



Chapter 13: *Summary, Conclusions, and Request for Reaccreditation*

The goals of the Ball State University self-study were to provide a concise summary of the activities and changes that have occurred since the accreditation visit in 1993, to offer evidence that Ball State meets or exceeds all general institutional requirements and meets the five accreditation criteria outlined by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, and to evaluate institutional development in the context of challenges facing the university and institutional strengths upon which the university might build in responding to these challenges. This chapter summarizes the key points presented in the preceding chapters.

Chapter 1 provided a brief history of Ball State, noting that it has been an institution of higher education since 1918 and that it was designated a university in 1965, and describing the changes—including the development of a new mission statement—that have taken place since the university’s accreditation was renewed in 1993. Ball State’s mission statement and many of the changes described reflect the institution’s adoption of Ernest Boyer’s principles and philosophy and the university’s aspiration to become a leader among institutions of higher education in the United States. Chapter 1 also contained institutional responses to the concerns raised by evaluators in the 1993 accreditation visit report. Evidence presented here and in subsequent chapters demonstrated that the university has addressed all of these concerns. Most of the 10 concerns raised in 1993 are no longer issues for the institution. A few, although diminished in significance, have not been completely resolved and need continued attention. In these cases, the report outlined the strategies the university will employ to address these issues and discussed their relationship to the *Ball State University Strategic Plan 2001–2006*. Finally, Chapter 1 described the processes the university used to complete its self-evaluation, which involved more than 150 faculty, staff, students, and administrators who contributed to this document. Most of what was learned from this effort was both gratifying and expected, but some challenges and opportunities were identified that need attention and, when addressed, will make Ball State even more responsive to the needs of faculty, staff, students, and the citizens of Indiana.

Chapter 2 detailed the university’s compliance with the Higher Learning Commission’s general institutional requirements. This chapter demonstrated that the minimum requirements in the categories of mission, authorization, governance, faculty, educational program, finance, and public information were met.

Evidence demonstrating the satisfaction of the five Higher Learning Commission criteria for accreditation was presented in Chapters 3 through 12.

Evidence for Criterion I (“The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education”) was detailed in Chapter 3. This chapter described the vision, mission, and goals of the university. It also provided examples of decision-making processes appropriate to the institution’s stated purposes and outlined the processes by which the university communicates its vision, mission, and goals to its constituencies.

Evidence for Criterion II (“The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes”) was provided in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. These chapters described the institution’s strong relationships with governing agencies in Indiana, the effectiveness of university’s administrative organization and governance system, how financial resources are organized to support teaching and learning, and the quality of the facilities that support Ball State’s institutional mission. Evidence also was presented to support the conclusion that the university has the necessary human resources to fulfill its mission, and the five groups of employees needed to carry out the university’s mission—faculty, professional personnel, staff personnel, service personnel, and student employees—were profiled.

Evidence for Criterion III (“The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes”) was presented in Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10. These chapters documented student learning as it takes place in graduate and undergraduate programs, in majors, and in the University Core Curriculum. The report also presented the ways in which assessment has been used to review and reform curricula, admissions criteria, and the efforts taken by the university to recruit and retain students. Evidence was presented to demonstrate that support services for students are extensive, effective, and complementary to the university’s instructional practices. The mechanisms in place at Ball State to support faculty development and the teacher-scholar model were identified, and the resulting accomplishments of faculty in teaching, scholarship, and professional service were outlined. Also discussed were the ways Ball State delivers educational services to the community, meets the needs of special constituencies, facilitates economic development, and maintains a positive relationship with its alumni.

Evidence for Criterion IV (“The institution can continue to accomplish its purpose and strengthen its educational effectiveness”) was described in Chapter 11. This chapter detailed the planning and assessment activities at the university that support and contribute to effective decision making and the allocation of resources. This chapter focused on the university’s strategic plan and how it provides vision and direction for the future as well as benchmarks for gauging progress.



Evidence for Criterion V (“The institution demonstrates integrity in its policies and relationships”) was provided in Chapter 12. Integrity is a core value expressed in Ball State’s mission statement. This chapter described the ways the university demonstrates integrity in its practices by clearly communicating its policies, employing effective processes for resolving disputes, complying with federal regulations, engaging in practices promoting access and diversity, and promoting integrity in its internal and external relationships. The chapter noted that Ball State’s policies and standards are routinely opened to peer review and are responsive to the new and enduring issues confronting academic communities.

Through the process of this self-study, both university strengths and future challenges have been identified. Some of these are described below.

A major strength of Ball State is well-qualified faculty, staff, and professional and service personnel who are committed to the mission of the institution. There is also effective collaboration among internal administrative offices, between senior administrators and the university senate, and between the university and external governing agencies. During times of budget cutbacks and uncertainty regarding the stability of state appropriations, the university has effectively managed resources so it could continue to fulfill its mission effectively. Coupled with good stewardship of state-supplied resources is the institution’s focus on increasing external funding and successfully exceeding capital campaign goals. A more selective admissions policy has resulted in a student body that is well prepared to complete college-level work. Ball State’s curricula are clearly defined, coherent, and intellectually rigorous. The university has strong support programs and resources to sustain teaching effectiveness. The teacher–scholar model has been integrated into tenure and promotion decisions. New buildings and renovated older buildings provide state-of-the-art teaching facilities. There is a shared view of the strategic plan and a means to realize its goals. Collaborative efforts with the local community and other communities within the state have expanded since the last review and involve every major unit on campus. Some of these initiatives, including Building Better Communities, target economic growth and community development that will enhance the quality of life in the state of Indiana.

Although this report identified many more strengths than future challenges in the process of self-evaluation, the university is aware of issues that require persistent effort to resolve. State funding has decreased as a percent of the total university budget, and in recent years state revenues have been below expectations. Revenue sources will need to be expanded and efficiencies adopted that will facilitate accomplishing university goals and

reducing dependence on state budget appropriations. Salaries and salary compression issues must continue to be a priority concern for the university. Likewise, stipends for graduate assistants and doctoral fellows still lag behind Ball State’s peer institutions, and the efforts to remedy this situation will continue. Achieving a more diverse student population and faculty is a major goal to accomplish in the next few years. Furthermore, Ball State’s use of and need for contract faculty is well established, and the university will need to identify effective strategies that recognize their needs and award them for their contributions. Finally, a realignment of the institution’s governance structure that strikes a balance between faculty input and administrative responsibility will enable the university to maintain the momentum it has achieved during the past decade.

Based on the information provided in this self-study report that demonstrates both the general institutional requirements and the five HLC criteria for accreditation have been met, Ball State University formally requests continued accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges.