funding or generated expenses. In respect to the current level of funding and the management of the budget process, the External Review Committee made the following observations:

1. The funding for Base Camp Cullowhee seems to be heavily placed on the back of revenue generation. The funding from the Vice Chancellor has increased from \$8,000 in FY 08-09 to \$15,000 in FY 10-11, which has reduced the amount of revenue needed from Base Camp Cullowhee program operations.
2. The staff does not appear to have a good understanding of the budget process outside of their own areas of responsibility. Based on the interviews we participated in with staff and specifically the Associate Directors, there needs to be a greater knowledge of and transparency in how the budget works, how the budget is tied into overall priorities of the department and not just the units, and staff need to understand the allocation process out of the Vice Chancellors office. No one spoke about funding in relation to the long range planning or program expansion or funding as it relates to priorities or mission for the department, the division or the University.
3. Find the funding for new collaborative programs with academic units is a concern.
4. There was no mention of fundraising or advancement activities as it relates to the UC or the division. Knowing where the UC operations, programs and services fit in the larger division initiative for advancement would be a healthy conversation for the administrative leadership of the UC to have with the division and the University's advancement staff/leadership. It could prove beneficial and create opportunities to reallocate current funding if certain programs and or services had alumni or private donor support/underwriting.

A review of the facilities managed by the UC staff and the funding provided to UC operations and units indicates that both of these areas are adequate to fulfill its current mission and scope of duties.

SUMMARY OF UNIT STRENGTHS AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

The staff at the A.K. Hinds University Center is very much appreciated for their “can do” attitude, their willingness to be engaged partners across both inter- and intra-divisional lines, and their ability to work with a diverse variety of clients from faculty, staff, students, alumni and, at times, community members to assist in making events successful. This was recognized by all members of the WCU campus community who participated in the interview process. The UC has a long history of creating a campus space that serves as a “community center” where students know they can go to meet others, explore opportunities to join clubs and organizations, and participate in social, cultural and academic focused programs. The students interviewed felt

strongly that as a new student, the UC was their “hub”. The UC is a place for them to hang out and to find out how to “get plugged in”, to attend meetings, and to have access to “invaluable resources”. As a “post new student”, the UC is known for where clubs and organizations meet, a place to participate in leadership classes, a central location to hang out during the day and it is known for its array of programs and services which benefit students directly.

Overall, there is much strength that supports the good work of this department. First and foremost, the professional, graduate and student staff is insightful, talented and very committed to the work that they do each and every day for the betterment of the WCU and the campus community. While many may perceive the UC to be staffing heavy or possess enough financial resources, this would not be correct. The staff is able to deliver quality service, programs and activities due to their professionalism, their energy, and their ability to engage student leaders. A second overall strength is that the UC is seen as a contributing partner in many collaborative programs across campus. The role that the staff and facilities contribute to campus wide programs like tailgating, large campus events and concerts, admissions and orientation, leadership development (both workshops and the academic minor),

Overall, there are three common themes that came from the interviews that point to areas of improvements. The first is given the size of the department, the large professional and student staff, the multiple areas across campus that the department functions and provides services, and the distinct programmatic areas, it is important to consider the practices and processes in place by which the staff develops a collective interest and understanding in the entire UC portfolio; effectively and efficiently communicates both internally within the department and externally with both the division and across campus; and, holds itself accountable for good customer service in respect to facilities operations and services. A second theme of concern is the lack of branding of what programs, services and facilities are associated with the A.K. Hinds University Center. A number of faculty, staff and student employees stated that certain units and programs are not thought of as a part of the UC or remembered so easily because they are not physically located in the A.K. Hinds University Center (e.g., Base Camp, student media, and the Cats Den). The third concern is the lack of access to food service and the overall facility after certain hours of operation. While we understand that food service is not part of the Division of Student Affairs and not managed through the UC, their hours of operation directly impact programs and services held in the UC especially during the evening and on the weekend. A final concern is the perception that they may have enough financial resources to address technology enhancements, improvements and purchases; upgrades in furniture (meeting rooms and lounge space), fixture and equipment. This is just not the case. The UC can manage what they have at the level they are currently providing services, but cannot support the extension of their programs and services in multiple locations across campus.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the feedback from the stakeholders and both the professional and student staff of the UC, the External Review Committee make the following recommendations for consideration to the UC, the Division of Student Affairs and to the Western Carolina University administration:

