Focused Visit Report

Organizational Context and Executive Summary

The University of Akron (UA) is a publically assisted metropolitan institution serving
approximatley 27,000 undergraduate and graduate students primarily at our main campus which
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Area of Focus: A-1. Assessment of Student Learning

A-1.1. Overview

The University of Akron, upon receipt of the Higher Learning Commission's March 2013 site visit report, immediately took steps to address the issues raised concerning the ongoing assessment of student learning. An assessment committee consisting of faculty and administrators from the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences (BCAS) was appointed in spring and summer of 2013. A committee chair was appointed and a special assistant in the Office of Academic Affairs (SAOAA) was hired to facilitate student learning assessment efforts throughout all the colleges. Initially, the committee emphasis was placed on the BCAS since the majority of the university's programs needing assessment plans were housed in this college. These efforts began in September 2013. At the same time, the Summit College (now College of Applied Science and Technology) assessment committee was reconstituted to begin/continue its work on developing/implementing assessment plans for the associate and baccalaureate programs housed in that college.

The BCAS assessment committee began regular monthly meetings in September 2013. Each member of the committee was assigned certain departments/programs to support through the process of developing program learning outcomes, assessment plans, rubrics and action plans. Committee members developed templates to provide direction to the departments as they developed their plans. All assessment plans had to include student learning outcomes, methods of assessment, timeline for assessment, and a dissemination process to help assure the use of data collected. The templates were distributed to all department chairs in BCAS in late September 2013. Presentations on the process were made to BCAS chairs and faculty in subsequent weeks.

As each BCAS department developed programmtmprontinuped pr0(r)-7(a)4(a)4(r)3(ni)-2(n)-10(g)10(out)-2(c)4
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During spring 2014, all programs were asked to begin, if they had not already done so, collecting the data that they had specified in their assessment plans. Communication was sent from the Provost to all deans reiterating the importance of the assessment process to the success of University of Akron students. This was followed by a memo from the assessment committee offering its continued help. A FAQ was sent to the chairs in BCAS addressing issues that had arisen about data collection. Review of the assessment information provided through program accreditation reports began with feedback from the SAOAA. An updated template was distributed mid-semester to all programs in BCAS in hopes of focusing their attention on data collection. Updates were provided to BCAS associate deans by the end of March. A workshop, Assessment 101, was offered by members of the assessment committee for all interested faculty. An overview of the assessment process was included along with a substantial amount of time devoted to specific questions on data collection.

During summer 2014 a variety of working sessions for faculty and chairs were developed by the director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) with input from the chairs of the university assessment committee. These workshops were designed to facilitate the collection and meaningful use of data. These workshops were interactive as they provided time for attendees to work on their specific assessment projects with feedback from the workshop facilitators and other attendees. These working sessions were repeated at various times throughout the semester to accommodate teaching schedules of faculty and to respond to the particular needs of those assessing student work/results at the appropriate point in the assessment cycle. ITL will continue to provide these and other workshops on an ongoing basis. New faculty and teaching assistants are introduced to their role in the ongoing student learning assessment process during orientation sessions in the fall.

Due to the inability utilizing the SharePoint site (where assessment plans and reports are stored) to generate reports on the data submitted for each academic program, the assessment committee formed a subcommittee that began its investigation into the use of assessment management software. The subcommittee continues to work on its recommendations.
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- Testing of first-year students and seniors (Voluntary System of Accountability Participation mandates this activity. UA administers the ETS-PP every three years)
- Information Literacy Assessment
- Computer Based Assessment and Evaluation (COMPASS and Computer Literacy)
- NSSE
- Program Review
- Assessment of academic advising

A-1.2. Non-Accredited Program Assessment by College

The process used by each college to develop/review assessment plans and report results was determined by the faculty in programs that do not have their own professional accreditations (professionally accredited programs). The assessment committee provided general guidelines (elements that had to be included). The faculty members in each college/department/program, as appropriate, were able to develop the continuous improvement plan that fit their disciplinary needs (when to assess, how to assess, how to disseminate results, etc.).

