

**Reaffirmation of Accreditation Recommendation
for**

**Ohio University
Athens, Ohio**

**of the 2008-2009
Academic Quality Improvement Program
Review Panel on Reaffirmation**

**The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
January 5, 2009**

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I. Context and Nature of Review

A. Review Purpose, Process, and Materials

AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation reviews are scheduled seven years in advance, when an institution first joins the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) or when an institution already participating in AQIP is reaffirmed via the AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation process.

In conducting these reviews, the AQIP Reaffirmation of review panel examines the following materials for each institution:

- Current Commission History file of institutional actions
- Current Commission Statement of Affiliation Status
- Current official Commission Organizational Profile
- Annual Updates of year's Action Projects
- AQIP Review Panel Report(s) on Institutional Status Change Requests
- Focused visit report(s) and action letter(s)
- Institutional websites
- Key correspondence between the institution and the Commission
- Last Comprehensive PEAQ Evaluation team report, institutional response, and Commission action letter
- Quality Checkup report(s)
- Quality Highlights Report, August 1, 2008
- Summary of Action Projects attempted
- Summary Update of institutional activity and dynamics since the last Quality Checkup, provided by the institution on September 1 of the review year
- Systems Appraisal Feedback Report(s)
- Systems Portfolio Index(es) (to compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation)
- Systems Portfolio(s), including update provided by the institution on September 1 of the review year
- Any other major reports or documents that are part of the institution's permanent Commission files

Two lead panelists from the AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation draft a recommendation that is reviewed by the entire panel before it is forwarded to the Institutional Actions Council.

B. Organizational Context

Ohio University was first accredited by the Commission in January, 1913. The university was admitted to AQIP on July 9, 2002, and then participated in Strategy Forums on June 5-7, 2002 and again on May 15-17, 2007. Since admission to AQIP, the institution has officially declared and attempted seven individual Action Projects (with one additional cancelled), and has provided AQIP with Annual Updates of ongoing projects and received Annual Update Feedback Reports on these.

Ohio University provided its Systems Portfolio for review in December 2005 and received a Systems Appraisal Feedback Report on March 21, 2006. The institution received an approval to offer MBA degrees at three international sites as of July 3, 2008.

AQIP conducted a Quality Checkup visit to the university on April 23-25, 2008 and provided a report of the visiting team.

C. Organizational Scope and Structure (including extended physical or distance education operations)

Ohio University is one of fifteen public, state-assisted universities in Ohio that are coordinated by the Ohio Board of Regents. Ohio University is a national, public, comprehensive university that emphasizes a high-quality, learning-centered educational experience and conducts world-class research in many disciplines. The Athens campus combines undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in a residential setting; the regional campuses offered enhanced access to many of the same quality programs.

Ohio University has five regional campuses, two centers, and active Lifelong Learning Program, the Ohio University Without Boundaries program (an Internet program), and a Professional MBA program. These programs reach many students, both traditional and non-traditional, across the southeastern region of the state and beyond. The International Studies program expands the University's reach to the international community and provides the opportunity for students from Ohio University to study abroad. Undergraduate enrollment is 20,903, and graduate enrollment is 2,483.

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

A Quality Checkup site visit to Ohio University was conducted on April 23-25, 2008. In compliance with Commission requirements, the University notified its constituencies and the public of this visit, solicited third party comment to be sent directly to the Commission. The Commission shared one comment received with the institution and the team.

E. Compliance with Federal Requirements

The Quality Checkup team that conducted a site visit to the institution on April 23-25, 2008 examined evidence provided by the institution of its compliance with the Commission's federal compliance program. The team concluded that the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it is in complete compliance with all Commission and AQIP expectations in this program.

F. Evidence of the Organization's Responsiveness to Previous Commission Concerns Regarding Fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation.

During the Quality Checkup Visit and in the formation of the February 14, 2008 Declaration of an AQIP Project (Coordinating Quality Improvement Activities with Strategic Planning at Ohio University), the university has presented evidence that it is responsive to Commission feedback about integration of its quality improvement and strategic planning.

II. Fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation

CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY. The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff and students.

