Focused Visit Report

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Organizational Context and Executive Summary

The University of Akron (UA) is a publically assisted metropolitan institution serving approximately 27,000 undergraduate and graduate students primarily at our main campus which is in close proximity to downtown Akron, Ohio. We also serve some of these students via several nearby additional locations, and at our branch campus which is located in Orrville, Ohio. UA offers degrees ranging from Associates to Doctoral across many disciplines and is one of 34 public institutions constituting the University System of Ohio. UA is proud of, and is consistently working to improve, our regional and national reputation and impact. With more than 100,000 graduates since its founding in 1870, UA’s role in higher education in the Northeast Ohio region and beyond is well established.

This focused visit report along with the documents provided in the electronic resource room serve as evidence of substantial institutional attention and progress in the two areas identified via the self-study process for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Comprehensive Evaluation Visit on March 3 - 6, 2013: Assessment of Student Learning, and Governance. It should be noted that the institution self-identified these areas as needing continuous improvement, and that our actions to address the findings of “met with concern” within Criteria 4 and 5 were timely and have been sustained. It is also noteworthy that we requested to be placed on the Standard Pathway primarily due to our history of mandated HLC follow up. We are aware of our Assurance Review and Comprehensive Evaluation Visit in 2016-2017 per the Standard Pathway timeline, and we fully understand that the recent progress to improve our assessment programs and governance practices must continue.

The pages that follow provide evidence of substantial faculty involvement in the launching of a truly campus-wide assessment of student learning program, one that has been lacking at UA for some time. The responsiveness of the faculty to this call for action has been superior, the plan is well established, and data are being collected. Using these data to generate curricular changes where deficiencies are noted is now part of our on-going and formalized process of continuous improvement. Substantial evidence is also presented outlining our progress in shared governance through institutional structures such as Faculty Senate and University Council, including a relatively new integrated approach to planning and budgeting with substantive roles for all constituency groups.

Our Board of Trustees, our newly appointed President Scott L. Scarborough, and the entire UA campus look forward to HLC’s critical review of our progress, assurance that our continuous improvement efforts in these two areas are heading the institution in the right direction, and helpful advice that will lead to UA’s advancement.
Area of Focus: A-1. Assessment of Student Learning

A-1.1. Overview

The University of Akron, upon receipt of the Higher Learning Commission’s March 2013 site visit report, immediately took steps to address the issues raised concerning the ongoing assessment of student learning. An assessment committee consisting of faculty and administrators from the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences (BCAS) was appointed in spring and summer of 2013. A committee chair was appointed and a special assistant in the Office of Academic Affairs (SAOAA) was hired to facilitate student learning assessment efforts throughout all the colleges. Initially, the committee emphasis was placed on the BCAS since the majority of the university’s programs needing assessment plans were housed in this college. These efforts began in September 2013. At the same time, the Summit College (now College of Applied Science and Technology) assessment committee was reconstituted to begin/continue its work on developing/implementing assessment plans for the associate and baccalaureate programs housed in that college.

The BCAS assessment committee began regular monthly meetings in September 2013. Each member of the committee was assigned certain departments/programs to support through the process of developing program learning outcomes, assessment plans, rubrics and action plans. Committee members developed templates to provide direction to the departments as they developed their plans. All assessment plans had to include student learning outcomes, methods of assessment, timeline for assessment, and a dissemination process to help assure the use of data collected. The templates were distributed to all department chairs in BCAS in late September 2013. Presentations on the process were made to BCAS chairs and faculty in subsequent weeks.

As each BCAS department developed program-level student learning assessment plans, an informal program audit was undertaken. This provided an opportunity for departments to correctly characterize offerings as active majors, and/or concentrations and to formally inactivate programs that were no longer available for enrollment. Meetings were held with the Director of Institutional Research to discuss program coding issues in order to clarify the actual programs offered at the university. Other university constituencies were kept in the loop regarding these issues including the Board of Trustees. The Executive Dean of the BCAS made a presentation to the Board of Trustees in October 2013, to apprise them of the progress made and plans moving forward. Another progress update was given to the Board on October 6, 2014. The Office of Academic Affairs added a web page: “Office of Academic Affairs: Priorities and Initiatives/Student Learning Assessment” to serve as a vehicle for information on the process.
Each program (undergraduate and graduate) submitted its assessment plan to its liaison by the end of November 2013. At that point, the liaisons provided constructive feedback. Department assessment committees were asked to incorporate that feedback where practicable, if appropriate. For some programs, this feedback loop took several iterations until a workable plan was developed. A SharePoint site was opened to allow for the sharing of plans among committee members. ([https://sps.uakron.edu-committees/SLOAC/SitePages/Assessment%20Plans.aspx](https://sps.uakron.edu-committees/SLOAC/SitePages/Assessment%20Plans.aspx)) Chairs and directors were encouraged to consider these plans as living documents that could and should be changed/modified as needed. Chairs were informed via meetings and email on the progress within their units (spreadsheet example).

