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SWOSU's Accreditation Extended Until 2030-31

Southwestern Oklahoma State University recently received news that its status as an accredited university has been extended until 2030-2031.

The Institutional Actions Council of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) granted SWOSU the 10-year accreditation at its January meeting. The decision is based on the recommendation of a peer team, which reviewed the university during a comprehensive evaluation for reaffirmation in October 2020.

"We are extremely pleased with the news about re-accreditation," said SWOSU Associate Provost Dr. Joel Kendall, who heads up the Accreditation Liaison Office. "Institution-wide accreditation is the lifeblood of a university. It validates the quality of our education and integrity of our operations."

To achieve reaffirmation, a university must demonstrate that it meets HLC's five criteria for accreditation: 1) mission-driven operations; 2) integrity; 3) quality education; 4) systems for assessment and continuous improvement; and 5) sufficient resources and planning processes. The peer review team found that SWOSU met all five criteria.

"In fact, the team determined that we meet all criteria without concerns, which means that HLC will not require any interim monitoring or actions on our part in order to keep our accreditation," Kendall said. "Basically, it was the best possible outcome that we could get."

Kendall said that a regular four-year review will take place in 2024-2025 but will not involve an on-campus visit from HLC.

"Students and families want to know more about an institution and its programs for which they are paying tuition, and this affirmation by HLC is an extremely positive outcome for the SWOSU community and future students and their families," SWOSU President Randy Beutler said. "We are so pleased with this news and thank everyone for their dedication on getting this most excellent news."

Preparations for the 10-year comprehensive evaluation took several years, according to Kendall. The effort was led by a steering team consisting of Provost Dr. James South, Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Ruth Boyd, Vice President for Administration and Finance Brenda Burgess, Office of Sponsored Programs Director Dr. Lori Gwyn, and Director of Libraries Jason Dupree. An additional 50 faculty and staff served on criterion teams, and many more faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members contributed before and during the evaluation.

"Our reaffirmation of accreditation was truly a whole-campus and whole-community effort. Everyone involved should be proud of being part of a quality institution," Kendall said.

HLC is the accrediting agency for a 19-state region, including all Oklahoma colleges and universities. SWOSU has been regionally-accredited since 1949. It also offers 14 nationally-accredited degree programs. More information about SWOSU's HLC accreditation can be found at hlccommission.org.