Criterion One—Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly;
it guides the institution's operations.

Core Component 1.A.

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution
and guides its operations.

The consistent threads in Ball State University's evolving mission are broadly understood by students, faculty, administrators, and staff. The institution is clearly focused on providing a relevant, high-quality education for its students. With our goals, we value the integration of scholarship and outreach and embrace immersive learning and other creative/experiential academic programs for students that expand Ball State's reach into state, national, and international communities. The university achieves these goals on a campus that is vibrant and welcoming.

Ball State's mission is widely publicized within the institution. Academic, financial, and infrastructural decisions are guided by the university's mission, as will be demonstrated throughout this self-study report. Lessons learned from our first strategic planning process for 2001–2006 included the need to define clear, measurable outcomes and an appropriate, consistent metric reporting process to achieve successful assessment. The 2007–2012 and 2012–2017 strategic plans each include more than 100 defined outcome measurements assessed clearly on an annual basis so the institution is aware of its progress in meeting its goals. This assessment, published in print and online, also provides a basis for continued decision making in all areas of the university.

Subcomponent 1.A.1.

The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and adopted by the governing board.

Ball State's culture of strategic planning has been one of inclusive representation on the task forces that developed the plans, including the mission, vision, and values statements. Much like the original 2001–2006 strategic planning process described in our previous self-study, development of the subsequent strategic plans for 2007–2012 and 2012–2017 included campuswide task forces of 20 or more members meeting during the course of two or three academic years. Care was taken to represent the university community as comprehensively as possible within the limitations of groups this size.

Strategic Plan 2007–2012

The 2007–2012 Strategic Planning Task Force met 31 times over a period of 21 months. A review of agendas and minutes for these meetings between January 19, 2005, and December 14, 2006, indicates the task force took care to achieve procedural and substantive objectives. Task force members gathered data from a wide variety of sources, including institutions outside the university, such as peer institutions and governmental agencies within the state, and departments within the university, such as budgeting and enrollment. They carefully examined the previous strategic plan using a rigorous SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. Smaller subcommittees looked intensively at

specific issues, including the goals, mission, vision, and values, which became the cornerstone of the strategic plan.

Campus Engagement—The Strategic Planning Task Force provided time for the university's many units to become engaged in the strategic planning process, encouraging and providing opportunities for feedback from all employees to ensure the process would merge top-down and bottom-up approaches. Feedback was gathered through two open forums (with task force members present) that were made available as webcasts, along with a presentation to the University Senate and a discussion board with comment forms. Commentary from the surrounding communities was also solicited.

Quantifiable Outcomes—In *Strategic Plan 2007–2012*, the task force systematically included quantifiable outcomes as well as assessment metrics and deadlines for achieving those outcomes. University units across the campus had considerable autonomy in determining objectives, outcomes, and assessment metrics that best applied to them relative to the institutional mission and strategic plan. The mission, vision, and values were developed to emphasize Ball State's distinctiveness in, for example, immersive learning and sustainability initiatives.

Although the 2007–2012 mission, vision, and values were not voted upon by the university's Board of Trustees, its members were kept informed about the plan's development via presentations by the board's vice president and Ball State's president and provost at regular meetings in 2005 and 2006. The board also provided input into the development of the strategic plan as a whole during its annual retreat in 2006. Consensus was reached indicating the board members' satisfaction with the plan, although there was no formal vote at a public meeting.

Strategic Plan 2012–2017

The 2012–2017 Strategic Planning Task Force met 22 times over 16 months. The meeting minutes and the data summary detail the procedural and substantive objectives. This group systematically analyzed the 2007–2012 strategic plan metrics to determine which objectives were met, which were nearly met, and which were not met in order to identify important targets for planning. The task force also performed a SWOT-A (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and aspirations) analysis. Data gathering from 450 stakeholders organized into 21 groups—including faculty, students, alumni, parents, and community and business leaders—included reflection on the SWOT-A analysis and an evaluation of the following within a five-year window: what went well for Ball State, what could have gone better, and what new information we learned about ourselves. The SWOT-A analysis also attempted to identify an area where change would have a significant impact on the university.