University Center

1. Administrative Management

- a. Create a Management Team which includes all direct reports to the director. It would be advised that this team meet on a regular basis, such as bi-weekly, to discuss department wide issues such as budget, staffing, facilities, strategic planning, assessment of programs and services, as examples.
- b. Orient the full-time, graduate and student staff to the structure of the UC. There seemed to be a lack of understanding amongst the staff of the UC and within the Division of Student Affairs regarding reporting lines and the philosophical framework for why all of the current units are apart of the UC. Engage the staff to think about their role larger than just their specific portfolio and direct reports.
- c. The Associate Directors should be charged with a department wide function(s) which challenge them to think from a department level perspective. Examples of such functions could include, but not limited to: staff development and training, the student employee program, strategic planning, assessment, marketing and communication, community partnerships, advancement/development, and student learning/academic initiatives & partnerships.
- d. All full-time staff, including graduate assistants, should participate in a bi-weekly or monthly department meeting. In these meetings it would be suggested that department wide matters could be discussed, disseminating information from the Division of Student Affairs directors meetings, issues facing the WCU campus, opportunities to learn more about each functional unit which makes up the UC, and opportunities for staff to share insight on issues facing student employees, student leaders and student organizations as a whole.
- e. The organizational structure is very flat with many direct reports to the director of the UC. We would recommend a comparison analysis amongst peer institutions within the UNC system and with similar size student unions/activities operations. A consideration could include three Senior Associate/Associate Directors for Operations and Facilities, Programming, and Finance and Administration. A realignment of function, scope, and personnel and financial resources would be appropriate as well.

- f. The student employees/leaders who participated in the interview process indicated that they did not feel like they were part of the UC staff, especially the individuals who were not housed within the AK Hinds University Center. Explore ways to make all UC student employees feel a part of the UC. Find ways to creatively remove the perceptions that each unit is its own department in regard to the student employees. Assist them, through training or student employee staff meetings, to see the big picture of the UC.
2. Finances/Budget Management
 - a. The Director of the University Center and the Budget Manager should work closely with the Associate Directors on the budget and long range planning process for the department. Engaging the Associate Directors in the budget process will develop their knowledge of the budget and their fiduciary responsibilities. Being a part of this process is also important to the continuity of the department and its future operations.
 - b. Clearly explain the budget and budget process to all full-time staff so that there isn't a perception that money is available and just not being allocated to certain units within the UC. There does not appear to be any baseline knowledge of the budget and or the budget process with staff outside of the administrative office and the Associate Directors.
 - c. The funding model for Base Camp Cullowhee should be reviewed. One area of special note is the funding for student employee wages for the management of the climbing wall in the Recreation Center. Is there a way to redirect some funding to subsidize this non-revenue generating operation?
 - d. The creation of a fund to help with the financial cost of new collaboration efforts with the department academic partners. These new collaborations would be in addition to the current programs and services conducted by this department. Additional funds would need to be secured in order to not diminish any of the current services.
 3. Assessment and Planning
 - a. There is a need for a Strategic Plan that outlines the next 3-5 years for the UC. Engage the staff in the development of vision, mission and values statements that embrace the strategic plan of the University and builds ownership amongst the staff on those statements and the plan.
 - b. Create a UC assessment plan to find out the needs/wants of all WCU students for UC Programming. Currently, it appears that only students who are already connected to the UC in some capacity are engaged in and/or taking advantage of UC programs and services. There was no indication given that much effort is

made to seek out the needs/wants of students who do not participate in existing programs and services.

