

Writing the Evidentiary Statement

Evidentiary statements are designed to capture the essence of an institution's efforts to meet an area of focus/core component. The evidentiary statement evaluates the quality of the evidence/data the institution presents in support of the criteria/core components.

There are three characteristics of an effective evidentiary statement.

- ◆ First, the evidentiary statement should be clear. That is, readers should be able to discern, without a doubt, the suitability of the evidence/data presented and the statement should precisely identify its merit or lack of merit.
- ◆ Second, the evidentiary statement should be limited, expounding on the merit of a single area of focus at a time. Think of it as a discrete unit that explores, singularly the quality of evidence presented for an area of focus.
- ◆ Third, the evidentiary statement should take a stand. It should provide qualitative information on whether the evidence sufficiently meets the area of focus/core component.

Thus, a good evidentiary statements should (a) set the context, (b) provide evidence related to the context and topic, and (c) take a stance that clearly links the statement to the Criterion and appropriate Core Components. Finally, some statements may benefit from commentary on the impact of the situation (a "because of this..." or "so what?").

Note: There is no required order of context, evidence, and stance in an evidentiary statement. The order of the content may vary and pieces may need to be expanded on so that the statement, standing alone is coherent and substantiates its claim.

Examples of Poor to Good Statements

Example One: Criterion Two, Preparing for the Future The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

(poor) A long-range financial plan has been developed that proposes restructuring GPU's indebtedness.

(mediocre) Since the announcement of *GPU Vision 2020*, the University has demonstrated significant strides in managing its financial condition through short- and long-term financial planning. The plan's resource base shows the ability for sustaining educational programs and supporting and strengthening their quality in the future.

(much improved) Since the announcement of *GPU Vision 2020*, the University has demonstrated significant strides in managing its financial condition through short- and long-term financial planning. In place is a long-range financial plan that proposes restructuring GPU's indebtedness and is designed to ensure that GPU has the ability for sustaining educational programs and supporting and strengthening their quality in the future.

(exemplary) Since the announcement of *GPU Vision 2020*, the University has demonstrated significant strides in managing its financial condition through short- and long-term financial planning. The evidence revealed that three years of annual cost reductions, largely in non-academic areas, have totaled \$4.8 million. Further, monthly financial statements are prepared to monitor financial conditions, financial relationships with affiliates have been restructured, and a long-range financial plan has been developed that proposes restructuring GPU's indebtedness. This plan's resource base shows current and future capacity for sustaining educational programs and supporting and strengthening their quality in the future.

Example 2 Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

(poor) GPU has recently expanded its offerings to include graduate degrees. However, evidence does not demonstrate a “graduate culture” distinct from that of an undergraduate culture, leaving the impression that these programs remain add-ons to undergraduate offerings.

(mediocre) Since 1997, GPU has requested and been approved for six masters programs in education, health, and business. However, evidence does not demonstrate a “graduate culture” distinct from that of an undergraduate culture, leaving the impression that these programs remain add-ons to undergraduate offerings. GPU needs to establish processes and policies characteristic of graduate offerings.

(much improved) Since 1997, GPU has requested and been approved for six masters programs and plans to continue to increase the number of graduate degree offerings in education, health, and business. However, evidence from faculty and administrative interviews, graduate handbooks, curricula, and Committee minutes does not indicate that GPU has developed the necessary policies, practices, and shared governing processes needed for these programs. Further, this evidence does not indicate that GPU has established a “graduate culture” distinct from that of an undergraduate culture. In fact, it is not clear that the learning outcomes of the graduate programs are sufficiently different than undergraduate outcomes, particularly in the increasing number of courses shared by undergraduate and graduate programs.

(exemplary) Since 1997, GPU has requested and been approved for six masters programs, and the academic plan calls for an additional four programs with the goal of establishing a graduate school offering education, health, and business degrees. However, evidence from faculty and administrative interviews, graduate handbooks, curricula, and Committee minutes does not indicate that GPU has developed the policies, practices, and shared governing processes necessary to sustain a full graduate school. Further, this evidence does not demonstrate a “graduate culture” distinct from that of an undergraduate culture, leaving the impression that these programs remain add-ons to undergraduate offerings. In fact, it is not clear that the learning outcomes of the graduate programs are sufficiently different than undergraduate outcomes, particularly in the increasing number of courses shared by undergraduate and graduate programs. Given its vision for a full graduate school, GPU now needs to develop and formalize institutional and academic policies and processes necessary to develop, sustain, and ensure effective graduate education.