

April 21, 2009

Grinnell presents workshop on self-study and leadership for the common good

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CHICAGO – The Higher Learning Commission, one of the six regional agencies in the United States that accredits colleges and universities, invited Grinnell College to present findings from its reaccreditation self-study process at the Commission’s 114th Annual Meeting April 17-21, 2009.

Henry Morisada Rietz, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and chair of Grinnell’s self-study committee, and Scott Baumler, Director of Institutional Research, presented two workshops titled, “Self-Study as Story and Map: Process, Evidence, and Presentation.”

Rietz and Baumler talked about conducting a self-study and Grinnell’s special emphasis: How can the College reinvigorate its traditional commitment to educate leaders for public service and social justice in the 21st century? The two Grinnellians gave practical advice about the process of self-study, gathering and compiling evidence, and producing a final report.

Eighty-eight college presidents, deans, provosts, professors, and higher education professionals attended the sessions, representing schools from New Mexico to Ohio and from Wisconsin to Arkansas.

Rietz and Baumler also met personally with scores of conference attendees at a “Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality” self-study fair where they discussed accreditation procedures. As the Commission explains, “Accreditation assures quality, primarily for the sake of the public, and it assists the improvement of quality, for the benefit of both the institutions and the public.” Rietz and Baumler distributed dozens of Grinnell’s self-study documents, and fielded 17 requests for follow-up information, to extend and share Grinnell’s work.

“It was a great opportunity to practice the type of sustainable ‘service leadership’ we discussed in the self-study document itself,” Baumler said. Rietz emphasized a call to “continue to report on the process to various constituencies,” including peer institutions.

“A self-study could not – and should not – have been accomplished without the hard work and sustained efforts of a community of leaders,” Rietz said. Input for the study was gathered from students, staff, faculty, alumni/ae, Trustees, and community members. Grinnell’s reaccreditation documents can be found online at <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/president>.

The 2008 Reaccreditation Steering Committee also included Vicki Bentley-Condit, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Laura Sinnett, Associate Professor of Psychology, Joyce Stern, Dean for Student Academic Support and Advising, and Karen Voss, Associate Treasurer.

The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools serves institutions in 19 Midwestern, south-central, and western states, as well as Department of Defense schools and organizations in sovereign U.S. tribal nations within these areas. Educational institutions must have their accreditation reaffirmed periodically; for institutions like Grinnell College, reaccreditation is examined every ten years.



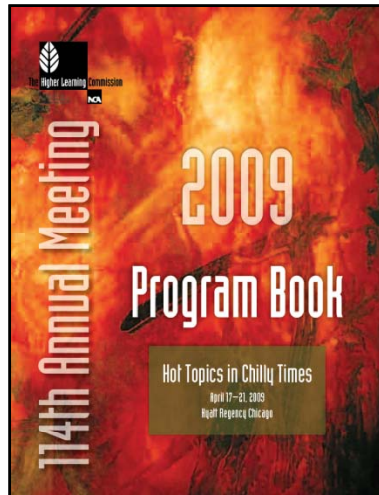
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GRINNELL COLLEGE



Self-Study as Story and Map: Process, Evidence, & Presentation

Henry Rietz & Scott Baumler



A Special Emphasis

- **Special emphasis.** In conjunction with its focus on self-study, an organization obtains Commission authorization to focus in-depth attention on a select group of issues critical to its pursuit of continuous improvement and educational excellence. The organization provides evidence that it fulfills the Criteria for Accreditation and reports on agreed-upon strategies and efforts it will use in pursuing ongoing organizational improvement. The Commission sends an evaluation team to the organization not only to address assurance issues associated with accreditation review but also to spend considerable time in a consultative role related to the previously agreed-upon special emphasis foci. (*Handbook of Accreditation*, 5-3).

A Special Emphasis

- Grinnell College Administration: “Let’s examine the success of our Strategic Plan!”
- Higher Learning Commission: “That would be deadly boring. Try again.”

A Special Emphasis

- Eventually we agreed upon “... examining a question central to the College’s mission: how can the College reinvigorate its traditional commitment to train leaders in public service and social justice as it enters the 21st century?”

Forming a Steering Committee

- Associate Academic Dean
- Director of Institutional Research
- Vice President for Student Services
- Associate Treasurer
- Professor of Anthropology
- Professor of Psychology

Initial Sources for the Steering Committee's Deliberations

- *Handbook of Accreditation* (3rd Edition): available at <http://www.ncahlc.org>
- Special Emphasis Question
- Last Self-Study Report (1998)
- Report of a Comprehensive Visit to Grinnell College (1998)
- Mission Statement
- Committee members' own sense of the College

Context of Leadership:

Modeling healthy leadership;
Integrity btw what we do what we say;
Healthy constructive communication;
Governance vs. administration;
Self governance

Diversity



Academics

- Individually mentored curriculum (IMC)
 - Distribution
 - Interdisciplinarity vs. disciplinarity
 - Integrity

Special Emphasis:

- Creating
 - leaders for social justice
 - servants of the common good
 - agents for social change

Student life

Balancing workload
Changes: technology, reinventing the wheel

Well-being:

Community morale
Efforts vs. outcome

Supported by financial, physical and human resources

Identify and Communicate with Constituencies

- Faculty
 - Executive council
 - Faculty Meetings
 - Special faculty members: librarians, athletics, early career, faculty of other colors
- Students
 - Student Government Association
 - Student Newspaper
- Staff
 - Various offices
 - Public Relations Office
 - Dining Services (often left out)
 - Facilities Management (Union?)
- Alumni/ae
 - Grinnell Magazine and G-Notes
 - Alumni/ae Council
 - Reunion
- City of Grinnell (cf. Strategic Plan 5)
- Board of Trustees
- Parents
- Employers of alums
- Graduate school mentors
- Internship supervisors
- Prospective students
- High School counselors

Accreditation 101

- Introduce and then continue to report on process to various constituencies
- Faculty, alumni/ae, students, trustees
- The Higher Learning what?