Strengths—Among Ball State's strengths, the task force cited:

- campus infrastructural improvements
- increases in student quality and retention
- unique identity and pride in the institution's reputation
- immersive learning experiences for students
- ability to work successfully toward change and achieve progressive goals
- strength and vitality due to strong teaching and research

Improvement—Among areas for improvement, they cited the university's need to enhance:

- student connectivity in areas of campus life
- faculty morale by continuing to work to increase salaries, providing more support and recognition for research, and achieving a better balance between teaching loads and research expectations
- administrative communication on decision-making processes

Goals—With these data in mind, a subcommittee of the task force developed the vision, mission, and values statements that are the basis for the remainder of the strategic plan. *Strategic Plan 2012–2017* emphasizes four goals:

- providing distinctive, high-quality educational experiences
- becoming a recognized leader for educational and disciplinary innovation
- creating a vibrant and integrated university and community emphasizing cocurricular speakers and events, improving faculty and staff relationships, and expanding community interactions
- advancing economic vitality throughout the state of Indiana through student engagement and faculty expertise, with projects and programs that benefit business, community, and government partners

Outcome measurements were developed in keeping with these four goals and will be assessed annually. The university community was asked to provide input into the plan via e-mail and forum discussions in spring 2012. Similarly, Ball State's Board of Trustees was apprised of progress on the development of the mission and the entire strategic plan and provided input into the planning process. A draft of *Strategic Plan 2012–2017* was presented to the Board of Trustees on October 17, 2012. Completion and approval of the final plan are pending.

Subcomponent 1.A.2.

The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.

Ball State's 2007–2012 mission challenged the institution to offer students "action-oriented learning, including immersive out-of-class experiences, research, and study abroad." For 2012–2017, the university's charge is to "transform information into knowledge, knowledge into judgment, and judgment into action that addresses complex problems."

As a comprehensive university, Ball State offers a wealth of academic opportunities, including about 180 undergraduate majors and preprofessional programs and more than 100 master's and doctoral degrees. The university's programs in entrepreneurship, architecture, landscape architecture, telecommunications, educational leadership, and nursing (online master's degree) are consistently ranked among the nation's best. A number of other academic programs have also earned national rankings or recognition. Ball State is committed to increasing the list.

This excellence is due in part to the quality of Ball State's faculty and their commitment to teaching. Notably, about 97 percent of the university's classes are taught by faculty, unlike at other large

universities where graduate assistants take on more of the teaching responsibilities. Also driving academic excellence at Ball State are innovative, real-world learning experiences on and off campus, critical support services and resources, and an increasingly bright and selective student body.

Immersive Learning

At the heart of a Ball State education, immersive learning melds course content, practical skills, societal need, and student interests into an intense, transformative experience. Interdisciplinary student teams work alongside faculty mentors and community or business partners to solve real-world problems. The result is a tangible product that enhances the community with a lasting impact. Students have created business plans, websites, documentaries, emerging media content and applications, publications and performance productions, and much more. Examples of immersive learning experiences are provided under Core Components 1.B., 1.C., and 1.D.

Experiential Learning

Students are provided numerous opportunities to collaborate with faculty on research projects and participate in internship, practicum, or other related professional experiences. Graduate and undergraduate students participate in research with faculty in many academic departments via master's, doctoral, or certificate programs as well as honors theses and research for credit in undergraduate and graduate classes. For more discussion of student research, see subcomponent 1.B.2.

Many departments require competitive internships for degree completion, including athletic training, criminal justice and criminology, exercise science, family and consumer sciences, finance, graphic arts management, and medical technology. Other programs such as accounting, biology, chemistry, management, natural resources and environmental management, and many more strongly encourage completion of internship hours as part of the degree. Details and curriculum requirements for these programs are outlined in the university's online course catalog.