During fall 2013, the SAOAA facilitated the above activities and developed a University Assessment Plan that was submitted to the Provost in October 2013. This plan addressed the need to implement a process and put in place an infrastructure that provided for a continuous improvement culture around the assessment of student learning. Areas such as faculty professional development and support, resources, organization, etc. were addressed.

After concentrated focus on BCAS resulted in workable assessment plans for each of its programs, the other colleges were brought into the process. The faculty chair of the assessment committee along with the SAOAA made a presentation to the Council of Deans and Provost on the plan to include all colleges in the university’s assessment process. A presentation was also made to a gathering of deans, associate deans and faculty. Many of the programs in colleges other than BCAS, are accredited by professional organizations. Most of these had assessment plans in place. When this was the case, units were asked to submit them to the SAOAA to verify that all the needed elements of the assessment plan, described above were present. Many of these colleges had no assessment plans for their graduate programs, since many accrediting agencies do not accredit graduate programs and thus they needed to be developed.

Deans were asked to submit, by the end of the fall semester, a name from each college (faculty or administrator) to serve on the assessment committee that had previously only had members from the BCAS. Assessment plan and rubric templates, developed by the BCAS assessment committee, were distributed to all colleges to guide development of plans.

January 2014 was used to set the stage for the spring’s activities. A meeting was held with the newly appointed members of the university assessment committee. Committee members were briefed on the activities undertaken during fall 2013 and the timeline for spring was developed. Committee members’ questions and concerns were answered as they related to the interaction between the professional accreditation process and the university’s assessment process.
During spring 2014, all programs were asked to begin, if they had not already done so, collecting the data that they had specified in their assessment plans. Communication was sent from the Provost to all deans reiterating the importance of the assessment process to the success of University of Akron students. This was followed by a memo from the assessment committee offering its continued help. A FAQ was sent to the chairs in BCAS addressing issues that had arisen about data collection. Review of the assessment information provided through program accreditation reports began with feedback from the SAOAA. An updated template was distributed mid-semester to all programs in BCAS in hopes of focusing their attention on data collection. Updates were provided to BCAS associate deans by the end of March. A workshop, Assessment 101, was offered by members of the assessment committee for all interested faculty. An overview of the assessment process was included along with a substantial amount of time devoted to specific questions on data collection.

During summer 2014 a variety of working sessions for faculty and chairs were developed by the director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) with input from the chairs of the university assessment committee. These workshops were designed to facilitate the collection and meaningful use of data. These workshops were interactive as they provided time for attendees to work on their specific assessment projects with feedback from the workshop facilitators and other attendees. These working sessions were repeated at various times throughout the semester to accommodate teaching schedules of faculty and to respond to the particular needs of those assessing student work/results at the appropriate point in the assessment cycle. ITL will continue to provide these and other workshops on an ongoing basis. New faculty and teaching assistants are introduced to their role in the ongoing student learning assessment process during orientation sessions in the fall.

Due to the inability utilizing the SharePoint site (where assessment plans and reports are stored) to generate reports on the data submitted for each academic program, the assessment committee formed a subcommittee that began its investigation into the use of assessment management software. The subcommittee continues to work on its recommendations.

The annual report template was developed by the assessment committee and distributed to all colleges in April 2014. Progress reports were made to all deans indicating whether workable assessment plans were on file for all programs in their respective colleges. The deadline for submission of the annual reports is September 15 for the previous academic year. Annual reports are available in the Assessment Appendices: Assessment Plans and Reports folder of the Resource Room and highlighted in the Results Section of this report.

Other university initiatives related to the assessment of student learning continue. These include, but are not limited to:
• Testing of first-year students and seniors (Voluntary System of Accountability Participation mandates this activity. UA administers the ETS-PP every three years)
• Information Literacy Assessment
• Computer Based Assessment and Evaluation (COMPASS and Computer Literacy)
• NSSE
• Program Review
• Assessment of academic advising

A-1.2. Non-Accredited Program Assessment by College

The process used by each college to develop/review assessment plans and report results was determined by the faculty in programs that do not have their own professional accreditations (professionally accredited programs). The assessment committee provided general guidelines (elements that had to be included). The faculty members in each college/department/program, as appropriate, were able to develop the continuous improvement plan that fit their disciplinary needs (when to assess, how to assess, how to disseminate results, etc.). It is expected that the results of analysis of the direct and indirect assessment data will not only inform curricular and other programmatic changes, but also will be part of program review and the resource allocation planning processes at the college and university level on an on-going basis.

