

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

**Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio**

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FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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ASSURANCE SECTION

I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

This visit was a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation of Bowling Green State University (BGSU). The review did not include any change requests.

B. Institutional Context:

A number of events have taken place at BGSU since the last HLC review, including the termination of an ongoing early retirement incentive program for faculty. This resulted in both large numbers of retirees and new hires. The University also increased its enrollment. Finally, through the leadership of the President's Office, BGSU has undergone a noticeable and favorable culture change since the last HLC visit.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

There were no unique aspects to this visit. It was a normal comprehensive evaluation on a 10-year cycle.

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited:

In addition to visiting the main campus in Bowling Green, two team members visited the University's only other site: Firelands.

E. Distance Education Reviewed:

The Team reviewed the University's distance education program; the program is modest, well planned and managed, and most of its offerings are in the summer. Specifically, the Team reviewed documents pertaining to course offerings, organizational structure, policies and procedures, and the Distance Education program's strategic plan.

F. Interactions with Institutional Constituencies:

In Bowling Green:

1. Academic Planning Team
2. Administrative Staff (open meeting)
3. Assessment Committee
4. Assistant Vice President for Capital Planning
5. Assistant Vice Provost
6. Associate Vice President for University Relations and Governmental Affairs
7. Athletic Compliance Officer
8. Athletic Director
9. BgeXperience Committee
10. Capital Planning Committee
11. Chair Faculty Development Committee
12. Chair Faculty Research Committee

13. Chair Faculty Senate
14. Chief Information Officer
15. Classified Staff (open meeting)
16. Community Leaders
17. Dean of Libraries
18. Dean of Students
19. Dean of Continuing Education, International, and Summer Programs (and other representatives of Distance Education)
20. Dean of the College of Business Administration
21. Director of Budgeting
22. Director (and Assistant Director) Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology
23. Director of Planning and Institutional Research
24. Director of Sponsored Programs and Research
25. Enrollment Management Committee
26. Executive Director of Residence Life
27. Executive Vice President
28. Faculty (open meeting)
29. Faculty Athletic Representative
30. Faculty Senate Leadership
31. Freshman Library Coordinator
32. General Education Committee
33. Graduate Council
34. Lab Science Department Chairs
35. Library Users
36. President
37. President's Cabinet
38. Program Review Committee
39. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
40. Self Study Committee
41. Senior Accounting Staff
42. Senior Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
43. Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration
44. Strategic Enrollment Management Committee
45. Student Achievement Assessment Committee
46. Student Affairs Council
47. Students (African American)
48. Students (in open meeting, included both undergraduate and graduate)
49. Students (in Student Center)
50. Students (random in Student Union and throughout campus)
51. Student Representatives on Faculty Senate
52. Task Force on Diversity
53. Treasurer and Associate Vice President for Finance
54. Trustees
55. Undergraduate Council
56. University Budget Committee and Faculty Senate Budget Committee
57. University Planning Council
58. Vice President for University Advancement
59. Vice Provost for Academic Programs
60. Vice Provost for Research and Dean of the Graduate College

In Firelands:

1. Administrative Staff (open meeting)
2. Associate Dean

3. Chair Applied Sciences Department
4. Chair Humanities Department
5. Chair Natural Sciences Department
3. Classified Staff (open meeting)
3. College Council (faculty, students, administrators, and staff)
4. Dean
5. Faculty (open meeting)
6. Students (open meeting)

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed:

In addition to the Self-Study and all accompanying materials, Team members consulted the following:

1. Admissions applications (undergraduate, graduate, transfer, and Firelands)
2. Affiliation agreements
3. Articulation agreements
4. Admissions Advisory Committee (various materials)
5. Alumni Association (various materials)
6. Affirmative Action Plan
7. Academic Charter
8. Admissions Itinerary Report
9. Admissions information
10. Adult Learner Services Strategic Plan
11. Academic Plan
12. Annual Priorities
13. Accounting Reports (Department and Division)
14. Assessment Reports (for five academic years)
15. Assessment Support Requests and Awards
16. Articulation and Transfer Policy (Ohio)
17. Assessment Web Pages
18. Bylaws, Board of Trustees
19. BGSU Foundation, Inc. materials
20. BG Magazine
21. BgeXperience Fact Sheet
22. BGSU Progress Report to North Central: Implementing an Assessment Plan
23. BG Supernet
24. Bursar's Office (various materials)
25. Budget Review Documents (Annual and Quarterly)
26. Consortium Agreement for Study Abroad Programs
27. Commitment to Assessment (various documents)
28. Course Applicability System
29. Capital Budget Request (2003-08)
30. Computing at BGSU
31. Campus Civility (Charge to the President's Committee)
32. Cohort Default Rate
33. CEISP (Strategic Plan, Program Listing, Cooperation and Exchange Agreements)
34. Cooperative Education and Internship Program (Various Documents)
35. Catalogs (Graduate and Undergraduate)
36. Capital Improvements (1997-2002)
37. Center for Multicultural and Academic Initiatives
38. Curriculum Modification Documents
39. Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology (various documents)
40. Classroom Utilization Reports
41. Core Values Documents

