Prepared for the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Criterion Five—Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Core Component 5.B.

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

Ball State University's governance and administrative structures facilitate the leadership and support needed to accomplish the institution's mission and strategic objectives. At the top, the university is governed by a nine-member Board of Trustees appointed by the governor of Indiana. The board is made up of two Ball State alumni, one full-time student, and six members appointed at large. Appointments are for four-year terms. Board members and their positions and biographies are available on the university's website.

The Board of Trustees hires the university president, to whom it delegates the day-to-day administration of the institution. The President's Cabinet consists of the senior management team, including:

- vice president for academic affairs (provost)
- vice president for business affairs (treasurer)
- vice president for enrollment, marketing, and communications
- vice president for information technology
- vice president for student affairs
- vice president for university advancement
- associate vice president for governmental affairs
- director of intercollegiate athletics

Information about these officers and organizational charts showing Ball State's administrative structure are available to the public on the university's website.

As a state-assisted institution, Ball State also continues substantial and significant relationships with the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and the Indiana General Assembly.

Subcomponent 5.B.1.

The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.

The principal entity responsible for formulating educational policy at Ball State is the University Senate. Its constitution is published in the *Faculty and Professional Personnel Handbook*. Following the

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constitution is a description of the Ball State University Council and Committee System as prepared by the Governance System Task Force, approved by university faculty and the University Senate, and adopted by Ball State's Board of Trustees on December 17, 2004.

Ball State has two other representative bodies: the Staff Council, elected by non-academic staff members, and the Student Senate. Both groups select their membership according to procedures set forth in their constitutions, and they may establish committees or boards and delegate certain responsibilities to them. The Staff Council and the Student Senate also make recommendations on matters of concern to the appropriate council or committee or to the Office of the President. The Ball State University Governance System Policy Formation Flow Chart is available on the university's website.

Governance Changes

At the time of Ball State's last accreditation self-study for the Higher Learning Commission, the portion of the University Constitution concerning governance was under review. It must be understood that the overall constitution had not been revised to any major extent for 20 years. The governance changes to the constitution involved the following:

Responsibilities—It was clarified that the governance system's responsibilities dealt with academic matters and that financial matters were not included in its purview.

Term Limits—Term limits were imposed on all senators. No one can hold the position for more than three consecutive two-year terms. This was the most extensively discussed change and passed after rigorous study and debate. Another change took away voting privileges from ex-officio committee members. The process of change and enactment of the constitution took more than two years. All constituencies were represented in the process. The process outlined in the last self-study was followed.

New Councils—Three new councils were created to share the bulk of the governance work: University Council, Campus Council, and Faculty Council. It was felt that this new structure provided a better balance among the constituencies than the previous system.

- Campus Council consists of two faculty members, two professional personnel, nine students, and various specific administrative personnel on an ex-officio basis. Its responsibilities include student activities, safety, and ethics and standards.
- Faculty Council consists of 49 regular and two contract faculty members, the chairs of the Campus Council and University Council, and the university's provost. Its responsibilities include academic freedom, promotion and tenure, and salaries and benefits.
- University Council consists of 18 general and specific professional personnel, seven faculty
 members, and five students. Its responsibilities include assessment and academic research,
 international, and master planning, and intellectual properties.
- New technology committees—one under the Faculty Council and one under the University Council—were added to provide a broad base of technology understanding and advice.

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Subcomponent 5.B.2.

The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight for the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

Ball State's nine-member Board of Trustees provides oversight for the total operation of the university, including all educational, financial, legal, and fiduciary matters. As stated in Ball State's *Faculty and Professional Personnel Handbook* since October 17, 1968, the Board of Trustees "reaffirms its commitment to the university community and the citizens of Indiana to provide optimum educational opportunity for all students of the university." Specifically, the Board of Trustees has the following duties:

- manage, control, and operate Ball State
- borrow money, issue bonds, and let contracts
- prescribe conditions for admission
- grant degrees and issue diplomas or certificates
- set fees, charges, fines, and penalties
- define the duties of and provide compensation for faculty and staff of the university
- receive and administer all donations, bequests, grants, funds, and property that are given or provided to the university
- possess all the powers in order to effectively operate the affairs of Ball State

Note: We talked about the possibility of having a list of "important actions" as found in the previous self-study. Also, mentioned in previous report: number of meetings per year, structure of executive meeting first, then public meeting, retreats, communication between meetings, minutes not online.