Overall, the number of students participating in an experiential learning opportunity rose from 2,005 (12 percent of all students) in 2007–08 to 5,607 (34 percent of students) in 2011–12, an increase of 22 percentage points.

International Programs

Through the Rinker Center for International Programs, Ball State students can incorporate a wide variety of study-abroad opportunities into their curriculum. They may study at one of Ball State's centers in England, Australia, and Costa Rica and take classes through an exchange program or one of our study-abroad consortia. They can participate in a field study during the summer or complete an international internship in Dublin, Ireland. Selected experiences are described via student blogs on the International Programs website.

Since 2006, the number of students participating in a stimulating study-abroad experience has ranged from 566 to 790 per year. Although recent declines may be a reflection of the economic times, the university's continuing goal is to provide experiences for more than 1,000 students annually as emphasized in Goal 3, Objective 1 of *Strategic Plan 2012–2017* and establish rigor standards for study abroad.

Academic Support Services

Academic support services for students are critical to ensure the success of Ball State's mission. Support for academics, career planning, health and wellness, and a variety of other services are available to all students. Academic advising starts at orientation, when new students develop their first- semester schedule with an academic advisor. Students are then assigned a freshman advisor until they have accrued 30 credit hours and have declared a major; then they are assigned a faculty advisor in the department of their major.

Online, students can plan their degrees and evaluate their progress through DegreeWorks—Ball State's new online summary of each student's plan of study—as well as access their grades and transcripts, view suggested four-year plans of study for many majors on department websites, register for classes, and apply for graduation. These and many other services assist students and advisors in the process of mapping a schedule for completing academic goals.

Learning Center

Ball State's Learning Center—honored with the 2010 National College Learning Center Association/Frank L. Christ Outstanding Learning Center Award for a four-year college—provides students with a variety of services for learning enhancement and academic achievement. In keeping with the university's mission, the Learning Center's mission is "to enhance the academic success of Ball State students by providing free peer tutoring, supplemental instruction, and workshops covering a variety of academic issues. In addition, the Learning Center models the university's goal of becoming a premier teaching institution by serving as a scholarly preprofessional experience for undergraduates and graduate student employees. Finally, the Learning Center strives to impact the extended university community through faculty development efforts, learning technologies, and outreach programs at other sites."

In 2010–11, the Learning Center provided services to 34.1 percent of freshmen and 18.8 percent of the entire Ball State student population while employing 140 or more undergraduate and graduate students as peer tutors and supplemental instruction leaders. Use of Learning Center services particularly for freshmen and sophomores resulted in higher overall GPAs—2.886 and 2.979, respectively—compared with GPAs for the overall Ball State population for those class standings—2.613 and 2.858, respectively. In 2011–12, the Learning Center recorded 15,600 student visits for tutoring and test proctoring sessions, serving a total of 3,366 individual students. Supplemental Instruction served an additional 1,958 students.

Career and Counseling Centers

Ball State's Career Center provides a variety of services for students at every stage of their education, beginning even before their first day of classes. During the orientation program, all incoming freshmen complete a career survey to help them make more informed decisions about their path of study. For freshmen seeking advice on possible careers and associated majors, the Career Center and the Counseling Center offer personal assessment tools such as Quest, SIGI3, and TypeFocus to aid in career exploration. For juniors and seniors needing a job or internship, resources include professional career advising, links to job fairs, immersive learning information, internship opportunities, job fair information, and mock interview services. The online booklets *Internships and Career Planning* and *The Job Search* offer advice on resume preparation, networking, application, and interviewing.

Cardinal Career Link provides lists of job and internship opportunities for current students and alumni. Additionally, the Career Center maintains listings of part-time student jobs available on campus. Career Center and Counseling Center staff work one-on-one with students in pursuit of their career goals.