- c. The development of overall assessment activities will be important for the UC. It would create avenues where students are able to provide insight/need on the following: current programs and services, use of the facilities, access to programs, and perceptions of scope and function. Understanding the students' perceptions would provide the UC data to make informed decisions on reallocation of resources and the types of programs and services offered given their financial support and the condition of their facilities.
 - d. Individual units need to provide comprehensive assessment plans on their specific programs and services. The ability to measure satisfaction and learning from the activities provided to students from staff-driven and student-driven initiatives will be critical to determine the ability to secure new and additional funding as the demand for more programs, co-curricular partnerships and services are expected or required.
 - e. Access to NSSE, BSSE and other data collected on the students at WCU would be most helpful to the staff of the UC. Members of the UC staff did not seem to be knowledgeable of NSSE data even though they seemed to be aware that WCU participates in the survey. There was also an indication that there may be other data available based on other surveys that are done with students on satisfaction and engagement. There was an expressed concern from staff that this existing data is not shared beyond the executive level of the division. If this is a misperception by the staff on the access to such data, it is highly recommended that it be corrected. Knowing what the data says about the students at WCU and their experience would be a great asset to the UC and the department directors in the division.
4. Operations and Facilities
- a. An evaluation of the facilities and operations staff's duties and responsibilities along with a review of the set up procedures and protocols is necessary. While there is a strong satisfaction and appreciation of the "can do" attitude of the student set up and tech crews by many stakeholders both within and outside of the Division of Student Affairs, there was an expressed concern about frequency when rooms are not set up in a timely manner or not set up per the requested room reservation. Again, when this has occurred, those (mostly faculty and staff representatives both in and outside of Student Affairs) expressing concern are quick to state that the staff make all the effort to correct the situation immediately, but acknowledge they would prefer it to happen less if at all. It is strongly suggested that protocols be evaluated to ensure checks and balances are in place that ensure room set ups are done in a timely manner and checked in a timely

manner by either a student building manager or full-time staff member in advanced of a scheduled program or event.

- b. There is a need and an opportunity to re-energize the Commuter Lounge located in the University Center. It is a fairly uninviting space with no artwork or sense of school pride in the physical space. At a minimum, this is an ideal location to add some WCU spirit items on the walls and change out the fabric on the couches to complement the spirit items. It is also suggested to evaluate the use of the space and to possibly sponsor a focus group with commuter students to determine if there is a better way to use this designated space.
 - c. The development of a life cycle budget for audio visual and technology equipment is desperately needed and long overdue. Stakeholders outside of the division recognize the reality that the UC does not have an adequate budget to replace and update all technology. However, the External Review Committee believes a proactive approach in developing such a plan would help in telling the story which includes the frequency in which such equipment is used and by whom (faculty, students, staff or outside clients), the return on investment in respect to fees that are charged, and the overall age and health of existing equipment.
 - d. A determination if there is enough facilities and operations staff to meet the baseline services promised when using space in any of the UC facilities. A comparison study is strongly encouraged in this area given the square footage of the multiple facilities and event areas covered by the set up/tech staff and housekeeping. It is the understanding of the External Review Committee that the UC staff not only provide set up (tables and chairs) and technical support in the actual A.K. Hinds University Center facility, but also the Brown building, Blue Ridge Conference Center, the Old Student Union and the many other locations across campus. The comparison study should also include a review of any fees that are charged for such services in respect to covering wear and tear on equipment and the ability to cover the staff salary/wages for these services outside of the main UC facility.
5. Branding, Marketing and Communication.
- a. Branding of the UC. What is the UC brand? What is it known for? The UC is more than one facility with a complex set of programs and services being provided through staff, student leaders and student organizations. Many students, faculty, and staff that participated in the interview process still only see the University Center as one building on the campus. The “brand” must create an understanding of the various buildings and programs as all being the University Center. The development of a comprehensive branding and marketing program is imperative for the campus community to understand all that the UC does as a department. Specific ideas or concepts to consider include the following:

- i. A review of all the signage needs for the Old Student Union and the location of Base Camp Cullowhee and The Cat's Den are needed. Identifying both the Old Student Union and the Brown Building as UC satellites is important to properly convey the reality that the UC is more than just the A.K. Hinds facility. Helping to promote the programs, services and facilities located in these spaces is currently lacking. This could include University approved signage outside of the physical space and new signage on or around the two facilities to identify them as UC facilities and which programs are housed within them.
 - ii. The UC website should be reviewed to determine if it showcases all of what the UC is as a department outside of the A.K. Hinds facility, itself.
 - iii. The marketing plan must be focused on getting the word out to all WCU students regarding UC events. There may be a need to get very creative with this initiative. Advertising events could potentially bring many more students to the events and it seems that some current methods (e.g., posters, banners hung from the balcony, etc.) just are not getting noticed. In the overall of assessment of what students want/need in programming could also include how students want to be notified about programs (e.g., Facebook, UC website, Twitter, posters, general email notification and so forth).
 - iv. The window signage on Base Camp Cullowhee and The Cat's Den gave no indication they were a unit of the University Center. Identifying all of the units that are part of the University Center under a unifying brand would help the campus community realize all of the different ways this department makes an impact on the campus.
 - v. Consideration should be given to "renaming" the Brown Building facility the AK Hinds University Center Satellite or the UC Satellite at the Brown Building. This would remind everyone on a daily basis – via the web, campus maps, publications and so forth – that the facility is a part of the overall UC operation, management and programs.
 - vi. On the ground floor of the University Center, there is a great display of an outdoor scene and half of a canoe on the wall. The members of the External Review Committee made the assumption this was a promotion for Base Camp Cullowhee, but there was no text signage to tell us more about Base Camp Cullowhee. Some additional information, such as location on a campus map or a telephone number and website information would be helpful.
- b. A number of constituents made comments on the frequency of programs and the overlapping of program topics/focus. A number of individuals specifically brought up the concern with "over programming". The UC should lead the way

