Comprehensive Self-Study for

The Higher Learning Commission
Reaffirmation of Accreditation Process

December 20, 2012

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Executive Summary

The University of Akron (UA) is a comprehensive metropolitan institution serving more than 28,000 students in Akron, Ohio. As one of the 34 public institutions of the University System of Ohio, we offer degrees ranging from Associates to Doctoral across many disciplinary fields of study. Our excellent faculty and facilities, regional and national reputation and impact, and growing list of alumni speak to our role in higher education in the Northeast Ohio region and beyond.

This self-study report and the associated documents provided in the electronic resource room serve as evidence in support of our request for reaffirmation of regional accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The campus-wide self-study process spanned more than 18 months and involved many constituency groups and their representatives on the Steering Committee and Criteria Teams. We submit this document as part of the preparation for our scheduled Comprehensive Site Visit on March 3 - 6, 2013.

The University of Akron believes that it has provided sufficient evidence to ensure that it meets all of the new Criteria and Core Components for reaffirmation of accreditation that will be in effect January 2013. As one of the first campuses to write a comprehensive self-study addressing the new Criteria, and understanding the future Pathways for accreditation, we have attempted to be as concise as possible in providing evidence for each Core Component without embellishing narrative. Therefore, this self-study report may not be as long or as vivid as those prepared in the past, but the campus involvement and comprehensive vetting processes were nevertheless robust. It should be noted that we at times found it difficult to concisely provide evidence for individual sub-Core Components without significant overlap between them. In these cases, we wrote to the Core Components directly, avoiding partitioning under sub-headings that would have led to substantial redundancy.

Our overall strengths revealed through this self-study process include:

- *Vision 2020* - our new strategic plan;
- Our roles in innovation, commercialization, licensing and community wellbeing;
- The Akron Experience - a new model to integrate our wide variety of co-curricular learning for our students;
- Substantial IT and student support services;
- Emphasis on inclusive excellence and diversity;
- Effective policies, oversight and support services to ensure integrity and ethical practices in all that we do;
- Substantive faculty oversight and control of our curriculum;
- Robust monitoring of faculty and staff hiring, credentials and performance;
- Systematic program review;
- Policies and practices related to transfer of credit and other academic matters;
- Disciplinary accreditations;

- Significant levels of shared governance through faculty collective bargaining and institutional structures such as Faculty Senate and University Council;
- Open sharing and use of comprehensive data and analyses to inform decision making; and
- A relatively new integrated approach to planning and budgeting.

Our overall challenges revealed through this self-study process include:

- Growing and diversifying our revenue streams;
- Maintaining affordability for our students in the presence of shrinking State support;
- Expanding and strengthening our process of integrated planning and budgeting;
- Increasing the use of online delivery of courses and programs;
- Improving retention, persistence and graduation rates;
- Increasing the numbers of tenure-track faculty and their interactions with our students;
- Expanding our research portfolio;
- Finalizing reform of our General Education curriculum;
- Developing a more robust and consistent program for assessing student learning outcomes; and
- Maintaining the momentum we currently have with our new enrollment management and shared governance models.

With respect to the future HLC Pathways, we request consideration for the Standard Pathway. This request is based on our past history of follow up required by HLC, the number of additional locations that we have recently added and the changes that are taking place with respect to our implementation of *Vision 2020*. It should be noted that UA has entitled its new undergraduate student academic success enrollment plan the "Pathways" approach - not to be confused in this document with the HLC Pathways for accreditation.

Finally, some important institutional context is needed. Within the University System of Ohio, UA is the only comprehensive institution to have within its structure a unit that is in essence a community college. Summit College, formerly named the The Community and Technical College, offers, on main campus, more than 20 Associates degrees. In addition, it offers more than ten technically-oriented bachelors degrees. This current structure has an impact on the profile of UA's undergraduate student body and degree completion data. Furthermore, the University's only branch campus, Wayne College, which is located in Orrville, Ohio has its own HLC accreditation separate from main campus, and is therefore not formally included at length in this self-study.

Criterion One. Mission

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

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

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.

The mission of The University of Akron (UA) is clearly articulated in the publicly available Board of Trustee rule 3359-20-01: Institutional mission and goals, affirmative action statement, which states "The University of Akron, a publicly assisted metropolitan institution, strives to develop enlightened members of society. It offers comprehensive programs of instruction from associate through doctoral levels; pursues a vigorous agenda of research in the arts, sciences, and professions; and provides service to the community. The university pursues excellence in undergraduate education and distinction in selected areas of graduate instruction, inquiry, and creative activity."

The formal mission statement, mission and goals embodied in this rule have not been altered for at least fifteen years. We anticipate that the campus may find it timely to reconsider these formal statements in the near future due to the changing climate in higher education and our own relatively new initiatives discussed throughout this self-study and described in our new strategic plan *Vision 2020*. If changes are to be made, we will be following the type of approach used in the development of our new strategic plan involving the campus and community, followed by formal adoption through our governance processes.

1.A.2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.

The University's programs include more than 300 undergraduate and graduate programs. With a vigorous agenda of teaching, research and service in the arts, sciences, and professions, the University is well positioned with a variety of comprehensive programs that benefit the region and beyond. The University of Akron recently received external acknowledgments of some of its academic programs, including but not necessarily limited to:

- Akron is among the top 20 percent of U.S. universities conferring doctorate degrees in chemistry;
- *BusinessWeek* magazine ranked UA's College of Business Administration among the nation's top undergraduate business schools - in 2012 UA was ranked 85th nationally and also ranked 17th in recruiter satisfaction;
- The College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering, internationally recognized as one of the largest units of its kind, is helping to establish Northeast Ohio as an advanced functional materials hub that competes globally in the development and commercialization of materials for many industries;

- UA's College of Engineering is the fastest-growing engineering program in Ohio and fourth in the nation, according to a review of the nation's top 150 schools by the American Society for Engineering Education;
- Students graduating from The School of Law and taking the bar exam have a passage rate on the order of 90%; and
- The Industrial/Organizational Psychology graduate program is one of the highest rated and most respected in the nation, and is consistently highly ranked by U.S. News and World Reports.

As evidence of the focus on service to the community and positively impacting the region, UA has an active Workforce Development and Continuing Education program that includes noncredit and certification courses and a wide variety of online courses for career development, certification, personal enrichment and recertification credits. Customized on-site training for employees is also available. More than 300 classroom and online training sessions are presented each semester and many offerings are approved by professional, national and state organizations for certificate and license recertification.

In addition, the relatively new Akron Experience framework, supporting our student academic success and inclusive excellence priorities, provides for excellence in student support services. The Akron Experience is a distinctive approach of combining academic and experiential learning that helps students understand the combined power of culture and knowledge to advance society and the economy. Through curricular, co-curricular and experiential learning, students will become "citizens of the world" who are prepared by their Akron Experience to understand and address societal needs. Measurement of success includes improved job placement/graduate school rates, retention, persistence, graduation rates, student satisfaction and engagement scores, increased diversity and participation of students in global programs and service learning experiences.

The Akron Experience includes substantial student support services provided by the Division of Strategic Engagement. The University restructured these units in August 2012 to increase support for students. The supporting offices include; The Akron Experience, Admissions, Counseling Center, Career Center, Off-Campus Student Services, Financial Aid, Registrar, Multi-cultural Development, Learning Communities, Office of Accessibility, New Student Orientation, Transfer and Adult Student Center, and the Military Services Center. The Division of Student Affairs also supports The Akron Experience, and includes the following offices: Student Life, Residence Life and Housing, Student Judicial Affairs, Student Health Services, Office of International Programs, Academic Achievement Programs, and Student Recreation and Wellness. We also have Academic Achievement Programs including Upward Bound, the Pre-Engineering Program, Educational Talent Search, and the Strive Toward Excellence Program (STEP) and Early College High School which enable local (eligible) high school students to experience college life. Also, the Office of Accessibility works with all students who have disabilities to ensure they have equal access to education and support services.

The University's enrollment profile flows from the mission of the institution, which is defined as a metropolitan university serving the community, region and beyond. Until only very recently (fall 2012), UA has operated as a quasi-open enrollment institution. Students enter the

University across a spectrum of academic preparation, from associate degrees to baccalaureate degrees of varying competitiveness, to world-ranked graduate programs. Certificates are also offered for a variety of areas to enrich academic degrees or provide assistance to workforce development skills. Many of UA's students attend part-time and/or are adults. The adult student population will continue to grow based on local demographics, and the University is therefore expanding support services, evening and weekend courses, veteran services and online courses and programs.

1.A.3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.

Our new strategic plan, *Vision 2020*, addresses the need to enhance revenues to support growth and improve student academic success. Aggressive efforts to broaden and diversify revenue sources are necessary to ensure fiscal viability and allow strategic investment in innovative opportunities. A stronger financial portfolio will increase affordability for students. The University's planning and budgeting priorities include new fundraising initiatives to grow the endowment, increasing its flexibility to meet student and institutional priorities. In addition, our expertise in commercialization and licensing and in creating new startup companies are other avenues that continue to yield success in our community.

Integrated planning and budgeting drives a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation to circumstances as they occur. Through inclusive planning, reviewing, measuring and analyzing outcomes, there is more predictability in the budgeting process consistently demonstrating how our strategic actions positively impact operations. Evidence of this inclusive process was demonstrated in campus forums held in spring 2012 which detailed the history of budget decision making and budget planning at the University. The sessions were well-attended by faculty, administrators and staff.

The University's strategic planning and budgeting process identifies challenges and enables efficiencies and effectiveness in University operations, which results in the best use of University resources, cost savings with shared services (within and outside the University), and the utilization of technology to its fullest potential. Other examples of strategic planning to diversify revenues include academic and support services for adult students and increased offerings of online courses and programs.

1.B. The mission is articulated publicly.

1.B.1. The institution clearly defines its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goal, plans or institutional priorities.

The Board of Trustee rule regarding UA's mission is available via the UA website and is found in the undergraduate and graduate bulletins. The mission is expanded upon and clarified by our policies and procedures found in other rules and documents, and also by *Vision 2020*.

Prior to our last reaffirmation comprehensive visit, The University of Akron introduced Charting

the Course, a framework for strategic thinking that guided the institution's actions for more than a decade. As a statement of strategic intent, Charting the Course was designed to energize the University, provide direction, identify the University's distinctiveness and develop a shared sense of destiny. Dedicating resources to those strategies enabled the University to attain a higher standard of excellence through campus growth and improvement, enrollment enhancement, revenue generation and diversification, and a process of mission evaluation that developed unique strengths.

The University of Akron began its "New Landscape for Learning" campus enhancement program in 2000. The decade saw 20 new buildings added to campus, along with 18 major additions or renovations and 34 acres of new green space. UA's metropolitan campus is now a blend of its new structures, such as the Student Union and the historic Buchtel Hall, which is the University's administration building. In addition, by leveraging core competencies, the institution also achieved strong momentum in research, fundraising, athletics and community engagement. During this time, the University markedly expanded its role as a catalytic presence for innovation and community wellbeing bringing people, ideas, energy, infrastructure and resources into clusters of innovation to enrich the region.

In the past few years, the University built upon its then current strategic plan, Charting the Course, by creating a new strategic plan entitled *Vision 2020*: *Toward 150 Years of Distinction & A New Gold Standard of University Performance.* The development process took approximately two years and involved the contributions of more than 3,500 faculty, staff, students, trustees, alumni and community leaders, and included review and feedback by many committees and units. The Board of Trustees unanimously endorsed *Vision 2020* in January 2012 as a plan that will guide the University's collective actions through the sesquicentennial in 2020. This new strategic plan has been broadly disseminated and highlighted both on campus and publicly in various media outlets.

The mission articulated in *Vision 2020* "To ensure student success and leverage our region's unique assets in the creation of knowledge and application of research that benefits humankind" does not replace the University mission found in Board rule 3359-20-01. It does, however, serve to summarize and focus our attention to emphasize student success and the importance of the University to the region and beyond in the creation of knowledge and application of research. *Vision 2020* reflects the University's commitment to the principles of relevance (delivering tangible benefits to the campus and community), connectivity (achieving greater impact through partnerships, collaborations and collective initiatives), and productivity (adding value to the regional ecosystem with the University as an active agent of opportunity, innovation and change). It also includes numerous aspirational goals, such as:

- Enroll up to 40,000 learners in degree, certificate, licensure, distance-education and career-advancement programs improving alignment of the student body with professional and personal success
- Increase diversity with measureable improvements over time as a demonstration of our commitment to inclusive excellence
- Improve year-to-year persistence to graduation and graduation rates equal to or greater than 60 % by streamlining and targeting pathways to degrees and jobs

- Improve year-to-year, post-graduation job or professional program placement in dynamic careers, approaching 80% within six months of graduation
- Diversify revenue sources and create a culture of continuous improvement including integrated planning and budgeting to support growth initiatives
- Increase annual research expenditures approaching $200 million
- Annually increase the development portfolio with significant scholarship and unrestricted funds equal to or greater than $1 billion
- Attain national recognition for The Akron Experience, which provides unique and integrated in-and-out-of-the-classroom learning experiences for each student
- Revitalize the campus "neighborhood" in collaboration with University Park Alliance and other anchor institutions, increasing development of real estate, business, social and human capital, and community/civic engagement
- Achieve recognition by the University System of Ohio, Board of Regents, and other higher education organizations as a leader in academic innovation that fuels student success, and community and economic growth
- Attain recognition nationally for The Akron Model, which creates successful economic and talent development partnerships to leverage resources with government, nonprofits, business and industry for collective impact
- Benchmark our achievements against research oriented, entrepreneurial and industrial-based universities identified nationally and internationally through publicly available performance measures

1.B.2. The document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.

Vision 2020 articulates the University's priority of ensuring student success. The Akron Experience will provide students a distinctive approach to teaching and learning, emphasizing critical thinking and communication skills that foster life-long learning and developing their ability to apply newly acquired knowledge to solve practical problems. Students will be given more opportunities to understand and demonstrate creative problem solving, become involved in entrepreneurship and learn what it means to serve the community. Excellence in teaching is also part of The Akron Experience as faculty are urged to develop students' capacity to realize their potential and prosper as citizens of an increasingly diverse and multicultural world.

Another example of ensuring student success is found in *Vision 2020*'s Globally Relevant & Distinctive Programs concept. The University experience will reflect a global and multicultural mindset. For students to succeed in a global marketplace, they must understand and appreciate cultural, racial and ethnic differences that contribute to an increasingly complex and interconnected world. The University will be expanding international learning opportunities and exchanges for students and faculty so that acquired knowledge can advance human wellbeing on a global scale. The University promotes innovative teaching and learning of world languages and cultures across a variety of disciplines and fosters intellectual and cultural interactions on campus and abroad. Learning resources and opportunities will be enhanced through the

expansion of digital capabilities. Finally, an important aspect of student academic success which supports *Vision 2020* is the <u>Pathways for Undergraduate Student Academic Success</u> initiative. This arose as part of our HLC comprehensive self-study focusing on undergraduate students and their levels of college preparedness resulting in a <u>plan for increasing UA's retention, persistence and graduation rates</u> while at the same time providing options for new applicants to lower their costs at the beginning of their college careers.

In the application of research and economic development, *Vision 2020*'s Interdisciplinary Clusters of Entrepreneurial Innovation section demonstrates the University's priorities in these areas. Common themes of this strategy include interdisciplinary programs and curricula and collaboration among scholars, teachers, researchers and students. The synergy created by bringing together the disciplinary approaches in liberal arts, health care, social sciences, and science and technology will create innovative solutions to the broader issues of community, government, business and nonprofit entities. The University has a broad-based "tool chest" of expertise to fuel an economic engine that enhances the vitality of the region, nation and world. Faculty are encouraged to work with the community to create new opportunities for research excellence with greater relevance to regional solutions and industrial collaboration.

The initiative called <u>Achieving Distinction</u> is the interdisciplinary framework for successfully achieving innovation in research and collaboration within the University and with strategic partnerships in the region and beyond. The University of Akron is now investing a minimum of $2M annually to execute this initiative. In a groundbreaking program, this long-term initiative represents a projected 10-year $140M total investment, subject to annual Board of Trustees fiscal year budget endorsement. Areas targeted for investment include: regional solutions, health care and medicine, the human condition and innovative technologies. A critical component of this strategy is to align institutional investments to enhance and advance vital partnerships, where greater gains can be achieved through the mutual leveraging of resources. It is anticipated that over time this initiative will lead to discoveries that will increase external funding and patents awarded as well as licensing and commercialization successes.

Measurements of success include the appointment of interdisciplinary faculty, the development of programs and curricula that combine the expertise of diverse faculty across departments and colleges and an increase in cross-disciplinary research activities. The University will increase the number of partnerships between those who imagine, discover and create new ideas and those who can bring them to life to improve communities. In addition, the program will result in new company formation and licensed products which will contribute to regional economic vitality.

1.B.3. The document or documents identify the nature and scope of the higher education programs and services the institution provides and whom these activities serve.

While the main emphasis at UA is on traditional undergraduate student academic success, the University also focuses on adult and part-time students with their different academic and service needs. For example, UA is the only Midwestern institution to receive a $1M endowment from the Osher Foundation to assist students in re-entering a bachelors program, which was facilited through a commitment by the University to match the annual endowment income. Graduate school programs and the importance of research-driven learning outcomes are also vital

components of the University's scope of programs. Our academic programs are clearly outlined in the underundergraduate and graduate bulletins, and on individual unit websites. Our rules on undergraduate and graduate admissions identify the students that we serve.

1.C. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of U.S. society.

1.C.1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.

The University of Akron defines diversity as the "individual, group, and social differences that can be engaged in the service of learning. Individual differences might include personality, learning styles, and life experiences. Group and social differences might include race/ethnicity, economic class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, cultural, political or religious affiliations."

The University of Akron has declared the importance of diversity to its mission and vision by embracing the principle of an "inclusive university" and making this principle a cornerstone of *Vision 2020*.

The University's attention to diversity is addressed at prominent administrative levels. The Affirmative Action Policy states "…that there shall be no unlawful discrimination against any individual in employment or in its programs or activities at The University of Akron because of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, disability, military status, or status as a veteran. The University of Akron prohibits sexual harassment of any form in all aspects of employment and in its programs and activities and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual and racial or ethnic orientation in employment and admissions." All new employees are required to attend a sexual harassment seminar to ensure a mutual understanding of the key issues.

The University of Akron reviews and publishes its policies, goals and timetables annually. Additionally, its equal employment opportunity statement is prominent on the website. The University of Akron has made a major effort to address problems of underutilization in relation to faculty and staff, including a report and handbook prepared by EEO entitled "Diverse Hiring Recommendations."

1.C.2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within it mission and for the constituencies it serves.

The Akron Experience encapsulates the University's comprehensive approach to undergraduate education, an education of the whole student in terms of General Education, experiential learning, co-curricular activities and academic major. Inclusive Excellence is an essential component of The Akron Experience: "It takes a campus and a community to create an environment conducive to Inclusive Excellence. At The University of Akron, we are developing a multi-level approach for inclusion and engagement that will lead to enhanced student success. We are raising the bar beyond traditional practices to a "new plane of engagement activities" that

will foster a culture of high expectations for all students - including those historically underserved."

Inclusive Excellence, the active, intentional and ongoing engagement with diversity, involves both curricular and co-curricular activities and directly supports the University's mission and vision by increasing awareness of self, enhancing empathy with others, and achieving greater understanding of the complex ways in which individuals interact and collaborate within communities and institutions. The goals for Inclusive Excellence proclaim that The University of Akron is a "university that succeeds by including and not excluding." Within The Akron Experience, multiple pathways to success provide each student with a transformative experience that creates citizens of the world, engaged in their communities, while at the same time producing a robust creative environment for faculty and staff. The Inclusive Excellence website contains multiple links to diversity related internal and external programs, a strategic road map, and other resources for students, faculty, staff and community members.

The University's Diversity Council supports and guides the Office of Inclusion & Equity's efforts to advance inclusive excellence principles across campus and in the community, as prescribed in the Strategic Diversity Roadmap. The Council's subcommittees are constructed to focus on University climate; improving student recruitment, retention and graduation; diverse faculty hiring; diverse staff hiring; business outreach and supplier diversity; and community outreach. The following is a listing of campus-wide programs and resources which demonstrate our commitment to diversity:

Office of the Vice President for Talent Development and Human Resources – "To achieve our shared mission, we recruit, retain, and develop the very best talent… Innovative and competitive recruitment strategies will attract and yield the best candidates through both the creative use of technology and the development of effective individual outreach and professional networking. Intentional outreach to diverse populations and efficient and cost-effective employee immigration services and other support systems will meet the needs of an increasingly international workforce. We recognize that the members of our diverse community have different life experiences, opportunities, and obstacles and we respond to these differences in ways that fully support the success of each community member." Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Offices are a part of this office.