College of Education

The College of Education has an Office of Assessment and Accreditation that oversees activities for all programs in the college. The mission of the office is to support the programs of the College of Education and the work of the College's faculty and staff by delivering accurate, useful, and timely data and information by providing quality database and reporting solutions; by assisting with and collaborating on assessment efforts; and by efficiently coordinating accreditation and licensure activities. The director of this office serves on the university assessment committee. The college is applying for accreditation by the Council of Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) and as a result all programs are under review and/or revision. Admissions to several programs were suspended in the spring 2014 semester by (t)-2(e)4Fe2(e)4(ss)1(e-6(v)-0(c

College of Health Professions

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College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering

During AY13-14, the College focused on hiring a new dean. In spring 2014, the university assessment committee liaison met with both department chairs (polymer science and polymer engineering) to discuss the department's assessment efforts. Constructive suggestions were made and changes to the curriculum are being implemented as discussed in the results section below.

College of Applied Science and Technology

The Assessment Committee for the former Summit College was reconstituted in fall 2013. The assessment committee liaison was selected to chair the college's committee. The committee has representatives from every department in the college. Programs that are accredited by an outside agency were identified. These included most of the programs in Allied Health (now in the College of Health Professions), Engineering Technology, and Business Technology, as well as many in Public Service Technology, and that information was submitted to SAOAA.

The committee then focused on those programs that did not have assessment plans. These included three degrees from Associate Studies, many from Public Service Technology, and some from Business Technology and Engineering Technology. Assessment committees from each department met and developed plans. These plans were reviewed by the committee chair and SAOAA. Several plans needed revision and the assessment committee liaison worked with department assessment coordinators to answer questions and complete the plans.

Each program developed a plan for writing the annual report which was due September 15, 2014. Assessment coordinators and/or committees are in place for each program. Data collected in AY13-14 was submitted at the end of the spring semester to meet the September 15 deadline.

Humanities
- The English department implemented a very complex assessment plan at all levels involving a large number of faculty. In doing so, they discovered inconsistencies in the assessment process at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. During AY13-14, the faculty will be discussing the type of papers to be assessed, the need for more uniform writing assignments, and the use of rubrics.
- Students in Modern Languages performed well on the Oral Proficiency Inventory, but realizing there is room for improvement, the faculty are discussing how oral proficiency can be addressed in lower-division classes.
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conducting critical analysis. Discussions are underway on how to address these issues.

College of Engineering

College of Applied Science and Technology

The College currently awards associate and baccalaureate degrees, and many of the programs are in the beginning stages of their assessment efforts. AY13-14 was used to develop assessment plans and to begin collecting base-line data. Some programs, such as Surveying and Mapping, that had student learning outcomes from previous initiatives, changed them based on changes in the discipline and employment opportunities. Surveying and Mapping is currently determining how to address the changes in the appropriate courses.

After a review of its data, Business and Information Technology faculty notic

Area of

A-2.2. Faculty Senate

In the period since the last Higher Learning Commission site visit, the Faculty Senate has continued to operate effectively and has strengthened its operations in certain areas. The Senate itself has functioned cohesively, with few closely-divided votes on policy or curriculum proposals, and few referrals of proposals back to committees for further consideration and development. This is a reflection of careful and thorough work by the Senate's committees in preparing proposals for consideration by the Senate. Faculty Senate minutes are available at http://www.uakron.edu/facultysenate/archive.dot.

The relationship between the central Administration and the Faculty Senate, although not without its occasional difficulties, has generally improved during this period. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee has continued to meet with the President and the Provost on a monthly basis. The Provost has begun to meet with the Faculty Senate Chairman on an approximately monthly basis. President (now former President) Proenza made himself available to meet with the Faculty Senate Chairman whenever needed. President Scarborough, who took office July 1, 2014, has consulted closely with the Chairman. A good working relationship between the Vice Provost and the Chairman has played an important role in strengthening the shared governance process.