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. The mission, vision, and core values (teaching, learning, research, governance, diversity, global awareness, fiscal prudence, and accountability) of Ohio University are publicly expressed in Vision Ohio, the strategic plan mandated by the University's trustees (SA p. 10).
2. The mission documents recognize the diversity of learners and other constituents by stating it will serve the "educational, societal, and economic needs of the region, state, nation, and world. The university will be a welcoming, learning-centered, globally aware community with loyal and engaged alumni, an extensive network of supportive partnerships, and a diverse populations of students, faculty, and staff." (SP p. 3).
3. During the Quality Checkup Visit, the team met with representatives of the governance structure and determined that innovation, empowerment, and organization learning and sharing exist throughout the University (QCU p 9).
4. Shared governance, which operates within a culture of open and shared information in the development and implementation of academic programming and in the stewardship of institutional resources, is a central institutional value. This collaborative process enables the institution to fulfill its mission (SA p. 10).
5. Ohio University determined its distinctive objectives in the context of its *Vision Ohio* strategic plan, drafted by a 46-member data-gathering committee, with a concerted effort to involve the entire university community (SA p.21).
6. The university has developed *Vision Ohio*, a strategic plan that serves as the blueprint for vision and direction of the university for the next ten years. The university has also developed academic, financial, and facilities plans for the next five years. It is clear that the university considers the *Vision Ohio* plan one that will aid the institution in adjusting to a succession in leadership. This planning for leadership succession is evidence the institution seeks to uphold and protect the integrity of its mission (QCU p. 7).

B. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None

C. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution's Systems Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.

None

D. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.

None

Recommendation of the Panel:

The Criterion is met, and no specific Commission follow-up is recommended.

CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. Ohio University seeks to expand local, regional, national and international partnerships in order to promote greater opportunities for service learning, community outreach, internships and externships and study abroad. In doing so, the university prepares its faculty, staff and students for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends (SA p. 10).
2. Ohio University will continue to face severe challenges in the future including shrinking budgets and subsidy from the State of Ohio, a decreased traditional student population base, and increased pressure from the public and government on accountability measures. However, extensive strategic planning has been completed, and ongoing refinement of the strategic plan puts the institution in very strong position to accept these challenges and strategically to invest finances and human efforts (QCU p 8).
3. Ohio University's ongoing evaluation of learning communities shows strong evidence that demonstrates the program is beneficial in promoting first year student engagement and has a positive effect on academic performance and student satisfaction. This evaluation informs strategies for continuous improvement (QH p 5).
4. The university has developed a mechanism to identify expected common learning objectives/outcomes and formulated a plan to analyze the current general education program curriculum in order to determine what modifications would need to be made (QCU p.6-7).
5. Since 2005, the development of the *Vision Ohio* Strategic Plan and the five-year action implementation plan has been instrumental in guiding institutional quality improvement initiatives (QCU p. 8).

6. Ohio University has a three tiered general education program requiring proficiency in mathematics, composition, logical thinking, breadth of knowledge, and interdisciplinary and integrative thought. Specific program learning objectives are determined by academic schools and departments within the disciplines (SP p 17).
7. Ohio University evaluates faculty teaching effectiveness each quarter through end-of-course evaluations, and in some departments through peer or mentor reviews and classroom visits, and ties this to its merit recognition system (SA p. 17).
8. Ohio University has assured that all levels of planning align with the organization's mission. Beginning in the 2004-2005 academic year, the university used a broad based task force to prepare a plan in which the guiding principles of the institution were identified, and goals and ambitions were set in all areas of its academic mission. This work has created a quality improvement "blueprint" for the next 15 to 20 years (QCU 11-12).

B. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None

C. Evidence that one ore more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution's Systems Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.

None

D. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.

None

Recommendation of the Panel:

The Criterion is met, and no specific Commission follow-up is recommended.

