

**Alumni Role in the Middle States Self-Study Review Process**  
**By Dana Offerman, Provost and Chief Academic Officer**

Excelsior College is well on its way in the reaccreditation process with our regional accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The reaccreditation process consists of an institutional self-study, peer review and a site visit from a team of evaluators in the spring of 2012, a report and recommendations from the team, and final Commission action.

For those who have participated in institutional self-study, you know what a daunting process this can be. The stakes are very high as regional accreditation is the hallmark of institutional quality and accreditation is necessary for the College to continue to participate in federal financial aid programs. The process is protracted and rigorous—requiring multiple teams of individuals to examine evidence, to assess institutional performance, and to determine the degree to which the institution adheres to standards. The process often results in generating more questions than answers as issues and concerns are raised, and gaps in evidence and documentation are identified. And the requirements of the accrediting bodies, especially in terms of accountability, student learning outcomes, and institutional effectiveness are more rigorous than ever.

Yet what is important to remember as we proceed through the self-study process is that it is not only about quality assurance—demonstrating that we meet standards—it is also fundamentally about quality improvement—about institutional renewal, about doing things better. In fact, I would argue that while the compliance aspects of accreditation are important and necessary, the improvement aspects are far more important.

Excelsior College has changed fundamentally and dramatically since the last time it was accredited in 2002. So the self-study process is an excellent opportunity for us to reflect on those changes and growth, to understand them within the context of our mission, to celebrate where we have been successful, and to acknowledge when we have been less so.

The self-study report has been drafted and its findings will be disseminated to the broad College community—including our alumni—to have the opportunity to respond to the major findings and recommendations. Invitations to those events will be sent to you shortly. In addition, alumni will be asked to meet with the site visit team when they visit the campus in March 25-28, 2012.

Many of our alumni were with us in 2002; some of you are more recent additions to our academic community. Whatever your longevity with the College, your participation and contributions to the self-study process are crucial. As graduates of Excelsior College you are the best people to speak about the College—its mission and its impact on individual lives.

Thank you!



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