Gathering Data

- Reuse, reduce, recycle
 - Resist the urge to have a flurry of new activity just for the sake of activity!
 - Gather previous Institutional Research studies
 - Gather previous administrative reports, especially Dean's Reports and President's Reports
 - Departmental reviews!
 - Your own self reflections as well as those of other external reviewers
 - Inventory of what your institution is already doing

Gathering Data (continued)

- New Data—both qualitative and quantitative (appeal to different constituencies)
 - Interviews of key faculty
 - Surveys—summative and formative
 - Staff
 - Alumni/ae
 - Students
 - Discussions among constituencies (faculty, staff, students, administration, alumni/ae, trustees)

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

“I don't much care where,” said Alice.

“Then it doesn't matter which way you go,” said the Cat.

-- Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Process



- Metaphors
 - Blueprint, map, story
- Knowing where you want to go
 - “Serendipity by design”
- Structures
 - Theme-based
 - Criteria-based
 - Cross-cutting themes
 - Core components
 - Special emphasis
- Integrated, evaluative



Grinnell's anchors

Grinnell College Mission Statement

When Grinnell College framed its charter in the Iowa Territory of the United States in 1846, it set forth a mission to educate its students “for the different professions and for the honorable discharge of the duties of life.” The College pursues that mission...

Foundational Documents

30 January 2007

Steven D. Crow, Executive Director
The Higher Learning Commission
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400
Chicago, Illinois 60602-2504

Memorandum of Understanding

Dear Mr. Crow:

When Grinnell College undertakes its regular decennial Higher Learning Commission self-study for reaccreditation in autumn 2008, we agree that this shall be a *special emphasis self-study* examining a question central to the College's mission: how can the College reinvigorate its traditional commitment to train leaders in public service and social justice as it enters the 21st century?

Memo of Understanding

Handbook of Accreditation

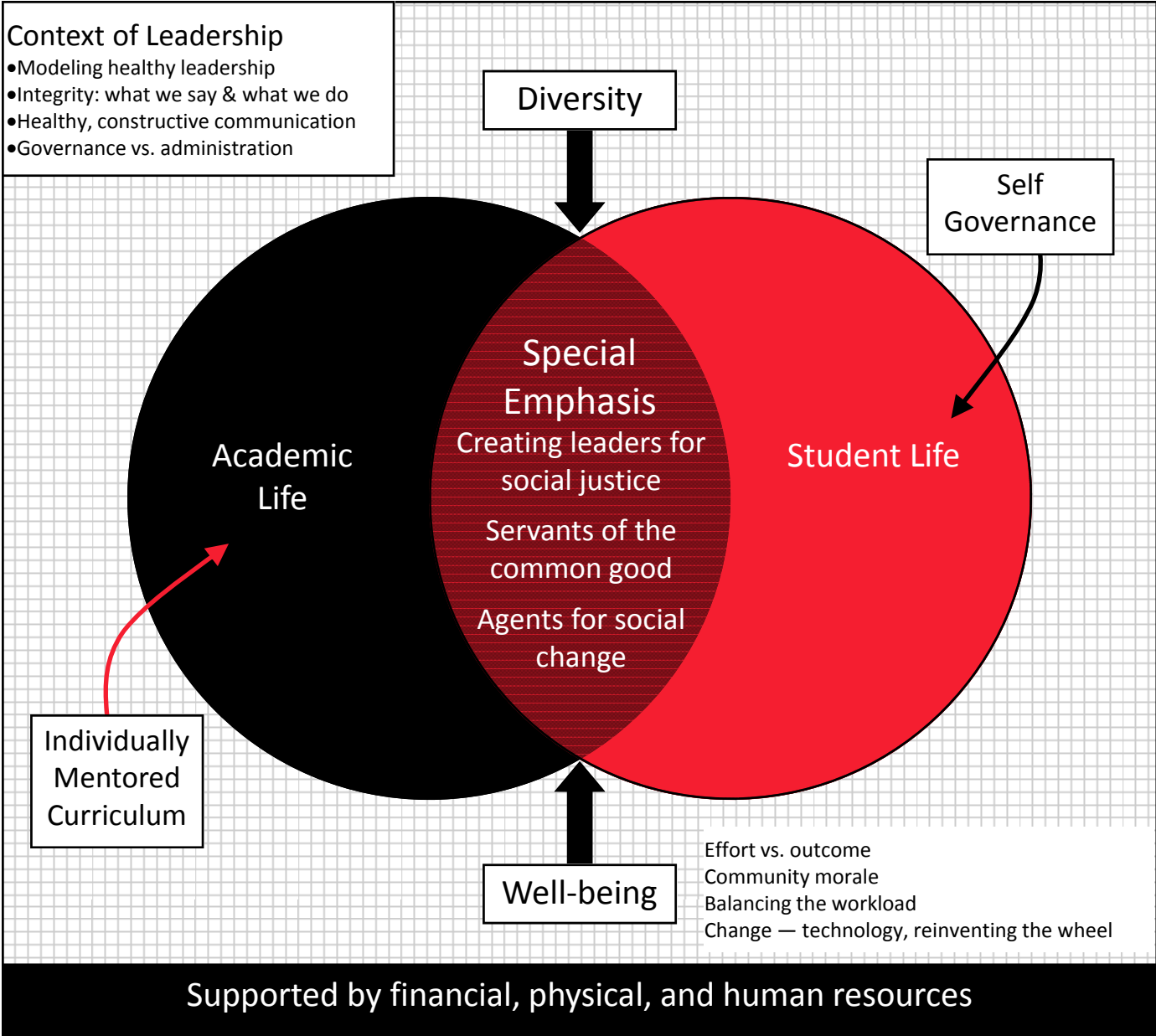
Third Edition



The Higher Learning Commission
a commission of the North Central Association

Chicago, Illinois

Self-Study *Special Emphasis* Model



The Table of Contents as a “Storyboard”