CRITERION THREE: Student Learning and Effective Teaching. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. The following academic units have structured assessment activities and processes:
 - College of Education and affiliated secondary education departments
 - Russ College of Engineering and Technology, all departments/schools
 - College of Business, all departments/schools
 - College of Health and Human Services, selected accredited schools

- Department of Social Work
 - Department of English and Writing across the Curriculum
 - (Ohio University. Office of Institutional Research.
<http://www.ohiou.edu/institres/assessments/activities.html>)
2. The university has developed a mechanism to identify expected common learning objectives/outcomes and formulated a plan to analyze the current general education program curriculum (QCU p. 7).
 3. Methods were outlined regarding how the desired learning outcomes could be assessed, which institutional units should be involved in this process, what education/training faculty need regarding assessment, and what units would be responsible for this process (QCU p. 7).
 4. Ohio University's ongoing evaluation of learning communities shows strong evidence that demonstrates the program is beneficial in promoting first year student engagement and has a positive effect on academic performance and student satisfaction. This evaluation informs strategies for continuous improvement (QH p 5).
 5. Ohio University evaluates faculty teaching effectiveness each quarter through end-of-course evaluations, and in some departments through peer or mentor reviews and classroom visits, and ties this to its merit recognition system (SA p. 17).
 6. The university has set planning and tracking mechanisms in place that assure effective learning environments across a complex university structure. Before joining AQIP and creating the strategic plan, the institution employed a more decentralized approach that allowed individual academic support units to set their own improvement priorities and goals with little attention paid to how these efforts were benefitting the overall mission of the institution. A new executive leadership team has brought a new planning process that emphasizes quality improvement on an institutional level (QH p.3).
 7. As summarized in the Quality Highlights, action project reports show that the institution has made significant progress in the areas of undergraduate student engagement, selective enhancement of graduate and research programs, and the development and assessment of common learning outcomes for general education (QH p. 4).
 8. Since 2000, the university has placed an emphasis on "personalized technology for every student" with a computer/printer and internet access in every dorm room (SA p. 39).
 9. Faculty are expected to pursue an active research agenda, high quality teaching, advising and mentoring of students, and institutional service opportunities (SA p. 11).
 10. A number of development opportunities in technologically-enhanced pedagogies and in teaching and learning best practices are made available to faculty (SA p. 11).

B. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

1. Assessment continues to be a challenge, and an opportunity exists to strengthen the nine categories in the Systems Portfolio in the areas of measures, results and improvements. The university should address this challenge in updating and keeping the Systems Portfolio current, with an emphasis on measures, results and improvements. (QCU p. 6).

C. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution's Systems Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.

None

D. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.

None

Recommendation of the Panel:

The Criterion is met, and no specific Commission follow-up is recommended

CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE. The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. Faculty are expected to pursue an active research agenda, high quality teaching, advising and mentoring of students, and institutional service opportunities (SA p. 11).
2. Ohio University aspires to be an internationally prominent university that engages its students in learning centered educational experiences and civic issues, as well as an institution recognized for distinctive and world-class research activities (SP p. 3).
3. The university conducts educational research that result in organizational improvement. In 2002, the university began collecting data related to the effectiveness of the learning communities program in improving retention of first year students, academic performance and student engagement/satisfaction with the university. As a result of this research, learning communities have been expanded at Ohio University (QH p.5).
4. Ohio University believes one-on-one interaction with faculty is critical to the academic development and engagement of students. As a means to promote such interaction, the university provides both financial and other institutional support to encourage undergraduate research (QH p. 7).

5. Ohio University has selected an action project to accurately and fairly evaluate the potential of graduate and research programs, and selectively enhance these programs from a financial standpoint (QH p. 9).
6. The university has shown that integral to its educational programs is the acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and the skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry through the development of a mechanism to identify expected common learning objectives/outcomes. A plan has also been formulated to analyze the current general education program curriculum to determine what modifications would need to be made (QCU p. 7).
7. Ohio University seeks to expand local, regional, national and international partnerships in order to promote greater opportunities for service learning, community outreach, internships and externships and study abroad. Connecting students with real world experiences helps students learn how to live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society (SA p. 10).
8. The university is providing an educational experience that alumni and donors find is relevant. Alumni are highly satisfied with ongoing post graduation reach out programs (SA p. 28).
9. The university has developed a traditional set of processes for initiating and building relationships with students that include a set of activities for enrolled students including services, participation in campus life, structured programs, and emphasis on developing social and academic relationships (SA p. 26).
10. The university maintains a Professional Ethics Committee in each College to continually monitor ethical practices across the institution (SA p. 31).

B. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None

C. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution's Systems Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.

None

D. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.

None

Recommendation of the Panel:

The Criterion is met, and no specific Commission follow-up is recommended

CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE: As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. The Office of Institutional Research assesses students and alumni needs through a variety of surveys: Cooperative Institutional Research Project (CIRP), national Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Student Involvement/Engagement Surveys, Student Satisfaction Surveys, and Alumni Surveys (SP p. 28).
2. The university has articulated the means by which relationships with other educational institutions, employers, partners, agencies and governmental entities are created and nurtured by individuals within the institution (SA p. 53).
3. The university uses a process of continuous review, including surveys, assessment, and evaluation reports, to determine the goals and benefits of its relationships with partners (SA p. 53).
4. The university provides several indicators of results in building and maintaining partnerships, including steady enrollment, ranking within the top 100 public institutions, a 60% increase in grants and contract funding, sponsorship of 172 international programs, assists for start-up companies, reciprocity agreements with several institutions, and ranking first among aspirations peers relative to research dollars spent (SA p. 54).

B. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None

C. Evidence that one ore more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution's Systems Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.

None

D. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.

None

Recommendation of the Panel:

The Criterion is met, and no specific Commission follow-up is recommended.

Summary of Panel recommendations regarding fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation

The Criteria are all met, and no Commission follow-up recommended.

III. Participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP)

A. Comments and counsel on specific improvement projects

B. Comments and counsel on key institutional processes and systems

C. Comments and counsel on the institution's culture of quality and its quality program or infrastructure

Past Action Projects have included significant areas of quality improvement including an emphasis on first year student engagement and retention, selective enhancement of graduate and research programs, and the development of common learning outcomes (undergraduate students). These are detailed in the Quality Checkup Report (March 2008) and have influenced many of the comments above related to meeting Criteria for Accreditation.

However, integration of Action Project results, the Vision Ohio, and the decentralized tracking of evaluation and assessment results at Ohio University, a large, complex organization, have been challenging. During the recent Quality Checkup Visit (April 2008), the visiting team had several conversations on the topic of using AQIP as a tool in integration.

Through these conversations, university representatives learned how the Systems Portfolio could be a driving force for its continuous improvement initiatives noted in the *Vision Ohio* (the university's Strategic Plan). In addition, Action Projects could help members of the institution focus their energy and direction in the accomplishment of specific priorities and goals. It is this type of organizational learning that is the goal of Quality Checkup Visit, and the representatives of Ohio University should be commended for their openness to feedback and formulation of next steps.

Consequently, the university will place greater emphasis in the Systems Portfolio results section, and the updated Systems Portfolio will be used to aid the selection of new Action Projects, based on the assessment and evaluation results.

It is important to emphasize that Ohio University is large and complex. It is now using all the AQIP tools at its disposal—Action Projects with peer review, the Systems Portfolio with peer review, and the team visit, to elevate its past, more decentralized approach to implementing and tracking improvement efforts, to a centralized approach which aligns with its critical strategic plan.

The writers of the August 2008 Quality Highlights Report noted that the State of Ohio is asking all state-supported institutions of higher education to identify "Centers of Excellence" in undergraduate and graduate education. Ohio institutions will be asked to focus on these centers (implying that this type of focus is critical in a time of declining resources). The writers of the Quality Highlights envision AQIP as a philosophy which will serve the university well in this identification and support process.

Summary of panel comments and counsel about the organization's commitment to continuous quality improvement and its participation in AQIP.

Ohio University continues to learn and apply AQIP principles – especially within a fast-changing higher education environment. This learning and applying of principles demonstrate a growing culture of quality. It appears that Ohio University has capitalized on the “opportunities for improvement” in its 2005 Systems Portfolio and has sought new ways for Ohio University to be an AQIP institution.