Rethinking Race Week - In 1997, then U. S. President Clinton chose The University of Akron as the location for his first Town Hall Meeting on Race. Since 2007, students, faculty and staff have come together to plan a series of events known as Rethinking Race: Black, White and Beyond. This ongoing and pro-active work in understanding race relations (including racial and ethnic conflicts) and improving upon the racial climate on our campus has grown into a model program demonstrating global best practices in diversity education. Rethinking Race Week is held annually on campus in February.

Rising to the Occasion - The Office of Multicultural Development, through the support of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, has implemented "Rising to the Occasion," a comprehensive, educational recruitment and retention model to increase the number of African American males enrolling and successfully graduating from the University. Students

participating in "Rising to the Occasion" quickly become acclimated to the academic rigors of college and the study skills they will need to be successful.

African American Male Learning Community - The African American Male Learning Community (AAMLC) is comprised of groups of approximately 25 students who participate in structured learning experiences by taking two to four classes together, which promote the academic and social integration of students into the University. The AAMLC targets incoming first-year students who participate in a year-long experience focusing on leadership, responsibility and academic achievement.

LGBTU Equality Committee - LGBTU is The University of Akron's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender union organization. LGBTU includes students, faculty, allies and alumni. The goal of the organization is to provide an educational environment in which students can freely assemble for support and participate in networking and campus/community advocacy related to LGBT issues. LGBTU strives to develop educational programs and social events that work toward eliminating myths, misconceptions and stereotypes that are oppressive while supporting University policies guaranteeing equal rights without discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Black Male Summit - The Black Male Summit is held on the campus annually in April. Nationally-renowned speakers, educational leaders, practitioners and students explore the critical issues impacting black males in higher education. This year there will be a special focus on students from the Akron Public Schools system.

Diversity Week - Diversity week is an annual week of events sponsored by a collection of campus affinity groups, where each activity is an enriching event that teaches, trains or increases students' knowledge of how to be more culturally competent.

Counseling Center - Comprehensive psychological services are offered at no charge to currently enrolled students. A culturally diverse staff of licensed psychologists and doctoral trainees provide psychological counseling and psychotherapy, career counseling, testing services, outreach and consultation to the University community. The Counseling Center College Survival Kit consists of numerous workshops that provide academic performance advice, wellness education and discussion of issues such as cultural diversity.

Center for Conflict Management – Coursework and experiences designed to help students better prevent, resolve or reduce the harms associated with the conflicts in their lives are available to all students.

Center for Urban and Higher Education - As a public education and research unit within the College of Education, CUHE's specific mission is to construct and deliver quality professional development services to educational and community leaders that directly and positively impact student learning in urban settings, Pre-K through higher education. CUHE's urban education institutes, professional development workshops and training and research initiatives provide the mechanisms for service delivery. CUHE serves both the community and University by building

and sustaining collaborative partnerships among practitioners, faculty, students and community leaders.

English Language Institute offers high-quality instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL).

Military Services Center - The mission is to provide comprehensive enrollment and referral services for military personnel and their families. The University has been designated a "military-friendly" campus for many years.

Pan African Center for Community Studies - Originally established as The Black Culture Center, it was renamed the Pan African Center for Community Studies. The Center combines the best of the academic, social and community worlds to help students be both socially and academically engaged with the society at large. The Center also provides information to support and stimulate student research.

Women's Studies Program – Instituted to accommodate the academic needs of the University's rich and diverse student body, the Women's Studies Program fosters a critical approach that integrates scholarship and research on women from a feminist perspective.

PASSAGE Learning Communities 1 & 2 - The PASSAGE Learning Community is a learning community for first-year students of color in which the curriculum is designed to meet general education requirements, regardless of academic track or major. The PASSAGE Learning Community consists of two structured experiences, PASSAGE 1 and PASSAGE 2. PASSAGE 1 is for the soft science and liberal arts majors (psychology, sociology, communications, business, education political science or exploratory). PASSAGE 2 has been designed for the hard-science majors (engineering, biology, chemistry and nursing). Benefits of both learning communities include connection to on-campus activities and events, access to the Office of Multicultural Development Laptop loan program, small class sizes, leadership opportunities, easy first-year class registration and structured study-table program.

Upward Bound Math & Science (Academic Achievement Programs) – This program is believed to be the only pre-college polymer program in the country. Focusing on polymer science, the program has two interrelated components: a six-week summer residential program and an academic year follow-up program. This federally funded TRiO program serves 50 high school students in grades 10-12.

The Office of International Programs has six units: 1) Recruiting International Students and Scholars;, 2) Undergraduate International Student Admissions; 3) International Student and Scholar Services; 4) Education Abroad;, 5) Undergraduate International Academic Advising; and 6) Programming. The University of Akron offers ongoing study abroad programs with university affiliates in the following countries: Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, People's Republic of China, Peru, Romania, South Korea and the United Kingdom. Whether immersing themselves in the language and culture in China and Korea on a summer trip, tasting the food and culture of Paris during spring break, or learning the skills of international business and finance in the College of Business Administration's interactive

classrooms, students have numerous opportunities to gain a comprehensive understanding of the global economy and to develop the skills and awareness necessary to work in international environments with diverse cultures.

Franco-American Teachers-in-Training Institute (FATITI) – Within the College of Education, FATITI is an international teacher exchange program designed to explore the evolution of education's best practices, social and education policy and the political institutions of schooling from a comparative lens. It is funded by the U.S. Department of State in collaboration with the Franco-American Commission for Educational Exchange (Fulbright Commission) and the French Ministry of Education. French and American teachers-in-training participate in a seminar examining history, language, culture, education and politics followed by a teaching practicum.

Confucius Institute is part of an international network, supported by the Chinese Ministry of Education, dedicated to enhancing the understanding of Chinese language and culture around the world. The Confucius Institute promotes the expansion of Chinese language instruction through a range of educational and outreach activities for students, teachers, businesses and community members on our campus and in our communities. The Confucius Institute is a cooperative project of The University of Akron, the National Office of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, Chinese Ministry of Education and Henan University in Kaifeng.

The Institute for Life-Span Development and Gerontology was established in 1976 and has offered an undergraduate certificate since 1977 and a graduate certificate since 1978. Certificates have been received with degrees from 22 different majors. Since 2007, The University of Akron and Kent State University have had a joint Graduate Certificate in Gerontology. In addition there is a Graduate M.A./Ph.D. in Psychology of Adult Development and Aging joint with Cleveland State University as well as a Specialization in Industrial Gerontological Psychology that is part of the Industrial/Organizational M.A./Ph.D. Graduate Program. The Institute for many years was part of the NIDRR Center on Aging and Developmental Disabilities. Institute Fellows have held major leadership roles in the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education, Division 20, Adult Development and Aging of the American Psychological Association, Gerontological Society of America, American Society on Aging and Sigma Phi Omega-National Professional and Honor Society on Aging. Fellows serve or served on multiple editorial boards of major journals and have well recognized scholarly activities. The Institute is part of the Northeast Ohio Consortium in Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology with Kent State University, Youngstown State University and Northeast Ohio Medical University.

1.D. The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1.D.1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution and thus entails a public obligation.

Vision 2020 also promotes UA in the interest of the public good: "Our students shall have a sense of place and an acknowledged responsibility for contributing to human wellbeing. Deeply embedded in The Akron Experience, students will merge campus and classroom learning with community involvement. Students and faculty will be engaged in their surroundings through

community service and culturally diverse experiences." The University of Akron's physical space fosters great interaction with the broader Akron community enriching the intellectual, social and cultural experiences for students, faculty and staff. The University's strong community partnerships create the mechanism for an array of service learning experiences and other activities that bring diverse peoples and resources together with our students for greater productivity.

The University encourages and supports students and faculty as civic-minded citizens by responding to the local, regional and national emergency and non-emergency events such as the Katrina aftermath, Haiti earthquake, Make a Difference Day, Hearts for Humanity fund-raising and other community service (painting houses, involvement with Habitat for Humanity and projects reflecting world citizenship).

Another goal of the University is to link students, faculty and communities for the purpose of serving the public good. Collaborations between students and the community through centers, institutes and student organizations/associations have a twofold result: students practice and apply what they have learned in the classroom/laboratories, and the outside community benefits from the latest techniques and faculty expertise. Examples of academic-community partnerships are noted in the following programs: Cooperative Education Program, Service Learning Partnerships, Center for Emergency Management and Homeland Security Policy Research, Bliss Institute and Center for Literacy.

Other examples of our community involvement include:

University Park Alliance (UPA) Partnership – UPA, a 50-block urban neighborhood with a diverse population, is located near the center of education, medicine, technology and culture. Its mission is to revitalize the diverse neighborhood in the area immediately surrounding The University of Akron through engaging the community and catalyzing real estate and business investment.

College of Education – The College has successful partnerships with K-12 schools. Students participate in professional service learning activities that are designed to give them experience in working with children (and families) at various grade levels with tasks that include, but are not limited to, tutoring support, homework help, GED preparation and assisting with adult literacy. The College also provides the community with support through the Center for Child Development and Clinic for Individual and Family Counseling.

The Nursing Center for Community Health – The Center provides service to the University as well as underserved and vulnerable populations in the local community, thereby providing nursing and inter-professional practice opportunities for faculty and generating and sharing clinical research. This Center is one of the first nurse-managed clinics in the United States, which supported over 5,000 visits to underserved populations in this area in 2011. Through long–standing community partnerships, this inter-professional clinic also provides a learning environment for undergraduate and graduate students from varied disciplines as they work alongside advanced practice nurses, physicians and residents, dieticians, pharmacists and social workers to provide comprehensive care to clients.

The Akron Regional Inter-professional Area Health Education Center (ARI-AHEC) – This Center, established in 2010 through the federally funded AHEC program and the AmeriCorps Vista Volunteer Program, focuses on facilitating and supporting inter-professional education and practical experiences. These funded programs align well with our formation of an inter-professional College of Health Professions (CHP) to promote high quality, affordable and accessible care for underserved and vulnerable community populations.

Summit Education Initiative (SEI) - The University of Akron is a leading partner in the Summit Education Initiative, a community-wide collaborative effort to significantly improve education for all children in Summit County. Reflecting the interconnectedness of the entire education system (pre-kindergarten through college) and the community, the recently adopted strategic direction of "Cradle to Career" underscores the importance of preparedness of children to learn at all ages. The University's Provost serves on SEI's board of directors and a wide range of UA personnel (e.g., from the OAA, the College of Education and Summit College) are actively engaged in SEI's work.

National Inventors Hall of Fame STEM Middle School - The National Inventors Hall of Fame STEM middle school is the result of a pioneering partnership comprising the University, Akron Public Schools, the City of Akron, the National Inventors Hall of Fame Foundation, Akron Tomorrow and the Greater Akron Chamber. In Fall 2009, about 200 fifth- and sixth-graders began attending classes at an Akron Public School district office while a $14 million addition was under construction on the grounds of the former National Inventors Hall of Fame in downtown Akron. University faculty and students have had an active presence in the school. UA administrators were instrumental in its establishment, and University faculty and students are frequent participants in the educational process there. UA is now also involved in the new STEM high school that opened in fall 2012.

University of Akron Research Foundation (UARF) - As a catalyst for transformational change, communities are strengthened as UA expands its role as an active agent for regional economic development that is also globally relevant. The University is a world leader in polymer science and engineering, stemming from the region's long history in the automobile tire industry. Developments made in this field benefit scientists and innovators around the world and, at the same time, the regional economy benefits by the generation of new companies and workforce development. UARF, a non-profit corporation, was created to bridge gaps between industry and the University and facilitate the transfer of technology to private companies.

Centers of Excellence include Polymers, a Center of Excellence in Biomedicine and Health Care, a Center for Polymers and Advanced Functional Materials, and within the Ohio Center of Excellence in Enabling Technologies: Advanced Materials and Sensors. Partnerships with industries and the Austen BioInnovation Institute in Akron (ABIA), in particular the Biomaterials Division, which focuses on fundamental, translational and clinical research efforts in Materials for Regenerative Medicine, also support and enhance these efforts. Similarly, the Taylor Institute within the College of Business Administration is noted for its focuses on e-marketing, direct response advertising, direct marketing management, multi-channel marketing, integrated marketing communications, direct mail applications and telemarketing services.

In addition to facilitating economic development by streamlining technology licensing and industry sponsored research, UARF has launched over 50 start-up companies since 2001, including Akron Polymer Systems located in Akron which develops coatings for high resolution displays; SNS Nano Fibers, a joint venture with a German company located in Akron that commercializes electro-spun nanofibers developed at UA; and CO2 Capture LLC, which is developing a clean coal fuel cell with funding from the Department of Energy and in partnership with major regional energy companies. UARF's innovative Senior Fellows program hosts former industry leaders to forge partnerships with industry and the community, leading to a multi-million dollar program to train international polymer scientists and several research and development partnerships with major companies. UARF serves as a model for university technology commercialization services throughout Northeast Ohio and has enabled other state universities and colleges, such as Cleveland State University, Youngstown State University and Lorain County Community College, to further improve their technology transfer programs. In 2010, UARF and ABIA won the U.S. Department of Commerce's prestigious i6 National Innovation Challenge, which recognizes innovative, groundbreaking ideas that promote technology commercialization, job creation and economic growth.

1.D.2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization or supporting external interests.

The first and key component of the University's goals is to ensure student success. The institution's educational responsibilities are founded in the commitment to the success of each student as evidenced by persistence, graduation and the quality of programs offered by faculty and staff to prepare students to be critical thinkers as they move through their programs of study and transition from academia to the workforce or graduate school. In addition to our investments in the delivery of the academic programs of study as evidenced by our commitment to faculty hiring and compensation discussed in other parts of this self-study, we offer the following as further evidence of our use of financial and human resources for the education of our students.

Strategies to foster student success are multifaceted and include early interventional strategies, support services via advising, financial assistance and scholarships and academic and social support. Excellent academic programs and faculty to assist students achieve their individual goals will be highlighted to illustrate the institution's educational commitment to students from admission to graduation to employment.

In 2005-06, the University was selected to participate in the inaugural year of the Foundations of Excellence Project, along with 13 other colleges and universities. During that self-study, the First Year Experience Task Force conducted inventories of first-year students and faculty to evaluate engagement, the connection to how much time a student devotes to educationally-purposeful activities, and how connected the student feels to the University and his/her professors and cohorts. Nine dimensions of first-year excellence were defined and an action plan for improvement was developed.

As a result of the work done by the University-wide FYE Task Force, the Provost appointed a group of faculty and administrators to the Student Success & Retention Committee (SSRC) to study best practices as well as our policies and procedures in an effort to engage our Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors and enhance their progress to degree. The SSRC developed a report with 36 recommendations, some of which have been accomplished; other recommendations are currently being implemented. These recommendations as well as those from the FYE Task Force have since been incorporated into The Akron Experience. The University promotes diversity and creates targeted learning pathways to provide a remarkable University experience—The Akron Experience—for each student. Programs are designed and modified keeping in mind traditional-aged as well as working adult and veteran students. Deliberate programming to meet student needs include e-learning and other methodologies. Success initiatives center on programs, advising and connection to resources.

New and on-going initiatives are intended to limit the time spent in degree programs to reduce the cost burden to students/families. In October 2012, the University began to market 30 baccalaureate degrees which can be completed in three years. Also, the University collaborates with school systems within our service area to provide the opportunity for students to take college courses through the Post-Secondary Enrollment Option Program (PSEOP). The UA program is the largest among the state-assisted universities within Ohio. In addition, the Pathways for Student Academic Success include the implementation of a phased reduction in the number of students who require substantial developmental work. Partnerships with area community colleges have been created to assure the success of these students in associate degree programs and also improve their transition to the University to complete a bachelor degree.

MAP-Works®, Making Achievement Possible, is a comprehensive student retention and success program designed for first- and second-year students and is in its third year of implementation. An on-line survey is used to identify student issues that require immediate support and intervention as well as alert campus professionals of poor performance on exams/assignments/projects, poor attendance and personal problems. Feedback from the instrument provides students with personalized success tips and resources. For the 2011-2012 academic year, approximately 70% of first-year and 33% of second-year students completed the survey. Based on survey findings, initiatives to impact specific populations of students through Residence Life and Housing and Off-Campus Services were instituted. For example, for students who scored low on social integration, or reported homesickness causing distress factors, the professional live-in staff set up meetings with these students the issues. This initiative decreased the "gap" in retention between the students who fell into this category and other on-campus students in the Fall 2011 cohort from when compared to the same criteria for the Fall 2010 cohort. The advising system is linked to MAP-Works® by reports generated from the student surveys, as well as by faculty alerts to enhance individual student intervention. In 2010-2011, 373 direct connects/alerts were generated.

Some of the ongoing initiatives that illustrate the University's commitment to students and educational responsibilities include required new student orientation for traditional-aged, adult and transfer students; an opening convocation for new students in the fall; a common reading program with a First-Year Lecture; professional advisers who work with students until they transfer to the University's degree-granting colleges; an extensive Learning Communities

program; and a number of courses, such as Student Success Seminar and Information Tools for Success help students transition to the University or to a degree program. UA Adult Focus assists undergraduate students age 25 years and older with appropriate educational and career choices and the Majors Mosaic program highlights various programs in which students can earn majors, minors and certificates.

Student academic support is offered including peer tutoring and Learning Assistants. Student persistence is embodied in the ability to engage students in a holistic university experience. This entails creating a student-friendly environment with easy access to advising for undergraduate and international students; academic and social programs including club sports, student organizations, student life and career building; registration, transcript, and tuition information; recreation and wellness, health services and accessibility services; and campus mobility including an aesthetic environment that is safe and bridges the University and surrounding community in collaboration with University Park Alliance and the city of Akron.

Economically important to Akron and surrounding area students is financial aid and scholarships. UA offers scholarships and awards more than $40 million annually to undergraduate and graduate students through eight different types of general to discipline-specific scholarships. In addition, graduate student assistantships are available. One of the UA Aspirational Goals is to increase scholarship support for students who continue to demonstrate academic success through their program.

The Akron Experience blends academic and experiential learning with each student's capabilities, helping to make the transition from campus to community seamless and create a new generation of civic champions by experiencing the combined power of culture and knowledge to advance society and the economy. Co-op education and internships, service learning and shadowing programs unify public and private entities with higher education acting as an active agent for economic development and civic enhancements. For example, Co-op placements in the College of Engineering for 2011-2012 totaled 766 students at 376 companies in 19 states and Sweden and France. Post-graduation commitments and enhanced employment opportunities evolve from these programs. During 2009-2011, engineering placement after graduation ranged between 89-91%, with 73-78% working in Ohio. The Arts & Sciences Careers Program goal is to prepare majors for successful careers through on-the-job training and experience in numerous activities, using practical skills such as writing, editing, personal interaction and creative thinking.

Discipline-specific program accreditation assures the quality and integrity of baccalaureate and graduate programs. A list of accredited programs is posted on the UA website and disciplinary accreditation documents are available in the resource room. Faculty develop student capacity in these programs with metrics of student success captured in program accreditation reports. The Assuring Excellence and Achieving Distinction initiatives commit to increased hiring of diverse, full-time faculty and align with the University's commitment to maintain its programmatic accreditation.

1.D.3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

UA will continue to focus on commitment to our community through *Vision 2020*, which calls for a marked expansion of its role as a catalytic presence for innovation and community wellbeing. Partnerships with the community that have not already been referred to above are: counseling for individuals and families via the Clinic for Individual and Family Counseling; diagnostic and treatment services to persons with language, speech and/or hearing problems via the Audiology and Speech Center; and problem solving and support of small businesses through our legal clinics.

Community educational needs are addressed via certificate and customized workforce development and continuing education course offerings. The LEAN Certificate Program is designed to bring about rapid, planned, controlled and measured step-change improvements to the performance of an organization through an overhaul of the value stream to reduce costs and increase profits and customer satisfaction. In addition, examination preparation courses for certification, recertification from various organizations and continuing education with diverse courses for lifelong learning are delivered at the University. UA students attend sponsored Career Fairs attended by employers from across the region and the UA Career Center, a one-stop shop for everything career related, to launch their careers.