College of Arts and Sciences

As stated previously, each member of the assessment committee serves as a liaison to specific programs in particular colleges. The liaisons, along with their department contacts (chair, program director, faculty), determined the process to be used in moving the planning and implementation phases forward. The guiding principle used to frame these processes was: focus on continuous improvement that included an ongoing feedback loop. The five liaisons assigned to the BCAS served as resources for the departments. It was left to the discretion of each department as to how they developed the structure for the assessment process.

The documents required to support these processes were submitted according to a timeline developed by the assessment committee in coordination with the Dean and Provost. Initial plans were developed and reviewed in fall 2013. Data collection for ¼ of the outcomes or degrees began in spring 2014. Initial data were analyzed in fall 2014 with assessment reports based on the data due by September 25, 2014. Review and feedback on these reports is ongoing as is student outcome data collection. Reports will be due on an annual basis.
The College of Business Administration (CBA) has an ongoing effort to measure student learning outcomes. It continues to refine and update its processes. A few of the highlights of the 2013-14 academic year process are listed below:

- At the beginning of the 2013 academic year, individual faculty committees reviewed the goals from the prior year.
- In October 2013, an assessment retreat was held to review previous activities and refresh the learning goals and committee structure. Each goal category has an interdisciplinary committee, some with representation from administration or college institutes and centers that manages, measures and makes recommendations regarding objectives.
- Current undergraduate learning goal categories are:
  - Integrated Business Knowledge (represented by the Core Curriculum committee)
  - Analytical Quantitative Reasoning
  - Globalization
  - Business Communication (written and oral)
  - Decision Making
  - Professional Development (including leadership)
- A separate committee was constituted to derive and manage goals and objectives for the graduate MBA program.
- Major Field Tests from ETS were adopted for assessing undergraduate and graduate business knowledge. The undergraduate test was administered in fall 2013 and spring 2014. The graduate test was piloted in spring and summer 2014 for further administration in fall 2014.
- The Analytical Quantitative Reasoning committee worked with the faculty in the Department of Management to assess and respond to student accomplishments as they follow the course sequence.
- The Business Communication committee collected an initial assessment of writing in the Accounting Principles I class as a reaction paper to an in-class speaker.
- Later assessments of writing are collected in Business Strategy. A sample was collected in International Business in spring 2014.
- Samples of oral presentations were scored independently by the College Communication Business Practitioner in Business Strategy.
- The Globalization committee voted to add items from the Test of Cultural Literacy to the Major Field Test in Business.
- The Professional Development Committee met regularly in spring 2014 and made recommendations for updates to objectives and measures of leadership and ethics.
College of Education

The College of Education has an Office of Assessment and Accreditation that oversees activities for all programs in the college. The mission of the office is to support the programs of the College of Education and the work of the College’s faculty and staff by delivering accurate, useful, and timely data and information by providing quality database and reporting solutions; by assisting with and collaborating on assessment efforts; and by efficiently coordinating accreditation and licensure activities. The director of this office serves on the university assessment committee. The college is applying for accreditation by the Council of Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) and as a result all programs are under review and/or revision. Admissions to several programs were suspended in the spring 2014 semester by Faculty Senate action.

College of Engineering

Undergraduate

All undergraduate programs in the College of Engineering adhere to the requirements of ABET regarding the evaluation of program objectives and student learning outcomes. The assessment process has been in place for several ABET cycles and rigorously implemented. The assessment process utilizes multiple tools including individual course assessments, standardized exams, and different surveys. The data generated from this process are continuously used to maintain the focus of the instructional activities and improve the delivery and impact of the curriculum content. In addition, the assessment process provides that all constituencies (current students, alumni, employers, faculty and staff, advisory council) may have input to the process of refining student outcomes and program educational objectives.

Graduate

The assessment committee liaison met with the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies to discuss and formulate a strategy to develop assessment plans. All chairs were asked by the associate dean to identify learning outcomes for each graduate program. The chairs in turn asked the Graduate Policy Committees (GPC) to coordinate a response to the associate dean’s request. The assessment committee liaison met informally with several colleagues in the college GPC committees to share expectations and information. Each GPC, with faculty input, assembled a list of programs in their respective departments, identified learning outcomes for each, and identified core courses for all the programs. All faculty reviewed and discussed the response prepared by the GPC. The next step is to identify a specific process and activities by which data will be collected each semester.
College of Health Professions

This college includes programs in Nursing, Social Work, Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, Nutrition/Dietetics, Sport Science and Wellness Education, Counseling, and Allied Health Technology. During AY13-14, the assessment coordinator (associate dean):

- Made announcements, explained documents and gave direction to directors regarding the mission of the UA assessment committee.
- Worked with directors to formulate appropriate assessment plans and evaluative criteria.
- Tied the assessment process with the accreditation processes for selected directors and faculty.
- Reviewed assessment documents for suggested revisions, additions, etc.
- Agreed with the School of Nursing, which had already reconvened an ad hoc committee to review NCLEX scores. The Ohio Board of Nursing pass rates were 94.3% in 2012 and 84.2% in 2013. This average is above the national and State of Ohio average. The exam changed in 2013 with the level of difficulty increasing significantly.

