

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE VISIT

TO

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
Muncie, Indiana

February 9 to February 11, 2004

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

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ASSURANCE SECTION

I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of the Visit:

The purpose of the visit was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of Ball State University for continued accreditation. In addition, the consultant-evaluator team was asked to review relevant information related to the institution's request for institutional change; namely, permission to offer carefully related undergraduate and graduate courses, credit certificates, and degree programs electronically without geographic boundaries.

B. Institutional Context:

Ball State University is a public, Carnegie classified research-intensive university committed to providing high quality undergraduate and selected and focused graduate degree programs to the citizens of Indiana as well as beyond state boundaries. Founded as the Eastern Division of the Indiana State Normal School, the institution was granted institutional autonomy as Ball State Teachers College in 1929. In 1965 the legislature renamed the institution Ball State University.

In 2000, then President Brownell initiated a strategic planning process from which the Ball State University 2003-2006 plan was developed. Also in 2001, the University adopted both a vision and mission statement with corresponding institutional values statements. The establishment of the Strategic Plan Assessment and Implementation Team was charged with insuring that both the University and college/unit plans are implemented and resource allocations made according to identified goals.

At the time of the visit, the Board of Regents had initiated a search process for the next president of Ball State University following the resignation of President Blaine Brownell in late October and his departure from the University in January. The Provost was serving concurrently as Interim President and Provost.

C. Unique Aspects of the Visit:

The University requested both continued accreditation as well as submitting a request for institution change regarding the electronic delivery of academic offerings.

D. Sites of Branch Campuses Visited: None

E. Distance Education Reviewed:

Ball State University requested an institutional change be granted for permission 'to offer carefully selected undergraduate and graduate courses, credit certificates, and degree programs electronically without geographic boundaries.' Ball State University has been a leader in technology facilitated instructional delivery beyond the campus boundaries. The proposed change was expected to increase access to educational opportunities, to expand opportunities for faculty to enhance teaching, and for the institution to continue its leadership in the innovative use of instructional and information technology.

F. Interactions with Institutional Constituencies:

- Interim President and Provost
- Senior Officers: Vice Chancellor – Business Affairs, Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, Information Technology, Advancement, Associate Vice President and Dean of the Graduate School, Associate Provost and Dean of University College, Associate Vice President Human Resources, Executive Director-University Compliance
- Deans, Department Chairs: Colleges of Applied Sciences and Technology, Architecture and Planning, Business, Communication, Information and Media, Fine Arts, Sciences and Humanities, Teachers College
- Student Services: Admissions and Enrollment Services, Student Life, Dean of Students, Student Services
- University Development
- Alumni Relations
- University Relations/Marketing
- Government Relations
- Budget, Controller and Business Services
- University Libraries
- Faculty, Staff and Student Government Officers
- Regents
- Community Members
- Facilities Planning and Management Office
- AAUP Chapter Representatives
- International Education Office
- Assessment/Institutional Research
- Extended Studies
- Separate Open meetings with faculty, staff, and students

G. Principal Documents, Materials and Web Pages Reviewed

- Basic institutional data and documents
 - Student enrollment

- Student recruitment
- Financial aid
- Graduation and retention rates
- Faculty full and part-time FTE headcounts
- Information resources
- Financial data
- Mission and goals
- Board, organization, administration and governance
- Curriculum and faculty
- Assessment
- Planning and budgeting
- Handbooks and policies
- Federal compliance
- Undergraduate & Graduate Bulletins
- Academic Assessment Plan
- College and Unit Assessment Reports
- Annual Financial Reports
- NCAA Athletics Reports
- Indiana Commission on Higher Education Reviews/Approvals for Undergraduate and Graduate Programs
- Ball State Strategic Planning Documents
- Faculty, Staff and Student Handbooks
- Complaint Log
- Board of Trustee Minutes
- Various Governance Group By-laws, Constitutions, and Organizational Charts
- Salary Survey Comparison Reports
- Alumni Association Financial and Annual Reports
- University Core Curriculum Task Force and Assessment Reports
- University Development Reports
- Legislative Requests 2003-2005
- Internal Program Reviews
- Accreditation Reviews and Reports
- Distance Education Strategic Plan
- Numerous other institutional reports, publications, and internal communications

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

The self-study extended over an almost two-year period and involved university wide representation and involvement from across the campus. The self-study was thorough, well organized, and well written. The campus community expressed familiarity with the accreditation process and the contents of the self-study report itself and reported it to be an accurate representation of Ball State University.

B. Integrity of the Self Study Report

The review of numerous documents as well as meetings held during the visit validated the self-study report as accurate and demonstrated high integrity. Minor inconsistencies were noted, but the overall assessment of the self-study was highly positive.

C. Capacity to Address Previously Identified Challenges

In response to several concerns raised during the 1993 accreditation team report, Ball State University has undertaken a number of initiatives to address those identified concerns. Most notably those concerns centered in areas of planning, full implementation of the teacher – scholar model, and the adequacy of resources to fulfill the mission of the institution.

