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16-17, 2015

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A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

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Donna Kempf, Assistant Professor Communication Studies, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 53201

Janet Smith, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas, 66762 (Chairperson)

I.   Context and Nature of Visit

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The comprehensive visit of March 4-6, 2013 resulted in a mandated
Focused Visit

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¥ Vice President and General Counsel, Secretary to the Board of Trustees
¥ Associate Chief Financial Officer
¥ Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees, Special Assistant to the President
¥ Vice President for Institutional Advancement
¥ Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Operations
¥ Associate Vice President & Chief Communication Officer
¥ Associate Vice President, Enrollment Management
¥ Vice President for Student Success

¥ Associate Professor, Law; Chair
¥ Associate Professor, English, Vice Chair
¥ Associate Professor, Economics
¥ Associate Professor, Curricular & Instructional Studies
¥ Professor, Psychology

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¥ Associate Vice President, Student Success, Chair
¥ Professor, Psychology, Vice Chair
¥ Project Manager, Application Systems Services, Secretary
¥ Director, Admissions
¥ Director of Network and Telecommunications
¥ President, Graduate Student GovernmentAAUP Executive Committee

¥ Professor, Biology; President
¥ Distinguished Professor, History; Vice President
¥ Professor, Mathematics; Chief Negotiator
¥ Professor, Family and Consumer Sciences; Secretary
¥ Professor, Biology; Grievance Officer
¥ Assistant Professor, UL Science and Technology; Liaison Representative
¥ Associate Professor, Myers School of Art; Past President

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¥ Dean, College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering
¥ Executive Dean, Buchtel College of Arts & Sciences

¥ Dean, College of Business Administration
¥ Dean, Honors College
¥ Dean, School of Law
¥ Dean, Interim, University Libraries
¥ Dean, Interim, Wayne College

Assurance Section

¥ Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Operations

formal priority as evidenced by: support of academic leadership for assessment activities; communication to campus of the importance of assessment by the Provost; presentation to the Board of Trustees on

Committee, all outcomes need to be measurable and any department that puts forth a course to be included in the general education curriculum has to identify artefacts of student learning that address the relevant assessment component. In this manner, the institution is building the foundation for integration of assessment into the general education curriculum. The committee shows evidence of solid assessment practices, namely staging their outcomes and starting with the easiest first in order to learn from successes and challenges. In addition, there is a general plan to keep things manageable by looking at general education outcomes on a rotation basis, using random sampling to determine if learning outcomes are being met. What remains unclear from interaction with the General Education Committee is how this plan will be implemented on a practical level and how data will be used to improve student learning.

¥   Finally, the institution shows greater use of assessment data beyond student learning outcomes. Based on discussion with President's Cabinet and review of key enrollment management documents, the institution is using data to inform decision-making at the institutional level. Within the area of enrollment management, there is greater intentionality is use of data and predictive analytics to inform decision-making.

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¥   While the institution has made impressive progress since the 2013 site visit, the University is at a critical point in the continued success of its assessment efforts. The institution has demonstrated that it has the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in the assessment and improvement of student learning and administration has shown support for these accomplishments to date. However, the level of continued resources devoted to assessment of student learning will play a significant role in how well the institution is able to build on current successes. The Focused Visit team is concerned that some of the structures that are key to the recent successes appear to be

assessment and improvement of student learning and that some faculty members are beginning to appreciate the value of assessment activities. However, it was also apparent that much of the campus views assessment activities as burdensome rather than meaningful and there is a need for ongoing efforts to move the campus from a compliance mindset to a commitment to improvement of student learning. Based on the varying quality observed in program assessment plans, this will necessitate an ongoing training component for campus.

¥   While the substantive revision of general education clearly involves discussion of assessment as a central component, there is much work to be done to implement an ongoing assessment plan on a concrete level. The General Education Committee appears to be highly engaged with assessment, but there is currently no structure or process in place to move beyond development of assessment measures and artefacts. As with assessment efforts at the program level, resources need to be devoted to providing leadership and expertise to ensure successful collection and use of assessment data to inform improvement of the general education curriculum.

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¥   Based on review of the Focused Visit Report and supporting evidence, along with conversations with faculty, staff, and administration during the site visit, the institution has taken active steps to address concerns with shared governance. The report outlined several examples of faculty involvement in key initiatives since the 2013 site visit, including general education reform and decision to terminate or suspend admission to a substantial number of academic programs. While significant challenges remain, there is evidence of progress in this area.

