

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is a pleasure to present the "Bridging to the Future" Self-Study Report, the first step toward the North Central Association's 2010 re-accreditation of our University of Arizona.

The UA voluntarily is seeking re-accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission, a commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The NCA, founded in 1895, is one of six regional accreditation organizations recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Our university has been continuously accredited since 1917.

Accreditation validates the extraordinary quality and integrity of our academics, research, administration, faculty, staff, resources, facilities and procedures. The credibility and accountability of accreditation resonates with students, graduates, donors, faculty and employers. Accreditation ensures the value and durability of a degree from our university.

In addition to quality assurance, institutional and program improvement is a basic purpose of accreditation. In this spirit, we did not view the self-study as a matter of compliance or a staid process of measurement and metrics; we seized this opportunity to take a reasoned, in-depth look at our university and to articulate a vision.

Our university's re-accreditation process, which began in August 2008, is led by co-chairs Beth Mitchneck, Associate Dean of the Colleges of Letters, Arts, and Science and Professor of Geography and Regional Development, and Randy Richardson, Professor of Geosciences. Working teams of faculty, staff, students, administrators and community members contributed to the self-study report, which reflects input from 70 department heads, numerous deans and vice presidents, community leaders, several hundred faculty members, and at least 1,000 students who participated in a case study and in focus groups.

The report, which emerged from thousands of hours of study and analysis, that reflects an inclusive institution that needs to celebrate its amazing accomplishments and to be prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

The report describes the UA's strengths, such as engaging undergraduate and graduate education, stable enrollment growth and increasing research funding, recognizing these as areas upon which we need to build. An overarching concept of integration percolates from the analysis. It is encouraging to see that productive, university-wide interconnections are prevalent.

In addition to a descriptive discussion of our university, this future-focused document recognizes challenges that our university must face and offers prescriptive comments on areas that need improvement.

Those who devoted their time and energy in shaping this report deserve our gratitude and appreciation for identifying accomplishments to celebrate and challenges we must meet. They have enriched our university.

The "Bridging to the Future" Self-Study Report will help shape the vision for a robust, nimble institution amid rapid change and technological advancements while expanding the UA's core mission of access, quality and discovery.



Robert N. Shelton, Ph.D., President
The University of Arizona