Finally, we have external advisery boards for many of our colleges, departments and degree programs. These groups provide valuable insight to our faculty and academic administrators in the development and updating of curricular offerings, and involve our external constituents in a substantive manner in defining the learning outcomes and skill sets that our students need to master before graduation. These are another mechanism through which we include our communities of interest in shared decision making and respond to the needs of the future employers of our graduates.

Criterion 1 Summary

The University of Akron believes that it has provided sufficient evidence that it meets Criterion 1 and all of its Core Components for reaffirmation of accreditation. Strengths in this area are: our roles in innovation and community wellbeing; The Akron Experience; substantial student support services; emphasis on inclusive excellence and diversity; and regional expertise in commercialization and licensing. In addition, although not specifically addressed in totality in this section, we acknowledge that our major challenge in attempting to fulfill the Aspirational Goals of *Vision 2020* will be to grow and diversify revenue streams to maintain affordable access to higher education for the students that we intend to recruit and admit in the future. Our responses to this self-identified challenge, as will be seen in later sections, have been: expanding and strengthening our process of integrated planning and budgeting; setting new fundraising and endowment priorities; increasing the use of online delivery of courses and programs; planning to improve retention, persistence and graduation rates; investing in full-time faculty; and following a more robust and transparent data-driven decision making process.

Criterion Two. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

The policies for all university constituencies are all highly visible on the University website. The rules, regulations and policies are constantly monitored by the Office of General Counsel (OGC) to assure they are accurate and updated. The division of Talent Development and Human Resources (TDHR) also consistently monitors the visibility and accuracy of the policies governing personnel including hiring procedures and employee handbooks. Finally, the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) maintains up-to-date links to the faculty collective bargaining agreement, and associated merit and retention/tenure/promotion (RTP) guidelines.

One recent example of the constant feedback and monitoring is the new performance evaluation process. The adoption of *Vision 2020* led TDHR to determine that a key strategy required a more appropriate and transparent Performance Evaluation and process to support personnel advancement and ability to meet the standards of *Vision 2020*. TDHR developed a new evaluation and vetted it through the Vice Presidents and the Office of Academic Affairs leadership. Importantly, the drafting process incorporated sharing the proposed forms with the official representative bodies of the affected constituency groups, SEAC (Staff Employee Advisory Committee) and CPAC (Contract Professional Advisory Committee). Their feedback resulted in changes to the forms, the process and the timeline. TDHR conducted workshops on using the new process and used the feedback to refine and improve the instrument and process. TDHR then instituted extensive training in using the new form and process. TDHR plans to examine the impact of the new process, and to base staffing analyses and reconfiguration on the results of the first use of the forms and process during 2012-2013.

The sharing of budget and expense data with the university community is an example of the ongoing attempts by the administration to involve a wider audience in important decision making processes to assure that the University's mission is carried out. In 2011-2012, financial challenges and necessary budget cuts led to concern and questions on campus about the university's budget process and whether or not the fiscal resources of the university were appropriately allocated between academic and academic support units. Faculty raised questions on the floor of Faculty Senate about support for faculty positions and academic priorities. The openness of the senior administration to respond to difficult questions and the willingness of faculty to press those questions demonstrate the commitment of the institution to free expression, openness, fairness and assurance of ethical choices being made concerning the financial resources of the university.

A member of the University Council Budget Standing Committee officially requested ten years of fiscal information, proposing a simplified template. The University Council Steering Committee then officially requested ten years of expense data. In response, University leaders provided more information than the Committee requested, as well as information on planning the

fiscal year 2013 budget. In the Spring of 2012, University leaders convened three underlined forums to address these and other inquiries about University budgets and expenses. The forums specifically sought to educate the university community and in understanding the budget and decision-making. The presenters at the forums provided information about general fund revenues, general fund expenses, auxiliaries and debt using a Power Point presentation.

In a transmittal memorandum, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, noted: "Gathering this volume of data required extensive work and the results are provided in a spirit of transparency and desire for dialogue that leads to a considered and comprehensive understanding of the University's financial strategies and decisions that are focused on achieving student success." Rather than simply providing the data requested by the University Council, the administration gave the data context by offering narrative and explanation. Following this transmittal of information, the forums were convened to offer opportunities for dialogue. The forums were well attended, core shared governance bodies cooperated, and the level of discourse about important budgetary issues was high. Each forum generated questions that were answered with the provision of more financial data. The University community emerged from the process with a better understanding of concerns and opportunities for growth and improvement and with a commitment to continuing the process.

Another example of how UA has recently demonstrated its ability to develop fair and ethical policies is the process through which the campus was involved in our study of undergraduate student academic success that was part of this HLC reaffirmation process. This analysis of entering credentials and subsequent UA course performance as related to student likelihood of graduation revealed that students with low-end scores failed to graduate at acceptable rates. This study led to adopting new policies for admitting students, after an open forum process of informing the campus of these findings and receiving input, especially from the faculty. As the new admissions policies were being developed and deployed, data revealed that different colleges enforced inconsistent polices regarding readmission of students who failed to maintain good academic standing and were placed on academic probation. OAA acted immediately by convening the appropriate Associate Deans and others responsible (December 2011) to ensure the uniform application of the new policy to make certain that unsuccessful students do not continue to be re-enrolled without evidence that they have improved their chances of success. These actions, although in the near-term contributing to our recent overall enrollment decline, were in the best interests of the students who were increasing their financial burdens with very limited chances of completion.

The University spends more than $113 million annually for supplies and services. All of these expenditures are governed by Board of Trustees rules which require mandatory bidding for contracts over specific dollar thresholds and the use of existing contracts (both University and group collaborations). While considerable decentralization is achieved for routine purchase of supplies, in fact only four individuals (President, Provost, CFO and Director of Purchasing) have signature authority and are authorized to actually purchasing on behalf of The University of Akron. The normal process is for the Department of Purchasing to review and approve all purchases and contracts. State law and University policies and procedures require public bidding on all purchases over $25,000 for goods and $50,000 for services and construction contracts, but the Director of Purchasing can require bids on any amount. Contracts over $25,000 but under

$350,000 are reported to the Board of Trustees for information; contracts over $350,000 require prior approval of the Board of Trustees. Achieving the smaller scale departmental purchases that maintain the work environment has become easier since the last HLC comprehensive visit through the development of a department-based credit-card purchasing program and of an electronic purchase order system. Master contracts have been negotiated to achieve economies of scale, but exceptions to master contracts can be obtained without threatening the integrity of the bid purchase, which assures all suppliers equal access to the University's buying power.

Contracts for service, a large part of the University's purchasing, cause the University to assure that the University not only practices but also enforces integrity, through a Contracts Compliance Officer. The Contracts Compliance Officer reviews all University contracts to assure that there is no illegal discrimination in employment and to gather information from everyone with whom the University does business to assure that their employment practices are fair. This office attends pre-bid meetings and monitors compliance; for instance, employers under University contract must report monthly about the numbers of females and minorities in their workforce, and they must reveal details of their collective bargaining agreements, payment of worker's compensation insurance and claims and maintenance of prevailing wage rates. This office also has opportunities to urge the employment of minority contractors and to encourage affirmative action.

2.B. The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

In 2012, the University is undergoing a review and reorganization of information presented on the forward facing website www.uakron.edu.   Information relevant to this Core Component can be found at:

Program Offerings and Admission Requirements
Faculty and Staff Directory
Costs to Students and Net Price Calculator
Mission, Values and Expectations of the Board of Trustees
UA Board of Trustees
Ohio Board of Regents and The University System of Ohio
Accreditation Relationships

Content review of the University's websites, specifically for accuracy and timeliness of the information provided, have led to several recent changes. Notable initiatives include:

- Creation of Program Curriculum Guides in a standardized format, including learning outcomes, for all undergraduate programs. These will be publicly available in a searchable database presented for audiences ranging from the various advising offices across campus to prospective and current students and their parents. This project is on target to be completed at the beginning of Spring Semester 2013.

- Consistent listing of all permanent faculty with a newly acquired software package, Faculty 180. This project will be ongoing and will provide updated, online listings of faculty and their areas of study in an accessible, searchable and consistent manner.

- A complete redesign of the University bulletins to make them interactive web-based documents, changing from static PDF documents. This will allow more accurate information updated in a timelier manner. This project is currently being implemented in stages starting with the Undergraduate Bulletin.

- The addition of the Net Price Calculator as required by The Higher Education Opportunity Act. The University began by implementing the free calculator provided by the National Center for Education Statistics. This calculator fulfilled the minimum requirements for The Higher Education Opportunity Act and provided students and their parents with figures based on national averages. The University has recently purchased The College Board's Net Price Calculator. Implementation of this tool will be completed early in Spring 2013. This tool will allow the University to tailor results to its financial aid awards and policies and can be customized to communicate the University's messages thus providing potential students and their parents with a more accurate picture of the costs of attending The University of Akron.

2.C. The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

The University of Akron's Board of Trustees is composed of 11 members - 9 voting members and 2 nonvoting student members - all of whom are appointed by the Governor of Ohio with the advice and consent of the State Senate. In addition to state ethics laws and other sections of the Ohio Revised Code that serve to ensure the Board's autonomy, the Board acted in November 2011 to expand the talents, resources and experiences available to the Board by enabling the Board to add individuals who need not be Ohio residents as non-voting Advisory Trustees. That step is one of several significant actions taken by the Trustees in the past few years to enhance the effectiveness and engagement of the Board.

Beginning with a retreat in September 2010, the Board stated a need to be more involved in the discussion of major issues and to have the necessary background information to enable effective deliberations. With the Board Chair at the time noting that, "The Board knows its role is to set policy and would like to do that," the Board engaged an expert in higher-education governance, Dr. Cathy Trower of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Her charge from the Board was to facilitate a Board self-assessment and to guide a discussion on how the Board could "add value and be partners with the administration in moving forward for the betterment of the University."

Starting in July 2011, the Board implemented several changes to allow for more information sharing and substantive discussion. First, the Board's committee structure was streamlined to focus on and be more involved with issues close to the core mission and financial matters. Second, substantial components of information presentation and discussion on major issues were

added in all meetings of the Academic Issues & Student Success Committee and the Finance & Administration Committee. Third, committee meetings were scheduled so that committees would meet regularly ten days in advance of each Board meeting, rather than continuing to be scheduled in an ad-hoc manner. Finally, the Board's Strategic Issues Committee worked with the administration to develop a year-long topics calendar that charts the discussion of major issues and progression of deliberations. The calendar is updated after each Board meeting and revisited in its entirety annually. Finally, the Board committed to an annual self-assessment. Both the administration and Trustees have indicated that Board involvement has been enhanced and focused on institutional priorities by these changes.

The Board's commitment to constituent involvement extends beyond the legal requirements for advance notice and public deliberations. Regular Board meeting are broadcast live on the Internet, and the Board's public website includes meeting schedules, summaries of Board actions, a link to a complete listing of University Rules, information on the Board's bylaws and legislative authority, Board committee descriptions and assignments, and information on Trustees.

In addition to having vital information readily available to constituencies, the Board and administration have sought to include a variety of constituents in significant deliberations. Most notable in recent years have been the formulation of the University's updated Campus Master Guide Plan developed by Sasaki Associates of Boston. Stakeholders representing many constituencies—including students, faculty and staff, the city of Akron, University Park Alliance and the Board of Trustees—collaborated extensively in the Master Guide Plan updating process through many public forums and meetings. The guide plan touches the full spectrum of University activity and sets forth principles behind a structure for campus change: learning and research, and connecting and partnering. The updated guide plan presents a vision for the campus that is closely aligned with the mission and aspirations for growth set forth in the University's strategic plan.

Ohio's ethics laws and other provisions of its revised code require public Trustees to comply with strict ethics requirements, including the necessity of being independent from undue influence. Trustees of The University of Akron are trained to understand and follow those provisions as part of their initial orientation to the Board. Further, the Board Secretary also serves, among other roles, as the institution's General Counsel and Chief Ethics Officer. In those two capacities, the person in this position is an officer of the state. By having a Board Secretary who serves those multiple roles, the Board has the additional level of credibility necessary to recognize and consider risks appropriately and to apply regulatory and statutory requirements to both the issue at hand and the process when deliberating. A review of Board minutes shows regular examples of Trustees recusing themselves from discussions and voting on matters of that may be perceived as posing potential conflict of interest. In addition, members of the Board and the General Counsel regularly attend annual meetings of the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) and Board Professionals, as well as attend and participate in meetings called by the Chancellor of the State of Ohio.

The previously mentioned year-long topics calendar that charts the discussion of major issues and progression of deliberations shows the policy-level focus of the Board, as do the minutes of

Board meetings. Included in the materials provided to Board members for major changes such as college convergences, grants-management alignment and general-education reform are details of the parties involved in providing the recommendations, with special note of faculty input. The CB Agreement between the Board and the Akron-AAUP faculty union clearly reflects the faculty's responsibility for academics, and the Board's support of the university-wide efforts that created a University Council included adoption of a formal resolution reaffirming the University's commitment to a new process of consultative decision-making and shared leadership.

2.D. The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Faculty are committed to imparting the values of freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning to students as evidenced in the current collective bargaining agreement between the university and the Akron AAUP. Article 09 Section 5.B of the CB Agreement states:

> As teachers, bargaining unit faculty shall encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students. They shall hold before them the best scholarly and ethical standards of their discipline. Bargaining unit faculty shall demonstrate respect for students as individuals and adhere to their proper roles as intellectual guides and counselors. Members of the bargaining unit shall make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct and ensure that their evaluations of students reflect each student's true merit. They shall avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. They shall acknowledge significant academic or scholarly assistance from students. They shall protect students' academic freedom.

The University of Akron is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in student learning as well. With such freedom comes responsibility. The Preamble to Rule 3359-42-01 also states "As members of the academic community, students in exercising their freedom have the responsibility of preserving the freedom of others and working for the good of the entire community." The remainder of the rule details the various ways students should responsibly exercise their right to pursue truth and freedom of expression.

2.E. The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

The University of Akron enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity through University Rule 3359-41-01, "Code of Student Conduct of the University of Akron." The Code of Student Conduct states "The disciplinary power of the university is inherent in its responsibility to protect its educational purposes and processes through the setting of standards of conduct and scholarship for its students and through the regulation of the use of its facilities." The Code of Student Conduct clearly defines academic misconduct and outlines the academic misconduct procedure. As outlined in the academic misconduct procedure the enforcement of the policy is

shared between the faculty and the Department of Student Judicial Affairs (SJA). Instructors are expected to clearly state appropriate and inappropriate academic conduct in their course syllabi, typically statements about the avoidance of plagiarism and cheating. During the class, student misconduct is to be addressed by the instructor and/or referred to SJA.

SJA is given the authority and responsibility to develop and enforce standards of conduct for our campus community. These standards of conduct were jointly developed by faculty, staff, and students. In fall 2010, SJA instituted an electronic referral system that allows any campus member to immediately refer a student for a violation of the standards of conduct. SJA fosters a climate conducive to student learning and personal development, and since fall 2009 SJA has presented 394 educational programs attended by 21,257 students, faculty, and staff. In addition, there is an educational focus when students are referred to SJA. Once the student is referred, an SJA team member meets with the student for a conversation, gains the student's perspective, walks through the perspective of the complainant, and discusses consequences of the behavior for the individuals involved. The overall student referral process is not intended to be primarily punitive, but rather a learning experience for the student. Each interaction with a student is tailored to the type of behavior referred, as is the educational and behavioral outcome or consequence. This approach to dealing with student misconduct seems to be working with a recidivism rate less than 5 percent.

The Code of Student Conduct and information concerning academic integrity are available to students, faculty, and staff through numerous publications and electronic resources including the New Student Orientation Handbook, Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletins, Department of Student Judicial Affairs website, and the Office of General Counsel website. The School of Law also has a specific Student Disciplinary Code for law students, which is enforced at the School of Law through the Academic and Disciplinary Committee, comprised of faculty and student representatives.

University of Akron Libraries' faculty and staff support students' freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in learning as made explicit through the mission, vision, and value statements of the University of Akron Libraries' Strategic Plan 2010-2014. The mission of the library is "to empower users to evaluate their information needs, identify and access reliable sources, and successfully transform information into knowledge." The vision statement affirms UAL "as essential to the educational process and student success," while the value statement provides the context of dedication to the student's needs and protecting their rights to "inclusive access to services and resources in a secure environment [and] research, inquiry and discovery without review or censorship." To further these aims, the libraries developed an Acceptable Behavior Policy so the educational rights of an individual student are not infringed upon by another individual's behavior.

Students may exercise responsible freedom of speech and expression through participating in the student run newspaper (The Buchtelite), radio station (WZIP), and television station (ZTV). The student newspaper is a registered student organization and enjoys the protections afforded by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Subject to the limits of those protections, it cannot be censored or controlled by the University or any of its employees. The radio and television stations are not student organizations of the University, but are

administrative services of the University associated with an academic department, The School of Communication. WZIP and ZTV do not receive the same protection by law that the First Amendment provides to The Buchtelite.

Students are free to express their perspectives through participation in governance in the Undergraduate Student Government and the Graduate Student Government as well as having representation on the Faculty Senate, the University Council, and the Board of Trustees. Students are also free to participate in more than 250 student organizations and may create their own organization, as long as they do not violate the Code of Student Conduct or discriminate in terms of gender, age, or race. A process is in place for those who would like to create a new group. Each group must recommit to its constitution annually, and the constitution is reviewed by Student Life for compliance. All incoming students are connected to OrgSync where students note interests and are linked with student organizations of interest to them.

The Vice President for Research (VPR) oversees the integrity of the use of human subjects in research through an Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB), the operation of which is mandated and certified by the federal government. The Office of the VPR also provides administrative support for the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) to provide for the ethical and humane treatment of animals in research. Under the auspices of the Senior Vice President and Provost, the radiation safety committee ensures compliance with applicable laws and relations regarding the use of radiation producing instruments and materials on campus. The Office of the Vice President for Capital Planning and Facilities Management oversees the Department of Environmental and Occupational Safety and Health which coordinates other activities to assure safety in research, such as the control of hazardous materials and waste.

The Office of Research Administration (ORA) facilitates faculty proposal preparation, proposal submission, and award acceptance. The ORA oversees and ensures compliance for sponsored projects, balancing the University's regulations against sponsor and federal regulations in the submission, acceptance and expenditure of awards. The ORA was created through a merger of the pre- and post-award units. A presentation on the merger was given at the March 5, 2012 BOT Strategic Issues Committee. The Committee determined that the decision to enact a merger would be best made by University administration. The formal merger occurred in June 2012 after BOT adoption of University rules officially creating an Office of Research Administration.

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training is mandated by an NSF ruling that became effective January 4, 2010. The University must certify that an RCR program is in place for students and postdoctoral fellows with every NSF proposal submission. To meet this requirement, the University has subscribed to the online RCR training program provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Additionally, to comply with NSF award conditions, principal investigators are responsible for assuring that students and postdoctoral fellows have taken and passed CITI training. CITI completion can be verified through printouts or at the CITI site. The ORA periodically checks the CITI site to verify completion of training.

All faculty, students and contract professionals participating in research involving human or animal subjects must complete the CITI training prior to IRB or IACUC review. Recipients of

NIH/NSF funding (e.g. awardees, fellowships, etc.) must also complete an instructional program addressing the responsible and ethical conduct in research. All students participating in research involving human subjects are supervised by faculty advisers.

Integrity in research begins with individual faculty. All employees complete the Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment form annually. In addition, all researchers with PHS/NIH grants and cooperative agreements complied with the 2011 Financial Conflict of Interest regulations beginning with proposals submitted on or after August 24, 2012.

The University has a Conduct and Ethics Policy regarding employee ownership of companies that are engaged in commercializing their inventions. This was approved by the UA Board of Trustees, signaling the determination that the best interests of The University of Akron will be served if employees who create new technology are afforded the opportunity to hold personal financial interests in companies engaged in commercializing their inventions. Employee participation with outside companies in technology development activities facilitates the University's goal of making its research available for use in the private marketplace and provides researchers an incentive to develop inventions with commercial applications. The opportunity to participate in commercialization activities is also essential to the University's efforts to attract and retain highly qualified researchers.

The procedures and guidelines set forth in this policy include a Conflict of Interest Management Plan that is intended to enable the University to realize the benefits of such entrepreneurial activities. It also protects the integrity of the research and educational mission and complies with University policies and with applicable federal and state laws. The University has a policy on Research Misconduct describing the process by which allegations of falsification, fabrication, or plagiarism against an employee are handled. A procedure is in place with the Office of the Vice President for Research to manage allegations of research misconduct. The procedure conforms to federal policies on misconduct.