¥   Overall, based on conversations with campus groups, several individuals noted perceived improvements in shared governance. Some faculty, particularly members of Faculty Senate, noted improvement in transparency and cooperation between faculty and administration. It is noted, however, that this view of improved cooperation and communication was not consistent across all individuals and that the Focused Visit team observed significant lingering sentiments of frustration with and distrust of senior administration.

¥   The appointment of a new President in 2014 has created an opportunity for changes in shared governance. During discussions with campus constituents, many individuals expressed a level of "cautious optimism" or at a minimum,

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Trustees took a more informed role in its interaction with the institution, particularly in the area of shared governance. For instance, the University Council by-laws have been under consideration by the Board for an extensive period of time and there is urgent need for the Board to take action in order to ensure full functioning of this Council.

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None.

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Evidence sufficiently demonstrated. No Commission follow-up recommended. Year

Year for next comprehensive evaluation: No change (2017)

(26 , 2015)

After submission of the final Report of a Commission-Mandated Focused Visit, the team chair received a registered letter dated May 8, 2015 from the President of the University of Akron AAUP. The team chair brought the letter to the attention of Dr. Mary Vanis, staff liaison for the University of Akron and the letter was forward to HLC legal department for input. The Coordinator for Legal and Governmental Affairs drafted a letter to the President of the University of Akron, requesting response to a number of questions pertaining to the complaint from the AAUP President. The site visit team has reviewed the initial complaint letter, the request for information from HLC, and the response from the institution. The team has determined that an additional visit is not warranted at this time, but does amend the original recommendation pertaining to shared governance. The team stands by the original recommendation pertaining to assessment of student learning.

In the Assurance Section of the Focused Site Visit Report, the team noted that it was difficult to determine if challenges in shared governance observed during the site visit were due to residual attitudes resultant of a long-term history of adversarial relationships between faculty and adm

As a result, the site visit team amends the original recommendation and now recommends an embedded monitoring report on shared governance within the scheduled 2017 year four review of Standard Pathway. This report should confirm that the University Council is fully operational and that the role of both University Council and the AAUP has been clarified to realize their potential contribution to shared governance. It is clear from the University of Akron response to the AAUP complaint that administration takes the issue of shared governance seriously and that structures are in place to support effective shared governance at the University of Akron. However, it is also clear that shared

REPORT OF A COMMISSION-MANDATED FOCUSED VISIT

Advancement Section

TO

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

CONSULTATION OF TEAM

    A. Observations of Team Regarding Area(s) of Focus

¥   The current Focused Visit addresses two areas that represent a long-standing history of challenges for the University of Akron. In addition, the current Focused Visit addresses two areas that typically involve considerable periods of time to effect meaningful change, as both assessment of student learning and shared governance speak to the culture of an institution. The Focused Visit team recognizes that there has been a relatively short period since the 2013 comprehensive visit and is impressed with the level of assessment activity 1 Tf 2412eve

Advancement Section

the institution create a permanent assessment position to provide leadership and expertise in the area of student assessment. In addition, the institution needs to continue to involve faculty in the assessment of student learning and the Focused Visit team recommends that the institution examine the critical elements of its committee structure that contributed to recent success and ensure these elements continue on a longer-term basis.

¥ The current assessment plan is based on numerous effective principles and has served the institution well over the past two years. However, the current plan frames assessment activities in terms of compliance with HLC requirements and explicitly identifies actions to be completed before HLC visits. The Focused Visit team recommends eliminating reference to HLC in the assessment plan. The institution needs to create an updated version of its assessment plan that retains many of the sound principles of assessment, but addresses assessment activities beyond the next HLC visit and from the perspective of what is in the best interest of the institution rather than what is needed to satisfy HLC requirements. Unless the institution begins to promote the value of assessment beyond meeting accreditation standards, there is a serious danger that assessment efforts will come to a halt after the 2017 HLC site visit given the intervening period between the subsequent visit will be six years.

¥ In promoting the value of assessment, conversations need to focus on improvement of student learning so that faculty see assessment efforts as meaningful to their work with students rather than simply as an added burden. This

¥   Finally, continued support from administration will be critical to ongoing success with assessment. This extends beyond provision of resources and includes continued communication from the Provost and college deans regarding the value of assessment. It appears that this has been a key component in success to date and ongoing communication from administration can assist in moving the institution from a compliance mindset to engagement in assessment activities that truly have the ability to advance the mission of the institution.

