



**UNIVERSITY  
SENATE**  
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

February 17, 2011

Dr. Harold R. Wilde, President  
North Central College  
30 North Brainard Street  
Naperville, IL 60540

Dear President Wilde:

On behalf of the University Senate, I am pleased to inform you that at the meeting of the Senate on January 27, 2011, upon recommendation of the Commission on Institutional Review, North Central College was approved for continued listing, without qualification, as a United Methodist-related academic institution.

Please accept our appreciation for the hospitality that was shown to the Review Committee and for your cooperation with the review process. If you have any questions, please let me know. We extend warm greetings to you personally and send our best wishes for continuing success.

Sincerely,

Gerald D. Lord  
Executive Secretary

GDL:jhu  
Enclosure  
Copy to: Dr. F. Stuart Gulley  
Dr. Jerry M. Boone  
Dr. Linda Salane

**REPORT OF THE REVIEW  
OF  
NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE  
NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS**

**OCTOBER 4-6, 2010**

For the University Senate  
Of  
The United Methodist Church

F. Stuart Gulley, President  
Woodward Academy  
Chair

Jerry Boone, Consultant  
General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

Linda Salane, Executive Director  
The Leadership Institute  
Columbia College

The University Senate team carried out a review of North Central College on October 4-6, 2010. President Wilde and his colleagues received the team graciously. Commendation is particularly in order to Dr. Peter Barger who coordinated many of the details of our visit.

## **NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS**

### **Institutional Integrity**

There was no evidence presented or reviewed to suggest any compromise of North Central's institutional integrity. No problems surfaced that suggested conflicts of interest by representatives or officials of the college, and no practices or conditions were identified which, left unattended, would undermine the integrity of the institution.

The college's policies concerning nondiscrimination are widely distributed and understood; these include the Faculty Handbook, the College catalogs, and Trustee By-Laws. Academic freedom is clearly stated and reinforced in appropriate documents. Official policies relating to gender and ethnic representation and freedom from harassment and substance abuse are also present.

### **Program Quality**

North Central College is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA). During spring 2010, the college underwent its decennial review with NCA, and received a very favorable report, including reaffirmation of accreditation for another ten years.

At the undergraduate level, North Central College offers the Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Science degrees. Both degrees have been reviewed and changed by the faculty in the past 10 years to improve program quality and individual student attention. The mission of North Central College is to be "a community of learners dedicated to preparing students to be informed, involved, principled and productive citizens and leaders over a lifetime." Program curricula have a strong foundation in the liberal arts, a global component, an ethics and values emphasis and a focus on practical application of learning. At the graduate level, the college offers the Master of Arts degree with two programs in Education and one in Liberal Studies; the Master of Science degree with programs in Web and Internet Applications and Management Information Systems; the master of Business Administration and the master of Leadership Studies.

North Central College's curriculum is developed and delivered by a highly qualified and dedicated faculty, 96 percent of whom hold the terminal degree in their field from a diverse and impressive range of institutions. The college's emphasis on quality is reflected in the growth in full time undergraduate enrollment, the increase in student quality, increase in full time faculty and the increase in faculty salaries to near the top of their traditional peer group of colleges. The commitment to ongoing program excellence

is evidenced in the faculty-led development of a Center for Teaching and Learning to enhance engaging pedagogy.

The academic program is delivered in excellent facilities. The college's strategic emphasis on facilities in the past 10 years has resulted in growth in its residential character. New and renovated facilities include an exceptional Fine Arts Center, a state-of-the-art athletic complex, classrooms with expanded technology, new residence halls, and new campus life space. The new facilities are integrated into the neighborhood of Naperville in a text book example of excellence in town-gown relationships. Campus landscaping is beautifully done. The Library and library services are well used by the campus community. Computer labs, laboratories and classrooms are suitable for the North Central College curricula. Technology is integrated into every part of the curriculum. A new Science Center is next on the master plan. It will add a new dimension to the science curriculum.