Assuring appropriate incentives for the development and marketing of intellectual property was the major driving force behind the creation of the Office of Technology Transfer (OTT) within the University and UARF as a separate non-profit corporation outside the University in 2001. Until 2000, the State of Ohio prohibited individual researchers from having a property interest in the intellectual creations that they developed with University support or during University employment. Following a change in Ohio state law, control of the economic incentive of the research process now resides with the University through the introduction of a policy that permits faculty to be part of a company based on their University creations. The three-sided relationship among faculty researchers, research funding agencies and the University as an agent of the State of Ohio has always been tested by disagreements about property rights: faculty want to publish, grantors want to retain ownership and confidentiality if not secrecy, and the University wants flexibility to exploit ideas to the fullest and to recoup its and the State's investment in facilities and in people, for both economic and educational reasons. Further complicating the relationship are State mandated limits of liability and indemnification.

OTT and UARF seek to assure faculty incentives, maintain the integrity of research in the educational process and resolve the limitations imposed by confusion over property rights. To

assist in these matters, UARF was contracted to manage the University's private sector sponsored research and commercialization of its intellectual property. Good progress and open communication in these areas enable students and faculty researchers to use their results in establishing a public record of accomplishment, and funding agencies to realize profits from the endeavors that they commissioned. Hence, the University can recoup its subsidy of the research process for future generations of students and can share with individual investigators profits to be made from the applications of discoveries.

Criterion 2 Summary

The University of Akron believes that it has provided sufficient evidence that it meets Criterion 2 and all of its Core Components for reaffirmation of accreditation. We have effective oversight and support services to ensure integrity in research and scholarly practices. Policies are in place for ethical conduct of human and animal research and for sponsored project compliance, resources are present to identify and manage potential conflicts of interest and commitment, and policies and procedures are followed to investigate and resolve conflicts that are disclosed. We also have robust processes in place for mitigating and dealing with academic and other forms of student misconduct. Our basic challenges in the areas covered by Criterion 2 will be to continue to develop our infrastructure and faculty size to meet the aspirational goals of *Vision 2020*. Our immediate responses are to focus on hiring the best faculty we can via the Achieving Distinction and Assuring Excellence initiatives. However, we will need to determine the extent to which more centralized processes for faculty development and staffing will be needed to maintain and expand our delivery of a quality education to students and also expand our research agenda.

Criterion Three. Teaching and Learning – Quality Resources and Support

3.A. The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

The University of Akron has long provided quality higher education degree programs that support the people and economy of Northeast Ohio. The University offers more than 300 undergraduate and graduate programs, some of which are recognized for their excellence. To make sure that the programs maintain their quality, the University uses both internal and external review mechanisms. These on-going reviews and self-studies support the University's efforts to provide students with the education and training needed to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The University of Akron, a member of the University System of Ohio, enjoys a long tradition of providing both diverse and appropriate higher education programs. Programs in the Arts, Business, Education, Engineering, Health Professions, and Law receive accreditation through outside agencies. To maintain external accreditation, these programs undergo periodic review to ensure that course offerings and faculty credentials continue to meet agency standards. The University also ensures that all degree programs undergo academic program review by an internal committee, and in the case of doctoral programs these reviews also include a site-visit and report by at least one external consultant as mandated by the Ohio Board of Regent's Advisory Committee on Graduate Study (RACGS).

The University engages in multiple review procedures to make sure that program and course offerings are current and appropriate. The University has established an on-going curriculum review process for new or altered courses/programs. Faculty members control these decisions with final approval via the Faculty Senate. In the case of new or significantly modified degree programs, the Board of Trustees and the Ohio Board of Regents must also approve the proposals as well. It is important to note that courses/programs that are proposed for distance delivery, even if they currently exist in traditional delivery formats, need to be approved through the University's curriculum review process.

The University is in the process of implementing a centralized web-based repository of curriculum guides for each program of study that include learning goals. Included with the development of the depository, academic departments are being asked to differentiate learning goals among programs. These efforts are guided by the OAA and are scheduled for completion in Spring 2013. As programs and colleges with external accreditation prepare for their reviews, ongoing self-studies must document that appropriate learning goals are aligned to specific programs. These efforts are described in detail in the specific accreditation documents.

The University offers courses in multiple formats: traditional, blended, web-enhanced, online and synchronous. The curricular content and mode of delivery for every course must complete a rigorous internal curriculum review process and be approved by the Faculty Senate and in some cases by the Board of Trustees. Programs and courses offered at all other locations meet the same standards as those presented on main campus. Faculty teaching at additional locations are hired via standard processes at the departmental, college, and Provost levels and must have the

same academic credentials regardless of location or mode of delivery. Departments are responsible for ensuring curricular consistency for courses taught at additional locations.

3.B. The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

Intellectual inquiry and broad learning are cornerstones to The University of Akron's approach to its academic programs at all levels. From the General Education requirements through graduation, courses and co-curricular experiences are designed to encourage students to develop the skills and strategies needed to succeed in a global workforce. Faculty members actively mentor both graduate and undergraduate students and encourage them to engage in research. To ensure that academic programs maintain a high standard of quality, the University examines and re-envisions programming. These efforts can currently be seen in the revision of the General Education curriculum and learning outcomes, as well as in the development of the unique Akron Experience, which helps students draw on both their academic and non-academic university experiences to demonstrate their skills and knowledge acquisition.

The current General Education Program at The University of Akron offers a selection of courses designed to provide students with the strong foundation needed to pursue their individual educational goals. The General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) currently selects and evaluates the courses included in the General Education curriculum to meet specific learning goals:

1. Acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will provide students with a better understanding of self in relation to the wider world community
2. Ability to master civic, occupational, and personal challenges
3. Enhanced appreciation of the depth and breadth of human knowledge and experience
4. Foundation for a pursuit of life-long learning

Undergraduates currently pursuing bachelor's degrees must complete at least 42 credits to meet general education requirements.   Associates programs require a minimum of 18 general education credits. For students enrolled in the University's Honors College, the general education experience is modified to an Honors Distribution. Honors students are required to take 6 cr. of Honors Colloquia—one humanities (2 cr.), one social science (2 cr.), one natural science (2 cr.), which substitute for some of the General Education requirements. It has been suggested by OAA that the new General Education reform initiative review the benefits of the Honors Distribution model in the context of student learning outcomes data to determine if it should be continued and/or expanded to be applicable to a wider audience of students.

The University recognizes the need to periodically re-assess and re-evaluate its curricula to meet changing needs, and the Provost commissioned the re-envisioning of general education in Summer 2011. The General Education Transformation Steering Committee (GETSC) has developed a more integrated framework for meeting general education goals as follows:

- Decrease the number of credit hours needed to achieve a baccalaureate degree
- Provide multiple rigorous pathways to desired learning outcomes
- Increase use of minors, certificates, integrated interdisciplinary sequences of courses, as well as service and experiential learning
- Emphasize documentable excellence consistent with Higher Learning Commission expectations

GETSC has proposed the following <u>learning outcomes</u> for the General Education curriculum at UA, which arose in part from our <u>HLC Assessment Academy project (CAUSAL)</u>:

- Communication skills and information literacy
- Critical thinking and complex reasoning skills
- Knowledge of the fine arts, humanities, natural sciences and social sciences
- Responsible citizenship in an interconnected world

The committee carefully considered the core competencies students need to meet the challenges of the 21st century and have shared a draft of an implementation plan that would help students meet the designated learning outcomes. The committee has also recommended that learning artifacts be collected to assess program effectiveness. The draft learning outcomes and implementation and assessment plans have been presented to the campus community via Faculty Senate meetings, department and college meetings and two open campus forums which drew a diverse mix of faculty, administrators and advisers. Feedback was taken at these meetings and has also been solicited via an online mechanism on the website where all of the General Education documents are posted. Feedback received has been posted regularly for the campus to review and will be considered in the Spring 2013 semester by the GETSC. This feedback will help reshape the initial work and proposal of the committee, and a revised proposal will go back to college faculty who will be instrumental in planning and implementing the proposed revisions.

As part of the current General Education curriculum, students are engaged in developing analytical skills, mastering critical thinking, communicating information, and developing skills adaptable to changing environments. The University is concerned, however, that students continue to hone these skills as they progress through their academic career and develop 21st century learning skills. For those programs accredited through external agencies, documentation of student involvement in communication, inquiry, and critical and creative thinking is available in accreditation documents.

Since the HLC reaffirmation visit in 2003, some academic programs have created capstone experiences for students that assess the students' critical thinking and communication skills. The approaches have included writing portfolios, capstone courses, senior papers, collaborative projects, internships and co-ops that vary according to disciplinary needs. Although progress has been made, more consistency and transparency are needed. The on-going General Education curriculum revisions address the need for integrating critical thinking, analytical, and communication skills fully into students' academic careers. The general education core provides the foundation in these areas, and as students progress toward degree, it is intended that these <u>skills are continuously reinforced</u> within degree programs and then finally demonstrated in a culminating capstone or other direct and indirect means of assessing student learning outcomes.

Multicultural education and the global relevance of academic and co-curricular programs are central to *Vision 2020* and are the focus of two of the five success strategies. The developing Akron Experience, which is a central component of our new strategic plan, combines classroom and experiential learning and recognizes that students come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Through *Vision 2020*, students and faculty will have increased opportunity to study internationally and to enjoy expanded cross-cultural experiences on campus.

Exposure to and mastery of cross-cultural competencies are already important components of the general education curriculum.   As the University re-envisions general education, the importance of human and cultural diversity remains at the forefront via the fourth stated learning objective in the proposed revision, "responsible citizenship in an interconnected world," encompasses multiple dimensions of diversity: global, domestic, and local. UA also offers a comprehensive set of co-curricular activities, resources and programs that provide learning experiences centered on human and cultural diversity, social needs and important social issues outside the classroom. Many of these were already discussed within our evidence for meeting Criterion 1 in this self-study.

Students at UA can access a wide range of international education opportunities designed to increase cross-cultural awareness and build skills critical for competing in a global work environment. International education opportunities range from short-term, faculty-led immersion experiences to full-semester and year-long programs of study at an international university. These opportunities are expanded in *Vision 2020*, which not only calls for an increase in the number of students studying abroad, but also plans to increase the ways students can experience living and learning in a diverse and global society. As part of this commitment to global citizenship, the University is also increasing its international student population. The University recognized the need to support these initiatives and added two staff members to the Office of International Programs through a "critical needs" budget request in 2011.

The University strives to ensure a diverse faculty and staff for instruction and support, providing additional opportunities for students to interact with people from distinct backgrounds and cultures. In 2009, the University's Office of Inclusion and Equity developed A Framework for Inclusive Excellence: Roadmap, a strategic plan with five major goals. The second goal focuses on recruitment and retention: "To increase the recruitment, retention and representation of people of color, women, people with disabilities and other underrepresented groups among students, faculty, administrators and staff."   The Diversity Council on campus formed two subcommittees in 2009-2010 to address this specific goal. Final reports submitted by both committees recommended specific pathways to increase minority hiring and retention at all levels of the University. Talent Development and Human Resources is working with the Diversity Council to implement the hiring recommendations in these reports.

Ongoing contributions to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge are central to the professional requirements of University tenure-track faculty members. The University's retention, tenure, and promotion guidelines, which are developed by faculty, establish the standards of scholarly and creative productivity for faculty members appropriate to discipline and level of degree granted for each academic department.

Faculty members working with graduate students must meet requirements established by the University for graduate faculty status. The criteria, outlined in the by-laws for graduate faculty, include on-going contributions to advancement of disciplinary knowledge and creative work. Decisions for graduate faculty status involve input from academic departments, colleges, and the Graduate School to ensure that faculty members working with graduate students meet necessary disciplinary standards. The criteria are more stringent for those faculty members who advise students on doctoral dissertations.

The University maintains a strong culture of faculty mentoring of both graduate and undergraduate students in research and creative projects. Graduate students across disciplines engage in faculty-supported thesis and dissertation research, participate in grant-funded research, and are encouraged to present and publish their findings. For undergraduates, research projects reflect the wide variety of programs available to students. Students in the Honors College complete an honors research project, engineers complete a senior project, and students in the fine and performing arts hold recitals and exhibits. The College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering sponsors undergraduate research every summer through the Research Experience for Undergraduates program (REU). Since 2004, the University has hosted The University of Akron Student Innovation Symposium (UASIS), which welcomes research presentations from across all disciplines from both undergraduate and graduate students.

3.C. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

The University has multiple controls in place to ensure that the faculty and staff who serve the students provide quality programming at all levels. Faculty performance, especially in the classroom, is assessed regularly. Faculty members must demonstrate consistent quality in the classroom and current qualifications in their discipline to be considered for merit increase, promotion, and tenure. Part-time faculty are also assessed regularly on their qualifications for classroom instruction. Student services staff undergo regular performance reviews as well to assure that they are meeting performance standards. To help all faculty and staff members maintain consistently high quality, the University provides multiple on-going resources for both faculty and staff development.

As discussed above, instructors are required to meet the appropriate credentialing criteria established by each academic unit. Hiring processes are in place to verify the credentials of faculty hires. In accredited programs, credentialing criteria are formed by the stringent standards of the outside accrediting agencies. The hiring of full-time faculty is covered in Article 11 of our CB Agreement, and that of part-time faculty by rule 3359-20-06.1. All hiring actions require approval of the OAA, recommendation of the President, and final approval by the Board of Trustees before becoming official.

Credentialing of graduate faculty highlights the level of expertise expected of faculty at The University of Akron. The bylaws of the graduate faculty explicitly outline the education and levels of research needed to qualify as an instructor and adviser to graduate students at the

master's and doctoral level. The Graduate Faculty By-laws require that "Candidates must possess a terminal degree appropriate to their fields" and each department has criteria on file that must be met for renewal of graduate faculty status every five years.

Tenure-track and non-tenure-track full-time instructors undergo regular evaluation. They must meet criteria established through the CB Agreement (Article 13 and Article 29 with associated MOU) in addition to those set forth by each unit for retention, tenure, and promotion. The CB Agreement provides the framework each academic unit uses to create discipline-specific criteria for evaluating faculty performance. The criteria all contain the following four categories:

1. Teaching
2. Research
3. Service
4. Professional conduct

Faculty must document their efforts in all four areas for reappointment, tenure decisions, and promotion. Each academic unit uses merit review guidelines annually to assess faculty performance based on teaching, research, and service. These guidelines are unique to each department and school. They reflect the distinctive missions and areas of focus of each program and are approved by the department, college and OAA. These guidelines not only determine annual merit-based salary increases, but also ensure that all faculty members continue to meet performance standards. Part-time faculty also undergo regular evaluation of their teaching, and departments use evaluations by students, peers, and supervisors to determine teaching effectiveness.

Professional development is central to these regular evaluations and is included in RTP guidelines for the University. Faculty in programs with external accreditation must meet the mandates set by their accrediting agencies, including staying current in their discipline. The University offers professional development or faculty improvement leave to provide faculty with opportunities to widen their professional activity and strengthen their areas of expertise. Any full-time faculty member with at least seven years of teaching service at The University of Akron may be granted professional leave for a period of not more than one academic year to engage in further education, research, or activity approved by the Board of Trustees. These leaves are available to any full-time faculty member holding the title of instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, professor or distinguished professor.

The University offers a variety of campus resources to faculty (both full- and part-time) and staff for professional development. One of the important resources is the Institute for Teaching Learning (ITL). With its mission to improve student success inside and outside the classroom, ITL supports scholarship in teaching and learning. ITL, along with Information Technology Services (ITS), provides frequent opportunities for instructors to stay current on best practices. From January 2011 to June 2012, ITL and ITS combined to offer 138 workshops and classes that were attended by 3,095 participants. Topics presented included advising, assessment, course design, ways students learn, and teaching with technology.   The Office of Research Administration also offers professional development to University faculty, with emphasis on research activity. This office provides workshops on grant writing and sponsors a variety of

speakers throughout each academic year. In 2009, "Research for Lunch" was introduced, which gave faculty opportunities to discuss their research projects with the campus community in an informal setting.

Instructors provide <u>office hours</u> so that they can work with students outside the classroom. Posted office hours are mandatory at the University, but the number of hours required varies across academic units. Academic departments, under the supervision of their chairs and directors, are expected to determine office hours that will provide students with optimal access to their instructors. <u>Part-time faculty</u> must also maintain regular office hours for students.

At the time of this writing (December, 2012) the University currently has 665 tenured/tenure-track faculty, 166 full-time non-tenure-track faculty, and 42 administrators with faculty rank. The percentage of semester credit hours taught by these faculty in fall 2011 was approximately 50%, with the remainder taught by part-time faculty and graduate assistants. Our IPEDS ratio of students to faculty is 21:1, based on a current student headcount of approximately 29,000. Data on <u>staffing</u> and <u>enrollment</u> at UA over time indicate that we have been relying more on part-time and full-time non-tenure-track faculty, and increasing our student support personnel, in recent years. Because of the rapid enrollment growth and reduced number of full-time, tenure-track faculty in some academic units, some faculty may be pressed to fulfill their classroom and non-classroom roles. Our new initiatives for Achieving Distinction and Assuring Excellence are intended to reverse these trends.

With respect to non-faculty staffing, each department or unit defines the necessary credentials for each position in collaboration with TDHR at the University. Position specifications are kept on file in TDHR that identify the required and preferred qualifications for each. TDHR is directly involved throughout the search process. They evaluate candidates' credentials for both part-time and full-time positions to ensure that minimum qualifications have been met. This process is clearly articulated in the classification services portion of their website.
On-campus professional development, sponsored through ITL, ITS, TDHR, and the Software Training Services, is available to all University employees. Staff members in academic departments and service units may also be granted leave time for professional development opportunities, including training seminars related to the staff member's job responsibilities. Staff members undergo an annual <u>performance review</u> with their immediate supervisor. At this time, staff members articulate successful accomplishment of job duties, identify future professional development opportunities (internal and external), and identify future goals. With the implementation of *Vision 2020*, performance reviews also include alignment with the University's goals, a personal mission statement, and behavioral skills.

3.D. The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

For students to succeed and persist to degree, many different types of support are needed that address students' experience in and outside the classroom. This is especially important on a campus that serves a diverse student population. Academic support services begin with students' first interactions with the University through New Student Orientation and Academic Advising, and multi-faceted programs continue to be available as students progress through their academic

programs. The University provides services to address the needs of specific student populations (e.g., Office of Multicultural Development, Transfer Student Services) in addition to programs designed to assist students campus wide (e.g., tutoring services, Learning Assistants). The University's recognition of the importance of educating the "whole student" is reflected in the rigor demonstrated by the programs sponsored through the Divisions of Strategic Engagement and Student Affairs.

The University offers a series of critical support services to ensure student persistence, success, and retention. Because the University recognizes that a wide variety of services are needed to serve its large and diverse student population, it offers support services targeted to meet the unique needs of specific populations. In addition, the University has organized support services around critical functional areas to provide more comprehensive assistance to for students. To assure the effectiveness of student support services, many units follow the guidelines from the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in higher education for successful practice. All departments in the Division of Student Affairs and many in the Division of Strategic Engagement undergo a five-year self-study or CAS review.

The University has long recognized the importance of providing support to entering students. As a result, the University developed First Year Experience (FYE) programming and continues to re-evaluate admissions and matriculation processes. This HLC self-study process began with a focus on the goal of student retention and persistence to degree. The disparity in college preparedness and performance across our student body led us to identify students in one of three academic preparedness levels in our Pathways approach: college ready, emergent, or preparatory. In January 2012, the Board of Trustees approved *Vision 2020* which includes the new admissions pathways approach for the University based on an applicant's high school grade-point average, test scores, class rank, and core curriculum. We are currently updating our undergraduate admissions Board of Trustees rule 3359-60-02 to reflect this new process and nomenclature.