in creating a more effective communication process amongst the student organizations, advisors and Student Affairs colleagues. Better communication between the student organizations and departments that do a lot of programming, could lessen the perception of duplication and increase the collaboration. A consideration of the unit assessment plans on programming and services should include quality versus quantity in respect to the overall programming model.

6. Campus Partnerships

- a. Academic partnerships are effective in their current arrangements with cultural activities, Base Camp, and leadership development programs. The Division of Student Affairs and the staff in the UC have a rich history of creating programs (e.g., service learning and first year experience) that eventually move over into Academic Affairs. In anticipation of the arrival of a new Provost, it will be important for the UC to lead the way in creating purposeful, intentional co-curricular activities that partner with existing academic programs and disciplines along with complimenting the academic experience. The UC staff should explore opportunities to collaborate in the expansion of the FYE programs, the development of a Sophomore and Junior Year experiences, contribute to capstone academic courses, advise on the input to ePortfolios (electronic brief case) for students, enhance service projects both locally and regionally, and document its contributions to the SACS review and the Quality Enhancement Program initiatives.
- b. Food Service is always a tricky partner based on students' perceptions of quality, quantity and access. Aramark appears to be a good partner with the Division of Student Affairs based on the interviews the External Review Committee conducted. However, the following areas are concerns that need to be addressed by the UC administration in partnership with the Division of Student Affairs, the Division of Finance and Administration, and Aramark:
 - i. The students felt very strongly that the access to food service in the evenings and weekends is not what it needs to be to support students, evening programming and weekend programming.
 - ii. The External Review Committee clearly heard from all stakeholders that food service on the weekends does not meet the needs of the students nor any member of the University community or greater community who may be on the campus during the weekend time frame.
 - iii. We strongly encourage the UC in partnership with Residential Living and Aramark to assess access to students and others on the weekends. It will be impossible to change the culture of the campus (e.g. a suitcase campus) if there is no or little food service to keep students at WCU on the weekends.

- iv. The Brown Building is a “missed opportunity” in respect to food service, evening & weekend programming, and additional partnerships with Residential Living and Aramark. We understand there was a food option and currently there is a C-Store in the space. However, given the proximity of the student housing facilities, trying to re-establish a food option would be a benefit to the students who live in the area and as a potential way to draw people into The Cat’s Den to participate in the programming.
 - v. The UC will need additional support and leadership from the respective Vice Chancellors for Student Affairs and Finance & Administration.
- c. Weekend Programming/Activities is challenging on many campuses and especially at institutions similar to WCU with a large percentage of students living within one to two hours from their family home. There is no silver bullet that can create a sense of urgency for students to remain on campus unless there is a campus wide initiative and commitment. The UC alone cannot change the culture of a “suitcase” campus. However, we would encourage the UC to provide the leadership in evaluating programming options from extended Base Camp programs, weekend service trips, leadership programs and services, and Saturday events on and around campus. Creating such a group of committed individuals of staff, students and faculty is not so much about the position that someone holds but who they are as individuals. It is suggested that individuals are invited to serve who have the respect and loyalty of others across campus as individuals who are in tune with the campus community and culture, and are known for getting things done. The External Review Committee understands that there exists some form of a “program council” that meets to discuss the number and types of programs that currently exist. This may be a good starting point so as not to duplicate efforts. It should also be noted that a number of individuals who participated in the interviews expressed a concern about overlapping programs (topics and frequency) and not enough communication between programming entities (both professional driven and student driven).
- d. Strengthen the relationship with the Faculty/Staff Advisors to student clubs and organizations. In a number of interviews with faculty and staff, it was acknowledged that more needs to happen in educating faculty and staff who serve as advisors to the registered clubs and organizations. Consider a combination of lunch-time workshops and or a half-day seminar to review policies, procedures and protocols along with re-occurring issues. While some faculty and staff appear to be fully aware of their role and the expectations as club/organization advisors, those present acknowledged that many of their colleagues are not as informed as they need to be in respect to the guidelines for registered student organizations/clubs.