School of Law

In the spring of 2013, several faculty members met with the interim dean and an associate provost to discuss the collection of assessment data, the reporting for the law school, and the planning of a faculty meeting devoted to the topic of assessment. The assessment committee liaison attended a conference on assessment, “Assessment Across the Curriculum” at the University of Arkansas Bowden Law School in April.

This fall the School of Law established an assessment committee. The university assessment committee liaison was selected to co-chair the committee along with another faculty member. The law school assessment committee convened its first meeting this past September. During that meeting, the committee discussed its goals for the year and the program learning outcomes identified in the 2013 – 2014 assessment plan. The committee considered the kind of data that would accurately represent the law school’s assessment of its students. The committee also discussed the connection between student learning outcomes for courses and program learning outcomes. The committee examined, in addition to other sources, the possibility of focusing on the program learning outcome of effective oral communication skills to collect data. In connection with this focus, the faculty would identify ways of increasing formalized opportunities for students to develop their oral communication skills.

The School of Law has reviewed the latest bar passage data and data concerning the performance of its law students at mock trial/writing competitions for the AY13-14 and has updated the law school’s assessment plan, accordingly.
College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering

During AY13-14, the College focused on hiring a new dean. In spring 2014, the university assessment committee liaison met with both department chairs (polymer science and polymer engineering) to discuss the department’s assessment efforts. Constructive suggestions were made and changes to the curriculum are being implemented as discussed in the results section below.

College of Applied Science and Technology

The Assessment Committee for the former Summit College was reconstituted in fall 2013. The assessment committee liaison was selected to chair the college’s committee. The committee has representatives from every department in the college. Programs that are accredited by an outside agency were identified. These included most of the programs in Allied Health (now in the College of Health Professions), Engineering Technology, and Business Technology, as well as many in Public Service Technology, and that information was submitted to SAOAA.

The committee then focused on those programs that did not have assessment plans. These included three degrees from Associate Studies, many from Public Service Technology, and some from Business Technology and Engineering Technology. Assessment committees from each department met and developed plans. These plans were reviewed by the committee chair and SAOAA. Several plans needed revision and the assessment committee liaison worked with department assessment coordinators to answer questions and complete the plans.

Each program developed a plan for writing the annual report which was due September 15, 2014. Assessment coordinators and/or committees are in place for each program. Data collected in AY13-14 was submitted at the end of the spring semester to meet the September 15 deadline.
A-1.3. Results

All academic program assessment plans and AY13-14 annual reports can be found in the Assessment Appendices: Assessment Plans and Reports folder of the Resource Room. The results of the AY13-14 assessment vary from program to program based on where the program is in its assessment cycle. Most programs that did not have assessment plans in place were able to gather data to use as a benchmark and plan additional assessment for AY14-15. Programs that are more mature in their assessment processes reported changes in program curriculum, individual courses, and/or specific assignments. Others noted responses needed to external forces (certification exams, licensure, accrediting bodies, employment, etc.). Examples of using the data to inform decision making and closing the loop regarding student learning are cited below by college.

Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences

The Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences is divided into four divisions: Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. The majority of the programs in the college are not accredited by an external agency and do not have a mature assessment process in place. All programs developed and submitted assessment plans during fall 2013 and began collection of data in spring 2014. Based on implementation experience, several programs found that their assessment process needed to be changed. Examples of these initial efforts are highlighted below.

**Arts**

- Dance faculty in both the BA and BFA programs felt that rubrics needed to be changed to allow for the separation of criteria that needed to be scored individually.
- Based on exam results, Music decided it needed to revise its Introduction to Theory course along with developing a more consistent rubric for jury assessment.
- Fashion Merchandising realized that it needed to include appropriate program learning outcomes on syllabi. A more coordinated alignment among program, course and project objectives is also needed.
- In order to strengthen student work for Standard 4 (Design Process) in Interior Design, the sequence of coursework was revised to position the Design Studio I and II earlier in the curriculum to allow the students more time for development of design skills. Additionally, new assignments were introduced into the Design Theory class.
Humanities

• The English department implemented a very complex assessment plan at all levels involving a large number of faculty. In doing so, they discovered inconsistencies in the assessment process at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. During AY13-14, the faculty will be discussing the type of papers to be assessed, the need for more uniform writing assignments, and the use of rubrics.