The Board of Trustees is represented on Ball State's Accreditation Steering Committee by Barbara Phillips, the board's assistant secretary. In a recent interview, she noted that the university's previous accreditation report mentioned communication issues between the Board of Trustees and the president. She said those issues have been corrected, and communication is now good with the administration, faculty, and staff. In addition to frequent contact and information from the president, each board member meets with other members of the Ball State community. Face-to-face meetings also occur at university commencements, board retreats, and regular board meetings.

According to Phillips, the Board of Trustees has been very involved in the university's strategic planning activities, including the development of *Education Redefined: Strategic Plan 2007–2012*, updates on the plan's progress, and the organization and planning of *Strategic Plan 2012–2017*. She also noted that the board has been environmentally green, using digital media for all communications—including iPads at meetings—in support of the university's sustainability efforts.

The members of the board have continued to carry out their responsibilities with dedication and loyalty and in a completely professional manner to fulfill their pledge to provide optimum educational opportunity for all students of the university.

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Subcomponent 5.B.3.

The institution enables the involvement of its administration, faculty, staff, and students in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Frequently, collaboration among university administration, faculty, staff, and students in handling academic issues is a hallmark of higher education. Ball State's internal governance structure facilitates these collaborative efforts. Two recent examples illustrate this point. The two projects began as conversations at Faculty Council and University Senate meetings, and two distinct projects evolved. The establishment of two project teams originated from informal follow-up conversations between the university's provost and the chair of the University Senate. Creation of the two work groups was iterative, mostly by e-mail exchanges. Details of the projects follow:

Education of the Future

The first project was the development of the Education of the Future Task Force. This group was cochaired by Ball State's vice president for information technology and a faculty member. Other team members included faculty and professional staff experienced in technology in the classroom. Students were also involved. The group's charge was to examine current circumstances in higher education and how Ball State can continue to be a leader. Specifically, the task force was asked to:

- examine and summarize in more detail the recent major changes in the world and what will likely happen in the near future
- explain how will these changes affect undergraduate education
- enumerate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats specific to Ball State
- define how an undergraduate education from Ball State should be delivered in 10 years
- suggest a path that will lead the university toward that 2020 vision to serve as input for our next strategic planning process

The provost and the University Senate chair observed and participated in discussions with the task force. After considering more than 25 different references and consulting with campus constituencies, the group produced a final report titled *Education of the Future*. The task force's recommendations are being implemented and incorporated into the university's *Strategic Plan 2012–2017*.

Academic Rigor

The subject of the second project was initially called "grade inflation." This was an item of discussion by several University Senate committees for several years. In 2011, after much national and local press on the subject, the provost and the senate chair again established a team of administrators, faculty, staff, and students to examine what is now called "academic rigor." The generalities of this project revolve around the following questions: Is the education Ball State provides rigorous, and does the university maintain academic quality? How can we improve, and how can we adapt traditional measures to an evolving educational environment?

Team members were jointly selected by the administration and governance representatives. The specific charge to the group was to:

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- assemble the appropriate data for Ball State
- · assess Ball State's performance in maintaining and improving academic rigor
- provide recommendations to the university's faculty and administration

This team was also expected to review the following items:

- **Grade trends:** Is grade inflation real? To what extent is it explained by our better-qualified students or by our liberal course repeat policy?
- **Hours of study outside of class:** We know that today's students study fewer hours than most of us did. Is that a problem? What can we do about it?
- Use of "extra credit": Some faculty give "extra credit" for cocurricular activities such as attendance at lectures or visits to museums. Is that appropriate? What are alternatives?
- Writing proficiency: Writing continues to be very important for graduates in most fields. Are we preparing students well? Is our current assessment tool appropriate/adequate?
- Other related factors: How do we ensure rigor on nontraditional learning environments such as study abroad, field study, immersive learning, or online education? What are the Higher Learning Commission's accreditation requirements?

The team's deliberations began in spring 2012, and a preliminary report is expected before the end of 2012.