A centralized Office of New Student Orientation (NSO) guides new undergraduate students from matriculation through their first semester on campus. NSO's standard orientation program is designed to accomplish specific, consistent learning outcomes for all incoming students. In addition, NSO offers customized orientation programming designed for specific populations, such as military and veterans, adults, transfer students, post-secondary students, and minority students. As part of every NSO program, students meet with an academic adviser. The adviser determines appropriate placement for each student using available assessment tools and prior college and university coursework. The adviser pays special attention to the student's abilities in writing, mathematics, and reading comprehension. This makes sure students are adequately prepared for the courses they select for enrollment. Academic advisers focus on information found in the following assessment tools, complying with the placement policy recommendations from the Ohio Board of Regents:

1. ACT/SAT
2. COMPASS
3. Advanced Placement
4. Prior post-secondary and/or transfer coursework

As part of the new Akron Experience initiative, students take the Beginning College Student Survey of Engagement (BCSSE) as part of their NSO program. BCSSE collects data about entering college students' high school academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as their expectations for participating in educationally purposeful activities during their first year in college. BCSSE data will be used to aid the design of pre-college orientation programs, student service initiatives, and other programmatic efforts aimed at improving student learning during the students' first year at The University of Akron. In addition, each student will receive an individual advising report based on his or her responses to BCSSE. Beginning in Fall 2012, all advisers will receive this report for their students for use during advising sessions. Both Residence Life and Housing and Off-Campus Student Services staff will also be trained in the use of the individual advising report for designing student interventions and programming efforts.

Once students begin their academic careers at the University, they have access to a wide variety of resources that provide learning support and preparatory instruction. The programs range from the specialized remedial courses offered through Developmental Programs, to face-to-face and on-line tutoring available to all students enrolled at the University, to the research and learning resources and services available at Bierce Learning Commons. In addition, first-year students can take a Student Success Seminar to strengthen their academic skills. Students registered with the Office of Accessibility receive reasonable accommodations based on their specific needs to help them achieve academic success.

As part of The Akron Experience initiative, students participate in MAP-Works®, a student success tool that:

- Integrates information provided by the institution and the individual student to determine likelihood of retention
- Provides students with personalized success tips and resources through an interactive dashboard and written report
- Provides faculty and staff who are "direct connects" to an individual student as well as academic colleges and vice-presidential units with student-specific information that can enhance individual intervention
- Provides faculty and staff with an early warning mechanism for at-risk students
- Facilitates communication across units for seamless interaction and intervention with students
- Provides the institution with aggregate information that can inform the creation of institution-wide retention and student success initiatives

At UA, staff in the Divisions of Strategic Engagement and Student Affairs have presented nationally on the University's use of MAP-Works®. The data presented support the University's use of this tool as an effective risk indicator and mechanism for intervention.

The University supports an intrusive advising model that involves and motivates students to seek help when needed. Both professional advisers and faculty advisers work with students at the University. Advising is decentralized, with each degree-granting college responsible for assisting its own students. Every undergraduate student at Akron is assigned to either a professional or

faculty adviser, depending on which college is currently working with the student and how far the student has progressed toward degree completion. First-year students who are admitted directly to a degree-granting college may have a faculty adviser, a college-specific professional adviser, or both. For the many students who come through more general portals, professional generalist advisers provide academic counseling. However, specialized advisers are available to help specific University populations, e.g., adult students and military/veterans. Graduate students are predominantly advised by the faculty in their specific academic program.

Advisers and students meet regularly with students during traditional advising appointments or walk-in sessions. Advising has also incorporated technology-based initiatives to maintain contact with students using telephone sessions, electronic mail, and social media. In October, 2009 the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) audited academic advising at the University. NACADA is the nationally recognized professional organization representing academic advising in higher education. In the summary of the audit, the consultants stated, "The University of Akron has made significant progress in a relatively short amount of time in enhancing the quality of the academic advising experiences of its students, thus affecting their academic success and persistence". The consulting team affirmed its belief that with a continued focus on academic advising, the University would be "a leader in higher education". In response to NACADA team recommendations, the Provost took steps to strengthen academic advising on campus in 2010 by approving the hiring more than a dozen new full-time academic advisers.

Other resources in place to enable the success of our students are found across campus. For example, Information Technology Services (ITS), in combination with units in each college, manages and maintains the technological infrastructure on campus. ITS provides 132 kiosks in multiple buildings that enable students to check email or access university services quickly and easily, and maintains seven computer labs with 129 machines. In addition, ITS supports and maintains 59 labs with 904 workstations in buildings throughout the campus. Mobile laptop carts for classroom use are available (16 carts/637 laptops) in multiple buildings. Several hundred laptops are available for students to check out at various locations across the campus. Faculty and students have access to a wide array of software, some through site licenses and some through a virtual computing lab. Individual colleges and programs provide students with specialized hardware and software appropriate to their discipline. Wired or wireless Internet access is available in all instructional facilities and in all campus housing.

Colleges and departments provide specialized facilities to meet specific instructional needs (e.g., the Simulation Lab in Mary Gladwin Hall for Nursing students, the Taylor Institute in the Polsky Building for College of Business Administration students, and the Exercise Physiology/Human Performance Lab for Sports Science and Wellness Education students in the InfoCision Stadium). Another example is the Center for the History of Psychology, which is a unique facility that cares for, provides access to, and interprets the historical record of psychology and related human sciences. The Center, a member of the Smithsonian Institution Affiliations Program, includes a museum of psychology that highlights artifacts, documents, films, and photographs from the history of the human sciences. It is also home to the Archives of the History of American Psychology, comprised of a vast collection of artifacts, media, and documents, including the personal papers of many important psychologists.

University Libraries serves the main campus from three locations: Bierce Library, the Science & Technology Library in the Auburn Science & Engineering Center, and Archival Services in the Polsky Building. Bierce Library underwent a significant renovation in 2011 to create a Learning Commons on the first floor and to establish learning studios and technology-enhanced group study rooms on both the first and second floors. In 2012, a learning studio was added to the Science & Technology Library. Administratively separate library units serve the School of Law and Wayne College.

Finally, University Libraries provides instruction in information literacy for students throughout their academic careers. Support for information literacy begins with New Student Orientation and continues as students persist toward a degree. First-year students receive immediate instruction and experience with information literacy. The first-year Student Success Seminar and the required two-course English Composition sequence all include instruction and practice with information literacy. As students continue their studies, they and the faculty providing instruction have ready access to subject specialist librarians. University Libraries, however, continues to strengthen its instruction in information literacy. As part of its strategic plan and action plan, the library has developed a comprehensive program of information literacy instruction based on Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) standards. The program was implemented in the Fall 2012. Collections and resources for University Libraries are purchased and maintained to support learning, teaching, and research at the University of Akron . The University is a member of OhioLINK, Ohio's statewide consortium of 89 academic libraries. Member libraries realize substantial savings through collaborative expenditures on resource acquisition and a statewide infrastructure for expedited interlibrary borrowing.

3.E. The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

In *Vision 2020*, the University aspires to ensure student success through increased retention and graduation, job placement, global awareness, and global competitiveness. In support of these goals, the University offers a wide range of co-curricular learning experiences including those focused on civic engagement, service learning, and community service. These experiences are offered through Student Life, Residence Life and Housing, Off-Campus Student Services and ITL in the context of service learning. These efforts were recognized in 2008 when the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching awarded The University of Akron a Community Engagement Classification in Curricular Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships. This classification recognized the nature and extent of community engagement and community service opportunities available for students.

In support of student success, UA sponsors a diverse array of co-curricular offerings aimed at adding value to the students' academic curriculum by enhancing skills and learning outside of the classroom. Co-curricular offerings are centered on learning, engagement, or both. Learning-centered experiences have a variety of learning outcomes identified and measured, whereas engagement-related programs are meant to ensure a student's connection and/or commitment to the institution and create sense of belonging. As noted above, many programs and services in the co-curriculum follow CAS professional guidelines. To comply with these

standards, many co-curricular programs and services have learning outcomes that are regularly assessed.

As one example of the use of assessment for program improvement in a student support services area, The Department of Residence Life and Housing (RLH) has administered the Resident Assessment, a survey developed by the Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACUHO-I) and the Educational Benchmarking Institute (EBI), from 2002 to the present. The tool analyzes 16 factors and combined factors for overall resident satisfaction, overall resident learning, and overall program effectiveness and allows the University to measure its effectiveness relative to selected benchmark institutions.

Overall and across time, results indicate that Residence Life and Housing demonstrated consistently strong performance with regard to student satisfaction with the hall student staff, the sense of community built on our floors, and with the personal interactions students gain from their residential experience. Since 2009, RLH has made improvements in relation to student satisfaction with the room assignments and change process and with student satisfaction with facilities. A challenge remains with student satisfaction regarding how safe students feel on campus and their satisfaction with Dining Services. Recommendations have been made to Dining Services to improve the student experience. Also, regarding safety, students who live in hall locations that blend with the community on the east and south sides of campus express greater safety concerns than do those living on the north side of campus. To address these concerns, RLH now employs three community and housing police (CHOP) officers to work with our students and communities to improve student experiences regarding safety.

Furthermore, the University created a Campus Safety Task Force to discuss safety-related issues and develop comprehensive responses to issues that are identified. The Task Force, which meets on a bi-weekly basis, includes representatives from all aspects of campus life – including students, faculty, the University's Chief of Staff and other senior administration officials – and community partners, particularly from Downtown Akron. Working collaboratively, the Task Force is able to identify concerns and implement cross-department solutions in a timely, efficient manner.

One example of the Task Force's innovative approach to enhancing safety is the Safe Neighborhood Initiative, which focuses on the University Park neighborhood south of campus, home to many students. The Task Force joined with the University Park Alliance, of which UA is a partner, to place uniformed Safe Neighborhood security officers in the neighborhood. The security officers patrol on foot, on bike and in marked vehicles to supplement University and city police through the overnight hours, thus providing a heightened level of coverage for crime prevention, personal safety and property protection.

As mentioned previously in this self-study, UA has recently developed a new approach, The Akron Experience, to enhance the student experience and ensure the education of the "whole" student through transformative learning experiences that integrate the curriculum and the co-curriculum. The Akron Experience is an approach that ensures a rigorous academic program enhanced by meaningful and integrated experiences outside of the classroom. The Akron Experience incorporates learning inside and outside of the classroom with particular attention to

the whole experience of living and learning as a gateway to the world. The program will focus on strengthening students' intellectual development as well as their personal and social development.

Finally, ITL promotes student success inside and outside of the classroom through comprehensive faculty development opportunities and the intentional integration of classroom learning and outside of the classroom experiences. Through the ITL, faculty may enhance skills in mentoring undergraduate research, assessing student learning outcomes, incorporating experiential learning in their courses and may participate in one of several faculty learning communities to enhance teaching, learning and community building.

Criterion 3 Summary

The University of Akron believes that it has provided sufficient evidence that it meets Criterion 3 and all of its Core Components for reaffirmation of accreditation. We have substantive faculty oversight and control of our curriculum, robust monitoring of faculty and staff hiring, credentials and performance, and significant IT and student support services and co-curricular programming. Our basic challenges in the areas covered by Criterion 3 will be, as were also found under Criterion 2, to continue to develop our infrastructure and faculty size to meet the aspirational goals of *Vision 2020*, particularly in this case for teaching and learning. We also need to continue to focus attention on our new General Education curriculum and assessment of student learning outcomes. Our immediate responses are to focus on hiring the best faculty we can via the Achieving Distinction and Assuring Excellence (which is coupled with program review) initiatives, and assigning or hiring individuals to see that progress in these important areas (General Education and assessment) is maintained and sustained.

Criterion Four. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

4.A. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

4.A.1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.

A Program Review Committee was established during the spring of 2005. The committee currently consists of nine members including; faculty, associate deans, department chairs and vice provosts. A schedule has been developed so that each department in the University engages in a program review every five years. Self-study templates have been created so that each department or school evaluates itself holistically, and each of its undergraduate programs and graduate programs separately. The graduate program template is consistent with the recommended program review template outlined by RACGS. As such the review of graduate programs complies with OBR guidelines.

Each year the Program Review Committee meets with the department chairs and school directors scheduled for review that year to go over the self-study templates and expectations regarding the content of each self-study. The Office of Institutional Research (IR) maintains a website that contains relevant data that units utilize in writing their self-study documents. Units may supplement the data provided by IR but must document the source and method of data collection for additional data. Units must provide evidence pertaining to student satisfaction and post-graduation outcomes as well as benchmark data for comparable departments/schools and programs at other universities, in addition to information about students (numbers, demographics, academic quality, degree progress and success) and faculty (load, student credit hour generation and academic productivity). Doctoral programs are also reviewed by an external consultant who visits the campus and who provides a report to the Program Review Committee. Program reviews are initiated in the fall semester and provided to the Program Review Committee by late fall or early spring. The entire review process is to be completed by the end of the spring term of that academic year.

The Program Review Committee briefly reviews the initial submission of all self-study documents and data for completeness and sources of ambiguity. Departments/schools make revisions as requested by the Program Review Committee, and then submit their self-study reports to their dean who then completes a summary template. This "Dean's review" includes an assessment by the Dean of the strengths and weaknesses of the department/school and any initiatives proposed by the department/school for development or improvement. The Dean then forwards the complete set of materials to the Program Review Committee. The self-studies and Dean's review are then reviewed (along with external reviews as appropriate) by the Program Review Committee, and a summary report is written that contains department/school and program descriptions, Committee observations of strengths and weaknesses and recommendations for action. The report is provided to the Provost's Office and then is shared with the department/school and the appropriate dean after the Provost's review. A plan is developed to address any concerns or suggestions that are made as a result of the report of the Program Review Committee and a course of action and timeline for addressing those suggestions is established.

As of 2012, one cycle of program reviews has been completed and the Program Review Committee has also reviewed (September-October 2011) department responses to the recommendations that it made during the first cycle. Deans are also aware of the progress each department/school is making in response to its program review. In fall of 2011, departments/schools were asked to update the Program Review Committee regarding the progress made to implement recommendations made in their program review reports. Most departments reported making progress and, more importantly, indicated that they found the recommendations helpful for improving program quality. Accordingly, the Program Review Committee has been reconstituted and a review of the required information in each self-study template will be accomplished before the next round of reviews in 2013.

In particular, the responses to recommendations of the Program Review Committee will help the University with its Assuring Excellence strategy which will reallocate resources to either invest in, maintain, or disinvest in programs. This reallocation will be primarily through the hiring of new additional faculty in units slated for investment while phasing out some programs and not replacing faculty in areas targeted for disinvestment. The Provost has charged the Committee to provide actionable recommendations. The Board of Trustees expects an update on this activity during Spring 2013 during which time the appropriate governance processes will be followed to ensure a timely phasing out and closing of programs determined to no longer be viable or necessary at the University.

4.A.2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning.

For credits generated at The University of Akron, students enroll in courses (including co-op and internship courses), complete the various exams and other graded elements of the course and the course instructor evaluates their performance. The instructor uploads students' course grades through the internal web-based portal "My Akron" (formerly Zipline) and credits are awarded to students who earn passing grades.

Additional ways to obtain credits for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning are described in the Undergraduate Bulletin and include: College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement (AP), Technical Experience Assessment (TEA), American Council on Education (ACE), Credit by exam, Bypassed Credit, International Baccalaureate (IB), Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), and Tech Prep. The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) is a national program that offers the opportunity to obtain college credit by examination. A variety of experiences may have prepared a person to earn college credit. The qualifying score required to receive credit for a specific course is determined by the Ohio Board of Regents and the academic Department/School in which the course resides. Guidelines for accepting CLEP tests for credits are outlined in the Undergraduate Bulletin (page 49). Credits earned in this manner are included in the total credits completed but are not assigned a grade and do not count in the quality-point ratio, class standing, or graduation with honors calculations. CLEP examinations for credit toward any degree are not permissible in the term before graduation. Since no grades are earned though a CLEP exam, CLEP credit may not be used to repeat for change of grade.

Courses offered in the Advanced Placement program, through the auspices of the College Board, are eligible for college credit at The University of Akron. High school students may earn undergraduate credits in a number of different academic areas by enrolling in such courses during high school and taking Advanced Placement Tests at the end of each course. The test score required to receive credit for a specific course is determined by the Ohio Board of Regents and the academic department/school in which the course resides. Students obtaining an Advanced Placement (AP) exam score of 3 or above are awarded the identified course(s) and credits for the AP exam area(s) successfully completed. Additional courses or credits may be available when a score of 4 or 5 is obtained. Award of credit for higher score values varies depending on the academic discipline. Credits received are applied toward graduation and may also satisfy a General Education or Honor's Distribution requirements if the course(s), to which the AP area is equivalent, fulfills those requirements. The University provides a table in the Undergraduate Bulletin of which AP tests/scores correspond with which classes. If an equivalent course is not available for the AP exam area completed, elective or area credit is awarded in the appropriate academic discipline and applied toward graduation where such elective credit options exist within the academic major.

The Technical Experience Assessment (TEA) is a portfolio-based, prior learning assessment tool offered by Summit College and also provided through Wayne College. This option is available to people with work/life experience in the Business Technology and Public Services Technology majors such as marketing and criminal justice. An eight week non-credit workshop is offered through Workforce Development and Continuing Education that teaches individuals how to assemble their relevant experience into a logical, standardized format: the portfolio. Information in the portfolio is matched with one or more courses on campus. Each portfolio is written to demonstrate experience in and understanding of specific course concepts as represented by course objectives. Evaluation of the portfolio is done on an individual basis by the major's lead faculty member who decides on a per-case basis if the portfolio is credit-worthy. That portfolio is then evaluated by a faculty member in the subject area. The faculty member can reject the portfolio outright, request that the student redo the portfolio with certain changes in mind, or accept the portfolio as worthy of credit. If the portfolio is credit-worthy, the student gets non-graded credit for the specified course(s). Once the first portfolio is approved for credit, the participant may submit additional portfolios for other courses. Not all courses in the major are available for the TEA program, and usually capstone courses are not allowed. The participant may earn up to twenty-four total credit hours in his/her major through the TEA program.

The University accepts the American Council on Education's (ACE) College Credit Recommendation Service (CREDIT) evaluations of prior learning. CREDIT evaluates and makes credit recommendations for formal educational programs and courses offered by organizations including business and industry, labor unions, professional and voluntary associations, schools, training suppliers, military (e.g., SMART transcripts), and government agencies. The program is based on the idea that it is sound educational practice for colleges and universities to grant academic credit for high-quality educational programs conducted by a variety of organizations provided that the courses are appropriate to an individual's degree program. ACE credits are related to University of Akron credits on a departmental basis. Students receive credit for college-level work relevant to their experiences.

A student interested in earning Credit by Exam may request a special examination from the department/school in which the desired course is offered, with the permission of the Dean of the student's college and the Dean of the college in which the course is offered. The student must pay a special examination fee. The grade obtained in such an examination is recorded on the student's permanent academic record. Such credit by examination is offered on a class-by-class basis (i.e., not all classes participate in this program).

Certain courses at the University enable an eligible student to earn "bypassed" credit. A student who completes such a course with a grade of "C" or better may apply for and receive bypass credit for designated prerequisite courses that carry the same departmental code numbers. A student who completes such a course with a "C-"or lower is not be eligible to apply for or receive bypass credit. Courses for which bypass credit is available are listed on in the Undergraduate Bulletin.

UA recognizes the academic quality of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program and the efforts of students enrolled in IB coursework by awarding advanced standing credit for the completion of the IB Diploma. High-level examination scores are considered for departmental credit in the areas of French, Spanish, German, Geography, Latin, Greek, Economics, Chemistry, History, English, Social Anthropology, Mathematics, Music and Physics. Although minimum scores for the awarding of credit vary by subject area, generally scores of four or five are sufficient. No credit is awarded for IB Subsidiary examinations, with the exception of some foreign languages.

Through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program, high school students are eligible to enroll in courses at the University during fall and spring semesters. There are two options available. Option A allows students to receive college credit only, and Option B allows students to receive both high school graduation credit and college credit simultaneously. Option B courses may be University of Akron courses offered by high school partners who have been approved to offer the courses in their school and taught by their teachers. This process is specified in the Dual Enrollment Guidelines/Requirements. These PSEO enrollment options are not intended to be a substitute for the academic programs, social growth or maturing experiences provided by Ohio's public and private high schools, or otherwise interfere with or replace Advanced Placement courses or the college preparatory curriculum available to students within their school system. Students in grades 9-12 may enroll in the PSEO program if they meet the University's PSEO ACT/SAT score and GPA requirements. Course curriculum and tests must be the same as in the University's course and the department retains oversight for the course and the instructor.

The College Tech Prep program integrates technical training and college preparatory academics beginning in high school and continuing through a minimum of an Associate's degree. College Tech Prep prepares students for highly skilled occupations supported by regional business and industry in the area of business, information, health and engineering technologies. The College Tech Prep pathway is a skill-building curriculum jointly designed by business, high schools, and colleges. This pathway links the high school experience with a college degree program. Students

have the potential to earn college credit, gain advanced skills and have a clearer sense of career direction while they are still in high school.

