



OHIO

UNIVERSITY

Office of the President

February 14, 2014

Cutler Hall
1 Ohio University
Athens OH 45701-2979

Ms. Mary L. Green
AQIP Process Administrator
Higher Learning Commission
230 South LaSalle Street
Suite 7-500
Chicago, IL 60604-1411
AQIP@hlcommission.org

Dear Ms. Green,

The purpose of my letter is to acknowledge receipt of the 2014 Systems Appraisal report for Ohio University. We are grateful to the Commission and to the reviewers for providing this important feedback to our AQIP Systems Portfolio. We do wish to address the following items, especially as they pertain to our reaffirmation of accreditation cycle and our continuous improvement efforts in AQIP.

We are very pleased that the team affirmed evidence that Ohio University provided in the Portfolio that we are meeting the Criteria for Accreditation. We have taken the 2013 revision of the Criteria very seriously as "best practices" for a contemporary high-functioning institution. We will continue to incorporate the Core Components in our operations and practices.

As an AQIP institution, we have reviewed the report first for areas related to the Criteria for Accreditation in which the reviewers suggested we focus particular attention. We concur with the reviewers that we have made noteworthy progress in Core Components 4A (program review), 4B (assessment), 4C (persistence and completion), and 5A (planning efforts to support academic quality), and we will continue to develop these areas. In fact, we used the Systems Portfolio exercise as a tool to identify opportunities and already are redoubling our efforts in these areas. We hope to have made additional significant progress in these areas by the time of our Quality Checkup Visit next year. In addition, we have chosen this year's AQIP Action Projects to further use AQIP as a tool to focus attention and energy on areas such as assessment, curricular reform and institution-wide sustainability.

Our review of the report will continue, as we digest the detailed comments related to strategic challenges and the individual category feedback. We also would like to respond to some particular themes that emerged. First, we believe that we were unable to sufficiently communicate the complexity of Ohio University in the format of the Systems Portfolio. Space limitations in particular precluded sufficient inclusion of regional campus examples and detail. Second, we agree with the Systems Appraisal that we communicated about the Athens campus over the regional campus and distance learning operations. Managing all our locations and managing the University's external relationships are areas in which the University does devote significant attention, and we acknowledge their subordinate emphasis in the Portfolio. We do have institution-wide structures in place, either in the form of offices or committees to assist in their oversight and inclusion throughout the University. A third theme that emerged was the need to incorporate measures of employee satisfaction to assess our campus climate. This issue already is being addressed, and the University will be launching an institution-wide climate survey this spring semester. Using additional recommendations in the Appraisal, we recently have decided to incorporate questions about assessment and continuous quality improvement in this survey and add it into one of our AQIP Action Projects on assessment. This effort will help strengthen the role of our AQIP Task Force in our University - a fourth theme addressed our institutional planning efforts.

Indeed, Ohio University has a strong commitment to carry out its 4 x 4 strategic plan, and as we implement responsibility centered management (RCM), we currently are operationalizing its further development. We appreciate the reviewers' support of this process. Finally, we acknowledge the need for better data across all operational areas; this has been an ongoing effort, and we are devoting additional fiscal and human resources to its enhancement. All academic support units are being called upon to demonstrate accountability and effectiveness under RCM. All academic units are increasing their efforts to conduct meaningful academic program reviews and assessment of learning objectives that will help them in their "plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future." We took particular interest in the suggestion in 1P18, "to create a systematic, institutional-level program of assessment..." Our newly-revised academic program review template that incorporates student learning objectives will assist us greatly in this area.

There were some issues in the Systems Appraisal report itself that we would like to address that range from typographical errors to items that need clarification. We would like to request corrections and/or clarification of the following items:

- page 5, clarification: Ohio University has 21,000 students on the Athens campus (approx. 17,000 undergraduates);
- page 6, clarification: Ohio University identified students, faculty, staff, and alumni as its primary stakeholders;
- incomplete sentence, top of page 9; we would like to know the reviewers' complete thoughts;
- page 25, clarification: the chart in 4R4 clearly shows trend and external comparison data on compensation, yet the comment suggests this may have been missed in the review. However, the suggestion about gathering employee satisfaction data is well taken and already is being implemented;
- incomplete sentence, top of page 26; we would like to know the reviewers' complete thoughts.

Finally, as we attempt to incorporate the results of the Systems Portfolio, we understand that AQIP is evolving and likely will change its categories. We welcome this change to a more manageable and applicable group of categories that better fit a large and complex university such as ours, and the opportunity to participate in their development, so that we can increasingly use AQIP as an institutional tool to improve our operations in all areas.

Once again, on behalf of all those at Ohio University who participated in the development of the Systems Portfolio, I would like to extend my thanks to the Commission for this useful report.

Cordially,



Roderick J. McDavis
President

cc: Pamela Benoit, Executive Vice President and Provost
Michael Williford, Associate Provost for Institutional Accreditation