Table of Contents	
Chapter 1: Introduction	Chapter 4: Issues Raised from 1998 Site Visit Report
A Special Emphasis	Strengths, challenges, advice and suggestions
Steering Committee Process	Challenge 1
Acknowledgments	Challenge 2
I. Section on General Issues	Challenge 3
Chapter 2: A History of Grinnell College until 1998	Advice and Suggestion 1
A foundation in conflict- 1846-1884	Advice and Suggestion 2
“A world wide movement,”-the Gates years-1884-1900	Advice and Suggestion 3
Progressivism and growth-the Main years-1900-1931	Advice and Suggestion 4
The Nollen years-1931-1940	Advice and Suggestion 5
Complacency, and a period of decline-1941-1954	Advice and Suggestion 6
Pioneers on the New Frontier-1955-1964	Other issues raised in 1998 visit
“What Is To Be Done?”-years of struggle and transformation-1965-1975	Open Curriculum, Academic Advising, and Assessment of Student Achievement
Renovation and prosperity-1980-1990	Conclusion
Growth in facilities, diversity and the endowment-1991-1997	Chapter 5: The College and the Higher Learning Commission’s Five Criteria for Accreditation
Chapter 3: History of Grinnell College Since the 1998 Site Visit: Grinnell’s “Fifth Rebuild”	Criterion One: Mission and Integrity
Fund for Excellence (FFE)	Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future
Re-articulation of the Mission Statement and Other Governing Documents	Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching
Comprehensive Campus Master Plan	Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge
Campus Construction since 1998	Criterion Five: Engagement and Service
Reorganization of the Administration	II. Section on Special Emphasis
Strategic Planning and the Budget Process	Chapter 6: Posing the Questions
Development of the Strategic Plan	Leading Questions
Major accomplishments under the Strategic Plan	Excursus on notions of leadership for social justice and the for-profit world
Enrollment growth	Grinnell’s Traditional Commitment?
Engaging alumni and friends in the growth process	Chapter 7: Current Ways We Are Creating Leaders for Social Justice
Living up to our legacy	Macro-Cultural Values and Ideals
	Institutional Policies
	Academics
	Programmatic
	Other Events and Programs
	Student Life
	Grinnell and Beyond
	Conclusion
	Chapter 8: Models of Leadership, Social Justice; Conceptions of Power
	Special Emphasis Surveys—Alumni, Current Students, and Staff
	Interviews of Selected Faculty Members
	Priming the Pump: Models of Group Culture, Conceptions of Power, Foundations of Social Justice, and Teaching About “Leadership for Social Justice” at Grinnell
	Chapter 9: Discussion of Leadership & Social Justice Within Constituencies
	Discussions with Alumni Council
	Discussions with Students
	Faculty Discussions
	Discussions with Staff
	Other Data about Stress, Wellbeing, and On-Campus Communication
	Chapter 10: Towards a Vision for Sustainable Leadership for Social Justice
	Leadership for Social Justice
	Are there ways that we could be doing better? Absolutely
	Develop our students’ oral communication skills
	Be more intentional and explicit about creating leaders for social justice
	Improve on-campus communication
	Improve Staff Morale
	Promote wellness and wellbeing and reduce stress
	Towards a Vision for Sustainable Leadership for Social Justice
	Chapter 11: Summary of Recommendations
	The Liberal Arts as the foundation for “Sustainable Leadership for Social Justice”
	Appendices
	Organizational Charts
	Surveys
	Profiles in Leadership: The Grinnell Magazine 1998-2007 (J. Hartling Stolze)
	Grinnell College-nominated winners of prestigious national post-graduation scholarships and fellowships since 1999
	Campus Map