A general education curriculum implemented in 2000 includes a second science requirement, a religion/ethics requirement, an upper-level intercultural seminar, an upper-level leadership, ethics and values seminar and a language requirement for BA students. The emphasis on ethics, values, diversity and 21<sup>st</sup> century skill sets has resulted in new majors and minors like East Asian studies and interactive media studies. Expanded internships, study abroad (36 settings) and service opportunities reflect the college's focus on balancing educational experience with the liberal arts traditions.

North Central College admits students based on "each student's individual potential" as indicated by high school academic achievement, ACT or SAT scores and involvement in extracurricular activities. The undergraduate student profile is predominately traditional aged (24 and under), predominately in-state or regional with an average ACT composite score of 24.5. The college emphasizes diversity in its admissions process and works diligently to recruit a diverse incoming class. North Central College has support services for first generation students and students with weaker academic backgrounds. The retention rate of minority students reflects this emphasis on individualized support without reducing academic expectations. The college also has a significant number of transfer students.

The make-up of administration, trustees and students reflects the institution's commitment to racial, ethnic and gender diversity. By its own admission, the college has had limited success in recruiting and retaining African American and other minority faculty, even though it has a selection process in place which is proactive. The student body, staff and trustee make up demonstrated a recognition that diversity and excellence are important values of the College.

North Central College's faculty governance structure appears to work to safeguard academic integrity. There is a high degree of collaboration and commitment to the college among faculty members and between faculty and administration. The processes for initiating changes and providing visibility for curricular and personnel issues

appeared well understood and used. From all indications, faculty, staff, and administration all practice excellent shared governance.

Student support services do a particularly good job of serving North Central's student body. A number of those services deserve special mention:

- Student to student mentors include peer academic leaders who work with FYE 100 classes, writing associates who work in writing center, modern and classical language tutors, individual tutors who participate in an on call system for tutoring in their specialties, structured time tutors who work with first year courses with historically high failure rates and student athlete mentors.
- The Academic Support Center and Disability Support which uses a group study model to assist students who need special assistance.
- The campus has wireless network coverage, and students were observed making use of this feature throughout the campus setting.
- A First Year Experience program organized around a contemporary case study in which faculty and students investigate real world ethical and global issues.
- The Office of Academic Opportunities responsible for the College Honor's Program and for ensuring that strong academically oriented students are positioned to take advantage of national and international opportunities. The college had its first NSF scholar this year—an example of how this program can work.
- The strongest academic support element noted during the visit—and the one most frequently cited by students—is North Central's caring and concerned faculty.

### **Sound Management and Financial Health**

The committee met with 14 trustees, including the United Methodist Bishops of the Northern Illinois and Wisconsin Annual Conferences (by phone). These conversations satisfied the committee that the Board is supportive and appreciative of the leadership of President Wilde. The trustees understand the role they play in the success of the institution. They appreciate the way President Wilde keeps them informed about important issues. The Board was aware of the mission of the institution and is proud of the overall condition of the institution. They understand the relationship to the church, and expressed satisfaction with the college's current relationship to the church.

It is very evident that President Wilde is providing visionary and motivational leadership to the institution—now in his twentieth year. Every group with whom we met mentioned his leadership without solicitation. The senior staff are supportive of his leadership. Senior staff members appear to have a high level of competence for their areas of responsibility, and like President Wilde, have served the institution for many years.

A financial audit of the institution is completed each year. The team reviewed audits for Fiscal Years 2008 and 2009. (The audit for FY 2010 was just being concluded during our visit.) These audits are conducted by qualified and disinterested parties and were accompanied by letters confirming that the audit was unqualified.

The By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation were reviewed by the team. They were revised in 2009. There is no reversionary clause.