¥   Regarding the area of Shared Governance, the team offers the following recommendations:

¥   In order for the University Council to have a legitimate role in shared governance, by-laws need to be formally approved and resource support provided for this group. In addition, the institution needs to determine the types of issues that will automatically be brought before this group and develop a mechanism for this to occur. It has been two years since the previous site visit team noted the need for full implementation of the University Council. Although the Council has begun to play a more active role in shared governance, this role cannot be fully realized until official by-laws are in place and the role of the Council and its relationship to other governance entities more clearly defined.

¥   The AAUP Collective Bargaining UnitÕs goal of making communication a focus of upcoming negotiations is on target and has the potential to positively impai 3 (0 0 6 (i) -181 (i) -4 (i)hm) -8 1 ( )45 0 0 Tm /TT1hm 0 (e) 4 (0 (u) cm B

STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS WORKSHEET

INSTITUTION and STATE: University of Akron OH

TYPE OF REVIEW: Focused Visits

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW: (Spring 2015) on (a) relationship and roles of faculty in shared institutional governance and (b) assessment of student learning in general education and in undergraduate and graduate majors.

DATES OF REVIEW: 02/16/2015 - 02/17/2015

■   No Change in Statement of Affiliation Status

Nature of Organization

CONTROL: Public

RECOMMENDATION:
DEGREES AWARDED : Associates, Bachelors, Doctors, Masters, Certificate

RECOMMENDATION: No Change

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS:
Prior Commission approval is required for substantive change as stated in Commission policy.

RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS:
The institution has been approved for the Notification Program, allowing the institution to open new additional locations within the United States.
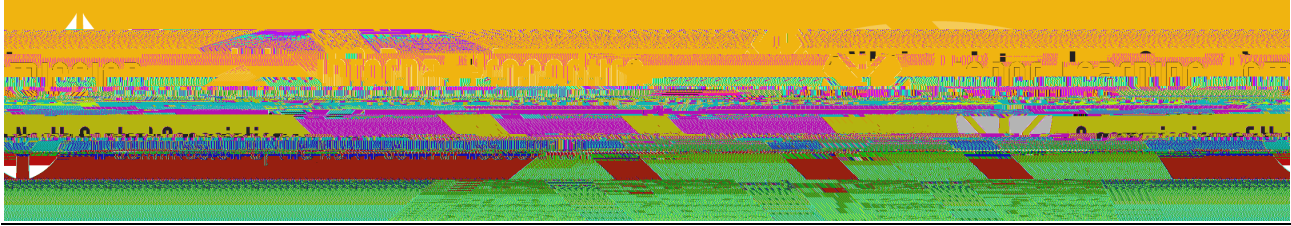
RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE WORKSHEET

INSTITUTION and STATE: 1599 University of Akron OH

TYPE OF REVIEW: Monitoring: Focused Visits

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW: (Spring 2015) on (a) relationship and roles of faculty in shared institutional governance and (b) assessment of student learning in general education and in undergraduate and graduate majors.

■   No change to Organization Profile

Educational Programs

Recommended Change:

Correspondence Education Programs:
<u>Present Offerings:</u>
None.

Recommended Change:

Contractual Relationships:
<u>Present Offerings:</u>
None.

Recommended Change:

Consortial Relationships:
<u>Present Offerings:</u>
Master 44.07 Social Work Master - 44.07 Social Work (Masters in Social Work)

Doctor 51.0202 Audiology/Audiologist Doctor - 51.0202 Audiology/Audiologist (Doctorate of Audiology)

Doctor 44.04 Public Administration Doctor - 44.04 Public Administration (Doctorate in Philosophy in Urban Studies and Public Affairs)

Master 51.0203 Speech-Language Pathology/Pathologist Master - 51.0203 Speech-Language Pathology/Pathologist (Master of Arts in Speech-Language Pathology)

Bachelor 52.0301 Accounting Bachelor - 52.0301 Accounting (Bachelor of Science in Accounting)

Bachelor 51.38 Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing Bachelor - 51.38 Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing (RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing)

Master 51.38 Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing Master - 51.38 Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing (RN to Master of Science in Nursing)

Doctor 51.38 Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing Doctor - 51.38 Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing (Doctor of Nursing)

Master 23.1302 Creative Writing Master - 23.1302 Creative Writing (Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing)

Doctor 45.11 Sociology Doctor - 45.11 Sociology (Doctorate of Philosophy in Sociology)