Western Illinois University

Report to UCAR Membership Committee on 2009 Academic Affiliate Application

The Department of Geography at Western Illinois University has recently begun to award a Bachelor of Science degree in Meteorology. Since 2005, 14 students have graduated with this degree. Currently 76 students are enrolled in this degree program which represents a large majority of undergraduate students in the Department. In addition, the Department offers a Master of Arts in Geography and three of their current graduate students are pursuing graduate degrees related to Atmospheric Sciences.

The Department has 10 full time faculty members with 3 faculty teaching courses for the BS Meteorology degree. While only one faculty member has a PhD in atmospheric science the other two faculty members have PhDs with expertise in Physical Geography. In all, the faculty have expertise in atmospheric physics and dynamics, climate, remote sensing, and synoptic climatology. At the time of their application the University was conducting a search for a fourth meteorology faculty member with an expertise in data analysis, numerical weather prediction, and advanced dynamics. The faculty have active, yet small research programs that are typical of a regional teaching university. The research appears in peer reviewed journals and is presented at regional and national conferences.

The current B.S. meteorology degree program meets National Weather Service criteria for hiring meteorologists and is similar in content and scope to other B.S. degree programs nationwide. The program anticipates developing the curriculum in the next few years to have additional tracks leading to graduate school in atmospheric science and broadcast meteorology. The facilities for the students are typical of a small program and they have already begun using Unidata software in their computing facilities. It appears that University administration and the Department of Geography are committed to active participation in UCAR. In fact, last year, in preparation for this application, Dr. Redina Herman attended the annual UCAR meeting.

Overall the application materials indicate that Western Illinois University meets the criteria for academic affiliation membership in UCAR.

On 15 June 2009, the UCAR Membership Committee voted to accept Western Illinois University into the UCAR Academic Affiliate Program.