4.A.3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

The University accepts <u>transfer credits</u> from colleges/universities that are associated with one of the U.S. regional institutional accrediting agencies (Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Higher Education; New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education; North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Higher Learning Commission; Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges; Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges; Western Association of Schools and Colleges). For international students, the Office of International Programs determines whether the institution is appropriately accredited.

Students applying for transfer credits are assigned an equivalent credit if the course in question has already been deemed equivalent to a specific University course (as noted on the articulation tables of the Degree Audit Reporting System, DARS). Students can check which courses transfer to the University at the <u>Uselect</u> web site. If a course has not yet been compared to an equivalent campus course, or if it is from a non-U.S. institution, the student is required to submit a syllabus for the course to the Chair/Director/Dean of the department/school/college in which the desired course credit is offered. The Chair/Director/Dean contacts the professor teaching the course and asks that professor to assess the similarity of the transfer course to the campus course based on the syllabus. If the course is considered sufficiently similar, the student receives credit for the campus course and the transfer course number is entered into the DARS system (for U.S. courses). If it is not deemed sufficiently similar, the student receives general elective credit for the course.

U.S. citizens and permanent residents who wish to transfer credits for coursework completed overseas need to send their transcripts to an agency that is familiar with international universities/colleges (e.g., World Education Services). The agency does a course-by-course equivalency evaluation of the courses on the transcript. The University of Akron then uses that evaluation for transferring credits.

Grades for transfer work do not convert automatically to a University of Akron GPA, but grades obtained outside the University can be used to determine whether the student may advance in certain University programs. For example, overall science GPA from another university can be used for inclusion into a science degree program, or grades for specific non-University of Akron courses (e.g., achieving a D in calculus) can be used to determine eligibility to enter certain University classes. For graduate students, transfer credits transfer only if the student earned a minimum of a "B" (or its equivalent) for the course(s) transferred.

There is no general limit on the period of time that transfer credits are valid. There is a limit on when the courses were completed for certain programs (e.g., College of Business Administration, accelerated Nursing program); in some cases (e.g., Business school), students are "strongly encouraged" to update their classes; in others (e.g., accelerated Nursing program), older courses

(>5-7 years) are not considered valid for acceptance into the program. In graduate programs, individual course transfer credits (i.e., rather than whole blocks of credits) must fall within the six (Masters degree) or ten (Ph.D. degree) year time frame for completing the graduate degree. In graduate programs, no more than one-third (Master's degree) or one-half (Ph.D. degree) of the credits needed can be transferred from other institutions. Additionally, the credits cannot be transferred until the student has completed 12 semester credits at UA and attained a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

4.A.4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs.

Evidence for this component of Criterion 4 is found primarily within the University's curriculum review process. Curriculum originates in the Department/School and with the faculty who will be responsible for it. In the current curriculum proposal system, individual faculty members may enter a proposal to create a new course/program/certificate, alter an approved course/program/certificate, or delete a current course/program/certificate. Proposals include specifications for the nature of the course/program/certificate and its objectives, course prerequisites, course credits and grading scheme, faculty and other resources needed to offer the course/program/ certificate, and other courses/programs/certificates that will be affected by the proposal. A syllabus must accompany course proposals and faculty vitae (to support their credentials to offer the program) must accompany program proposals. Learning outcomes are required to be specified for General Education courses, and may be specified in the syllabi for other courses; accredited degree programs often require specification of learning outcomes on syllabi for courses in their program.

When a proposal is completed, it enters the curriculum proposal workflow for the College in which it originates. It is reviewed and must be approved by the appropriate Department personnel and College governing bodies, and then is released into the University system. These bodies consider the academic integrity of the proposed action and its consistency with College and University policies. Formal University level review is the purview of the Curriculum Review Committee (CRC), which is a standing committee of the Faculty Senate. It has three subcommittees. The University Review Committee (URC) examines the appropriateness of curricular additions and revisions along with their effect on other academic programs. The Distance Learning Review Committee (DLRC) examines proposals that involve online instructional components. The General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) reviews curricular changes specific to General Education courses.

Other institution-level curricular review bodies include: University Libraries; Institutional Research; and the Graduate School. These bodies review curriculum changes to ensure needed resources are in place and standards of graduate education are met. In the review process, the CRC takes the lead in assisting with reviews of curriculum proposals that generate objections, negotiating those objections and helping the parties involved to come to a resolution. Objections to a proposal require that the proposal be returned to its originator for revision and re-released into the system.

After these formal review committees approve a proposal, it goes to university-level review and constituents may comment or file objections. Any interested member of the university community may review curriculum proposals and anyone can comment on or object to proposals. If no objections are filed during the university-wide review period, a proposal moves to the Faculty Senate for approval. If objections are filed, the proposal is sent to the CRC. The CRC deliberates and is charged to make a recommendation to the Faculty Senate for action on the disputed proposal. If the Senate approves a proposal, it moves to the Provost and Board of Trustees (in cases of degree programs) for final approval. Only then is the curriculum change implemented and disseminated in university documents. There have been some concerns voiced on campus that this process is lengthy and subject to delays. In response, the administration, working with the Faculty Senate, is endeavoring to rectify any problems that users of the new curriculum proposal system may be encountering.

Regarding "learning resources" and "course prerequisite authority," all registered University of Akron students (including Post-Secondary Education Option students) have access to appropriate and necessary technical/computing/laboratory resources and learning resources that include library resources, online course resources (e.g., the learning management system Springboard), and face-to-face or online tutoring. Prerequisites for courses are set via the curriculum process already described and the University has been exploring (but has not yet been able to implement) a new prerequisite checking program to ensure that students are prepared for the courses in which they enroll. Nevertheless, departments can query the credentials of students (i.e., contingency reports) to determine if all enrolled students in a class meet the required prerequisites and thereby manually control students' participation.

The University maintains "authority for faculty qualifications" in that graduate faculty and part-time faculty qualifications are specified in University rules that identify the appropriate level of quality and preparation for persons in these positions. Graduate faculty membership is contingent upon possession of a terminal degree, appropriate experience, and scholarly productivity. Part-time faculty qualifications include distinctive requirements for the three levels of part-time Lecturers. In all cases a requirement for a Master's degree is typical, as is documented experience appropriate to the position. Regular faculty members are hired based on approved search plans and criteria that specify the academic credentials and experience necessary for the faculty member's role per the hiring unit. Ongoing review and evaluation of a regular full-time faculty member's credentials is accomplished via retention, tenure and promotion and merit evaluation procedures for the unit in which the faculty member resides.

The University assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum. Instructor qualifications for dual credit courses offered by high school teachers are evaluated as specified in the Dual Enrollment Guidelines/Requirements. High school administrators work with the University to identify desired courses and high school teachers are approved for adjunct faculty status by the appropriate Department Chair/School Director. Departments/Schools maintain oversight of these instructors and the content of their courses. The University's Dual Enrollment Guidelines specify that syllabi, texts, assignments and examinations for these courses follow from those used on campus. These measures are intended to assure that the educational

experience and outcomes for students in dual credit courses are equivalent to other University students.

4.A.5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.

The University holds 27 specialized program accreditations. All programs also hold the Ohio Board of Regents' approval, including all teacher licensure/credentialing programs. A calendar of accreditation reviews is maintained on the Office of Academic Affairs website. All accreditation reviews are initiated by the faculty in the respective programs, reviewed by the College, and forwarded to OAA for final review. Once all internal reviews are successfully completed, required accreditation self-studies are sent to the appropriate accreditation agency. Colleges are responsible for costs involved in program accreditation.

4.A.6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates.

As part of this HLC self-study process, it became apparent that at an institutional level, UA has not formally kept track of employment or admission rates to advanced degree programs for its graduates, though certain programs (notably as required for accreditation or licensure) have tracked these values. Examples of placement rate data (employment rates plus admission rates to advanced programs) include:

Program	Placement Rates for Graduates	Percent of graduates who go on to Graduate School
Engineering	89% (3-yr average)	14% (3-yr average)
School of Law	91% (2-yr average)	1% (2-yr average)
Speech Pathology and Audiology	100%	NA

In response to this self-identified gap in our understanding of post-graduation success of our students, the UA Board of Trustees recently approved a change to rule 3359-2-01 that authorizes the use of exit surveys as part of the administrative processing of degrees. In spring of 2012, the University developed and implemented a "First Destination" survey to ascertain undergraduate employment and post-baccalaureate rates. The spring 2012 survey (over 1,000 responses) showed a combined employment and graduate school placement rate of 62%. The university has established a goal of 80% placement within six months of graduation. Efforts are underway to track placement rates for graduate students upon graduation as well through the relatively new exit survey administered by the Graduate School.

4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

The 2003 HLC Self-Study Report described the University's efforts at assessing educational effectiveness, which it noted were a clear priority for the administration. The report details the construction of a University-wide Student Assessment Task Force (SATF), participation in the

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the use of ETS Academic Profiles and General Writing portfolios, and the role of the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL). Assessment plans and institutionalized Program Reviews were implemented at a departmental level and a new provost-level administrative position was created: Associate Provost for Teaching, Learning, and Faculty Development.

The November 21, 2003 Statement of Affiliation Status resulting from the 2003 HLC comprehensive evaluation visit stated the following: "Because student outcomes assessment is not evenly developed across the academic departments and general education, the Evaluation Team recommends a focused visit in 2007-2008 for the University to demonstrate that each graduate and undergraduate academic major and the general education program have assessment programs in place that include: (1) the skills and concepts to be mastered; (2) the assessment methods employed; (3) the results of the assessment; (4) how the assessment results are being used to improve the program." Later, in lieu of this intermediate focused visit, the University was invited to join the HLC Assessment Academy as a way of promoting assessment efforts. This offer was accepted. A number of activities have been undertaken since the 2003 visit, with two main goals of these efforts: to develop assessment methods for General Education courses, and to set processes in place for more consistent review and assessment of academic programs.

Although our Program Review process, which has been described previously in this self-study, is continuing as planned and generating data and recommendations that are being used to inform programmatic changes and resource allocation decisions, our assessment of student learning outcomes still needs institutional attention as will be seen below. Goals for student learning are expressed at the University level through the Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletins. The former lays out the core curricula "considered essential for all graduates of the University" and the expected Student Learning Outcomes, while the latter generally notes that the objectives of the Graduate School are to provide a "quality program of instruction." These general goals are broad philosophical statements of purpose not tied to learning any specific disciplinary content. Specific goals for student learning of disciplinary content and methods are implicit within the requirements for individual degrees.

Establishing a process for consistent assessment of academic programs began in 2003 with re-implementation of the Student Assessment Task Force (SATF), originally put in place in 1998. In October 2003, departments were asked to submit assessment plans that documented their student learning outcomes and a description of their planned methods and tools for data collection to the SATF. All colleges participated, and almost 100 separate plans were submitted. An effort was made in 2004 to develop a web site to manage the assessment plan collection and review. In the 2004 program, each department was required to designate one faculty member as the Assessment Leader, and to complete an Assessment Plan in matrix form that showed their Program Learning Outcomes, Assessment Tools, Summary of Results, and Actions Taken. The collected data indicated that many but not all programs participated; for example, in the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences about two-thirds of the programs had goals and assessment plans on file. The SATF process was not able to involve enough faculty in developing meaningful and measurable student learning outcomes, and was eventually abandoned.

The SATF, although not successful in establishing a consistent process for campus-wide assessment of student learning outcomes, led to some successful efforts in individual programs. Some assessment tools developed under the SATF initiative are still in active use by individual departments. One example is an "exit exam" of core competencies for General Education courses in Anthropology and Classical Studies. These exams comprise short, 40-50 question, multiple-choice exams covering content that the faculty have agreed constitute a minimum set of learning objectives. The exams are not part of the student's graded work although students are required to take the exam before receiving a final grade. Tests are administered electronically, results are compiled and archived, and the department has used these data to evaluate and update their curriculum and pedagogy.

The HLC Assessment Academy work at the University, led by ITL, began with a 2007 project entitled Core Competency Assessment of Undergraduate Student Achievement and Learning (CAUSAL) with a focus on evaluation of the General Education program. In 2007, a Campus Conversation was held to develop university-wide "core competencies" for all undergraduates with input from a variety of perspectives; these core competencies involve written communication, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking. A set of learning outcomes associated with the core competencies was developed, and serve as the basis for assessment of the general goals. As the work proceeded, it was determined that the program would benefit from a more focused approach. Sponsoring faculty-run mini-grants to assess specific learning outcomes associated with the established core competencies for all undergraduates was the chosen course of action.

In 2008, ITL awarded funds for a number of "mini-grants" aimed at helping programs assess learning outcomes in specific General Education courses and to inform changes to improve student learning in the core competencies. Examples of ITL mini-grants include one to collect data through a standardized ETS exam and to construct a common rubric used by all instructors of General Education oral communications courses. Feedback gained from using the rubric led to changes in the courses; new course content was introduced and a more rigorous grading system was established. Likewise, a mini-grant allowed for the development of a measurement system for learning outcomes related to the core competency of quantitative literacy in Statistics for Everyday Life, another General Education course. As a result of monitoring learning outcomes, the Department of Statistics changed course content and has seen gains in student learning.

A 2010 study, sponsored by ITL, was aimed at assessing the core competency of written communication. Student performance was measured both at the end of the freshman year, as part of an English Composition course, and at the end of the undergraduate program, using written artifacts from a senior-level capstone course. Students from a variety of programs participated (Marketing, Communication, English, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Chemical Engineering). CAUSAL results are posted on the ITL web site. One example of an assessment tool that emerged from the SATF and Writing Across the Curriculum Program was the introduction of Course Portfolios for the required freshman English Composition II course and the implementation of a campus-wide Writing Assignment. The writing assignments were collected for both freshmen and seniors from six different majors. A report on Writing Across

the Curriculum submitted in November 2011 analyzes the effectiveness of the Course Portfolios and the consistency of their application across sections.

As part of work to develop a College Portrait, groups of 200 seniors and first-year students took the ETS Proficiency Profile in Spring 2011. The students were chosen from engineering, communication, and business. This test includes assessment of the core competencies of written communication and critical thinking. A resulting report entitled ETS Proficiency Profile Assessment Summary indicates that UA freshmen are significantly less proficient than the comparison group in writing and critical thinking; seniors also are less proficient than their comparison group, but the difference is much smaller. The Learning Gains analysis provided by ETS shows UA performing at expected levels for writing and critical thinking.

Individual programs offer specific requirements for their undergraduate majors and graduate students. Some of these, such as oral defenses, Master's theses, and Doctoral dissertations, are common to most programs offering advanced degrees. At the undergraduate level, there is a wider variety of tools used to assess student success in learning disciplinary content apart from grades, e.g., portfolios, capstone/keystone courses, entrance/exit exams, and so forth. All students in the Honors College are required to complete an Honors Research Project. An increasing number of students choose to begin that research prior to the senior year, which gives them the potential to deliver a paper at a regional conference, or even submit a publication. The research project could be any one of the following types: a Research Thesis-original scholarship investigating a significant question; a Research Report-a formal written presentation of technical laboratory or investigative research; or an Artistic or Creative Performance or Production-in the fine arts, applied arts, or performing arts.

One significant outgrowth of UA participation in the HLC Assessment Academy and the related new programs to assess whether our students are achieving the general goals set by the University is a campus-wide conversation about General Education. The result is an initiative, begun in 2011, to make significant revisions to the General Education requirements for undergraduates. As already noted in a previous section of this self-study, a committee from across the campus leads this effort and discussions and presentations of learning outcomes have been held in every college during this first year. Although a detailed implementation proposal has only just been put forward by the steering committee, learning outcomes have been specified and the guiding principle for the work is the need for a "more fully integrated model in which General Education serves as the essential infrastructure for degree programs." Integration of General Education learning outcomes into individual degree programs is hoped to lead to gains in student learning, and to help to address the current disjuncture between the University's general and specific learning goals. Importantly, embedded and mandatory assessment with a specified institutional cycle for examining the data and feeding it back to the campus is a central component of the General Education revision.

Several other programs were started in response to the Assessment Academy charge from HLC, including a Student Success Planning Team and the Student Success Program (SSP), although neither appears to have been effective. A new Impact Survey, implemented in Spring 2012, asks graduating students to assess their own preparation in four core competency areas (e.g., critical thinking, communication, diversity awareness, and citizenship behaviors), and the first wave of

this survey suggested that most general learning outcomes were endorsed as met by 70% or more of the responding graduates. The fact that this survey relies on self-assessment is, however, a limitation. A graduate student exit survey is also under development and will be administered as soon as possible.

Finally, The Akron Experience launched as part of *Vision 2020* is an approach to student learning that emphasizes an integration of academic learning with experiential learning outside the curriculum. The Akron Experience has its own set of core competencies that are coordinated with those of the aforementioned General Education revision; representative competencies include communication and information literacy, critical thinking and complex reasoning, and responsible citizenship in an interconnected world. Main foci include a more formal structuring of co-curricular activities, and a built-in framework for assessment. With sufficient buy-in from the teaching faculty, this effort could also help address current shortcomings and to make assessment part of the campus culture. Co-curricular programs offered to students on campus are required to have learning outcomes specified and assessed, and these learning outcomes and assessments are reported in units' annual reports. In addition, the Self-Assessment Guide (SAG) that is prepared prior to each five-year NCAS visit summarizes the outcomes achieved as a result of student engagement programs.

4.C. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

By way of context, an historical overview is offered for this part of Criterion 4, although much of this information is already present in other sections of this self-study. Charting the Course (2000) adopted six principal goals from the University's 1997 North Central accreditation self-study as "necessary, core competencies." These core competencies centered the University's mission and future directions, dictating that the "number one priority" of the University be the education and success of its students. Five fundamental, guiding strategies were created to that end; of those, the Enrollment Management strategy enabled the University to shape and thus determine the quality, diversity, and size of its student body. Additionally, this strategy included "aggressive and deliberate action to reverse the enrollment trends of the last ten years through increased recruitment and retention activities" with "professional development of faculty and staff" to assist as the University implemented Charting the Course.

The First Year Experience (FYE) Task Force (2002 – 2010) was created to drive much of the implementation of Charting the Course's Enrollment Management strategy. The FYE Task Force was composed of faculty, administrators, and staff directly connected and committed to student success in the first year of college. In 2003, the FYE proposed ambitious goals to improve first to second year retention among all first-time, full-time freshmen by 7%, to increase first-to-second year retention among African American students by 10%, and to increase the number of second year and beyond students in good academic standing by 10% ("A New Blueprint: A Proposal to Improve UA's First-Year Experience"). Attainment of these goals was projected to occur by re-envisioning the University's admittance policies of first-year students (e.g., a new college was proposed to which all incoming students who were not academically

qualified for direct admittance into a degree-granting college would go for any necessary remedial coursework and/or General Education courses) and by creating a university-wide Student Success Unit which would focus on academic advisement and assessment, academic support, student transitions to college, and community outreach programs.

Although the University did not fully implement the FYE proposal, it did continue to invest resources in student success. In 2005 – 2006, the FYE participated in the Foundations of Excellence Process, a nine-month self-examination devoted to the first-year university experience of new students. Conducted through the Policy Center on the First Year of College, the FYE Task Force Self-Study Report provided strategic planning recommendations designed to enhance student success during the first year of college. Some of the specific areas targeted by the FYE Task Force for examination and improvement included first-year academic programming, undergraduate advising systems, first-year co-curricular activities, cultural diversity issues, student engagement with faculty and the campus community, and the professional development of faculty teaching first-year students.

Examples of these recommendations which continue today in selected units include Academic Progress Reports, which serve as early warning alerts by identifying first-year students who are struggling below a C average in their classes, "intrusive" academic advising services that increase student-adviser contact (as well as student-faculty member communication), the creation and implementation of an Advising Syllabus for first-year students and their advisers that received national acclaim (NACADA Final Report, 2009), and the creation of the Institute for Teaching and Learning's Outstanding Teacher/Mentor of First Year Students Award which recognizes instructors who excel in engaging and educating first-year students. The Student Success and Retention Committee (SSRC), created in April of 2006, took the work of the FYE one step further and recommended concrete actions to increase student retention in 2007. A 2009 review of steps taken to implement those recommendations indicated many significant actions have been taken in terms of infrastructure, information sharing, and policies and procedures to enhance student success and retention.