Several issues that arose during the period since the last HLC site visit exemplify the progress and also some of the difficulties in shared governance at The University of Akron: (1) general education reform; (2) reorganization and changes in the missions and names of academic units; (3) review and termination or suspension of academic programs; (4) curriculum review process; (5) faculty workload policy; (6) review of academic centers and institutes; (7) presidential search; and (8) development of programs to promote student retention and success.

1. **General education reform:** The initiative to reform The University of Akron's general education requirements for undergraduate students began with the appointment of a committee of faculty members by the Dean of the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences with the imprimatur of the Provost. Because the general education requirements apply to all undergraduate students, including not only those in the College of Arts and Sciences but also those in the Colleges of Applied Science and Technology (formerly called Summit College), Business Administration, Education, Engineering, and Health Professions, and because the general education requirements are quintessentially matters of curriculum, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee urged the Administration to allow this initiative to come under the auspices of the Faculty Senate. The Administration agreed and, with the addition of a few faculty members appointed by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the General Education Revision Committee became an ad hoc Faculty Senate committee. This committee completed its work, which

consisted of the development of a new set of general education requirements and a plan for implementing them, near the end of the Spring 2014 Semester, after the faculties of each of the affected colleges had reviewed and expressed their views about the proposal (some of the initial college reactions were not favorable). In its May 2014 meeting, the Faculty Senate adopted the committee's proposal without dissent. In accordance with the implementation plan, the Faculty Senate has formed eight general education learning outcome committees. These committees will receive and consider requests for approval of courses as satisfying the various general education learning outcomes specified in the new general education requirements. This work is just beginning at the time of writing of this report, with the committees designing templates for the requests for approval.

2. **Reorganizations and changes in the missions and names of academic units:** Whereas in previous years the Faculty Senate's role in advising the Administration and the Board of Trustees concerning the reorganization and changes in the mission and names of

55 proposed by the Provost (in these cases the proposals to eliminate the programs came from the affected faculty). The President concurred with the Senate's recommendations with the support of the Provost, and the Board of Trustees adopted all of the Senate's recommendations.

4. **Curriculum review process:** Along with academic policies, curriculum decisions lie at the core of faculty responsibility. Before the

search committee, delegating to an ad hoc committee of Trustees the responsibility of determining the search criteria, conducting the search, and choosing the finalists. The ad hoc committee invited representatives of various University constituencies, including the faculty, to meet with it in executive session to discuss the search criteria. In accord with the AAUP collective bargaining agreement, those representatives were also afforded the opportunity to interview the finalists and then to meet with the Board in executive session to express their views of the finalists. The faculty representatives included three elected by the Faculty Senate and three chosen by the Akron Chapter of the American Association of University Professors, which represents The University of Akron faculty in collective bargaining. Although the Faculty Senate leadership believes that representatives of the faculty should not have been excluded from the process of selecting the finalists, in the end, the Board of Trustees listTc 0 h(he)4(s)-11t(ul)-2(t qtue)-2hvTJ   -31.1 -(e)4(c)4

A-2.3. University Council

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Transition of Leadership

Since April 2013, there have been multiple leadership transitions in UC. The first Chair of UC resigned (May 14, 2013) and the Vice Chair became Chair. Unfortunately, that member could not remain as the Chair due to his position on one of the standing committees. These events led to an election (October 1, 2013) to fill the remaining term limits of the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The current Chair and Vice-Chair were elected and subsequently re-elected in the election process (June 18, 2014). From April 2013 to the present, committees have either re-elected their Chairs or elected new Chairs to represent their committees. As part of the bylaws revision, the UC Steering Committee was restructured to ensure representation by all constituency groups. This inclusiveness has enabled the UC Steering Committee, as well as the entire UC, to consider the full impact of their decisions on the entire campus community.

Organization and Operation of UC

In the last year, UC developed an annual calendar for detailed standing committee reports based on the work schedule set forth by the Board of Trustees. This coordination ensures that that the two bodies mirror one another to work seamlessly regarding critical topics. (See

Annual Survey of the UC

Yearly surveys of the body have been implemented to gauge their satisfaction with the work of the UC and to solicit recommendations for improvement.