University Libraries

Ball State's University Libraries support student pursuits for academic success and faculty endeavors for the creation of knowledge. As of August 2011, the libraries housed 1,076,635 total titles that are accessible to students, faculty, and staff in hard copy, microfilm, or digital format. The highly trained librarian staff provides reference services, library instruction in classrooms, online tutorials, workshops, online chat services, and support for distance education students. In addition to materials for class research, the libraries provide student access to more than 400 computers as well as printing services, the Cardinal Scholar digital repository for media storage, and the digital media repository. Free apps allow students to access the library's services via mobile devices.

Bracken Library is also a meeting place for students in the middle of the campus, providing study spaces and meeting rooms for student reservation and use. Interlibrary loan, course reserves, and individual research consultations are available to the Ball State community. Students take advantage of this area to research, learn, and interact with friends and colleagues. During daily peak usage, as many as 5,400 individuals use the library's services. The number of visitors increased from 807,606 in 2002 to more than 1.6 million in 2011.

Bright, Curious Students

Immersive and experiential learning requires bright and curious students. Almost 17,000 students applied for admission to Ball State for fall 2012, producing an increasingly selective student body. That fall, 63.2 percent of our freshmen held the Indiana Academic Honors Diploma or its equivalent from other states, an increase of more than 16 percentage points from the 2006 freshman class. By comparison, about 31 percent of 2011 Indiana high school graduates (the most recent year available) earned the state's honors diploma. Ball State's 2012 freshman class also averaged a high school GPA of 3.35, and nearly 8.7 percent of them were enrolled in the university's Honors College program.

Demographically, 14.1 percent of the fall 2012 freshman class came from outside Indiana, and 14.3 percent were underrepresented minorities, up significantly from 8.6 percent in 2006. The 2011 freshman cohort's retention rate was 79.4 percent, up nearly 5 percentage points from 74.7 percent for the 2006 entering class. The quality of Ball State's degree-seeking graduate students also improved from 2006, when 22 programs enrolled students with a mean undergraduate GPA of 3.3 or above, to the 2011–12 level of 37 programs, well on the road to the university's strategic plan goal of 44 programs. Ethnic diversity among Ball State's graduate student applicants increased from 10.6 percent in 2006 to 13 percent in 2011–12 but came short of the 15 percent strategic plan goal.

Enrollment Strategy

Ball State's enrollment strategy continues to support the goals of the institution's mission and strategic plan. The Division of Enrollment, Marketing, and Communications recruits students who are creative curious, prepared for college academic rigor from diverse backgrounds, and likely to persist to completion of a degree at Ball State. The four goals of this enrollment strategy include:

- developing an increasingly selective student body
- representing diverse ethnic, geographic, and international populations
- building a strong graduate student enrollment
- increasing graduate student retention and completion rates

This strategy will continue to provide Ball State with outstanding students who will be prepared to complete a rigorous and immersive college experience and be successful lifelong learners.

Subcomponent 1.A.3.

The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.

Ball State's biennial and annual budget planning process occurs in the Office of the Vice President for Business Affairs and Treasurer in consultation with the university's president, the Board of Trustees, and faculty, staff, and student constituents through the Finance and Budgetary Affairs Committee. This budget is developed to allow Ball State to advance its priorities as defined in the university's mission and strategic plan. Our request for state appropriations is presented and negotiated by the president through the biennial legislative process. The budget is ultimately approved by the Board of Trustees. For details on budgetary processes that support Ball State's mission, please refer to subcomponent 5.C.1.

Core Component Summary

Ball State's mission is developed using a broad-based process during the university's five-year strategic planning efforts. The mission statement, crafted first, drives the development of the remainder of the strategic plan and its assessment metrics. As a result, our academic programs, student support services, and enrollment strategies reflect the mission, vision, and values in the strategic plan. The evolution of the institutional mission into *Strategic Plan 2012–2017* will allow the university to continue to meet such challenges as providing quality immersive and experiential learning experiences for our students, increasing student participation in study-abroad experiences, and increasing the quality and diversity of our student body.