



Office of the President

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2, 2012

Dr. Joseph Frizado
Vice President for Academic Operations and Assessment
Bowling Green State University
1600 East Wooster Street
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403

Dear Dr. Frizado:

This letter is the consultation report requested for the “HLC Quality Initiative Report: A Learning Commons,” submitted by Bowling Green State University to the Higher Learning Commission on August 31, 2012. We have carefully reviewed the document and find that Bowling Green State University has met all criteria for this review (demonstrated the seriousness of the undertaking, that the initiative had scope and impact, a commitment to and engagement in the initiative, and adequate resource provision) and has made a “genuine effort.” Clearly, the initiative was clearly conceptualized and represents a clear effort by BGSU to improve the quality of student success efforts.

BGSU’s quality initiative was effectively planned and delivered, and we believe that the effort to develop the “learning commons” was an excellent step toward the continuing improvement of student success efforts at BGSU. More specific comments on aspects of the report are below.

The key elements, accessibility; affordability; and accountability to deliver quality; listed on page three of the report were very appropriate elements around which to shape the initiative, and the report is quite clear on both the methods and processes that BGSU used to shape the development of the initiative and also how the initiative was assessed. Clearly, the development of a single center focusing on student success addressed all three elements very effectively.

The initiative provided BGSU with a needed opportunity for organizational restructuring in the area of student success, as the report clearly explains problems resulting from the previous organizational structure. The timeline discussed in the report was very appropriate and reflected a clear set of implementation goals and activities that were effectively managed by the institution. Resourcing of the initiative seems very appropriate. Maintaining personnel costs at \$260,000 through re-alignment was a major achievement, especially as careful budgeting allowed for the hiring of a new director to oversee the newly combined services, as was the maintenance of the operating budget at \$46,000 through a streamlining of budgets in the creation of a single operating budget. The outlays for *Accademia* and for other ITS contributions should contribute to a long-

term maintenance of the gains in student success outcomes through the Learning Commons.

The development of very specific initial goals for the initiative aided greatly in evaluation and assessment efforts. The data reported in the report provide important data that can be added to those for future years to address trends in student use, and the purchase of *Accademia* to help with data collection and report generation is quite appropriate in tracking usage of the Learning Commons. The institution will be well-served by an analysis of this use, particularly why the Learning Commons seems to be used a great deal more by students with higher GPAs so that the university might find more effective ways to market the center to those in greater academic need and why seniors were much less likely to use the center than freshmen.

Other assessment measures were equally useful. The use of a pilot of predictive modeling and comparisons between predictions and actual course GPA for the BIOL 2050 course was an effective use of assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of visits to the Learning Commons. We did wonder whether the differences between predicted and actual course GPA were statistically significant, and the report is not clear as to whether or not similar analyses are being planned for students in other courses. Ultimately, the best measure of the effectiveness of the Learning Commons is going to be measures of student learning, so additional assessments in addition to GPA might well be worth taking. Obviously, additional such assessments with other courses and across additional years will be helpful in more fully evaluating the effectiveness of the Learning Commons in future years. The use of the satisfaction survey should also be continued in future years to track student satisfaction with services, but the initial data certainly indicate that students believe that the services offered were solid and that they helped with skill development. The report is not clear as to whether these results are stronger or not than those perhaps previously collected for the former separate centers, but such an analysis might be helpful to BGSU.

Finally, we applaud the actions taken by BGSU in reaching out to various campus constituencies to lead to greater collaborative efforts toward student success at the university. Such a collaborative model bodes well for continued success of these initiatives in improving student retention and progress toward degrees. Plans for the future of the Learning Commons seem promising. The reconceptualization of the University Libraries as the academic center of campus would seem to be appropriate, especially as many campus offices and services have indicated an interest in moving their efforts to Jerome Library. Having a multiplicity of offices and services located in a single space might offer students greater opportunities for help as well as improving appropriate collaborative efforts to improve student success. The university should find methods to evaluate and assess those collaborative efforts, but preliminary evidence suggests that the effort may be well worth it.

In conclusion, we find that BGSU developed and executed an excellent quality initiative and has developed a "Learning Commons" that will serve the university extremely well

for years to come. We congratulate you on the development of the Learning Commons and wish all of you at BGSU well in the future.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Jones
Associate Dean of Faculty
Westminster College
Fulton, MO

Dr. John Gratton
President
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