• Students in Modern Languages performed well on the Oral Proficiency Inventory, but realizing there is room for improvement, the faculty are discussing how oral proficiency can be addressed in lower-division classes.

• A team approach to assessing student papers was introduced in Philosophy. This was a learning experience for faculty who realized that the rubric for assessing papers needed to be shared with students.

Natural Sciences

• Assessment of the Biology program pointed to some flaws in the Principles of Biology curriculum. To address the deficiencies, the curriculum in the lab will be modified to place a stronger emphasis on data interpretation, statistical applications, and displaying the information correctly. The assessment plan will be modified to ensure consistency between members of the faculty.

• MFAT scores in Computer Science encouraged faculty to review when students are enrolling in specific courses. Due to low MFAT scores in the area of ethics, it was determined that more course content around these issues needed to be added.

• Through the assessment process, Geoscience faculty determined that the Engineering Geology program should be inactivated. Case studies will be added in the Geophysics program to address deficiencies in scientific writing skills.

• Mathematics faculty determined a need for more consistency in the calculus sequence. A common syllabus will be developed and meetings of faculty teaching the course will be instituted.

• Masters students in Statistics show weaknesses in colloquium presentation skills. A list of successful presentation skills will be developed for students.

Social Sciences

• Economics faculty found that the students in the master’s program needed to be made more aware of the expectations around the assessment process. Faculty plan on rewriting the rubric used and placing it in course syllabi. Also to be included in the syllabi are an identification of the artifacts used for program assessment, the weight assigned to student assignments, and a template for writing a research paper.

• After conducting an assessment in spring 2014, Communication faculty felt training in rubric application is necessary as well as a broader gathering of data.

• Assessment results in Political Science indicated that the undergraduate curriculum needed a greater emphasis on theory and methods and the graduate programs needed more attention on formulating research questions and
conducting critical analysis. Discussions are underway on how to address these issues.

- Knowledge of quantitative methods was the weakest domain for undergraduate Psychology students. Inclusion of quantitative principles throughout other courses will address this issue. The undergraduate assessment instrument will be updated.

**College of Business Administration**

Programs in the College of Business Administration are accredited by AACSB. The assessment plans in the college are based on the Assurance of Learning assessment process mandated by AACSB. The undergraduate program uses the ETS Major Field test on an ongoing basis to assess nine academic indicators. From Fall 2013 to Spring 2014 student scores increased in economics, finance and legal and social environment, and decreased in accounting, quantitative business analysis, marketing, information systems, and international issues; scores remained constant in management.

Faculty are using results to identify areas of weakness across the curriculum. They will make suggestions of other assessment projects that can be utilized to assess these weaknesses. Faculty may also write additional questions that can be included in future ETS Major Field Tests. Real World 101 will be incorporated in accounting classes in Spring 2015 as an assessment project to evaluate student writing skills. Changes to structure, assignments, and curricula are being made in 6500:304 and 305 to address areas of weakness.

**College of Education**

All programs in the College of Education are currently under review as they align with the standards of a new accrediting body (CAEP). Several programs were inactivated during AY13-14 pending further review. Changes to programs are ongoing and include:

- Core courses in Early Childhood Education now include information on diversity and exceptional learners.
- Course changes were made in Special Education based on students’ tests scores that showed they were low in instruction and assessment.
- A new project was added in the Ph.D. program in Assessment and Evaluation and is currently under assessment.
- Curriculum changes are planned to address deficiencies found in students’ student teaching experience.
College of Engineering

The undergraduate programs in the College of Engineering are accredited by ABET and have a robust assessment program in place. ABET does not accredit graduate programs. Therefore, the College worked during AY13-14 to put assessment plans in place. Data collection for those programs will begin in AY14-15. Rubrics for theses and dissertations have been in place for an extended period.

Due to its robust assessment plans of undergraduate learning, the various programs in the College have been able to develop a cycle of continuous improvement based on the ABET review cycle. Some of the results of those assessments include:

- Chemical Engineering added more hands-on problem solving, leadership development opportunities and formalized project management within the curriculum.
- Computer Engineering established trigger points for each student outcome that indicates faculty discussion and decision-making is needed.
- Based on three-year trend data, Corrosion Engineering faculty are reviewing both the assessment instruments used and the data collected in preparation for the ABET visit in 2016.
- Electrical Engineering found low grades in SO9 (a-e) and determined that they might be unavoidable owing to the difficulty of integrating the associated material in the curriculum. The Design Project was reviewed for coverage and it was deemed reasonable.

College of Health Professions

The programs housed in the College of Health Professions increased dramatically in AY13-14 due to a restructuring. All undergraduate programs and some graduate programs in the College are associated with professional accrediting agencies. All are in good standing with their accreditors. Each program has an assessment plan based on the requirements/standards of the professional agency with which it is associated.