42. Decision-making Environment Documents (Faculty, Social, Economic, Demographic)
43. Dance Marathon (various documents)
44. Diversity Plan and Diversity Resolution
45. Diversity Statistics
46. Diversity Task Force Report
47. Division of Student Affairs (Brochures and other documents)
48. Education Abroad (statistics, guidelines, and other materials)
49. Employee Appraisal and Evaluation Forms
50. Equal Opportunity and Anti-Harassment Policy
51. Evaluations of Freshman Development Program Advisors
52. Exchange Program Guidelines
53. External Auditor Opinion Letter
54. External Review Report, Department of Residence Life
55. Fact Book
56. Faculty Research Center Annual Report FY 2001-02
57. Faculty Surveys (1998 and 2001)
58. Feedback Report on Learning Communities & First Year Programs at BGSU
59. Financial Aid Findings and Policy Recommendations
60. Financial Reports (FY01 and FY02 and Supplementary Information)
61. Firelands Advising Documents
62. Firelands Mission Statement
63. Firelands Strategic Plan
64. First Year Student Questionnaire
65. Fiscal Watch Analysis
66. Fostering Residential Learning at BGSU
67. Foundation Report and Financial Statement
68. Functional Mission Statement
69. General Education Bulletin
70. General Education Pilot Course Assessment
71. Get Involved Campus Involvement Directory
72. Graduating Senior Questionnaire
73. Grants and Contracts, Executive summary 2000-01
74. Grants and Contracts, Submissions and Awards 2000-01
75. Guide to Public Policy Research
76. Handbooks (Administrative Staff, Classified Staff, Faculty, Firelands)
77. Handbooks (Students, Student-Athlete, Firelands Student Survival)
78. Handbook, SPAR Research
79. Honors Program Documents
80. Human Resources Hiring Procedures
81. Information Technology Strategic Plan
82. Institutional Research Studies
83. Interactive Distance Education for All Learners (various documents, including strategic plan)
84. IPEDS (various surveys)
85. Judicial Statistics
86. Learning Communities Documents
87. Learning Outcomes (various documents)
88. Levels of Implementation
89. Logs of Student Complaints
90. Master Plan
91. Merit Plan Template

92. Minutes (various, e.g., Faculty Senate, Board, Graduate Council, NCA Steering Committee, Faculty Development Committee, Faculty Research Committee, Undergraduate Council, committees)
93. Multicultural and Academic Initiatives
94. New Faculty Orientation
95. New Faculty Positions Table
96. New Faculty Rosters (1998-2002)
97. Northwest Ohio Educational Technology Foundation (various materials)
98. Office of Residence Life Study Report for External Program Review
99. Ohio Board of Regents Fiscal Watch Ratios
100. Ohio Revised Code
101. Orientation and Registration (various materials)
102. Organizational Charts
103. Partnering Knowledge and Industry
104. Partnerships for Community Action
105. Planning and Budgeting Process Documentation
106. Planning Success Indicators
107. President's Address
108. President's Perspective (Issues I-V)
109. Program Reviews (Academic and Support Units, 1997-2001)
110. Promotion and Tenure Templates
111. Physical Structure File
112. Residence Life Satisfaction Survey
113. Retention Task Force Report
114. Role and Mission Statements
115. Rooms and Buildings
116. Safety and Security Report
117. Schedule of Classes (main and Firelands campuses)
118. Self Study (including appendices)
119. Strategic Enrollment Management Committee Report
120. Staff Questionnaires (1999 and 2001)
121. Student Affairs Mission and Strategic Issues
122. Student Affairs Departmental Planning Documents
123. Student Learning (various documents)
124. Student Life Assessment Summary
125. Student Technology Center (various materials)
126. Student Union (various materials)
127. Study Abroad Programs
128. Syllabi of UNIV 210 and UNIV 220
129. Teacher Quality Success Initiative Action Plan
130. The Bowling Green Experience: A State University's Initiative to Prepare Principled Citizens: A White Paper
131. Unit Plans
132. University Planning Council
133. University Standing Committees (list and membership rosters)
134. University Web Site
135. Utility/Infrastructure Improvement Project
136. Viewbook for Freshmen
137. Vision Statement
138. Vision and Values (Charge from and Report to the President)

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process:

The current Self-Study process began a year prior to the visit and built on other planning processes and structures developed at BGSU during the previous six or so years. Members of the Self-Study Executive Committee also served as chairs of the five major subcommittees. Individuals on both the main campus and its one branch reported having participated in the Self-Study effort with leadership and support being provided from central administration for the preparation of the final draft. The team found evidence that the Self-Study process was open and involved many individuals at the University.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report:

The self-study process and the Self-Study Report were conducted with integrity.

Two of the requirements the NCA Handbook of Accreditation specifies for the Self Study Report are (1) concise yet thorough, and (2) evaluative rather than descriptive. The BGSU Self Study report met the first of these requirements by consisting of less than 100 pages. It does describe briefly all aspects of the university, stressing those programs for which improvements were suggested in the 1993 NCA evaluation. It did not, however, contain much in the way of critical analysis or evaluation of the institution's procedures, programs, or prospects. Furthermore, the Self-Study simply did not clearly articulate the University's many accomplishments and successes since the last HLC visit in 1993. Bowling Green State University could have been better served by a Self-Study that provided deep analysis and self-evaluation. The Team found a much better institution than the one described in the Self-Study.

C. Capacity to Address Previously Identified Challenges

The Team considers the response of BGSU to previously identified challenges adequate.

D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment:

Requirements were fulfilled.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The Team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information. The team notes that only two of the twenty-seven complaints on the log reviewed had any information in the "Final Decision" column, although given the date and nature of the complaints, it was obvious that they had been resolved to closure.

IV. AFFIRMATION OF THE GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Based on the Self-Study review and other documentation, the team confirms that the institution continues to meet each of the twenty-four General Institutional Requirements. The team notes, however, that the statement in the Graduate Catalog (page 6) pertaining to the University's affiliation with HLC was incorrect (it was correct in the Undergraduate Catalog). This error easily can be corrected in the next printing of the Graduate Catalog.

V. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

A. CRITERION ONE

The institution demonstrates that it has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:

- The mission and vision statements are appropriate and consistent with those of an institution of higher education. In 1996, a Mission Committee that included faculty, staff, and student representation, developed the Vision Statement.
- BGSU maintains an active planning activity. The University Planning Council develops five- to ten-year planning themes.
- The institution keeps both the general public and its internal community informed through internal and external publications, press releases, presentations to a variety of audiences in the region, catalogs and policy manuals, and through its web pages.
- There is a strong commitment to values exploration and principled citizenship in the undergraduate experience.
- BGSU is committed to teaching and learning as evidenced by First Year programs and activities as well as by the fact that over three-fourths of the full-time faculty have been involved with the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology (CTLT).
- The Firelands campus has a clearly defined mission. All constituents with whom Team members spoke understood this mission to be grounded in a commitment to providing the citizens of north central Ohio the broad educational resources of a major state university in a smaller, student-centered, teaching focused, personalized environment.
- Commitment to student success was evident throughout the discussions at Firelands. The personalized attention afforded by small classes, “intensive” academic advising, a strategic planning process focused on “promoting, nurturing, and championing student success” all provide indications of a strong commitment to students. In addition, full professors are teaching lower division 100 and 200 level classes.
- The 2000+ Strategic Plan for Firelands provided an in-depth SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis prior to their establishing five strategic future directions and twenty-four specific strategic initiatives for the next three to five years.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention

- As noted in the Self-Study, there appear to be too many statements of purpose and the connection among them is not always clear. This lack of clarity leads to confusion and questions among constituencies regarding the University's purposes.
- There is some confusion about the Strategic Futures Directions and the Role and Mission Statement even though the documents overlap in detail. This lack of clarity raises questions about the University's mission and direction.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up

None

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended.

B.

CRITERION TWO

The institution demonstrates that it has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:

- BGSU's Board of Trustees, as exemplified by those with whom the HLC team met, is very knowledgeable about the institution; committed to its continued progress, aware of the board's appropriate role in policy responsibility, and has a high level of confidence in the Office of the President.
- The leadership of the president appointed after 1993 has brought about a significantly improved change in the culture at BGSU since the last HLC comprehensive visit. Factors contributing to this include better communication, an increase in shared credit for accomplishments, and a more consultative management style. The Office of the President is not only highly regarded by the campus community but also is appreciated by the external community.
- An administrative team has been assembled that is effective in managing institutional activities and exercising appropriate responsibility. Increases in administrative personnel have been necessitated for a number of reasons including an increase in government regulations, advising, and technological improvements to the campus.
- The faculty has a role in shared governance of the institution through the Faculty Senate, a system of committees, and program reviews. Faculty credentials are appropriate for the mission and programs of the institution. As

the result of the recent incentive program, retirements have created the opportunity to hire younger faculty with additional appointments still to be made.

- Students interviewed individually and collectively by the HLC team were very positive about the programs in which they are engaged and commented favorably about the interest and accessibility of the faculty.
- The most important ingredient in judging a university is the people forming its community. At BGSU, the faculty is dedicated and well-qualified to carry out its teaching, research, and service responsibilities. The University can also be proud of its administrative and classified staffs. The students the Team interviewed came to BGSU because of its reputation as an excellent teaching institution, and they were satisfied with the overall education they were gaining. All four groups (faculty, students, staff, and administration) have input into the University decision-making processes through the Faculty Senate, the Administrative Staff Council, the Classified Staff Council, the Undergraduate Student Government, and the Graduate Student Senate.
- The physical plant viewed by the HLC team appeared to be well maintained with good housekeeping. While there are some buildings and facilities on campus that need renovation or replacement, the institution is well aware of these needs. BGSU has a lesser degree of deferred maintenance for its physical plant than many other institutions of higher education today and has a regular funding program to deal with this condition.
- The team commends the financial management and administration team whose approach is to maximize the institution's capability to achieve its mission. The leadership in this area not only has sound financial understandings but also has a background in the academic arena that helps it appreciate the support function of finance and administration at BGSU.
- The library has adequate resources and equipment to support the institution's purposes. Access to Ohio-Link via the Internet greatly expands the books and journals available to faculty and students.
- Although a major funds campaign has not been conducted by the institution for 17 years, a development team has been created that has approval for a major multi-million dollar capital campaign. This campaign is currently in the silent phase, but the HLC team is optimistic about the program given increases in giving in recent years to the institution through the BGSU Foundation. The HLC team recognizes, however, that these increases are from a very small base.
- Administrative Staff and Classified Staff personnel are dedicated, in support of the teaching, research, and service roles of BGSU, and effective in carrying out their functions. Despite a hiring freeze on Classified Staff, morale is high among those staff members with whom the HLC Team spoke and the campus is characterized as a good place at which to work.
- The student affairs division has been reorganized in ways that have maximized resources, provided opportunities for greater cross department collaboration, resulting in enhanced involvement opportunities for students.

- The investment of resources in the residence halls and in the Student Union demonstrates a strong commitment to creating environments that maximize opportunities for student success outside of the traditional classroom. Residence hall renovations have focused on creating living arrangements suitable to today's students (e.g. six-person suites with a common living area) as well as living learning communities with space dedicated to collaborative programming with faculty. The 210,000 square foot Student Union is yet another tangible example of the institution's commitment to community, designed to serve as "the heart and soul" of the institution.
- Enrollment at the Firelands campus has now been stabilized with a commitment to a 3-5% growth over the next 5 years.
- The Firelands campus budget is self-sustaining. Quarterly reports indicate that the budget is sound with revenue consistently exceeding expenses.
- The relationship between the main Bowling Green campus and the Firelands campus has greatly improved since the last HCL visit. Everyone that the Team members spoke with agreed that there is much better communication between the two campuses. Current leadership on both campuses is credited with this positive change.
- The facilities at Firelands are well maintained, clean and aesthetically pleasing. A new facility, the Cedar Point Center, is under construction. The facility will feature state-of-the-art learning technology and flexible classroom, seminar, and study spaces to support academic program expansion and educational outreach into the broader community.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention

- The 1993 HLC Team addressed the issue of numerous majors and degree programs with minimal students. The 2003 HLC Team also was made aware of a considerable number of degree programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels with few or no recent graduates. While it is true that some programs with little demand, as evidenced by a lack of graduates, have been eliminated in recent years, BGSU should continue a thorough review of its degree programs to ascertain those that may possibly be eliminated so as to direct limited resources more appropriately in the institution.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up

None

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended.

C.**CRITERION THREE**

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion**1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:**

- BGSU has programs appropriate for its mission. The current general education program identifies four cognitive skill areas and six disciplinary areas to provide an intellectual foundation for undergraduate learning. The University has recently developed a new Academic Plan with significant implications for general education and all academic programs. The new Academic Plan is predicated upon achieving the vision of BGSU to be the premier learning community in Ohio and one of the best in the nation.
- Since the last HLC visit, BGSU has made significant progress in the development and implementation of an assessment program. The program is faculty owned and driven and is guided by a representative assessment committee, the Student Achievement Assessment Committee (SAAC), that includes students, faculty and appropriate administrators. Resources have been allocated to the program, e.g., seed money for professional development, funding for external consultants, and faculty development through the CTLT. Considerable faculty time and effort have served as a critical resource in the evolution of assessment at BGSU. Several curricular and pedagogical changes have occurred as a result of the assessment process.
- A systematic and comprehensive academic program review process was instituted in 1997. The program includes internal and external reviews, an assessment component, and an iterative approval process. The program was reviewed in 1999 and modifications were made to more closely link the program to administrative decision-making and thus to the budgeting process. Some significant curricular changes have resulted and have served to validate the process for faculty.
- Effective teaching is valued at BGSU as evidenced in the promotion, tenure and merit process. The Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology offers a rich variety of resources to support the development of effective teaching. The faculty development programs of the CTLT also support the assessment program. Additionally, the University has provided financial resources in the form of grants reviewed by the faculty development committee.
- The Strategic Enrollment Management Committee is an effective and representative group of key persons from the main and Firelands campuses. The Committee has set forth an ambitious plan to manage enrollment, increase retention, and encourage greater diversity at the University. The Committee is commended for thinking strategically and providing a holistic and proactive approach to enrollment and retention.
- BGSU supports programs and initiatives related to research through a system of grants sponsored by the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research and reviewed by faculty committees. These grants include the Faculty Mentoring

and Enrichment Program, the Scholars Assistance Program, the Research Incentive Grant Program and the Technology Innovations Enhancement Grants. Research has increased in importance at the institution and the definition of research has broadened.

- Sponsored research funding is growing in proportion to financial resources although from a small base. Newly instituted programs of seed grants, mentoring, and other incentives are influencing faculty to seek more funded research.
- A number of initiatives are underway to broaden the outreach of the university to provide opportunities for students and faculty to relate to other stakeholders. A prime example of this is the Entrepreneurship Center in the College of Business that will involve student, faculty, business people, employees, and community leaders to encourage the spirit of entrepreneurship.
- Distance Education is showing promise of developing into an outstanding program. The program is introducing new course offerings with careful deliberation and experimentation to constantly improve its products. The University now offers about 60 Web-based courses in various disciplines, taught mainly in the summer in small classes to allow almost personal interaction between the instructor and the students. After the techniques are refined, the plan is to gradually expand the program to offer courses throughout the year. The Distance Education program has productive collaborative agreements with a number of other institutions in Ohio. The program constantly conducts assessment of their classes, and these show that in many of their courses, distance education students perform better than students taking the course in live formats on campus, and their attitudes toward the courses are also better.
- Programs and services throughout the division of student affairs effectively support the BGSU's mission. There is ample evidence to support the Self-Study's assertion that academic and student affairs are collaborating to maximize student success. Examples include but are not limited to: the living learning communities in the residence halls, the Bowling Green Experience program, the newly created positions of Co-Directors of the Office of Student Academic Initiatives (academic and student affairs jointly oversee this office, focused on student success and retention initiatives), the call for increasing sections of the career development class, etc.
- The student affairs leadership team is in the process of developing an assessment plan for the division. A consultant was brought in to work with the staff; a retreat was held to focus on learning outcomes; and a committee is now preparing recommendations for the leadership team to review.
- In the student affairs arena, program review is occurring on an ongoing basis. Most recently, the Department of Residence Life conducted a self-study, followed by an external review composed of seven professionals from across the country. The Office of Institutional Research conducted a study on Learning Communities and First Year Programs. Their feedback report is dated March 2002, indicating that "several of the learning communities and first year programs are making significant impacts upon retention, graduation, grades, and credit hours earned."

- The Athletic Department is led by a dynamic team that clearly understands that athletics operates as a department within, and not separate from, the overall University structure. The Department appears to be operating effectively and within the University, Conference, and NCAA guidelines. Athletic fundraising cooperates with and is an integral part of the University's development program. The Athletic Department is to be complimented for giving high priority to the academic support system, gender equity, and a sports program that has fully integrated into the University.
- The Firelands campus has a faculty member serving on the SAAC. Departments are working on developing assessment plans to measure progress of learning outcomes. Departmental progress with respect to these plans varies from department to department.
- The extensive state of the art technology, particularly at the new Cedar Point Center, offers increased opportunities for even closer collaboration in the delivery of educational services to and from both the BGSU and Firelands campuses.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention

- Currently, the co-leaders of the General Education Committee have completed their term, and in the absence of an appointed replacement, have volunteered to continue their leadership for another year, in addition to their other full time duties. The success of the General Education program depends on a dedicated leadership position with support staff.
- Current University documents identify 1) *five* core values, 2) *seven* categories of goals derived from the mission, and 3) *six* university learning outcomes. In addition, the proposed Academic Plan identifies *five* learning themes and *four* modes of inquiry. The number of student outcomes as well as their overlap inhibits clear understanding of the applicable outcomes for assessment and creates a barrier to the advancement and assessment of a coherent program of student learning. The energy and commitment of the faculty in developing the above sets of outcomes are commendable. The Self Study, however, notes the confusion created by multiple sets of learning outcomes. The University is poised to benefit from the process and reflection of the Self Study, as well as from the proposed Academic Plan, to move to the next stage of integrating the multiple sets into one coherent presentation of University-wide student learning.
- Dually enrolled vocational technical students from the local high schools are a cause of concern expressed both by students and staff at the Firelands site. Apparently, the admission standard for these high school students used to be 4.0. It has been lowered to 2.5. University students indicated they would prefer not to have the high school students in their classes, citing disruptive behavior, lack of maturity and "holding the rest of the class back" as reasons. Staff members are of the opinion that these students are sent to Firelands because the high schools that send them "cannot handle them so they send them to us." Students indicated that if the standards were raised for the high school students, having dually enrolled students might not be such an issue.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up

- While the Team applauds BGSU for the progress it has made in assessment, the Team has concerns about the unevenness of implementation. Using HLC's *Levels of Implementation* matrix, the institution rated itself in the "making progress" level of implementing assessment programs across the University. One of the eight assessment components (Students Sharing Responsibility) was rated between "beginning" and "making progress". The modal response for one component (Institutional Culture: Mission) was "maturing", while the mode for the remaining six components was "making progress". Although some undergraduate departments and programs have developed sound assessment plans, the quality is highly variable (some are excellent; some are very weak). The Team found that while some programs are "mature", other programs remain at the "beginning" level (e.g., lack of direct measures, faculty questioning of efficacy of assessment program, students know little or nothing about the assessment program, prospective students are not provided with explicit statements regarding assessment, and no broad measurement of campus-wide student outcomes including general education outcomes). The purpose and nature of assessment are neither universally understood nor universally embraced on either campus.
- Assessment is conducted at the program and course level. There is no structure for reviewing achievement of the University level student learning outcomes.
- In general, students are not aware of the assessment program and the institution's commitment to assessment. The document, *Assessment of Student Academic Achievement: A University Commitment (1995)*, is a strong and informative statement of that commitment to assessment but it does not appear in the catalogs or other printed documents located by the Team.
- The assessment program provides input and feedback to faculty but rarely includes students in this input-feedback loop.
- Many of the program assessments employ indirect indicators of learning (student satisfaction surveys, graduation rates) rather than direct indicators of learning (student products or other evidence of achievement of specific learning outcomes).

Recommendation of the Team

Progress Report: The Team requests a Progress Report by March 31, 2006.

Rationale and Expectations: The team recognizes and commends the accomplishments in assessment found at BGSU. However, in evaluating the matrix of assessment characteristics, the Team finds that the institution is in the "progress" level of implementing assessment programs across the institution. There is still a considerable lack of understanding and reluctance regarding assessment in some program areas.

D.**CRITERION FOUR**

The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion**1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met**

- BGSU has demonstrated the ability to organize and allocate its resources to support its programs.
- There is broad engagement of the University community in planning. The University culture encourages the participation of faculty, students, staff, and administrators in a wide variety of committees, councils, and task forces. The emphasis is on a “bottom-up” approach to planning.
- Twenty-three standing committees provide students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to voice issues and concerns and to participate in the decision-making process.
- Quantitative data are regularly gathered and shared with the University community. The data can provide a measure of progress towards specific goals.
- The student affairs leadership team expressed a strong sense of teamwork, collaboration and positive momentum at the institution as a whole and within the division of student affairs itself. The leadership team members were clear as to the strategic direction of the institution as well as the division.
- BGSU has an informed and dedicated Board of Trustees, and an effectively structured administration that is led by a charismatic president who has won the enthusiastic support of the University community.
- The institution has enunciated a list of Strategic Future Directions for long-range planning and a list of short-term Institutional Priorities to guide it in achieving its goal of becoming the premier learning community in Ohio and one of the best in the nation.
- The campus has a Capital Plan that lays out a six-year program for the physical needs of the University, and a Master Plan is being completed to define the future growth of the campus. In recent years, the University has invested in renovating their older buildings and the campus is in a relatively good condition to face the future.
- Fiscal Watch Ratios have been developed for the Ohio Public Universities to measure their financial condition. These measures include relationships among current revenues, expenditures, net income, reserves, expendable fund balances, and plant debt. BGSU scores at or near the top of these measures reflecting a very positive fiscal condition. This bodes well for the continued ability of the institution to carry out its mission despite current fiscal stringencies in the State of Ohio.

- BGSU is pursuing non-state sources of funds, including private contributions and federal grants and contracts. By hiring many new, young researchers to the faculty, the University has made gains in research grant support. It also has set up partnerships with constituencies outside of the University. This involves research centers and institutes collaborating with external private or public institutions or serving various constituencies in the general public. Distance Education is another means of reaching a larger body of students that is being carefully expanded. BGSU is clearly aware of the vagaries in future sources of income and the institution is taking measures to prepare for the emerging fiscal environment.
- In recent years, vast improvements have been made in the academic computing environment at BGSU. The completion of the BGSupernet offers high-speed Ethernet connectivity to the entire campus, including faculty offices, classrooms, laboratories, and student residences. Well-equipped, general-access computing labs for students are distributed throughout the campus. Students and faculty who need technology assistance can receive it through innovative programs such as the Student Technology Center and the Personal Technology Trainers. The University's research program is enhanced by having access to Internet2. A needs survey on enhancing the administrative computing has been completed and plans are under way to make significant improvements. The University must be cognizant that these great steps forward in computing capability will be jeopardized if planning is not done for funds to be available for regular maintenance and replacement.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention

- Because there are numerous committees, councils, and task forces engaged in planning, it is important to ensure the integrity of the process. Specifically:
 1. The hierarchy of advice and decision-making should be made transparent to all. People should know where they fit into the overall process.
 2. Connections and communications among the various planning groups should be structural and not rely on a few individuals who may serve on multiple groups. The organization of the network of groups should be formalized and understood by all.
 3. With many planning groups come many recommendations. The University leadership should regularly report to the campus the status of all recommendations.
- It is important that the planning groups analyze the data that are collected. Analysis should lead to a regular assessment of progress towards the objectives.
- There is a lack of a solid infrastructure for research at BGSU, which is still primarily perceived as an undergraduate teaching institution. The research mission of the University is being compromised by its emphasis on teaching at the expense of research. Although research is stressed in hiring new faculty, BGSU should examine its overall research infrastructure, e.g., it should provide the departments with enough faculty members to enable those actively engaged in research to have reasonable teaching loads on a permanent basis.

- Although the results of the emphasis of BGSU on the information technology infrastructure has been very successful, it drained funds from the acquisition and maintenance of major scientific equipment and maintenance. Often there are no service contracts for the maintenance of laboratory equipment and faculty members must try to keep their equipment operational. Both the research and the teaching programs of the University suffer from lack of laboratory resources and maintenance.
- The administration, faculty and staff at Firelands strongly believe that the addition of 300-400 level courses (particularly in business) would allow them to meet the expressed needs and desires of students as well as business members in the broader community. This was the most frequently mentioned area of concern.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up

None

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended.

E. CRITERION FIVE

The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:

- Student, faculty, and staff handbooks and other pertinent documents accurately describe BGSU's relationships with these constituencies and contain appropriate personnel, student, and academic policies and procedures, including those pertaining to dispute resolution and grievance procedures. The University maintains records on student complaints and resolutions.
- The University's policies and practices are consistent with its mission and with common practice in higher education, including those relating to equity and non-discrimination, and they are clearly communicated to both the internal and external communities.
- The institution's statements and publications, including its website, accurately describe the University, its operations, and programs.
- BGSU has appropriate oversight processes for monitoring its contractual arrangements and responsibilities with external constituencies, including government, professional organizations, and other higher education institutions.

- The University's relationships with other institutions and organizations are conducted ethically and responsibly. The institution maintains a number of such relationships and its partners spoke well of the integrity with which the relationships are managed.
- The University has voiced an interest in and demonstrated a commitment to diversity in educational programs, the student body, and its workforce.
- BGSU has an excellent relationship with the city of Bowling Green (and surrounding communities) that is mutually beneficial.
- The University demonstrates integrity through its financial processes and has a good audit program.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention

- As noted in the Self Study, diversity remains a challenge particularly in both the classified and administrative staffs. In order for the University to demonstrate a serious commitment to developing this area, it needs to be more aggressive in recruiting women and people of color for all positions, including and in particular for senior-level administrative positions.
- Even though students of color believe that BGSU is involved in both recruiting a diverse student body and is also offering them various academic and financial support programs when they come to campus, they also would like to see the University work with them to break down the social barriers that exist between various ethnic and racial groups on campus. It will take some creative thinking to find ways to bring people from the different groups together at any of the many social events on a campus of this size. But such social interaction is the essence of diversity and a university should be an ideal environment to foster such mingling of diverse groups.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up

None

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended.

VI. ACCREDITATION RELATIONSHIP

ACCREDITATION RELATIONSHIP:

A. CONTINUED ACCREDITATION

Next Comprehensive Visit: 2012-2013

Rationale: BGSU is a mature institution that continues to meet all five Criteria and the twenty-four General Institutional Requirements. The pattern of evidence indicates that the University made great strides in many areas since the last HLC visit in 1993 and that it is positioned to continue to develop and improve itself. The Team found a very favorable culture change and a much-improved institution since the last HLC visit.

B. DEFINERS OF RELATIONSHIP

1. **Degree Level:** Doctor's.

Rationale: No change.

2. **Ownership:**

Rationale: No change.

3. **Stipulations:** None.

Rationale: No change.

4. **New Degree Sites:** No prior Commission approval required for offering existing degree programs at new sites within service area.

Rationale: No change,

5. **Other (Identify):** None

Rationale: No change.

C. COMMISSION FOLLOW-UP

Progress Report due March 31, 2006.

Rationale and Expectations: The team recognizes and commends the accomplishments in assessment found at BGSU. However, in evaluating the matrix of assessment characteristics, the Team finds that the institution is in the "progress" level of implementing assessment programs across the institution. There is still a considerable lack of understanding and reluctance regarding assessment in some program areas.

The Team recommends a report to indicate progress towards a more mature assessment program. This report should document that departments and programs have identified the following: measurable student outcomes, direct measures of these outcomes, results of assessing these outcomes, and influences of the assessment results on curriculum and pedagogy.

D. **SANCTION**
None

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

**Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio**

March 3-5, 2003

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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ADVANCEMENT SECTION

I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

A. Ten Years Ago

The HLC Team that visited BGSU in 1993 identified at least ten areas of serious concern, ranging from the absence of a systematic and comprehensive academic program review to a lack of mutual respect and trust among campus constituencies. Other major issues included the absence of a comprehensive strategic planning process, an exceptionally weak assessment of student academic achievement process, a poor computing environment, issues pertaining to disrespect and sexual harassment, problems with too many degree programs, faculty research productivity, among several other issues. In sum, it is fair to say that had BGSU continued on the trajectory the Team found in 1993, the University would be a significantly weakened institution today.

B. Bowling Green State University Today

The HLC Team that visited in 2003 found a highly improved BGSU. The Team notes that during the ten-year period since the last HLC visit, the University underwent a culture change that resulted in many improvements, ranging from relations among the institution's constituencies to the physical plant. The Team was impressed with many areas and initiatives, including the University's level of maturity and professionalism, with its sense of community, its self-confidence and ability to assess itself and to make appropriate changes and corrections when necessary. The Team saw improvements and real gains in structure, infrastructure, leadership, facilities, programs, benefits (including salaries), and in numerous other areas. Clearly, many individuals and groups, including faculty, staff, administrators, and students, have been exceptionally creative and working very hard to improve the University since the last HLC visit. The changes and improvements are quite visible and the BGSU community is to be commended and congratulated.

Hence, in light of the many improvements at BGSU, our Team has relatively little advice. The Team strongly encourages the University to stay the course and continue to implement the thoughtful and pertinent recommendations that have emerged from its several planning initiatives.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

A. Assessment of Student Academic Achievement: Transition to a Mature Level of Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

In an effort to assure that the program is owned by the faculty and is not driven by top-down mandates, overall coordination intentionally has not been assigned to an individual. The Team strongly recommends that an individual on campus be named to serve in a facilitative role to support faculty in the full implementation of assessment at the institution. This facilitator could serve to identify and match available resources to faculty assessment needs. For example, several seed grants that could have been used by the faculty to support their assessment efforts went unclaimed.

The electronic student portfolio to be piloted during Fall 2003 has the potential to address many of the current assessment issues noted by the Team. It will play a critical role in moving the University to a mature level of assessment. The technological infrastructure, chosen by the University after two years of investigating several different prototypes, will enable the campus to document student learning in relation to both discipline-specific learning outcomes and university-wide learning outcomes. The cycle of assessment includes not only direct measures of student learning but also student reflection on the assessment. This iterative cycle of learning, assessment, and reflection will prove a valuable tool for both the advancement of the assessment program and the enhancement of student learning. The Team commends the University on its portfolio initiative and strongly urges continued administrative support throughout these fiscally challenging times.

B. Research: It is essential that BGSU critically evaluate itself in order to unambiguously define its niche as a research institution. It is unlikely that the University can compete with large research extensive institutions, especially in multiple disciplines. It is essential that the infrastructure be in place to support the research enterprise aspirations. Important considerations include the following areas: (i) sponsored programs support and accounting; (ii) quality and quantity of research space; (iii) competitive graduate stipends; (iv) competitive start-up packages; (v) research must be a valued form of scholarship, and research-active faculty should be able to significantly reduce their teaching loads; (vi) a broad understanding of and adherence to best research practices (e.g., ethics, environmental control, use of animals, human subjects); and (vii) resources for maintenance, service contracts, and research support staff.

BGSU has identified a few areas in which it will focus resources, including photochemistry, neuroscience, and biomolecular studies. These areas are selected, in part, because they align well with what the State of Ohio has identified as areas for emphasis. The University may realize that competitive hiring in these areas is very expensive (relative to other disciplines) in terms of salaries, teaching release, start-up, space, and recurring infrastructure support. As institutional resources are focused and reallocated, it is important that everyone (whether or not they happen to be in the favored areas) understands the decision, understand the process that led to the decision, and have input in how best to organize the remaining resources to support other areas of scholarship. For example, if there are no longer sufficient resources to support research in a particular discipline, it may be appropriate to eliminate the corresponding graduate degree program.

C. Planning: BGSU emphasizes a culture of involvement by faculty, administrators, staff, and students in a variety of planning activities. These many councils, committees, and task forces analyze and often make recommendations on many important facets of the institution, including the curriculum, degree programs, budget priorities, capital planning, and enrollment and retention. In some cases, a significant amount of person-hours is involved in the process (e.g., the Undergraduate Council of ca. 40 persons meets every other week). The Team is impressed with this culture of involvement, but makes three observations/recommendations. (1) It is important that everyone involved knows where he/she fits into the overall planning structure. What is the hierarchy of decision-making? (2) It is important that the constituents be provided a regular report from the University leadership as to the status of previously made recommendations. When many people spend many hours analyzing a situation and then making recommendations, it is essential that they remain informed as to the outcome of their efforts. (3) There appeared to be a small handful of middle administrators who chair many of the key committees. This probably facilitates coordination among the different committees, but can leave the impression that the different committees are not independent from one another or from the administration.