The University demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through clearly defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion. These goals have been developed with consideration of the University's metropolitan context and its institutional mission to serve students in undergraduate and selected graduate programs. *Vision 2020* represents the University's current strategic framework in which these goals are presented. *Vision 2020*'s goals for retention, persistence, and completion of programs are ambitious and challenging, most notably those related to the requisite changes in the culture of the university via changes in the composition of the student population.

Vision 2020's Aspirational Goals fold into improved student retention, persistence, and completion rates via five, university-wide strategies defined as Pathways for Success. The Akron Experience: Academic and Inclusive Excellence represents the operationalization of one of these pathways. The Akron Experience fosters academic and inclusive excellence by enhancing diversity in all academic programs and by creating meaningful experiential learning outside the classroom, from each student's first year of college through the senior year. The University's Diversity Council advances inclusive excellence throughout the campus community through

implementation of its Strategic Roadmap. In July of this year, the University's Diversity Council was one of 25 such councils nationwide to receive a 2012 Diversity Council Honors Award from the Association of Diversity Councils. Through these mechanisms the University intends to move forward to improve student retention, persistence and completion rates.

For example, the Office of Multicultural Development (OMD) has initiatives in place to help track the University's diverse student population and their progress to degree. The African American Male Learning Community was piloted in Fall 2009 (and officially began Fall 2011) after analyzing data that showed poor retention and graduation rates for this group of learners. The Peer Mentoring Program, while in existence since the 1990's, has expanded as a result of data supporting its effectiveness. Yearly retention data are key measures for both these programs as well as the many other learning communities that the University promotes. Retention data show that, on average, students who participate in a Learning Community are more likely to be retained.

Coinciding with *Vision 2020* and in response to retention, persistence and graduation rates that it deems unacceptable, the University has made other significant efforts to increase retention, persistence, and completion of programs. For example, the University has established partnerships with local public school districts, particularly with Akron Public Schools (APS). Partnerships between the University and APS have been designed to increase post-secondary access, as well as retention, persistence and graduation rates. One such partnership has yielded the National Inventors Hall of Fame (NIHF) Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Middle School and Akron STEM High School, both of which are situated adjacent to the campus of the University.

The University has also partnered with Akron Public Schools to operate Akron Early College High School (AECHS), a public high school at the University where students can earn both a high school diploma and an associate's degree simultaneously. There are currently 287 students enrolled at AECHS, eighty percent of who are first generation college students. The AECHS received an "excellent" rating on the Ohio State Report Card for both the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 academic years. The University of Akron/Akron Public School partnership began in 2007 and had its first graduating class in the spring of 2011. Currently, AECHS is the highest rated public high school in Akron and the second highest rated public high school in Summit County. The goal of these programs is to graduate more well-prepared students who are positioned to be successful at the University.

In 2008 The University was one of twenty-five institutions in Ohio awarded a Choose Ohio First (COF) STEM Scholarship Program. The state-funded initiative is designed to retain talent in Ohio for post-secondary education and to encourage high school students who traditionally have not pursued post-secondary education and/or STEM degrees to do so. Participants receive a renewable scholarship as well as proactive support services aimed at increasing retention, graduation and employability in STEM fields. Since the 2008-2009 academic year the University's COF program has grown from 27 to 450 participants. The program has become a model of improving diverse student retention, and boasts an 89% Fall-to-Fall retention rate. The COF program has been in existence for only four years, but the program is anticipating a higher

six-year graduation rate for its STEM majors than the current six-year graduation rate for all STEM majors (46%, which is higher than the overall university graduation rate of 38%).

The University's ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and graduation has led to educational improvements in other units as well, particularly linked to student engagement. For example, the Honors College consistently has the highest retention and graduation rates (95% retention for students who entered in 2010, and an 84% graduation rate for students who entered in 2004) among First-Time/Full-Time undergraduate students of any academic unit in The University of Akron. Honors College initiatives to further enhance student success via increased student engagement include the Honors Academy for Post-Secondary Students, a Peer Mentoring Program for new Honors students, the Honors Complex Emerging Leaders Community, and the Undergraduate Honors to Law program.

The Honors College also encourages student organizations which build student engagement and leadership. There are Honors student organizations focused on education, business, nursing, and engineering. The Honors Club meets students' social needs while Honors Delegates are devoted to meeting with prospective students and bringing distinguished visitors to campus. Two *a cappella* groups, an Honors Book Discussion Group, a Multicultural Honors Society, and an organization to encourage participation in the team relays of the Akron Marathon add value to the Honors College students Akron Experience.

Other examples of educational improvements resulting from the University's use of retention, persistence, and graduation data also are evident in many other University initiatives. For example, MAP-Works®, Making Achievement Possible, is a comprehensive student retention and success program designed for first- and second-year students. All first-year students and returning first-year students complete a Transition Survey early in the semester to identify any issues that require immediate support and intervention. The survey measures research-based factors, including academic and social integration to the campus, entering skills and abilities, and student expectations of the college experience. Faculty and staff who instruct first-year courses can submit alerts and academic updates for any first and second-year students. The alert system allows faculty to communicate student issues with campus professionals who are designated as Direct Connects. In Spring 2012, the University was awarded the Off-Campus/Commuter Service Excellence Award for its commitment to improving student success and retention through MAP-Works® by Educational Benchmarking, Inc.

The Student Success Seminar, an elective, two-credit seminar course designed to help new students transition from high school or work to the college environment, is another such initiative and it underwent significant revision based upon reports and recommendations of the FYE Task Force. Course topics include: transition to the campus community, developing learning skills, building academic awareness, and discovering The University of Akron. Underprepared students are encouraged to enroll in the Seminar in their first semester to enhance their chances of academic success.

The Academic Advisement Center also is a source of many significant efforts to improve student retention, persistence, and graduation. The mission of the Academic Advisement Center is, "to educate, counsel, and empower students to make effective academic decisions as they work to

fulfill their educational, career and life goals. As noted by the NACADA Visitation Team, "The leadership of the University of Akron has embraced the importance of academic advising as an important element in its strategy to improve persistence and success toward graduation of all of the students it serves." Initiatives such as the Center's Advising Syllabus and its Peer Mentoring Program, coupled with the hiring of an additional Academic Advisers and support from ITL to involve faculty in advising policies (e.g., new Withdrawal Policy) attest to the University's commitment in this area.

With respect to the University's undergraduate withdrawal policy, data from IR, surveys, discussions, and focus groups were analyzed, and it was found that policy in effect at that time was a detriment to the success of students. Students had the ability to withdraw an unlimited number of times and the University's withdrawal deadline was the latest of all in the state by allowing withdrawals up until 12 weeks in the semester. This policy extended students' credit hours attempted, costs and time to graduation. Faculty views of the purpose of course withdrawals were contrasted with those of students who were surveyed. Ultimately, a revised rule was approved by the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees which limits the withdrawals allowed for first and second-year students without their adviser's permission and mandates additional withdrawals be done in consultation with an adviser. The intent is to monitor and guide newer students most likely to initiate multiple course withdrawals. The deadline for withdrawals was also moved to the seventh week to prompt students to be timely in seeking feedback from the instructors and making decisions.

The University has many reporting initiatives in place that provide current (and historical) information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs. The Institutional Research Office makes available numerous standard sets of information on an ongoing basis. In addition, several key initiatives utilize information on student retention, persistence and completion data to either justify beginning a new program or to report yearly outcome data. The following standard reports are compiled yearly and presented on the IR website:

- Retention rates for incoming full-time freshmen and sub-populations
- Graduation rates for incoming full-time freshmen and sub-populations
- Consortium for Student Retention and Data Exchange (CSRDE) reports – university population and STEM majors
- Degrees Awarded Data by college, department and program
- Time-to-degree metrics for all programs by type of student at time of entry

In addition, after the adoption of *Vision 2020*, a coordinated effort led by OAA began to compile data to show the University's progress toward meeting its objectives. UA identified as its "measurements of success" metrics centered on fiscal integrity, academic excellence and quality assurance, and strategic investment. By focusing on all three of these success measures, UA can ensure a commitment to educational improvement.

As noted previously, based on our self-study of undergraduate student academic success, the University began in Fall 2012 to move away from its long-standing practice of operating as a quais-open-admission institution to one in which admission is contingent upon students' academic preparedness for the college experience. This significant institutional shift is

supported by comprehensive analyses of the retention, persistence, and graduation rates of the University's entire student population. Based upon a new Pathways model, which takes into account students' level of academic preparation, academic performance and likelihood of graduating in six years, the University has identified the characteristics of College-Ready students (e.g., students most academically prepared and most successful at the University), Emergent students (e.g., those who may be best served after their college preparedness is established in order to succeed at the University), and Preparatory students (e.g., those least prepared for the college experience and who may be best served by an institution focused on their remedial needs before entering the University).

The Pathways model, in which only College-Ready and Emergent students will eventually be admitted to the University is intended to increase the retention and persistence (defined at UA as the percentage of all undergraduate students enrolled in a fall semester who return the following fall semester) rates to 80% and to culminate in an improved six-year graduation rate of 60% for all undergraduate students. By about 2017, the enrollment strategy implementation for all Preparatory students will involve attendance at other educational institutions (e.g., community colleges, branch campuses) at which necessary remedial development will be completed prior to admission to The University of Akron. In fall 2012, 161 Preparatory students applying for admission were referred to their local community colleges for first-time admission based on their zip codes. The average ACT score of these students was 13.9 and their average high school GPA was 1.67.

It is important to note that in addition to external factors such as the economy and changes in federal financial aid, the enrollment at UA dropped slightly in fall 2012. This is due, in part, to the initial phasing in of the Pathways strategy, as well as to our implementation in spring 2012 of the more consistent probation/dismissal policies which limited the ability of some students to return as quickly as in previous years. These changes, when combined with the relatively new withdrawal policy and differences in how we attempt to work with students who are having a difficult time meeting their financial obligations to the University, will begin to "pay off" in the future as our enrollment stabilizes and then begins to grow again with better academically-prepared sutdents.

Criterion 4 Summary

The University of Akron believes that it has provided sufficient evidence that it meets Criterion 4 and all of its Core Components for reaffirmation of accreditation, albeit with the need for further institutional attention. Our self-identified strengths are in our systematic program review process, policies and practices related to transfer of credit and prior learning assessment, student admission/withdrawal/probation/dismissal processes, disciplinary accreditations, and curriculum review. Our challenges are to develop and sustain a more uniform and comprehensive assessment program for student learning outcomes and to manage our enrollment so that our retention, persistence and graduation data and overall academic profile of our student population improves with time.

We recognize that setting up a successful process for ongoing campus-wide assessment of student learning will require a sustained effort. Demonstration of commitment to educational achievement and improvement as required by Criterion 4 requires that the University provide sufficient and ongoing resources earmarked for assessment. These resources should include funds identified for use not only by a campus-wide office for the coordination of assessment efforts, but also by the individual Colleges, as the majority of the effort must necessarily be undertaken by the faculty. The importance of assessment should be properly reflected in mechanisms that fund individual units and also in those that measure performance for annual merit and promotion considerations.

The University will identify a full-time assessment coordinator for the campus who is supported by the administration. The coordinator's main responsibility will be to set up a campus-wide plan for assessment, and to follow through to ensure that all programs implement the plan. The plan should be informed by best practices, and flexible enough to meet the needs of all programs, including those that are also assessed by outside agencies. It should be compatible with current work underway to assess general education learning outcomes, and align with efforts related to the Akron Experience and *Vision 2020*. The plan must be sustainable and not overly cumbersome, and have clear mechanisms for regular feedback. It is essential that the plan contain elements specifically designed to raise faculty awareness of the benefits and necessity of assessment, and to build buy-in by the faculty, beyond those that have normally been involved in assessment.

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.

5.A. The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

Fiscal Resources

This self-study process has enabled the campus to have a much better understanding of our fiscal situation. The data on fiscal resources and their changes over the past 10 years (FY 2002-2011) as developed by the Finance and Administration Division are found in a recent presentation to the university community. The data confirm that there has not been a dramatic shift of funds from academic units to academic support units. In fact, the sum of academic unit budgets grew faster than that of support-unit budgets (43% versus 35%, respectively) over this period, with the overall percentages for academic investments being maintained at 56-57%.

However, the Continuing (or Central) Obligations (CONOB) grew from 10% to 27% of the overall budget. This has raised concerns on campus since few people outside of the Finance Office understand this expense category and tend to assume that it is solely made up of administrative expenses. As part of this self-study process, it has become clear that the CONOB includes university-wide costs that cannot easily, at this point in time, be allocated to any particular unit. The Finance Office provided data in its information to the university community that explains the growth in this area. Growth in CONOB is largely due to auxiliary support and departmental carry-overs. The FY2007 spike in growth is primarily an accounting change for the General Fee support of Athletics. General Fee income prior to FY2007 was deposited directly into Auxiliaries in support of Athletics. For the sake of transparency, that revenue is now deposited to the General Fund and then transferred to Auxiliaries. The largest portion of CONOB expenses is represented by Net Transfers from the General Fund. Other significant expenses in CONOB are institutional scholarships for students – which increased 460% from FY2002 to FY2011 – and utilities that increased 48% from FY2002 to FY2011.

With regard to transfers, it should be noted that departmental carry-over balances are over-stated within CONOB. The University offered several Early Retirement Incentive Programs (ERIPs) in the 1990's, which created a liability of nearly $30 million. The University took advantage of its healthy cash balance in 2001 and paid off the outstanding ERIP liability of roughly $26 million to the state retirement systems. The savings from the ERIP, however, has accumulated in the departmental carry-over balances. Those carry-over balances need to be adjusted to reflect that $26 million expenditure. A process was developed along with the Deans and Vice Presidents for determining how to reconcile the ERIP payment from available carry-over balances over the next five years (FY 2013-2017) and has been implemented, with some units already fully reconciling their obligation.

Another area of significant growth in transfers is auxiliary support. Much, but not all, of this growth can be explained by accounting changes for athletics referenced above. Auxiliaries are generally intended to be self-supporting. In most cases fees and other income adequately support these functions, but in others, notably InfoCision stadium and EJ Thomas Performing Arts Hall, subsidies are presently necessary. It is important that the University prioritize these expenses in relation to its commitment to increase the proportion of funding that is allocated to academic units and to hire new full-time faculty.

The current fiscal climate is challenging. As a result of state funding reductions and stagnant (Fall 2011) to falling (Fall 2012) enrollment, there was a shortfall in the continuing funds revenue this year that will propagate into next year as well. A number of options are being used to balance the budget including the use of reserves, hiring restrictions and unit-level operating expense reductions. Additional cost containment measures and existing reserves will be used to make up additional shortfall, as will attrition savings. Specifically, a number of budget reductions totaling $9 million were implemented to balance the FY2013 budget. Reduction targets of $3.5 million in academic unit budgets (roughly 3% of their total) and $2.5 million in academic support units (roughly 6% of their total) were set. In addition, a savings of $3 million was targeted from attrition, which is considered to come from central funds. As noted above, reductions in academic unit budgets were less than in academic support budgets, which fulfill the objective of increasing the investment in academic units relative to support units. These reductions also allowed for significant contracted increases in faculty salaries (more than a 15% increase in the raise pool over the last three years). These raises were planned in order to retain and attract the best faculty possible, and have now positioned the University in roughly the top third of State institutions in terms of faculty compensation depending on rank.

There are already reasons, such as the large percentage of credit hours taught by part-time faculty, for hiring more full-time tenure track faculty and it remains to be seen how these needs can be reconciled within the budget. Possibilities for savings in, for example, utilities have not been fully discussed although Sasaki Associates of Boston is to provide an energy audit and the University is beginning to install some solar panels. Our recent change in providing health care to our employees is one example of how efficiency and cost savings may come from strategic planning, although health care reserves were used to balance this year's budget. Even with these fiscal challenges, there are Achieving Distinction investments included in the budget. The Board has directed the administration to invest at least $2 million per year for the next ten years in this initiative. The allocations for this year have just been announced.

Human Resources

Another area that has been the focus of open discussion during this self-study is the numbers of faculty and staff available to support our students over the past ten or so years. The data on staffing levels and their changes from 1997-present as developed by the Office of Talent Development & Human Resources are found in a recent presentation to the University Council Steering Committee and posted on the University Council website.

Staffing data show the numbers in all employee categories and in all faculty categories over time. Comparing 2003 and 2011 these data indicate that the percentage of total employees that were

teaching faculty in 2003 and in 2011 were similar, approximately 33%. There have been faculty concerns in the past about the growth of non-faculty categories, which, given these data and the fiscal data above appear to be unfounded. However, it is clear that the numbers of full-time faculty in the non-tenure-track (NTT) ranks have grown at the expense of tenure-track lines. This is primarily due to the fact that during times of enrollment growth, which UA has experienced since about 2005, more NTT faculty with relatively high teaching loads with respect to their tenure-track colleagues were needed. This is also true of the increased use of part-time faculty during the same time-frame. Comparison with other institutions using IPEDS data shows that our total number of faculty seems to have been keeping with our peers.

It should be noted that in 2011, sixty-seven percent (67%) of our full-time teaching faculty had doctorate degrees and eighty-one percent (81%) had terminal degrees in their field. The initial hire of bargaining unit faculty, including all tenure-track and NTT faculty, considers academic preparation and other relevant factors, as delineated in Article 11 of the CB Agreement between The University of Akron and the AAUP. Requirements for initial hire of bargaining unit faculty include a clearly defined search plan and written record of supporting evidence of perceived strengths and weaknesses of each candidate and evidence of how each candidate meets the appropriate rank/tenure criteria.

Recent changes to Ohio state employee retirement systems, including the primary system used by faculty (State Teachers Retirement System), may mean that a higher than usual number of faculty will retire before July 2015. According to estimates from Human Resources, up to 235 full-time faculty may be eligible to retire within the next five years based on their years of UA service. As this represents approximately 1/3 of the full-time faculty, replacing these faculty in a timely manner may present a challenge, especially when many other institutions in Ohio will also be looking to fill similar faculty lines. It is clear that succession planning in the academic departments/schools is necessary and that this process to guarantee continued excellence in our degree programs needs to be a joint effort between the administration and the faculty.

Physical Resources

The "New Landscape for Learning" was our campus building program that invested in the upgrade of our physical plant and the addition of student amenities. Facilities were added to support students, including increases in campus housing from 1,674 beds in 1997 to 3,249 beds in 2011. We added a new Student Union and Student Recreation & Wellness Center, Athletics facilities, extensive green spaces, and renovated or constructed numerous other buildings. We also added/expanded services to support students, including Veterans' Services, Advising, Commuter/Off-Campus Students Services, Transfer Student Services, a Career Center and new IT infrastructure and support.

The upgrade of our physical plant included increases in classrooms and teaching laboratories. The number of classrooms increased from 208 to 244, with an area increase from 170,656 square feet in 1999 to 211,397 square feet in 2011. The number of teaching laboratories increased from 164 to 199, with an area increase from 167,322 square feet in 1999 to 186,457 square feet in 2011. During this same time-frame, classroom utilization increased from 57% to 64% and teaching lab utilization increased from 26% to 31%.

Deferred maintenance remains an issue, however the University is not unique in the State with respect to such challenges. At the moment it is estimated that there is $500 million of deferred maintenance at UA. The data for 2012-13 show that one of the decisions made to help balance the budget included reducing a planned transfer from the General Fund to the Plant Fund by $1 million. Although arguably a fiscally sound decision in the near term, this recent action may reflect a continuing problem of deferral for the long term.

Managing and maintaining a comprehensive campus technological infrastructure is the responsibility of Information Technology Services (ITS) in combination with appropriate units in each college. ITS maintains the centralized technology infrastructure that supports the University's academic, research, and administrative efforts. ITS also provides leadership in identifying, recommending, and implementing new and technologies (eBooks, lecture capture, CRM, SaaS, advanced wireless, data warehousing/predictive analytics, etc.). Individual colleges provide students with specialized hardware and software as appropriate for the disciplines taught in the college, for example the School of Music, Polymer Science, Business Administration, Sports Science and Wellness Education, and the School of Nursing. High-speed wired and wireless Internet access is available in all instructional facilities and in all campus housing, and over 60% of the classrooms have projection and advanced audio systems.

In summary, a review of UA's fiscal, human and physical resources indicates that over the past ten years they have supported the academic programs at UA. There is no evidence that resources for teaching the curriculum were not available, and the University has supported hiring packages of faculty with competitive salaries and start-up funding, as well as significant salary raise pools in recent years. The major initiatives to increase physical facilities and focus on research in certain areas have been to increase student enrollment and represent strengths in developing the institution's resource base as well as regional and national impact and stature. Future enrollment planning, the necessity of hiring full-time tenure-track faculty to maintain our quality, introducing more cost savings measures, and reducing subsidies to auxiliaries are all part of our current integrated planning and budgeting process.

5.A.2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a super ordinate entity.

Since the University is a public institution, there is no super ordinate entity to consider. However, UA has a significant debt obligation, which requires brief discussion. Although the University carries a relatively high debt service, due primarily to the "New Landscape for Learning" initiative, most of the debt is backed by dedicated revenue sources within auxiliary operations. The repayment sources for General Receipts Bonds (GRB) Debt Service, which has all been issued at a fixed rate, is 22% general fund, 61% auxiliary, 14% facility fee, and 3% capital component as documented in the Debt Service Report which was submitted for approval at the October 31, 2012 Board of Trustees Meeting.

The issues raised by this debt relate to financial stability. Ohio Senate Bill 6 (SB6) of the 122nd General Assembly was enacted into law in 1997 and is designed to increase financial

accountability of Ohio's state-assisted colleges and universities by using a standard set of measures with which to monitor the fiscal health of campuses. A composite score of 1.7 or below for two consecutive years results in an institution being placed on fiscal watch. The highest composite score possible is 5.0. The University of Akron's SB6 composite ratio was as low as 2.0 in 2009 and back up to 3.6 in 2011. We anticipate, pending receipt of our 2012 audited financial statements, that our SB6 composite ratio will be 3.2. The Board of Trustees has indicated that the University's ratio should not be lower than 2.5; consequently we are well within that limit.

5.A.3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.

Vision 2020 has major goals (e.g., regional development, enrollment, research funding, expansion of University Park, etc.) that are "aspirational", in that even if they are not met they provide a challenge to the institution and lead to positive changes in the University and the community. This is a major strength of *Vision 2020*. For example, increases in student retention and persistence as a result of the Pathways approach, the intended expansion of on-line course offerings, and executing a global strategy are mechanisms that should generate enrollment growth in the future as we aspire to serve 40,000 learners. The Pathways strategy will also eventually raise our graduation rates, helping us to make progress toward the goal of 60%.

The goal of raising research expenditures to $200 million is also aspirational. The Achieving Distinction investments beginning to be made in identified priority clusters should make UA more competitive in receiving research grants. This funding mechanism primarily aimed at hiring tenure-track faculty will also help UA begin to reverse the trend discussed above concerning our reliance on NTT and part-time faculty. The Akron Experience will help us in the area of increasing value added and also with our emphasis on expanding experiential learning which should lead to higher job/graduate school placement rates in line with the 80% aspirational goal. This should also contribute to enhancing the local and regional economy. So again, having these aspirational goals in *Vision 2020* helps to provide overall guidance as we make decisions that also positively affect units at the local level.

5.A.4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.

The University is able to successfully execute its vision and strategies through the efforts of a well-educated workforce. A majority of our staff members have received either post-secondary technical or college-level training. The majority of our contract professionals hold graduate degrees. The employment category designated as contract professionals includes full-time or part-time non-teaching professional personnel. The minimum requirement for this employment category is a baccalaureate degree (3359-22-01). In addition, many contract professionals hold masters degrees (58%) and some hold doctorate degrees (11%). Staff employees at The University of Akron can be either Classified or Unclassified. Both categories have University rules that define minimum qualifications for each job title. Both the Unclassified plan (3359-25-07) and the Classified plan (3359-25-06) state that the University shall establish, modify, or repeal, by rule, a job classification plan for all positions, offices, and employments in the

unclassified civil service and classified civil service, respectively. Job specifications include minimum qualifications and requirements for competitive or non-competitive examinations, if applicable.

The academic preparation of our workforce is supplemented by ongoing professional development during their years of service at the University. The average years of service for all groups combined are 11 years; 11 years for staff, 9 years for contract professionals, and 13 years for faculty. In addition to on-the-job training and courses offered by the University free of charge to all full-time employees, faculty and contract professionals attend and/or present their work at state, regional, national and international seminars and conferences. Many of our staff employees earn technical certifications that allow them to work on certain types of equipment (computers & lab) or professional certifications that enhance their skill set or are required for them to perform their job (e.g. Health & Safety and the skilled trades). All faculty and staff also benefit from a generous tuition reimbursement plan.

5.A.5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

The University has processes in place for monitoring expenses. The University has a rule that requires quarterly financial and investment reports to the Board of Trustees. The financial report includes an analysis of current year actual spending versus projected spending based on the approved budget. This report includes auxiliary funds as well as restricted and capital expenditures. The investment report provides quarterly updates on investment balances and rates of return for both operating funds and endowments. In addition, staff evaluates budget activity every month and updates the Finance & Administration Committee and the Board of Trustees on the status of the current year budget at most meetings that fall in between quarterly reports.

The University's current budget process starts with three budget principles: Assuring Academic Excellence, Achieving Academic Distinction, and Fiscal Integrity. The process is fairly traditional in that it is incremental. The current year budget is the base for the coming year. Increases and reductions generally are determined based on projected revenues for the coming year. Unfortunately, in the current economic environment reductions have been more common than increases. However, within this environment academic units have been treated as a higher priority than support units. To the degree academic units have experienced reductions, such reductions have been considerably less than those in support units.

The budget process includes significant dialogue with each college and division as the budget is being developed. To the degree there have been reductions, the Deans and Vice Presidents have the opportunity to explain the ramifications of those reductions and considerable discretion to determine where best to make adjustments. Funding has been added to support the most critical needs and strategic initiatives. At the Board's direction, $2 million is being added to the budget each year for Achieving Distinction. This may be a modest amount; however, this is occurring at a time when state funding has been reduced nearly 15%.

To further understand the situation of budget planning, it is necessary to note that in the past ten years, six individuals have held the CFO position, four regular appointments and two interim

appointments. The budget process has changed over time in response to varying leadership initiatives in the OAA and Finance and Administration as well as the current budget climate. Since 2003, when the Planning and Budget Committee of Faculty Senate was eliminated by the Board due to pending collective bargaining talks, The University of Akron has had budget hearings, flat budgets with critical need requests, and requests for personnel and non-personnel budget reductions.

The University's budget development process is in transition. The University Council (UC) Budget and Finance Committee is a fairly new constituency to this process. The committee was created in early 2012. It had some input into development of the FY2013 budget, but its role is still evolving. The present CFO has made significant steps towards developing an effective budget process. At the request of the new University Council's Finance and Budget Committee, he prepared a ten year detailed review of the finances of the university and used it to make a presentation to the university community. This is an excellent basis for building a future budget process with a substantive role for the UC Finance and Budget Committee. Most recently, the group has agreed to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of a budget system that recognizes unit-level performance and the Committee continues this learning phase. These recent developments indicate a developing strength in transparent, broad-based budget planning. There are several constituencies and groups that are also involved in the development of the budget process, including the Vice Presidents, Deans, UC Budget and Finance Committee and the Integrated Financial Planning Group. How their role will be integrated with that of the University Council Finance and Budget Committee is yet to be determined.

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

Over the last several years, UA has made significant progress in strengthening our governance processes and in streamlining our administrative structures. As demonstrated by a Governance Report and the discussion below, the Faculty Senate plays an appropriate governance role with respect to the academic matters within its purview. The relatively new University Council, the result of several years of concerted effort by all interested constituencies, holds considerable promise. Despite some concerns about the way it was ultimately designed and some open questions about how it will function, it is possible that good faith implementation of the UC can enhance effective shared governance and be viewed as legitimate by all concerned.

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 University has established various policies related to engagement of internal constituencies. In particular, it continues to have a Faculty Senate, with significant powers with respect to academic issues. As authorized by Rule 3359-1-06(B), the Board has empowered the Faculty Senate to

(1) Formulate suitable rules, requirements, and procedures for the admission, government, management, and control of the students, courses of study, granting of degrees and certificates, and other internal affairs of the institution necessary to meet the objectives of the university, subject to the approval of the board of trustees, in accordance with the established policies of the board.

(2) Review and offer recommendations concerning proposals for the creation, abolition, or rearrangement of colleges, departments, schools, or divisions of instruction, proposals from university-wide committees, and such other matters as may be referred to the senate by the president of the university. See Rule 3359-10-02(B).

Similarly the Board provides that:

The functions of the faculty of a college shall be to prepare and recommend to the faculty senate curricula and courses for the college, changes in departmental or school organization, requirements for admission to and graduation from the college, and candidates for degrees and certificates. See Rule 3359-2-02(C)(2).

The Faculty Senate represents the continuation of a longstanding governance function related primarily to academic matters. The faculty's involvement is central in setting curricula, courses of study, and similar core academic functions. Changes to the rule related to undergraduate admissions in response to the Pathways strategy are currently being discussed by the Academic Policies Committee of the Faculty Senate to formalize the nomenclature and processes to be used. Since the process through which the campus arrived at the realization that it needed to make these changes was open and transparent, the administration took the initiative to begin implementation in Fall 2012 rather than waiting at least one more academic year for the final rule language to be formally approved. Authority for the administration to take this action is vested in rule 3359-60-02(A)(2) which states:

Admission is necessarily limited by the university's capacity to provide for student's educational objectives. The university reserves the right to approve admission only to those individuals whose ability, attitude and character promise satisfactory achievement of university objectives.

We also have the Contract Professional Advisory Committee (CPAC); Staff Employee Advisory Committee (SEAC); Undergraduate Student Government (USG); Graduate Student Government (GSG); Chairs/Directors; Vice Presidents; and the Council of Deans. Each body provides a means for the relevant constituency to express itself in University governance.

The University Council is the most significant development relevant to how shared governance and consultative decision-making have evolved on our campus since the 2008 Focused Visit. The UC is the primary mechanism for expanding shared governance at the University.

In 2006, the Faculty Senate created the broadly representative University Council Exploratory Committee (UCEC), with faculty members elected by the Faculty Senate and other members selected by the seven other major constituencies of the University. (Undergraduate Student

Government, Council of Deans, Contract Professional Advisory Committee, Department Chairs and School Directors, Faculty Senate, Graduate Student Government, Staff Employee Advisory Committee, and the Vice Presidents). After much discussion among all interest groups, agreement among all eight constituencies, and on the recommendation of the UCEC, the Faculty Senate in April 2010 proposed Bylaws to govern a new University Council. Among other things, the proposed Bylaws would have created an Executive Committee chaired by an elected non-administrator member of the UC. It would also have created seven standing committees addressing various areas of University operation, and a parallel set of seven Implementation Committees charged with implementing the university's long-range plan.

After members of the Board of Trustees questioned whether the structure as proposed would be effective and efficient, the Provost took the lead in drafting a new governing document via meetings and consultations with the UCEC. Although the constituency groups were not asked to formally ratify the plan, their elected/selected UCEC representatives agreed to implement the UC under its current model. The new model increases the involvement of the administration by having the Provost co-chair the steering committee. It also creates only one set of committees, with co-chairs from within and without the administration. The various university constituencies then elected or otherwise selected their representatives to the UC, and it began operations.

The UC has been operating for a year, considering and providing input on a variety of issues. As the Governance Report reflects, there are several issues that need to be resolved and concerns about the new structure, but it is everyone's desire that good faith cooperation by those involved will improve the effectiveness of our shared UA governance. The UC operates, as originally proposed in the bylaws, under the following definition taken from the AAUP Statement on Government for Colleges and Universities:

"Defining shared governance. The university council will operate under the principle of consultative decision-making wherein the opinion and advice of the university council membership are sought but where decision-making authority remains with the senior administration and the board of trustees. Thus, the university council will function in a manner that revolves around information sharing and discussion rather than joint decision-making. The purpose of the university council is to provide open lines of communication such that the university administration will have informed decision-making on matters of policy and planning that affects all constituent groups. Those reporting lines that are already in place will not be removed, nor will any of the authorities of the represented groups be supplanted by university council."

The University Council held two meetings in late 2011 to organize itself and hold elections. The first substantive meeting took place in January 2012, with monthly meetings thereafter. Details of these meetings are publicly available. The Steering Committee reported in January that it had begun discussing the Governing Document, known as the "White Paper," with a view to developing bylaws. In the absence of bylaws, the UC developed various operational protocols. It also created an ad hoc committee to develop the bylaws. As of June 2012, the Bylaws Committee had held several meetings and hoped to finish its work in late August. There are no formally approved UC bylaws as of this writing, although drafts were given to the Steering Committee in late September 2012 and continue to be discussed.

It is noteworthy that the University Council and the administration appear to be collaborating effectively with respect to budget matters. In March 2012, the University Council Steering Committee sought budget information, which the Vice President responsible for Finance provided the following month. The administration has agreed to provide the UC Budget Committee with access to university budget spreadsheets so the UC Committee can do its own analysis. The UC now provides a major opportunity for dialogue among the various constituencies on campus, dialogue that can lead to greater understanding, facilitate work, and lead to more informed presentations by the administration to the Board of Trustees that support the recommendations originating from campus core constituencies.

The Governance Report reflects five case studies of shared governance in recent years. This approach parallels that taken in preparation for the 2008 HLC Focused Visit on Governance. Case Study A addresses the University Council, discussed above. Case Studies B-D address three recent major decisions, the adoption of *Vision 2020*, the reorganization of certain colleges and departments, and the development of the new Master Guide Plan for the campus. Case Study E addresses the Pathways changes in undergraduate admissions requirements already referred to in this self-study.

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.

Starting in July 2011, the Board of Trustees implemented several changes to allow for more information sharing and substantive discussion. First, the Board's committee structure was streamlined to focus on, and be more involved with, issues close to the core mission and financial matters. Second, substantial components of information presentation and discussion on major issues were added in all meetings of the Academic Issues & Student Success Committee and the Finance & Administration Committee. Third, committee meetings were scheduled to meet regularly, Ten days in advance of each Board meeting, rather than continuing to be scheduled in an ad-hoc manner. Fourth, the Board's Strategic Issues Committee worked with the administration to develop a year-long topics calendar that charts the discussion of major issues and progression of deliberations. The calendar is updated after each Board meeting and revisited in its entirety annually. Finally, the Board committed to an annual self-assessment. Both the administration and Trustees have indicated that Board involvement has been enhanced and focused on institutional priorities by these changes.

An examination of Board agendas and minutes will reflect appropriate exercising of the Board's oversight roles, including finance and academics, as well as fulfillment of the Board's legal and fiduciary responsibilities. Trustees are trained to understand and follow Ohio's ethics laws and all other relevant provisions of its revised code as part of their initial orientation to the Board. Further, the Board Secretary also serves, among other roles, as the institution's General Counsel and Chief Ethics Officer. In those two capacities, he is an officer of the state. By having a Board Secretary who serves those multiple roles, the Board has the additional level of credibility necessary to recognize and consider risks appropriately and to apply regulatory and statutory requirements to both the issue at hand and the process when deliberating.

5.B.3. The institution enables the involvement of its administration, faculty, staff, and students in setting academic requirements, policies, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative efforts.

The information provided under section 5.B.1. also pertains to this sub-component. In addition, the <u>Academic Policies Committee</u> of the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Senate as a whole have been heavily involved in shaping many new academic policies and processes including a new undergraduate withdrawal rule and significant reorganization of some of its colleges over the last several years. Recent changes in the academic structure of the University were the result of the reorganization of the College of Fine and Applied Arts. In 2007, the College of Fine and Applied Arts was divided into the College of Creative and Professional Arts and the College of Health Sciences and Human Services. As of 2012, the College of Creative and Professional Arts was merged into the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences, and the College of Health Sciences and Human Services converged with the College of Nursing to form the College of Health Professions. There were also several reorganizations of departments within these colleges, and some concerns have been raised. Nevertheless, the APC and the Faculty Senate are currently revising the rules pertaining to the disbanding of the University College structure, new admissions processes under our Pathways model, and the future role of Summit College.

5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

As indicated in our response to 5.A.1., we have allocated our human, fiscal and physical resources in support of our institutional mission and priorities. Better alignment in the future will be ensured by continuing to improve our planning processes through consultative decision-making. A major component of the formation of the University Council was to formalize the participation of internal university constituencies in all planning processes. As the UC is so new it is not possible to assess the progress on integrated planning. However, the work done so far suggests a willingness to address any previously perceived shortcomings.

The new UC structure including its standing committees offer an opportunity through which UA can strengthen the alignment of its strategic planning with resource allocations. In addition, other sections of our self-study indicate that UA needs to focus more institutional attention on developing a consistent and campus-wide assessment program for student learning outcomes. The new general education initiative and re-constituted Academic Program Review process are moving substantially in this direction, whereby student learning outcomes are tied to programmatic and fiscal/staffing decision making. The institutional gap in uniform assessment practices identified in the course of this self-study will be filled and the results tied directly into our new integrated planning and budgeting process via the UC standing committees.

In addition, in Summer 2012 two off-campus events were held with the aim of aligning academic and academic support unit goals (those of the Deans and Vice Presidents, respectively) to work together towards achieving strategic priorities (called the <u>Leadership Agenda</u>) for the 2012-2013 academic year. In the first event, Deans met with OAA administrators and in the second event, the President and Vice Presidents joined in. The Leadership Agenda includes Pathways for

Academic Success, Innovation in Delivery of Courses and Programs (UA Online, Evening and Weekend, and Alternative Offerings), and Achieving Distinction. From these events, Deans, Vice Presidents and other Administrators have aligned unit goals to the Leadership Agenda and *Vision 2020* and developed implementation plans. To keep on task with goals, Deans meet monthly with the Provost using a common meeting template, which is structured around the Leadership Agenda. Each summer, the Leadership Agenda will be evaluated and adjusted accordingly to best meet the aspirational goals of *Vision 2020*.

The detailed studies that led to our Pathways model and to our faculty hiring initiatives based on Delaware Study data and capacity analysis in the past 18 months indicate that we are planning by taking many important factors into account. Our current budget and enrollment models are much more sophisticated and encompassing than what were used previously, and these efforts will continue. As a University we have begun to address the need for more online and hybrid delivery of courses and programs in response to both the demands of traditional students and to the need to develop a competitive edge in the marketplace for non-traditional and international students. The recent reorganization of our admissions and advising structures is one tangible example as to the institution's response to meeting the needs of different types of learners, as is the faculty driven process currently in place for the UA Online initiative. These activities demonstrate our ability to be responsive and plan our future in the context of emerging external factors. Our new approach to data-driven decision making will ensure that we are much more planning oriented in the future. Developing a culture where decision-making is consultative and based upon reliable data will produce a more successful and productive university, which is one of the primary reasons we developed the UC structure.

5.D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

Over the past ten years, The University of Akron has made major progress in developing "evidence of performance in its operations." In part, this development has come due to advancements in technology allowing for advanced collection and analyses of data. Currently, the Office of Institutional Research has developed into a centralized source to collect and analyze data on the University, along with help from OAA. Data which ten years ago was held by individual units across campus is now available on the web for anyone wishing to develop or evaluate ideas on improving the institution. The use of data-based decision making has increased at the University, driven, in part, by shrinking resources but also by recognition that success is based upon performance that is measured.

The University is continuing to expand its collection and use of data. In a project called "Faculty 180" initiated for this self-study, we are placing all faculty vitae in an electronic databank. Using these and other data, the University is embarking on a process to develop a "Data Warehouse" which will begin to link together various databases to assist in planning as well as performance evaluations. For example, linking together admissions, enrollment, class characteristics, expenses and personnel data can provide a more complete picture of student experiences at the University.

UA has continued to improve its operations in many ways that provide evidence that it meets this Core Component. Specific examples in the past few years include: an effective enrollment management data collection and analysis system; an improved second collective bargaining agreement with our full-time faculty; a significantly streamlined health care benefits plan; new electronic systems for hiring full-time employees and for curriculum proposals; a more transparent budgeting process; the recent mergers of several colleges; enhanced safety and security forces and protocols, including emergency preparedness; a modified undergraduate student scholarship plan; and improved classroom utilization. Whereas this list is not exhaustive, it demonstrates the institution's ability to assess its operations and to put into place new and improved business processes where needed.

Criterion 5 Summary

The University of Akron believes that it has provided sufficient evidence that it meets Criterion 5 and all of its Core Components for reaffirmation of accreditation, albeit with the need for further institutional attention. Our self-identified strengths are in our significant progress in shared governance, the open sharing and use of comprehensive data and analyses to inform decision making, and a more inclusive approach to planning and budgeting. There are, however, challenges that must continue to be addressed, including: developing a consistent assessment program across campus; hiring more tenure-track faculty and managing potential faculty retirements; and maintaining our momentum with integrated and inclusive planning and shared governance.