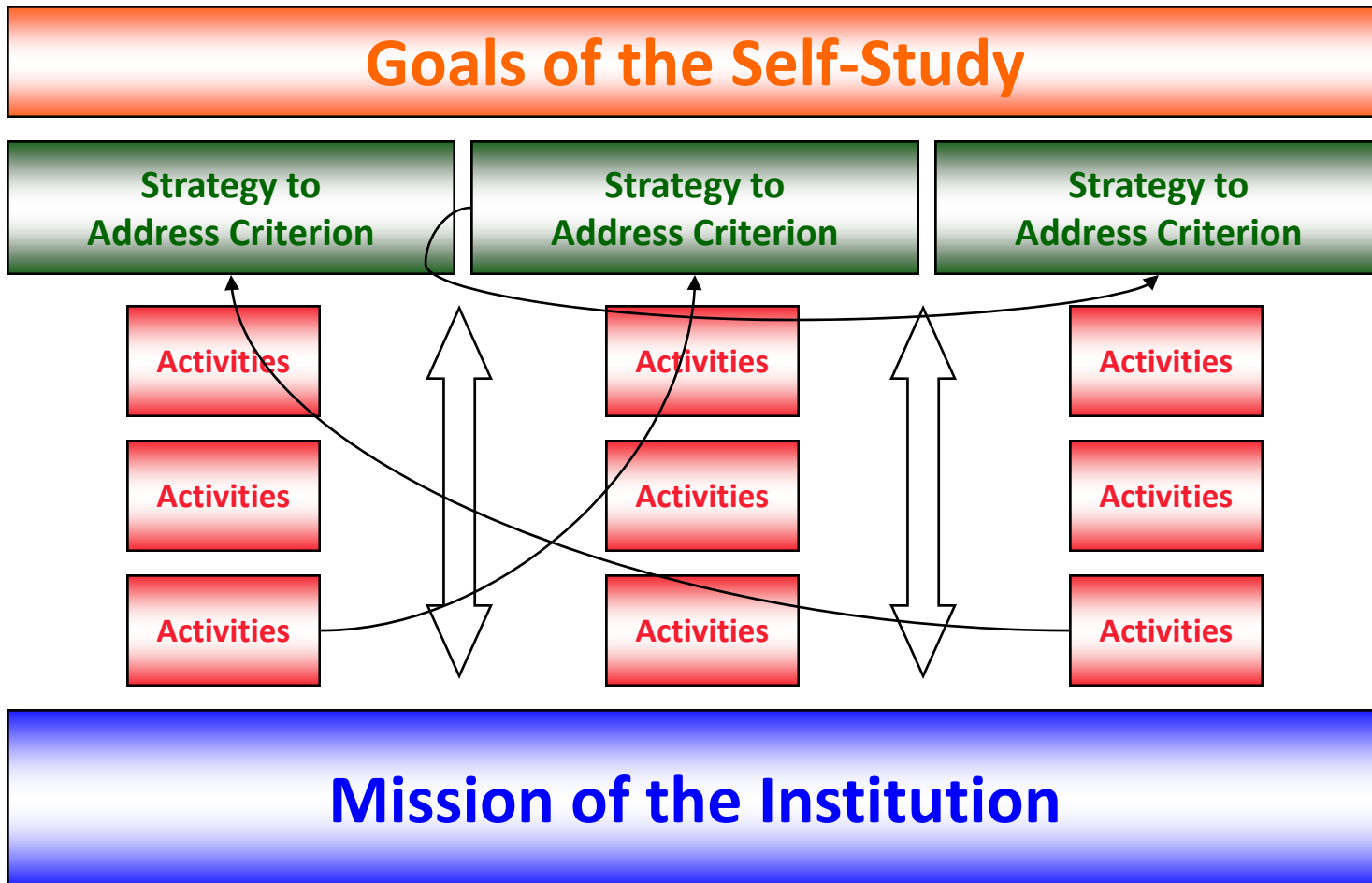
Goals & activities

Unaligned



Goals & strategies

Aligned – but flexible



Pulling things together

- Speak in one voice
 - Consistency of tone
 - Readable report
 - Supposed to be about connectedness, so watch for discontinuity (or unnecessary repetition)
- Should be evaluative, not simply descriptive
 - Data-driven dialogues, not diffuse discussions using just anecdotes
 - Use evidentiary statements

Pulling things together (continued)

- Make it concise (!)
 - Equal treatment is not necessary due to organizational structures of the institution; expand on important areas for the HLC criteria
- Build credibility through transparency & broad participation
 - It's not just to *prove*, but to *improve*
 - “To make the best better”



Humility with chutzpa

- Honesty & openness
- Integrity of the self-study report

“The team found the self-study report to be accurate and straightforward in factual material, comprehensive in nature, and honest in presenting the College's self-assessment.”
- But for goodness sake – **MAKE YOUR CASE!**
 - This is an opportunity to brag a little bit too
 - It’s an opportunity for some “free consulting”
- This is not a place for “spin”

Evidence & Presentation

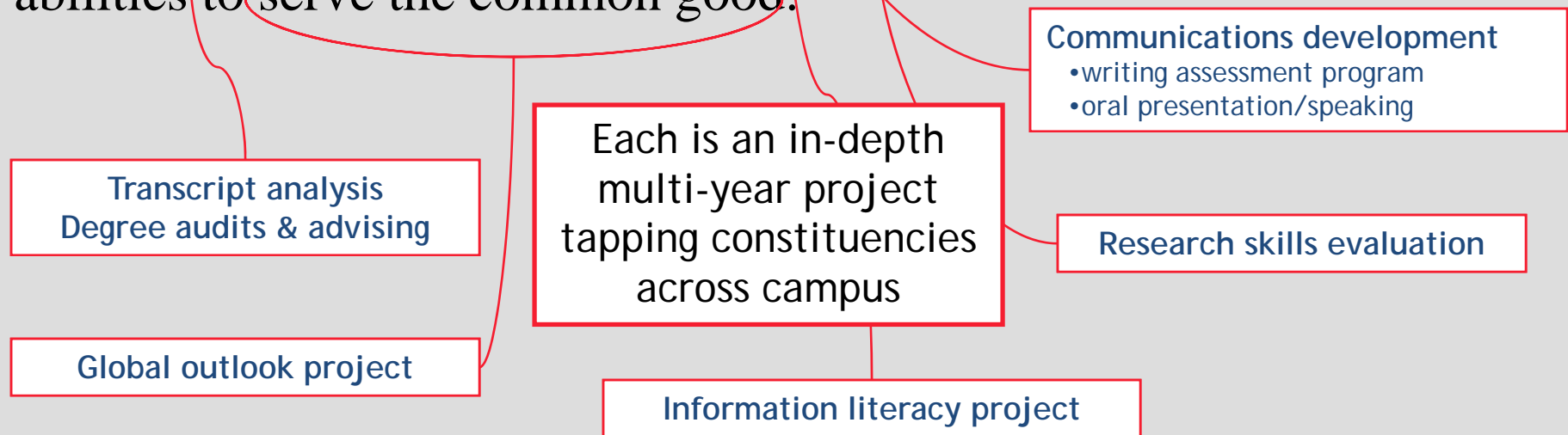
- Consider the need to separate/specialize the *process management* from the *evidence collection/creation* duties. Depends on circumstances.
- Core team needs recognition (“authority”) for getting self-study resources
- Plan forward for file sharing, layout, production of graphics, default software specifications, etc.
- Tell *and* show