D. Diversity: In its report ten years ago, the visiting accreditation team noted as a strength the University's genuine commitment to cultural diversity. This spirit of commitment continues, and was recently enunciated by a Task Force on Diversity (TFOD) convened by the President. In the spring of 2002, the TFOD presented a report that included several bold and well-considered recommendations. Unfortunately, most of the faculty with whom the Team met seemed unaware of the recommendations of the TFOD. Since the submission of the report, a few changes have occurred so that there are now a Diversity Plan, a Liaison Group, a Diversity Leadership Team, and co-curricular student activities. There are good people involved in these different initiatives, but the efforts appear to be uncoordinated. The Diversity Plan is the responsibility of the office for Equity, Diversity, and Immigration; the Liaison Group reports to the Executive Vice-President; the Leadership Team is under the Provost; and the office of Student Affairs organizes student activities.

The University is commended for its attention to the challenges and opportunities of diversity. In order to continue its progress in this arena, the university is urged to consider the following recommendations: (1) Immediately implement the first recommendation of the TFOD, which calls for "unambiguous statements" by the top leadership to articulate a commitment to enhancing diversity in the curricula and hiring and retaining faculty and staff; (2) Coordinate the various efforts on campus with direct reporting to the President; and (3) The President should regularly report to the University community the outcomes and follow-through of the several recommendations of the TFOD.

E. Organizational Structure: The Team suggests that BGSU examine the organizational location of Continuing Education, International and Summer Programs (or some portion thereof). Currently, this function is not within the academic unit of the University. This results in some departments losing their faculty (who were hired to cover courses for degree seeking students) and their tuition producing credits because of incentives from another unit to deliver course work elsewhere. Such a structure complicates the planning for departments, creates more competition for resources among units than necessary and may undermine the strength of the affected academic departments.

F. Course Evaluations: BGSU should review the current course evaluation system that is based at the department level to assure that the quality of the information provided is adequate for making decisions. While course evaluation forms may differ among departments, the standards for the quality of instruments to gather student evaluation of teaching should apply to all versions that might be used at an institution. Expertise exists on the campus and the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology to guide this review.

G. Faculty: The large number of new faculty hires in recent years requires the institution to continue to attend to the unique needs and the consequences of this significant portion of the faculty. When financially feasible, the departments need to continue to consider reduced loads to support research efforts and the institution should pursue every effort to financially support their research and professional activity. The rich resources found in CTLT are utilized by many of the new faculty but all new faculty could benefit with direct contact; the Center has made extraordinary efforts to reach out. Some form of a voluntary mentoring program could take advantage of the CTLT and be very beneficial to the corps of new faculty and the future of the institution.

Some faculty members expressed concern about the increase in administrative and technical staff personnel in recent years. This area of morale could be ameliorated by further open communication by BGSU's central administration as to the reasons for these additions that apparently include government regulations, technology improvements, financial development staffing, and increased research support personnel.

H. Library: As a teaching institution, BGSU has a series of holdings and staffing appropriate for this mission. In terms of its research focus, its connection to Ohio-Link provided a wealth of additional resources for students and faculty alike. With the potential for further reductions in state appropriations, the utilization of Ohio-Link will likely increase over time. The University needs to be aware of this increase and the Team strongly recommends that it plan for it.

I. Firelands: The high level of technology and flexibility in educational programming can serve to bring the two campuses, main and Firelands, even closer together. Various combinations of services can create enhanced and innovative educational programs for delivery to a virtually unlimited clientele. An increased involvement and responsibility for the technology services at the Firelands campus would further the success of both campuses in distance education via technology.

Additionally, the issue of offering 300 – 400 level classes at Firelands College merits further attention. Given the positive perceptions of increased communication between the two campuses, the expressed student interest in these classes and the current fiscal realities on most college and university campuses, the Team recommends that the University fully explore this issue in a formalized, systematic way.

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

A. The Bowling Green Experience: Also known as BgeXperience [What do you care about?], the Bowling Green Experience is a new initiative that deserves special mention. In April 2002, President Ribeau appointed a task force of faculty, staff and administrators and charged them with developing a plan to “integrate values exploration, critical thinking, civic engagement, and character development throughout the curricular and co-curricular experience.” What has evolved from this charge is the BgeXperience, piloted in the fall of 2002. The experience consists of five components: (1) an intensive August orientation experience, (2) a freshman general education course, including a focus on critical thinking about values in the discipline in which the course is offered, (3) a program of co-curricular experiences and service learning opportunities, (4) an intensive junior experience and (5) a senior capstone course in the major.

Students are assigned to small groups of 25, along with a faculty member, a student affairs staff member and a returning student. The students remain with the same group of students, faculty and staff throughout the orientation and general education course. The general education course is grounded in the discipline in which it is being taught with the added component of teaching students to think critically about values in that discipline. Initial response to the program has been very favorable. The long-range goal is that every new student would eventually participate in this program. BgeXperience is an exciting and ambitious endeavor and merits continued attention.

B. Academic Plan: The Team would like to commend Bowling Green State University on the development of its proposed Academic Plan, not only for its visionary approach to organizing the campus learning community around student success but also for the process in which it was developed. It involved over fifty committees, faculty groups, and student groups in the course of its development, ensuring a huge vested commitment to its implementation. It has the potential to serve as a catalyst to reconfigure the General Education program to include all the other exciting first year initiatives and to integrate the many lists of outcomes, values, and goals into its five-theme, four modes of inquiry core. It will truly serve to aid the transformation of the campus to one of the premier learning communities in the nation.