CONCLUSION

On-going and continuous improvement is the sign of a proactive, reflective and self-assured organization. The Administrative Program Review provides departments in the Division of Student Affairs at Western Carolina University to do just that and to make informed choices on future re-allocations of human, financial and physical resources. The A.K. Hinds University Center is a solid organization with caliber staff and adequate resources with its current portfolio/scope of programs, services and facilities. As indicated earlier, there are real strengths in the department and some areas that are opportunities that need to be strengthened and expanded. There are some limited weaknesses that certainly become strengths with minimal tweaks. While there are threats, they do not deter the department to do the good and effective work that is completed each and every day by this dedicated staff. Throughout the conversations with campus stakeholders in the UC, it became obvious that the department contributes to the Division of Student Affairs' mission and that of Western Carolina University. The staff, faculty and students who are engaged with the UC can articulate clearly how the programs and services contribute to the students' overall learning. The programs and services are a compliment to the academic experience the students are seeking at WCU. When asked early in the process if the External Review Committee members perceived the department to be well prepared and equipped to contribute to the new strategic plan, the answer would be yes. As the division moves forward, however, it will need to carefully measure future expectations of the department and or the responsibilities of the staff without additional financial resources and support. The challenge for both the division and the UC in the future will be making the tough decision of what does the UC stop doing or providing given its level of human and financial resources.

The External Review Committee does not recommend any major changes to the overall department but does believe there are areas of improvement for a healthier, more productive department. The A.K. Hinds University Center has a history of meeting and exceeding expectations. To continue down this path, the department must find the ability to retain its brightest, most creative and inspiring staff. It will be critical as the A.K. Hinds University Center to continue to define itself and its contribution to the greater WCU community. As a strong asset to the Division of Student Affairs, the UC must contribute to student learning within the context of the new strategic plan as outlined by the Chancellor. The development of a comprehensive assessment program of its programs and services linked to learning/program outcomes will also benefit the department along with its own strategic plan which can be mapped back to the Division of Student Affairs and the University. The A.K. Hinds University Center is in a good position to make effective, minimal changes to be a more influential member of the division and leave a greater impact on the community of Western Carolina University.

General Comments on the Administrative Program Review

The External Review Committee members were very pleased with the overall experience and are grateful for the opportunity to have participated in the process. In our observations of the experience, we would make the following recommendations for your consideration for the future External Reviews of the remaining departments in the Division of Student Affairs:

1. While the UC is a very large department and it was helpful to have individual unit internal assessments (e.g. facilities, leadership, programming and outdoor recreation), it would have been equally important to have an overall department internal review. At times, it felt as if we were providing an external review for the respective units and not the entire department. A recommendation in the future is to have at a minimum an overall department internal review. Supplemental internal reviews would provide additional insight in larger departments but this would not be necessary for every department in the Division of Student Affairs.
2. The internal review documents were very helpful in preparing for the visit. Unfortunately, the internal review documents were not current. In the future, the internal review document should reflect the current year of operation and make note of any significant changes from previous years. In this situation, there were some personnel changes not reflected in the documents but in a new, updated organization chart.
3. In asking that a review on personnel and finances be provided, it would be helpful in the future to include the following documents:
 - a. Current organization charts with position descriptions of all staff.
 - b. Copies of resumes of individuals currently working in the department.
4. The interview and time spent with Jeff Hughes, the director of the A.K. Hinds University Center, and Dr. Sam Miller, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, were quite helpful, but there was no time with the staff member overseeing assessment for the division. It would have been helpful, in hindsight, to have spent some time getting the perspective of the individual managing this process for the division. Having a better understanding of how the final report will be utilized once submitted and or how it is shared, would be helpful in the writing of the document.
5. In the spirit of continued transparency, it is recommended that the findings and recommendations be shared in some capacity in an open forum with the staff and stakeholders who participated in the review process.
6. Finally, the External Review Committee strongly recommends that all future final reports either be sent directly to the division's Director of Planning and Assessment or the Vice Chancellor, himself, who would in return review the final report with the department director.