Tracking Mission accomplishments

Broad programs reflecting on process & achievement

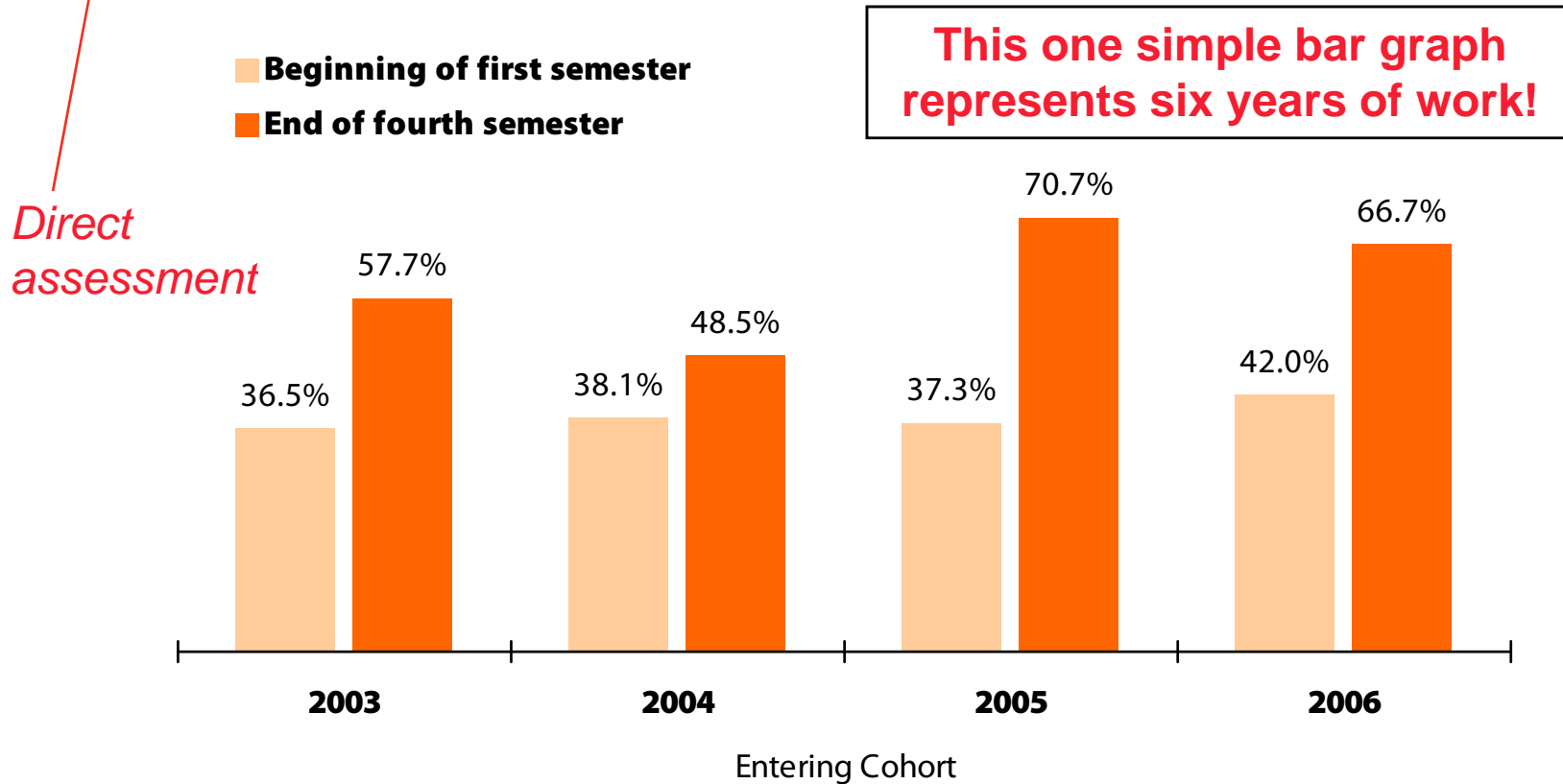
Mission: ...The College aims to graduate women and men who can think clearly, who can speak and write persuasively and even eloquently, who can evaluate critically both their own and others' ideas, who can acquire new knowledge, and who are prepared in life and work to use their knowledge and abilities to serve the common good.



Evidentiary materials

Direct assessment: Faculty ratings of students' writing skills

Percent of students rated *generally adequate* or *consistently excellent* on each of ten criteria, 1st & 4th semesters



Matched pair cohorts with sample sizes of 85, 97, 75, & 69, respectively.

Rating scale: Consistently excellent | Generally adequate | Variable quality, usually some problems | Student needs significant work on this.

Dimensions (criteria): *Central claim, maintains unity, opening, closing, stays focused, connected, grammar, use of info., engagement, complexity.*

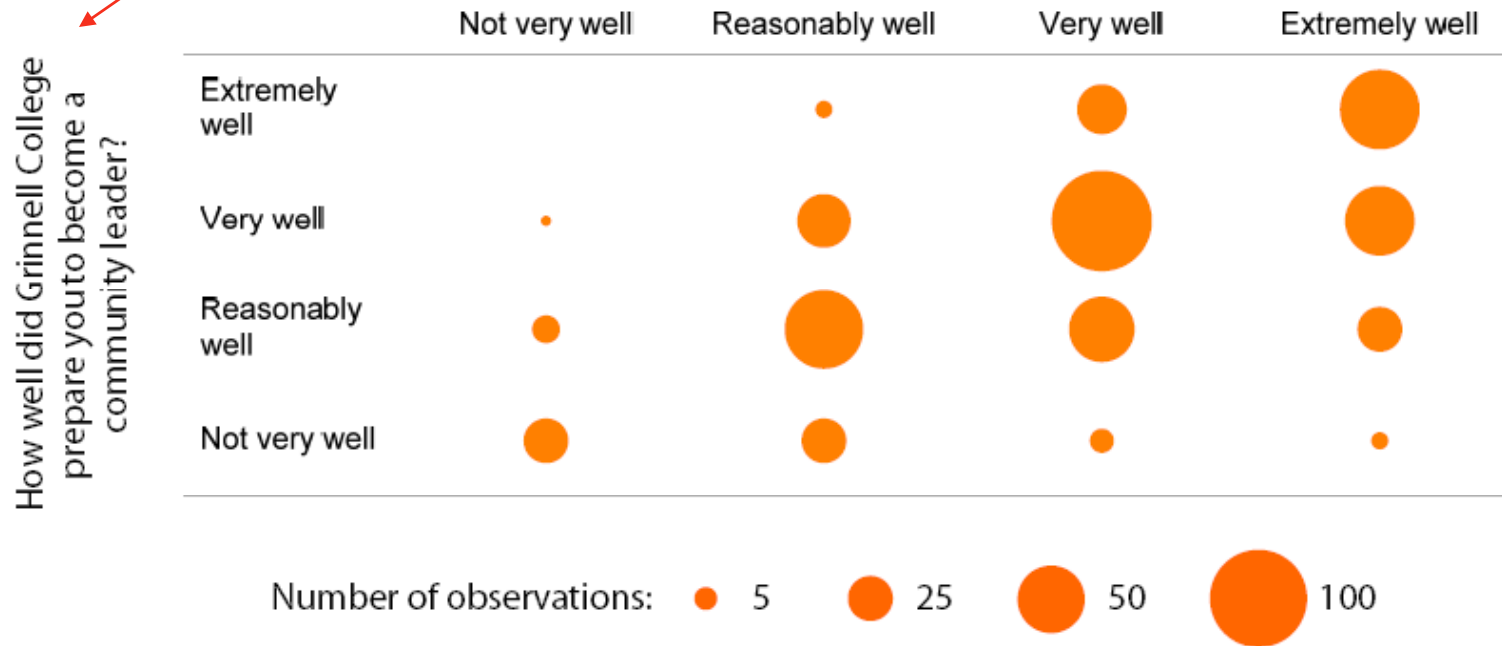
Source: Office of Academic Affairs, Office of Institutional Research.

