Roles and Responsibilities of Criterion Committee
Co-Chairs and Members

Preamble: The University of Northern Colorado will be visited in 2014-2015 by a review team from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), UNC’s regional accreditor. Maintaining regional accreditation is important for a number of reasons including UNC’s ability to offer federal financial aid to students and acceptance of transfer credits and degrees awarded by other institutions. Prior to the visit, we must complete a comprehensive self-study to evaluate the extent to which the University meets criteria established by the HLC. While an important motivation for conducting the self-study is to maintain ongoing regional accreditation, the self-study process also provides us an opportunity to continue our work to shape the University for the 21st century.

President Norton has outlined three goals for the self-study process:

1. To conduct a thorough and candid self-study of the University of Northern Colorado in relation to the criteria set forth by the Higher Learning Commission.
2. To conduct the self-study in a manner that is inclusive of multiple perspectives and provides opportunity for broad input from internal and external constituents.
3. To use what we learn in the self-study process to identify ways in which we will continue to embrace, advance, and cultivate UNC’s distinctive role among Colorado’s public doctoral research universities.

Criterion Committees: Five committees will be convened fall 2012 and assigned to each of the five HLC criteria. Very briefly, the five criteria focus on mission; integrity; teaching and learning (quality and resources as well as evaluation and improvement); and planning and institutional effectiveness. (See HLC Accreditation Criteria document for a full description.)

The analysis of complex issues through a committee process is challenging. The stakes are high because committees will have the opportunity to make unique and indispensable contributions to UNC’s self-study and toward fundamental and enduring improvements in how we provide transformative educational experiences for students.

Each of the criterion committees will be headed by co-chairs, ideally one faculty member and one staff person, and typically will have 5-6 members. Having a faculty and a staff person with co-equal leadership roles emphasizes the university’s commitment to an inclusive process and a recognition that all employees of the university contribute to its mission and effective operation.

CO-CHAIRS
Selection of Co-chairs: Co-chairs will be selected from among individuals who possess the following qualities and/or potential: content knowledge; experience in evaluation; ability and willingness to produce a written product; experience in effective meeting facilitation; willingness and ability to collaborate with colleagues; and a commitment to the welfare of the university as a whole.

Roles of the Co-Chairs: The categories outlined below are meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive. Similarly, the items listed in parentheses are illustrative examples of the kinds of activities and products that will be involved in this process.
Committee Members

Selection of Committee Members: Committee members will be selected to include a balance of those who have knowledge of the areas covered by a criterion and heterogeneity in perspectives. Committee members should: be able to work well with others (collaborative); be thoughtful; have the ability to follow through; and open to candid findings.

Committee members should work with their supervisors to assure that work on the committees can be accommodated; supervisors will be made aware that there is an institutional commitment to the self-study process.

Roles of Committee Members: The categories outlined below are meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive. Similarly, the items listed in parentheses are illustrative examples of the kinds of activities and work that will be involved in this process.

(1) Report preparation (address criterion as well as each core component and institutional questions; draft, with other committee members, the final committee report and ensure that it is consistent with the template in style and substance; work with the committee to produce a report that is evaluative and not solely descriptive; meet defined milestones)

(2) Evidence collection and analysis (consider and incorporate evidence from UNC document inventory; collect other evidence as needed; facilitate the evaluation of UNC’s performance against the HLC criteria and institutional questions)

(3) Communication (meet regularly with co-chairs from other committees as well as the steering committee; provide written updates that can be used for campus communication efforts)

(4) Facilitation of meetings and committee team work (ensure active participation from all committee members; foster collaboration among members; frame charge, set tone for discussions; develop consensus from diverse perspectives)

(5) Administrative responsibilities (schedule committee meetings; prepare meeting agendas; document process, progress and results; meet defined milestones)

Release time/reassignment of duties is possible for the co-chairs. The configuration of such alternative assignments will, of course, need to be accomplished in negotiation with unit supervisors and will vary throughout the process. Some administrative support will be made available to the criterion committee co-chairs.