The outcomes from the annual survey have included improvements in UC processes and communications. For example, last year's survey revealed a desire for increased communications. This need led to scheduled communications to the University community and more effective communication processes in and among the committees. In 2014, several ideas for improved productivity were presented resulting in formal committee goals, in-depth committee reports, more effective communication practices on and by committees, committee meeting notes, scheduled meetings and more. The survey process will continue and UC remains open to opportunities for improvement. (See 2013-14 University Council Satisfaction Survey Results).

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In-Depth Report, Budget and Finance Committee

From University Council proposed Bylaws (page 12);
The University Council Budget and Finance Committee (UC B&FC) is responsible for studying monitoring, and making recommendations to University Council on the development of all university budget, finance, and purchasing policies and resource allocations in collaboration with staff, contract professionals, and faculty in appropriate departments. These recommendations shall be forwarded to the University Council for consideration.

Although the bylaws were clear about the mission of UC B&FC, the implementation of this mission was challenging. As the result of a topic submission from UC, the committee decided that in order to fulfill their mission, each year the CFO will provide to the committee:

1. The past five-years' spending history of each academic and administrative unit.
2. Updates on the progress in developing recommendations for revenue enhancements as well as budget reductions or increases, including;
   a. Feedback from the Effectiveness and Efficiency Initiatives groups.
   b. Deliberations with the Vice Presidents, Council of Deans and the Board of Trustees.
3. An eventual draft of the suggested budget for the following year.

The committee's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, studying the consistency of the budget draft with spending history data, identifying where dramatic changes have occurred, and considering whether the causes of the dramatic increases or decreases are justifiable. The committee may need to interview the budget representatives of some business units. Also, the committee will study the feasibility of the budget with respect to the revenue and determine the expected surplus or deficit caused by the suggested budget.

After a complete review, UC B&FC will submit to UC its recommendations.

The following response to the aforementioned topic submission was passed at University Council on May 14, 2013.

• The UC B&FC received each unit's past five-year spending data. There was not adequate time to review and make recommendations about FY14. But, the spending data provided a good starting point for FY15. The committee members had every opportunity to ask questions regarding the provided data and they did ask many questions. Numerous conversations were held about the committee's role relative to budget development as well as the University's fiscal condition. On February 2014 (a starting point for the FY15 budget) some substantial reductions for some business units were proposed to the committee. After

working together, the administration and business units were able to prepare and present balanced budgets for their areas.

During the spring, a great deal of progress was made in clarifying expectations and developing a process by which our committee would be consulted about budgetary issues. Of particular

4. Summer Plateau: The UC B&FC will assign a workgroup to develop an implementation plan for a pilot. UC B&FC would oversee that project and will set a goal of having a fairly specific proposal for UC before the end of the fiscal year.

As the result of Goal 1, FY2015 Budget Development, an effective process is in place for providing input into the budget plan for the next fiscal year. This process was used and refined in the spring for the FY2015 budget. It will be implemented earlier for FY2016, which

college committee, and it can be reported that there has been faculty and staff input into the renovation plans.

- Another example of UC PEC's work concerned a proposal from the Interim Dean of University Libraries regarding the combining of the Science Library with the Main Bierce Library. This proposal took into consideration plans suggested by Sasaki Associates, Inc. that Bierce Library would be renovated. The Interim Dean of University Libraries recommended the Science Library and Main Bierce Library collections could be brought together with more efficient staffing. Upon further study by UC PEC, it was determined that students felt that the study space in the Science Library was very important. This issue was discussed by the UC Steering Committee. Provost Sherman, as a member, informed the UC Steering Committee that no action would be taken for at least a year. Subsequently, UC PEC raised the issue with the Faculty Senate Library Committee that is now reviewing the issue. The UC PEC will not make recommendations until we receive a report from the Faculty Senate Library Committee. This is an example of how the two governance committees can coordinate recommendations.

The UC PEC has carried out its charge with active participation and reviewed issues presented with careful consideration. UC PEC has presented formally its Planning Process Document to be followed at all levels of the university and it has been adopted by UC. The UC PEC is aware that there are some issues that have not been presented to the committee where their involvement would be beneficial. Although UC PEC Co-Chair Vice President Curtis and Chair Sterns have worked well together, the members believe that University Administration has made some decisions that should have gone through the formal planning process. This is an area of opportunity and growth that UC PEC continues to pursue.