Evidentiary materials

Mix & match

Senior Snapshot surveys: Leadership & the common good

How well did Grinnell College prepare you to use your knowledge & abilities to serve the common good?



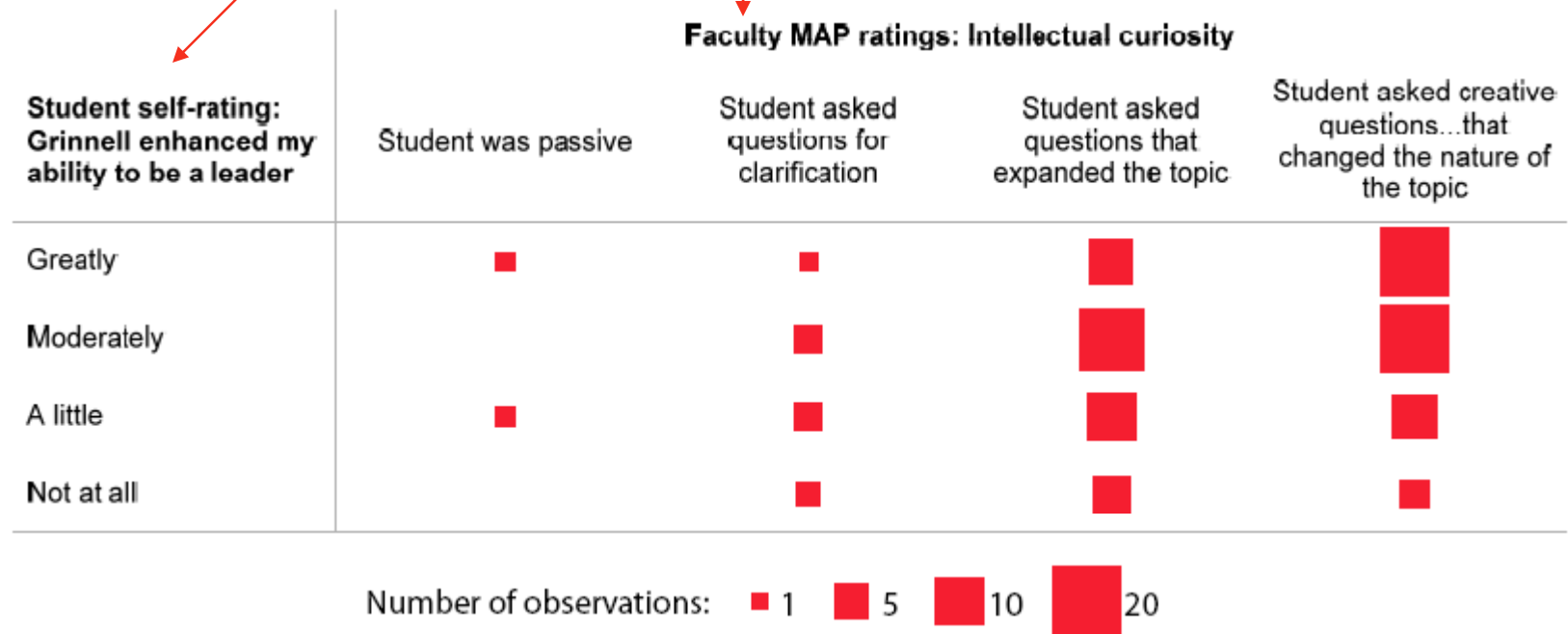
Responses from graduating seniors, 2006-08. N = 474 [$\rho(472) = .583, p < .01$].

Evidentiary materials

Indirect & direct measures

Direct & indirect assessments: Preliminary investigations into the relationship between intellectual curiosity and leadership

Correlation between faculty ratings of students' intellectual curiosity (via MAP evaluations) and students' self-ratings of enhanced leadership skills (via senior surveys)



Matched data from student senior survey responses and faculty MAP evaluations. N = 94 [$\rho(92) = .264, p < .05$].