- Based on tracking feedback, Athletic Training changed clinical sites in order to enhance students’ experiences.
- Exercise Science implemented course changes to reflect the new emphasis on legal practice in the certification exam and a new type of instruction was implemented in exercise prescription classes to help increase results in the student learning outcome, “…evaluate health behavior assessment and risk stratification.”
- An assessment committee was formed at the master’s level in Coaching.
- The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program curriculum changed to better meet
student, licensure and accreditation needs.

- Nursing implemented three new courses at the undergraduate level. The NCLEX Task Force was reactivated to examine the drop in the NCLEX-RN pass rates. Recognizing the need to link more tightly the application of lecture to clinical practice, a faculty member was assigned load to work with part-time faculty at the sophomore and junior level to improve student learning.
- Nutrition introduced recitation sessions after noting a decrease in first-time pass rates on the certification exam.
- Social Work (BA/BASW) focused its efforts on improving licensure passage rates by increasing seminars to two hours, making Social Work Practice II a prerequisite for field education and adding Introduction to Social Work Practice. Licensure Prep, a 1-credit elective, was also added.
- Speech Pathology and Audiology (BA/BAT) is currently reassessing how three projects are evaluated.

**School of Law**

The School of Law adheres to the American Bar Association’s standards when developing and implementing its assessment plan. A new assessment committee has been formed and discussions are ongoing. Use of a student portfolio is being considered. Noting a need in the area of problem solving, all first-year students are required to complete a 2-credit problem-solving workshop. This will provide for a more structured assessment of students’ problem-solving abilities. Due to the nature of the Ohio Bar Exam (extensively essay), it was decided to increase credit hours for upper-level drafting courses from one-to two-credit hours. Currently consideration is being given to the need to assess oral communication skills.

**College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering**

The College offers graduate programs in Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering. After reviewing results of written comprehensive exams, consideration is being given to the use of oral exams in the Master’s program in Polymer Science. A new core curriculum was implemented for the Ph.D. in Polymer Engineering and a new qualifying exam procedure was implemented. Evaluation metrics for the Ph.D. program need to be redefined as the information obtained currently does not provide enough useful information for curricular assessment. The Master’s program also implemented a new core curriculum based on changes in the discipline.
College of Applied Science and Technology

The College currently awards associate and baccalaureate degrees, and many of the programs are in the beginning stages of their assessment efforts. AY13-14 was used to develop assessment plans and to begin collecting base-line data. Some programs, such as Surveying and Mapping, that had student learning outcomes from previous initiatives, changed them based on changes in the discipline and employment opportunities. Surveying and Mapping is currently determining how to address the changes in the appropriate courses.

After a review of its data, Business and Information Technology faculty noticed that a larger than desired number of students were not completing project assignments. A website was developed to facilitate project management; homework assistance is provided through CONNECT Network; lab time was extended; and training modules from SIM net were incorporated. Peer advisors are available for projects. Electronic Engineering Technology, facing the same issue, will introduce scheduled, periodic meetings with students during Spring 2015.

Construction Management Technology requires a co-op experience. Due to the down turn in the economy, co-op sites have dwindled. To provide the students’ with the needed experience, a service work option was introduced to satisfy the co-op requirement. To address the learning issues of students who scored less than 70% on exams, the Emergency Medical Technology faculty introduced peer tutoring and an online learning center, and a senior seminar course is being considered for students in the Homeland Security program.

A-1.4. Steps Moving Forward

In order to continue the positive trajectory that we are now on, The University of Akron needs to:

University level

- Develop a UA-wide system of assessment, where data from degree programs, general education, NSSE and other measurements are analyzed and used for planning and budgeting, program review and decision-making at all levels – we intend to have Dr. Barbara Walvoord, Professor Emerita from the University of Notre Dame, visit UA in Spring 2015 to help the campus meet these goals.
- Provide professional development opportunities for faculty and professional staff in the area of student learning assessment (began in Fall 2014).


Degree program level

- Continue the assessment process, evaluate data, and make programmatic/curricular changes annually.
- Track all curricular changes that result from “closing the loop” on an on-going basis.
- Integrate results from assessment into program review and college/university level processes for resource allocations and strategic planning.

General Education Program

- A substantive revision is currently underway with assessment of learning outcomes as a top priority – we must ensure that the Program will meet expectations for the timely collection and analysis of direct and indirect data and mechanisms for feedback to continuously improve the Program’s impact on student learning.
- Implement the complete Program for the Fall 2016 incoming class, after Board of Trustees endorsement.
- Gather enough evidence and artifacts in advance of UA’s next HLC comprehensive evaluation (Standard Pathway 2016-2017) to demonstrate that the learning outcomes of this Program can be properly assessed.
Area of Focus: A-2. Governance

A-2.1. Overview

In addition to many less-formal means of providing input into planning and decision making, the relationship and roles of faculty in shared institutional governance at The University of Akron are best described from three perspectives: (1) Akron-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement; (2) Faculty Senate; and (3) University Council.