These previously identified challenges have been addressed as follows:

- Questions about the long run and strategic planning efforts of the university: A more open and inclusive planning process resulted in the adoption of the Ball State University Strategic Plan 2001-2006 with the corresponding establishment, in 2002, of a Strategic Plan Implementation and Assessment Team to oversee progress toward achievement of the goals of the plan. The Board of Trustees approved substantial tuition increases to provide the resources to achieve the plan's goals.
- The lack of uniform promotion and tenure guidelines and an incomplete implementation of teaching load adjustments to establish the teacher-scholar model: A university-wide review of promotion and tenure policies across the university assured parity existed with respect to the levels of achievement required for promotion, established the need for evidence of peer-reviewed scholarship in promotion and tenure portfolios, and implemented external peer review for promotion decisions to full professor. All colleges have developed a faculty workload model and provide faculty development opportunities and support for research and scholarly activity appropriate to the teacher-scholar model.
- Concerns about the adequacy of institutional resources: Ball State University has linked its planning initiative with resource allocations and institutional priorities. Significant tuition increases, an impressive increase in external funding, the establishment of additional assistantship positions as well as increased graduate assistantship stipends, and continued attention to faculty salaries reflect the importance the University had placed on addressing these earlier identified concerns. In addition, some of the additional resources coming to the University have been directed to the library collection, with an emphasis on materials acquisition through technology.

While much progress has been made in addressing the concerns identified in the 1993 report, Ball State University recognizes the need for continual vigilance in each of these areas. The progress made in the last decade, however, clearly demonstrates the institutions capacity to address identified challenges.

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

Requirements were fulfilled. No third party comments were received. A “Response to the Self Study Report of Ball State University” prepared by the Ball State Chapter of the AAUP was sent directly to consultant-evaluator team members. The chapter was requested to forward the minority report to the Higher Learning Commission.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information. The institution was found to be in compliance with an acceptable default rate and appropriate complaint resolution process.

IV. AFFIRMATION OF THE GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Based on the self-study review and other documentation, the team confirmed that the institution continues to meet each of the twenty-four General Institutional Requirements.

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:

- a) The institutional mission statement and corresponding values are clearly articulated in an array of published materials. The advancement efforts of Ball State University are centered on the institution’s mission and vision.
- b) The faculty and administration have endorsed the “teacher-scholar” model (as articulated by E. Boyer) as the implementation focus for the fulfillment of the mission of Ball State University.
- c) Numerous faculty development opportunities were identified which encourage faculty fulfillment of the teacher-scholar model.

- d) In support of its mission as a learning community, students were found to be genuinely active in the teaching-learning environment and were involved in research and scholarly/creative activities, service learning, internships and practica, and international education experiences.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention:

- a) A lack of clarity was found when persons were asked to differentiate between an understanding of the “teacher-scholar model” as the mechanism to fulfill the mission and vision of Ball State University and the actual mission itself.
- b) Faculty members expressed concerns with their ability to fulfill the “teacher-scholar” role as enrollment growth continues and the size of the faculty remains constant.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up: None noted

Recommendation of the Team

The patterns of evidence are sufficient to demonstrate the institution has met the criterion. No commission follow-up is 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:

- a) Financial: The institution has demonstrated a fiscally conservative management approach and used available resources prudently. Financial records are regularly externally audited.
- b) Physical: A campus facilities master plan exists with new capital construction initiatives driven by future oriented academic program initiatives. A systematic plan for the purchase of properties adjacent to the campus also was identified.
- c) Human Resources: Faculty and professional staff were found to possess the appropriate credentials for their assigned instructional/administrative responsibilities. Faculty expectations in fulfillment of the teacher-scholar

model have been clearly articulated. Even in times of enrollment shifts and financial strains, personnel reallocations have enabled the university to sustain a stable employee base.

- d) Governance: Faculty, students, and staff are involved in institutional governance opportunities through various organized governance structures. New models of governance have been drafted and were found to be under discussion on the campus.
- e) Students: The University has raised admission standards with continued modest enrollment growth. The increased emphasis on Ball State University as a “more selective, mid-sized university with strong undergraduate and focused graduate programs” was strongly endorsed by students.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention:

- a) Confusion and lack of clarity of the existence of a campus facility master plan was expressed by a variety of campus constituencies.
- b) The apparent existence of a facilities master plan was found not to be communicated adequately to the campus community, and the entity responsible for its development and dissemination is unknown on campus.
- c) The budget development process, as well as the institutional resource revenues, expenditures, and allocations, were found to lack transparency, and thus are not to be readily understood by the campus community.
- d) Communications between the Board and the President were found to be hampered by unclear expectations of the frequency and nature of the communications which should occur.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up: None noted

Recommendation of the Team

No commission follow-up is recommended as the patterns of evidence sufficiently demonstrate the meeting of the criterion.