See Physical Environment Committee in-depth report to the UC.

In-Depth Report, Student Engagement and Success Committee

The University Council Student Engagement and Success Committee (UC SESC) is responsible for studying, monitoring and making recommendations regarding the university's student engagement and success strategies and practices in collaboration with staff, contract professionals and faculty in appropriate departments. These recommendations shall be forwarded to the University Council for consideration.

Goals*:*

1. Increase the Yield Rate from applicants to admitted students and from admitted students to confirmed students.

   Metrics:
   - Maintain our recent yield rate which coupled with our much larger and broader applicant pool will result in an increase in new freshmen in 2014-2015. The first metric measurement will take place based on the May 1, 2014 Confirmation Deadline. Realize increased percentage of Direct and College Ready Admits and decreased percentage of Emergent and Preparatory Admits among the entire Confirmation pool.

2. Work with New Student Orientation (NSO) Team to incorporate more information about Greek Life and Student Involvement in NSO.

   Metrics:
   - Inventory of activities for 2014 compared to 2013.

3. Submit a proposal to UC for Campus Culture of "The Blue & Gold Promise": *a new service model proposal to shift campus culture to respond to student problems/questions with an attitude of: "No matter the problem or question, I will help you resolve" and includes Uve-o1(t)-luc(Tf   -2.2 -1223)at 0.004 Tw -7.1D1.1 Ctio U*

Metrics:
- Complete evaluation and provide recommendations in 2014-2015 academic year.

2. University Non-Discrimination Policy: Review current University of Akron non-discrimination policy to consider expanding covered categories.

   Metrics:
   - Complete evaluation and recommendation by the end of the 2013-2014 academic year.

3. Comprehensive Campus Health Program: Evaluate possible options/programs we can provide for our employees to encourage and promote a healthy lifestyle. A wide range of options will be considered to determine what the University can do to encourage employees to engage in positive activities. Conduct a survey of UA employees to identify current issues with UA program offerings and identify areas of interest for future consideration. In addition, review current best practices to see what other employers are doing to reduce premiums and health care costs for possible application at UA.

   Metrics:
   - Complete evaluation and recommendation by the end of the 2014-2015 academic year.

See [Talent Development and Human Resources Committee in-depth report to the UC.](#)

Ongoing Discussions for Continuous Improvement

Opportunity: Administrative Support

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the Faculty Senate by holding regular meetings between the UC Steering Committee and the President and Provost. It is also possible that the President could have a formal role at each UC meeting.

A-2.4. Steps Moving Forward

The UA administration, under the leadership of President Scarborough, plans to continue its formal involvement in shared governance processes as discussed above (i.e., collective bargaining, Faculty Senate and University Council) as well as through more informal means. Examples of the latter include:

- President's Book Club – UA faculty thought leaders have open discussions with the President.
- Faculty Researcher Luncheon – a time for the President to meet the faculty with significant external research funding.
- Budget Primer – Faculty Senate Chair, Akron-AAUP President, and a department Chair from the UC Budget and Finance Committee meet regularly with the President, CFO and Budget Director to fully understand the UA budget.
- Staff Meeting – biweekly meetings run by the President with Deans, VPs and leaders from Faculty Senate, UC, GSG and USG present to discuss topics of interest to the Board of Trustees.
- Academic Leadership Team – monthly meetings of Deans, VPs, Assistant and Associate Deans, Department Chairs and School Directors with the President and Provost for information sharing.
- College Strategic Planning Meetings – the President and Provost are meeting with the leadership of each college three times in Fall 2014 to iteratively arrive at a forward-looking direction for each unit, which is then being shared with the entire college for discussion and revision. Subsequent meetings will be held until consensus has been reached to enable proper allocation of budget resources for the new college strategic plans in the next fiscal year (by April 2015). The President has target dates in February 2015 at which the campus will consider revising Vision 2020 to align it with the new college-level plans.