

To: The Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions

From: Dr. Helen Bergland, Academic Program Manager, Office of Academic Planning

Date: November 16, 2015

Subject: Letter of Verification for Course and Program Assessment

Eastern Washington University is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Within the standard entitled “Effectiveness and Improvement,” the Commission calls for the institution to “engage in an effective system of evaluation of its programs and services, wherever offered and however delivered, to evaluate achievement of clearly identified program goals or intended outcomes,” and further states, “faculty have a primary role in the evaluation of educational programs and services” (page 35, ¹Standard 4.A.2, NWCCU’s Accreditation Handbook, 2015 edition). Additional elements of the Standard include that 1) student achievement is documented comprehensively and regularly; 2) students achieve “identified course, program, and degree learning outcomes”; and 3) the “institution evaluates holistically the alignment, correlation, and integration of planning, resources, capacity, practices, and assessment with respect to achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of its programs” (page 35).

In addition to these extracts from Standard Four, NWCCU provides the following item under “Eligibility Requirements” (page 21):

22. Student Achievement

The institution identifies and publishes the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs. The institution engages in regular and ongoing assessment to validate student achievement of these learning outcomes.

I verify that EWU’s Therapeutic Recreation (TR) program as well as the core courses for the TR, Outdoor Recreation, and Recreation and Tourism Management programs have met our regional accrediting body’s assessment requirements. The programs and core courses are supported by a strong assessment plan built around meaningful and assessable student learning outcomes, longitudinal data collection, data analysis, and use of results to improve student achievement and the curriculum.

To support these processes, the department has created a Google Docs data base that not only records quarterly quantitative and qualitative outcomes-based data but also includes a section that demonstrates where data has been used to “close the loop”—or improve student achievement and the curriculum—for every course and assignment used for this purpose.

These assessment practices are quite evident in Eastern’s annual Program Student Learning Outcomes Assessment reports submitted by the Therapeutic Recreation, Outdoor Recreation, Recreation and Tourism Management programs, and their related core courses. The programs demonstrate exemplary assessment and use of results to improve student achievement, as well as clear communication of results that is supported by evidence.

¹ <http://www.nwccu.org/Pubs%20Forms%20and%20Updates/Publications/Accreditation%20Handbook,%202015%20Edition.pdf>