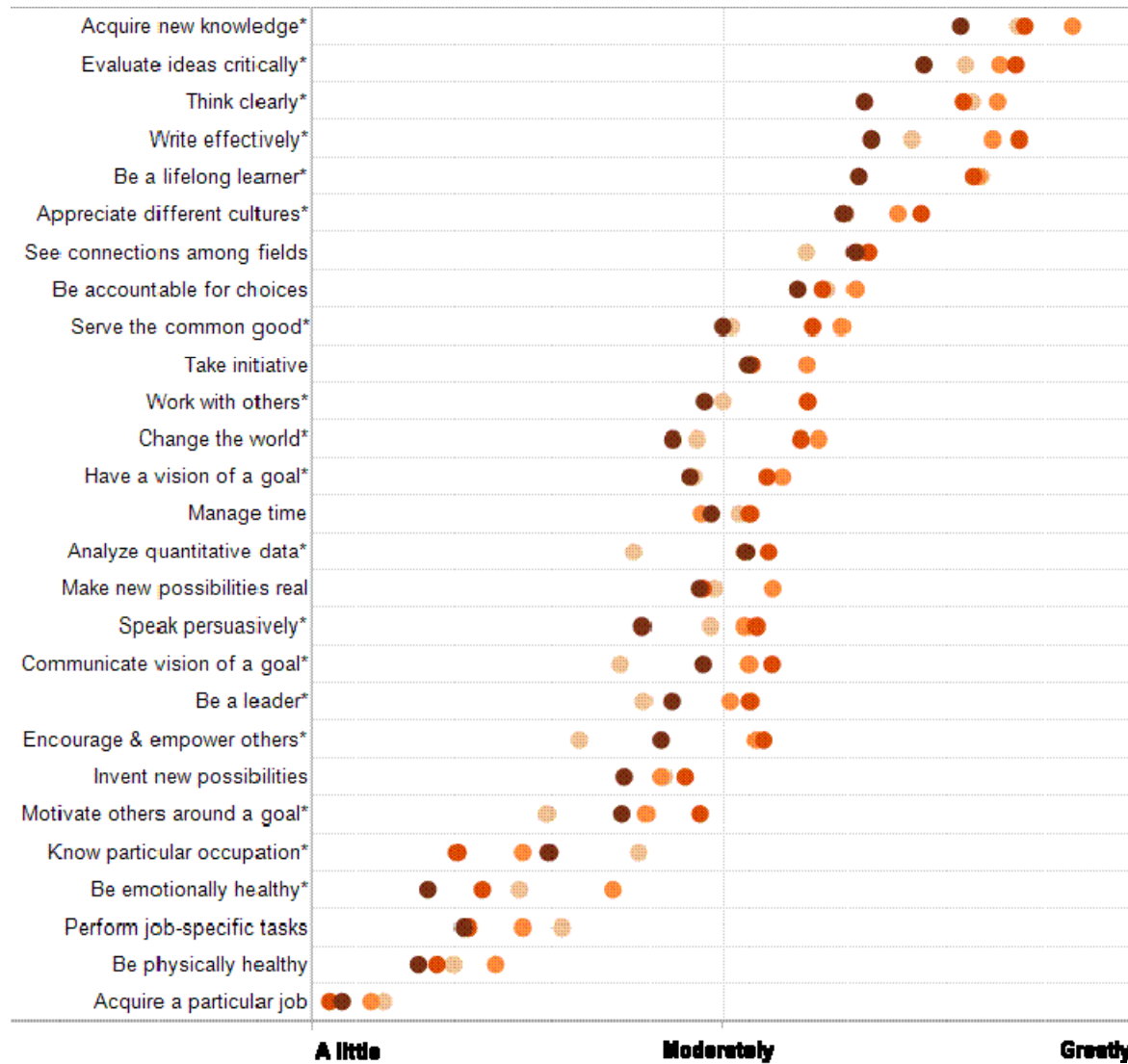
Evidentiary materials

Qualitative techniques

Figure 6: Concept map for “What does it mean for a person to be a leader?”



To what extent did Grinnell College enhance your ability to...



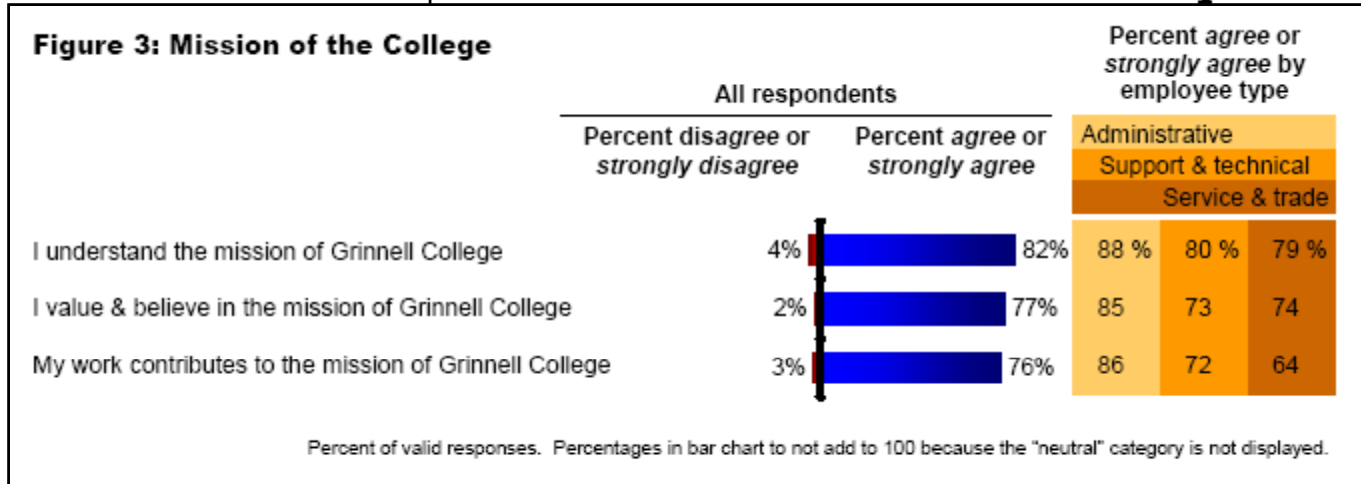
Different cohorts of stakeholders

Legend

- Current students, classes 2008-2010, ages 18-24, n = 313
 - Recent graduates, classes 1998-07, ages 23-32, n = 260
 - Midlife alumni, classes 1978-97, ages 33-64, n = 113
 - Seasoned alumni, classes 1960-76, ages 65-80, n = 98
- Asterisks indicate significant group differences at $p < .05$.

Evidentiary materials

Inclusive & broad-based



69%
67%

Writing the Report

- Draft a table of contents early
 - Provides an outline of your process
 - Provides benchmarks for your process
- Start writing certain sections early!
 - Importance of the history chapter
 - Evaluated on being true to yourself

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction (write last)

I. Section on General Issues

Chapter 2: A History of Grinnell College until 1998

Chapter 3: History of Grinnell College since the 1998 Site Visit: Grinnell's "Fifth Rebuilding"

Chapter 4: Issues Raised from 1998 Site Visit Report

Chapter 5: 5 Criteria

II. Section on Special Emphasis

Chapter 6: Posing the questions

Past studies that led to question

History of leaders for social justice at Grinnell College

Chapter 7: Current ways that we are creating leaders for social justice

Chapter 8: Models of leadership and social justice; conceptions of power

Surveys

Interviews with key faculty: "Priming the Pump"

Chapter 9: Discussion of leadership and social justice within constituencies

Survey Results and Discussions

Chapter 10: Reflection and formative evaluation: Towards a Vision for Sustainable Leadership for Social Justice

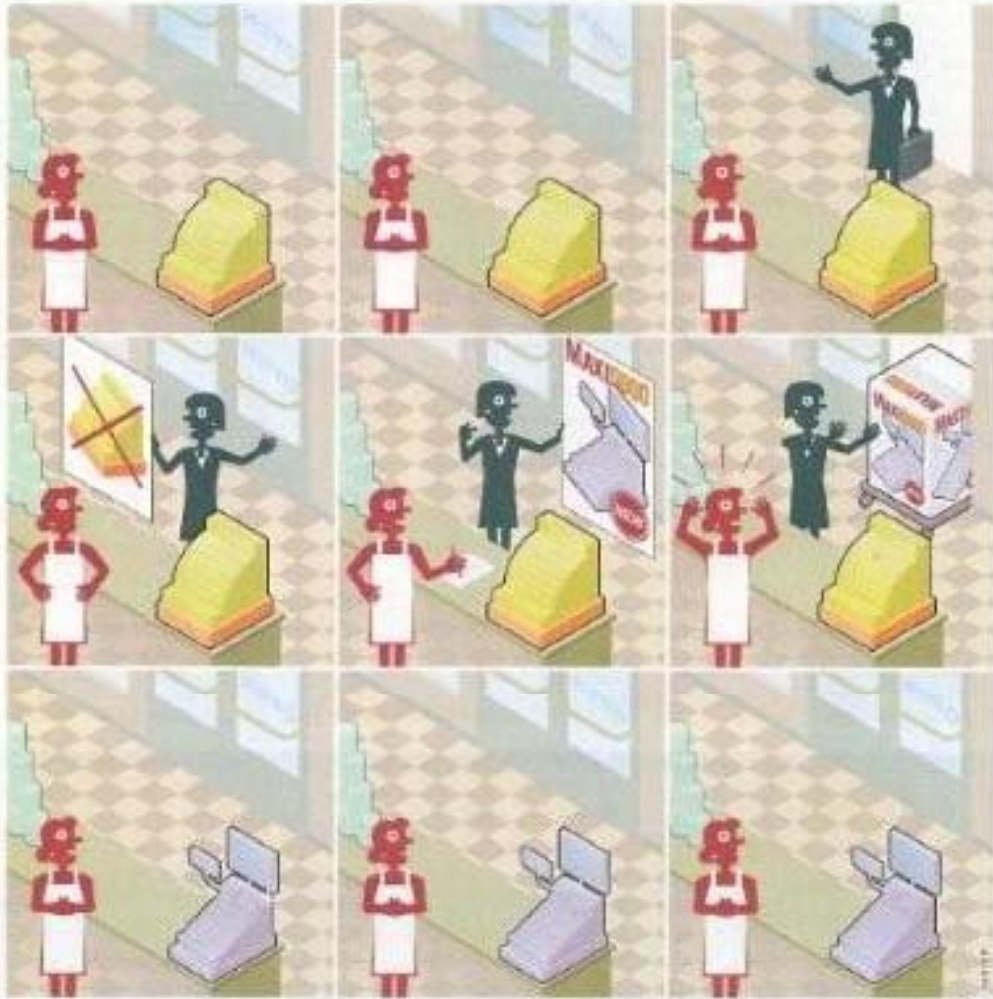
Chapter 11: Conclusion

Appendices

Writing the Report (continued)

- Research, reflect, then write other sections
 - Can't we see through papers that didn't do that?
- Snapshot in time of your institution
- Be honest
- Provide evidence
- Read instructions (i.e., use the *HLC Handbook*)
- It will take longer than you expect

A storyboard of substance



“There is always an easy solution to every human problem – neat, plausible, and wrong. -- H.L. Mencken

Life after accreditation

- Like many institutions, Grinnell distinguishes itself from other institutions in our unique ability to promote life-long learning

Yes, there is life after accreditation

- Institutional life-long learning
- Push through the finish line

“The ambitious agenda the College set for itself exceeded the time available to address every item originally envisioned. The wide array of Grinnellians interviewed by the accreditation team all look forward to continuing to explore and refine these questions, and we fully anticipate that they will be answered and acted upon to the benefit of the College in the coming years.”

- Creating assessment data
 - Collecting learning goals

Don't forget the niceties

- Acknowledge when “we need your expertise in this area/on this topic” – limit time frames, break up commitments, and focus on specific tasks – don't wear people out
- Throw parties to recognize achievements; celebrate
- Thank you notes

GRINNELL COLLEGE



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Self-study documents online at:
<http://www.grinnell.edu/accreditation>