The financial condition of North Central is outstanding. The institution has exercised remarkable fiscal restraint in using conservative revenue estimates, while holding the line on expenses. The market value of the endowment stands at approximately \$80 million, with a spending policy which permits a draw of up to 6% of the average market value over the last 12 quarters. However, last year, during the downturn in the economy, the institution made no draw against the endowment, and this year the draw will not exceed 4%. The institution has approximately \$42 million of long term debt.

The institution has a well-organized development program for securing the necessary funds to make it affordable for students to attend North Central. The Annual Fund for the institution is approximately \$1.6 million, with an alumni donation rate of 29%. Total giving to the institution has averaged approximately \$11 million annually in recent years, despite the fact that the school is not in an active comprehensive campaign mode.

The institution has a strategic planning process, which is inclusive and transparent. Trustees and faculty noted the role they played in crafting the current plan, which will expire in 2012.

The enrollment of the institution currently stands at 2,900, with approximately 2,500 undergraduate students. Retention and graduation rates in recent years have improved, with over 850 new students enrolling each year (550 freshmen and 300 transfer). Tuition discounting is closely monitored, with a discount rate this academic year of approximately 40%.

### **Church Relatedness**

North Central College is very proud of its relationship to The United Methodist Church and it is evident in its WEB site, student recruitment literature, and mission statement. In all areas of the college, the relationship is identified. In its mission statement the college states that it is committed to "Recruiting and supporting qualified students, faculty, and staff from diverse ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds, consistent with the inclusive tradition of The United Methodist Church." The college made a conscious effort to include that relationship in the mission statement drafted for the 2007-2012 and previous Strategic Plans.

The college has affiliation with both the Northern Illinois Annual Conference and the Wisconsin Annual Conference. The Northern Illinois Annual Conference provides about \$7,000 to the college but it also underwrites the salary and benefits of the college's full-time chaplain. The college should investigate the possibility of transferring this support to scholarships for UM students in order to have full flexibility in the choice of a chaplain when that time arrives.

Through its Chaplain's programs and especially through the Ministry and Service program, the college provides opportunities for religious expression. The college sponsors a Catholic group, United Methodist Student Organization, Fellowship of Christian Athletes. There has also been a yearly program on contemplation, focusing on different traditions, which is sponsored by the Department of Religious Studies and the Office of Ministry and Service. Examples of traditions featured this year are Judaism, Catholicism, Buddhism and Hinduism.

There is a weekly event, "The Union," which offers live music, art exhibits and films. A traditional program is the MLK Prayer Breakfast in January which draws more than 200 persons. In addition, there are student-led programs under the umbrella organization "Focus" which sponsor student mentoring, Bible study (8 in fall 2010), prayer groups, and a Wednesday evening worship service. It is very clear that the energy of the programming for the campus comes from the Office of Ministry and Service.

The campus offers many opportunities for service in the community. Cardinals in Action is a weekly service opportunity focused on at-risk students, senior citizens and other local, regional and national concerns and the campus Circle K Club focuses on service. The Uncommon Life Movement is a service program in the nearby community of Aurora.

Beyond the immediate campus area the college sponsors outreach ministries during the summer. Students participate in "New Beginnings," a program of Vacation Bible School leadership in churches and "New Visions," a program of summer camp leadership. "Break Away" is the college's off-campus service program during D-term, spring break and summer. This program has carried students to numerous locations in the US and foreign countries.

A number of students are involved in the leadership of the religious programming. However, even those students who were not actively involved in the religious activities and sometimes did not know of the activities in this area were aware of the service opportunities and often participated in the programs sponsored by the Office of Ministry and Service. There is a strong crossover between the Christian ministry and the other programs on campus which are not specifically related to this ministry.

There is a one course requirement in religion and ethics. Other courses are available to meet the humanities requirement. There are four full-time professors in religious studies and several adjuncts. Approximately 21 students are pursuing a major or minor in the department with coursework spread over four areas. Several students are pursuing double majors and the college has several students and recent alumni who are in seminary or planning to attend.