The collective bargaining agreement provides for formal faculty input in the selection and review of department chairs, school directors and deans. It also guarantees participation in the selection of the Provost and the President through a subcommittee of six faculty who have the opportunity to discuss their collective views of finalists with the full Board of Trustees in executive session. These processes provide substantial faculty voice in shaping the academic leadership of the institution, and recently played a vital role in the hiring of our new President. Any changes to these processes would need to be negotiated under Ohio law, so the remainder of this report will focus on other forms of governance. Representatives from Akron-AAUP and the Office of Academic Affairs meet biweekly to discuss contract implementation concerns and confer in real time as issues arise. The working relationship for the betterment of the institution is positive and continues to mature.

The Faculty Senate is primarily composed of faculty representatives from the various colleges, as well as part-time faculty, retired faculty, students and one academic advisor. It has purview over academic matters at UA, most notably policies on admissions, grading, and curricular changes, and involves many campus members in the activities of its numerous committees. The President and Provost meet with the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate on a regular basis, and work together to improve UA’s degree programs. Our new undergraduate admissions rule and the disposition of academic program review are two recent examples of the influence of this body. The following section of this report is dedicated to a more thorough discussion of the role of the Faculty Senate in shared institutional governance.

The University Council, also described more fully in a subsequent section of this report, is a relatively new body with representation from a wide range of campus constituency groups. It is intended to serve the university in long-range strategic planning and budgeting by involving perspectives from various viewpoints. It considers issues that transcend the campus and provides recommendations to inform decisions with far-reaching implications. One example of the substantive role the University Council has begun to play at UA is in the finalization of the fiscal year 2014 (i.e., 2014 – 2015 academic year) budget through its Budget and Finance Committee.
A-2.2. Faculty Senate

In the period since the last Higher Learning Commission site visit, the Faculty Senate has continued to operate effectively and has strengthened its operations in certain areas. The Senate itself has functioned cohesively, with few closely-divided votes on policy or curriculum proposals, and few referrals of proposals back to committees for further consideration and development. This is a reflection of careful and thorough work by the Senate’s committees in preparing proposals for consideration by the Senate. Faculty Senate minutes are available at http://www.uakron.edu/facultysenate/archive.dot.

The relationship between the central Administration and the Faculty Senate, although not without its occasional difficulties, has generally improved during this period. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee has continued to meet with the President and the Provost on a monthly basis. The Provost has begun to meet with the Faculty Senate Chairman on an approximately monthly basis. President (now former President) Proenza made himself available to meet with the Faculty Senate Chairman whenever needed. President Scarborough, who took office July 1, 2014, has consulted closely with the Chairman. A good working relationship between the Vice Provost and the Chairman has played an important role in strengthening the shared governance process.

Several issues that arose during the period since the last HLC site visit exemplify the progress and also some of the difficulties in shared governance at The University of Akron: (1) general education reform; (2) reorganization and changes in the missions and names of academic units; (3) review and termination or suspension of academic programs; (4) curriculum review process; (5) faculty workload policy; (6) review of academic centers and institutes; (7) presidential search; and (8) development of programs to promote student retention and success.

1. General education reform: The initiative to reform The University of Akron’s general education requirements for undergraduate students began with the appointment of a committee of faculty members by the Dean of the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences with the imprimatur of the Provost. Because the general education requirements apply to all undergraduate students, including not only those in the College of Arts and Sciences but also those in the Colleges of Applied Science and Technology (formerly called Summit College), Business Administration, Education, Engineering, and Health Professions, and because the general education requirements are quintessentially matters of curriculum, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee urged the Administration to allow this initiative to come under the auspices of the Faculty Senate. The Administration agreed and, with the addition of a few faculty members appointed by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the General Education Revision Committee became an ad hoc Faculty Senate committee. This committee completed its work, which
focused of the development of a new set of general education requirements and a plan for implementing them, near the end of the Spring 2014 Semester, after the faculties of each of the affected colleges had reviewed and expressed their views about the proposal (some of the initial college reactions were not favorable). In its May 2014 meeting, the Faculty Senate adopted the committee’s proposal without dissent. In accordance with the implementation plan, the Faculty Senate has formed eight general education learning outcome committees. These committees will receive and consider requests for approval of courses as satisfying the various general education learning outcomes specified in the new general education requirements. This work is just beginning at the time of writing of this report, with the committees designing templates for the requests for approval.