C. CRITERION THREE

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates criterion is met:

- a) The general education/core curriculum, as well as all major programs, undergoes continuous review and revision through well documented assessment processes. Support for faculty development is provided to address areas of need as identified by student outcomes assessment.
- b) The impact of the Freshman Connections program, coupled with increased admission standards, has resulted in a markedly increased retention rate (over 80%) an increased graduation rate, and high pass rates on identified board certification/licensure examinations.
- c) Students expressed high satisfaction with the academic programs at Ball State University, advisement experiences, and the campus environment. Over 95% of alumni surveyed reported a positive or very positive experience at the university.
- d) Strong student support was expressed by students for the international and service learning experiences at Ball State University.
- e) Although salaries remain lower than desirable, faculty and staff turnover is low, professional development opportunities and supports are extensive, and university community members report satisfaction with their experience at Ball State University.
- f) The large numbers of accredited and nationally recognized programs were found to be a strong validation of the quality of the academic programs of the institution.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention:

None noted

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up: None noted

Recommendation of the Team

The patterns of evidence sufficiently demonstrate criterion three is met.

D. CRITERION FOUR

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

1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:

- a) The Ball State University strategic Plan 2001-2006 identifies the vision, mission, values, operating principles and goals for the future. The plan includes the explicit identification of measures, baselines, and targets for each goal statement.
- b) A Strategic Plan Assessment and Implementation Team has been identified to insure the university and corresponding college/unit plans direct the future initiatives of the institution.
- c) A financial plan has been put in place which is designed to provide the resources to continue to strengthen the Ball State educational experience and to support new initiatives.
- d) Professional development opportunities and supports are available to strengthen the teaching, research/scholarly activity, and service capabilities of university faculty and staff.
- e) The embedding of technology throughout the curriculum was evident across the campus and is increasingly manifested in increased access to academic programs through technologically facilitated instructional delivery systems.
- f) An impressive growth in external support, both private, state, and federal, was evidenced across the institution.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention:

- a) Graduate stipends were found to be inadequate to attract a more academically talented and geographically diverse population, even in the selected focused graduate programs of the university.
- b) Competitive entry-level salaries were found to be a high institutional priority. Salary compression was evident within some ranks; namely, associate and full professors, and this issue is critical to the continued strengthening of the academic programs of the institution and the development of future institutional initiatives.
- c) While evidence was found that assessment outcomes information was used to inform decision-making at the departmental level, little evidence regarding the integration and coordination of information at the university level was identified.

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up: None noted

Recommendation of the Team

The criterion is met by the demonstration of the patterns of evidence for criterion four.

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:**

- a) Publications included accurate and informative information regarding admission and degree requirements, university and student support services and academic policies and procedures.
- b) Grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures were clear, publicly available and the campus community was aware of their existence.
- c) Academic records reflected commonly accepted practices and appropriate processes protected the integrity of the academic record.
- d) Procedures and processes existed and were in place to adjudicate questions of academic integrity in graduate and undergraduate research/scholarly/academic activities.
- e) Faculty credentials, academic transcripts, and personnel records were well maintained and demonstrated appropriate levels of record management.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention:

None noted

3. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up: None noted**Recommendation of the Team**

The patterns of evidence sufficiently demonstrate the meeting of criterion five.

VI. TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

ACCREDITATION RELATIONSHIP:

CONTINUED ACCREDITATION

Next Comprehensive Visit: Full ten years or 2013-2014.

Rationale: The institution has demonstrated fulfillment of the General Institutional Requirements and has provided evidence related to each accreditation criterion as defined by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. Ball State University has very effectively addressed the concerns expressed during the 1993 comprehensive visit, developed a comprehensive strategic planning process for the campus, identified new revenue opportunities to address institutional priorities, and continued strong institutional initiatives in assessment and distance education. The University is well positioned to continue to fulfill its mission in the coming decade.

DEFINERS OF RELATIONSHIP

Degree Level: Doctorate

Legal Status: Public
Retain Original Wording

Stipulations: Out of state offerings are limited to courses. Online delivery of programs is limited to progress in Nursing and Technology/Technical Education.

Recommended Wording: No prior commission approval required to offer on-line delivery of undergraduate and graduate academic programs, courses and certificates beyond geographic boundaries.

Rationale: Ball State University has demonstrated its capability and past experience in the provision of distance education and technologically facilitated instruction. The institution has developed a strong infrastructure with established policies to carry out distance education in the School of Extended Education. The expansion of distance learning opportunities is consistent with several goals of the BSU strategic plan including... 'will continue to be a best practice institution in the innovative use of instructional and information technology.' The removal of geographic restrictions will enable student access to the innovative educational leadership Ball State University provides in distance education.

New Degree Sites: Prior Commission Approval Required
Retain Original Wording

Progress Reports Required: None

Monitoring Reports Required: None

Contingency Reports Required: None

Other Visits Required: None

Last Comprehensive Evaluation: 2003 - 2004

Next Comprehensive Evaluation: 2013 - 2014

STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

Ball State University
2000 University Avenue
Muncie, Indiana 47306

Statement of Affiliation Status

Status: Accredited (1925 -)

Highest degree awarded: Doctor's

Stipulations on affiliation status: No prior Commission approval required to offer on-line delivery of undergraduate and graduate academic programs, courses and certificates beyond geographic boundaries.

New degree sites: prior Commission approval

Progress reports required: None

Monitoring report required: None

Contingency reports required: None

Other visits required: None

Last comprehensive evaluation: 2003 - 2004

Next comprehensive evaluation: 2013 - 2014