

SACS

SACS Re-affirmation Officially Begins

Carol Burton To Direct SACS Review at Western

As director of Western's Teaching Fellows Program for the past 13 years, Carol Burton has faced her share of challenges, but none as daunting as her new assignment. Chancellor John Bardo has named Burton to head up the university's critical effort to earn re-accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, better known as SACS.

"Carol has demonstrated a distinguished record of working with accreditation processes, most notably the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)," Bardo said. "Because of Carol, we also have one of the finest Teaching Fellows programs in North Carolina. Carol is highly organized and well respected on campus. Finally, she has a long history of being able to pull people together to get work completed. I am confident that her leadership skills and experience will be a definite asset to Western as we pursue SACS re-accreditation."

"It's a tremendous honor to be chosen for this assignment, and a tremendous responsibility," Burton said. "It's also a great opportunity to serve my alma mater."

Burton earned her undergraduate degree in nutrition and dietetics from Western in 1987 and stayed for a master's degree in education in 1989. She then went on to become director of Special Programs in the College of Education and Allied Professions, where she placed teacher education students in local public schools for their early field experiences. In 1992, she became director of Western's Teaching Fellows Program. She expects to resume that position when the SACS review process is finished two years from now.

The current SACS review process is different from the most recent one, a two-year effort that culminated in 1996, Burton explains. "Instead of an external review body determining who we are and how well we're doing, the new process gives Western an opportunity to define our own

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Carol Burton and Kyle Carter

Provost Urges Participation, Positive Approach

Kyle Carter, who became Western's first provost in November, knows what it's like to face a major accreditation review. The experience is fresh in Carter's mind because he was part of the team that helped Central Missouri State University achieve re-accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission, an accrediting body similar to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, just before he came to Western. He sees the review process as an opportunity for progress.

"The SACS review is a time for people to 'show their purple,' to be proud of what Western has accomplished, to work toward improvements in the future, and to put the university's best foot forward," Carter said.

At the same time, he is realistic about the amount of effort needed for the task that is just beginning. "This review will require a lot of work by all of us," Carter said. "Each of the deans has experience with periodic reviews of their specific programs, but this will involve the entire university community," Carter said.

"I encourage you to be informed, to be involved, to track the progress of the accreditation review effort, and to believe that our success depends upon your help and the collaboration of everyone on this campus."

—Kyle Carter, provost

"We have very good people leading this SACS review effort. You will be hearing from them. You can expect to be asked to participate, and you will be expected to pitch in and help when asked," he said. "I encourage you to be informed, to be involved, to track the progress of the accreditation review effort, and to believe that our success depends upon your help and the collaboration of everyone on this campus."

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Carol Burton: Key Biographical Information

Degrees

Ed.D. in Adult Education; NC State University, in progress
MA in education, with specialization in community counseling, Western '89
BS in nutrition and dietetics, Western '87

Administrative and Teaching positions

- 1992 - present - Director, Office of Special Programs and NC Teaching Fellows Program, Western's College of Education and Allied Professions
- 1989-1992 - Program Officer, Western's (then) School of Education and Psychology.
- 1992 - present - Instructor, Western's Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

Service (partial list)

- Current Member, NC Council on Accreditation and School Improvement for Elementary, Middle and Secondary Schools Commission of SACS
- Assistant Chair, NC Secondary and Middle Schools Committee of SACS, two terms in '90s and 2001-05
- Arrangements Coordinator for education program reviews conducted by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and by the NC Department of Public Instruction
- Member, North Carolina State Evaluation Committee for the review of all teacher education programs in the state; 2000-present
- College Representative, NCAA subcommittee on gender and racial equity in athletics, 2003-04
- Chair, College Strategic Planning Committee, 1992
- College Representative, University Scholarship Committee, 1992-present
- Member, Institutional Review Board, 1998 - present
- Chair, College Colloquium Committee, 1998 - present

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Burton To Direct SACS Review *continued from side a*

mission, to show SACS how we're accomplishing our goals and how we intend to make the institution better," she said. "We will be assessed based on what we are doing, what we hope to do, and how well the university community and its stakeholders are involved in the process."

Burton points out that it will require the participation of many people throughout the university community to make the SACS review successful. She'll be asking people to work with her on two key committees – the Compliance Committee, which reviews the university's performance on specific standards; and the Quality Enhancement Plan (or QEP) Committee, which will develop and implement plans for the university's direction and focus for the future. The Leadership Team will help to keep the entire effort on track throughout the two-year process.

"Those committees, which will include faculty, staff, students and administrators, will tap into the best ideas of the entire campus community," Burton said. "We need people who can take a broader view of Western, including (but not limited to) their own immediate concerns. The SACS review and what it will accomplish is about us as an institution. It will have an impact on Western, on our students, and on our region in the next decade and beyond."

Burton invites anyone with an interest in helping with the SACS review process to call her at 227-7497. Assisting Burton in the new University Accreditation Office is Darlene Stonesifer, formerly of the Office for University Planning at Western. The Accreditation Office is located in the Provost's Office, 560 H.F. Robinson Building.

Details on SACS committee memberships, upcoming training sessions, an overview of the SACS review, and frequent updates on the review process will be available at www.wcu.edu/sacs

Provost: Participation, Positive Approach *continued from side a*

Since Western's last accreditation review in 1997, there has been a major change in the process, Carter points out. While universities still have to meet stringent standards, they also are required to show how they are getting better. Instead of evaluating a static process, the reviewers will be looking for improvements that show measurable results in student learning and outcomes.

As a result, Carter said, this review process requires everyone to look at what they're doing and to figure out how they could be doing better. "We have an opportunity not only to show that we've met the widely accepted standards for academic and operational excellence, but also to examine what we can do better to make a significant difference in our students' lives and to prove that our quality improvement plans are in place and working well."

There's a predictable pattern to the review process, Carter said. During the initial phase of the review, there will be a lot of work for small groups of people. Committees will work on overall goals and plans; subcommittees will deal with specific issues. As the final deadline approaches, the work will intensify. There will be more work for more people all across the campus community. There will be deadlines, hard work, late hours. It will all come together and reach a crescendo about six to eight weeks before the SACS review team visits Western in April/March of 2007.

"We will succeed," Carter predicted. "We will be happy to see the SACS team arrive, and we will be overjoyed to see them leave."

"The good news is that this effort will not be over when the SACS review is over," he said. "It will leave us with something of lasting value for Western and its future."

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