2. Reorganizations and changes in the missions and names of academic units: Whereas in previous years the Faculty Senate’s role in advising the Administration and the Board of Trustees concerning the reorganization and changes in the mission and names of academic units was not consistently respected by the Administration, during the period since the last HLC site visit the Faculty Senate has consistently been allowed to exercise its role in such decisions. These include the transfer of the Department of Sports Science and Wellness Education and the Department of Counseling from the College of Education to the College of Health Professions, and changing the mission and name of the former Summit College (now the College of Applied Science and Technology) along with transferring the Department of Allied Health Technology to the College of Health Professions.

3. Review and termination or suspension of academic programs: A number of years ago, the Provost at that time established a committee to conduct reviews of academic programs. This academic review process was completely apart from any established shared governance mechanism. After much work had been done, the review process stalled. At the beginning of the Spring 2014 Semester, the Provost announced it would be his recommendation to suspend admission to 55 academic programs. After strenuous objection by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, including clarification of the difference between suspending admissions leading toward program elimination vs. suspending admissions until the programs could become viable, the Board of Trustees asked for the Senate’s advice on these matters. In its April 2014 meeting, the Faculty Senate concurred with the proposal to suspend admissions to, and eventually eliminate, 22 of the 55 programs; recommended that 13 of the 55 programs not be suspended; recommended that 16 of the 55 programs be suspended until their curricula are revised so that they can remain viable; recommended that four (4) of the 55 programs be suspended pending the availability of resources needed to restore their viability; and recommended the suspension and eventual elimination of seven (7) programs that were not among the
55 proposed by the Provost (in these cases the proposals to eliminate the programs came from the affected faculty). The President concurred with the Senate’s recommendations with the support of the Provost, and the Board of Trustees adopted all of the Senate’s recommendations.

4. **Curriculum review process:** Along with academic policies, curriculum decisions lie at the core of faculty responsibility. Before the last HLC site visit, representatives of the Faculty Senate had played a major role in designing a new, online curriculum change proposal system. This system has had its problems. Some of these problems have been resolved; others, mainly those that arise from the fact the system is not fully self-explanatory and many faculty members use it only infrequently, have yet to be completely resolved. One of the impediments to the resolution of these problems is the lack of resources allocated by the Administration to technical support of the system. As a result, there is a need to rely on administrative intervention to ensure that individual curriculum change proposals are handled appropriately. To this extent, the curriculum proposal system is, in the view of the Faculty Senate leadership, not as fully faculty driven as it should be. Nevertheless, curriculum proposals are moving through the system much more efficiently than at the time of the last HLC visit, and no proposals can take effect until they are approved by the Faculty Senate.

5. **Faculty workload policy:** During the Spring 2013 semester, the Provost’s office increased the teaching loads of some faculty members across the University. These decisions reflected a shift in priorities from research to undergraduate teaching in some areas. The Faculty Senate was not consulted about this change in priorities, nor was its expressed concerns heeded. The Faculty Senate leadership believes that shared governance requires that the Faculty Senate be consulted on such decisions. Such consultation would, in their view, lead to a more fully-considered decision and to more widespread acceptance of it by the faculty.

6. **Review of academic centers and institutes:** Late in the Fall 2013 Semester, President Proenza asked the Faculty Senate to conduct a review of academic centers and institutes within the University. In previous years, such a review would likely have been conducted apart from any established shared governance mechanism. That the President asked the Senate to conduct this review reflects progress toward the realization of shared governance at this University.

7. **Presidential search:** In late August 2013, President Proenza announced his intention to step down as President effective June 30, 2014. During the 2013-14 academic year, the Board of Trustees conducted a search for his replacement. The Board served as the
search committee, delegating to an ad hoc committee of Trustees the responsibility of determining the search criteria, conducting the search, and choosing the finalists. The ad hoc committee invited representatives of various University constituencies, including the faculty, to meet with it in executive session to discuss the search criteria. In accord with the AAUP collective bargaining agreement, those representatives were also afforded the opportunity to interview the finalists and then to meet with the Board in executive session to express their views of the finalists. The faculty representatives included three elected by the Faculty Senate and three chosen by the Akron Chapter of the American Association of University Professors, which represents The University of Akron faculty in collective bargaining. Although the Faculty Senate leadership believes that representatives of the faculty should not have been excluded from the process of selecting the finalists, in the end, the Board of Trustees listened to and heeded the advice of the faculty representatives in choosing one of the finalists to appoint as president.

8. **Development of programs to promote student retention success:** Since the last HLC site visit, the University has begun to develop and implement various programs to promote student retention and success. For this purpose, the Board of Trustees created a new administrative division that reported to a new vice president, who in turn reported directly to the President. Decisions about the design of these programs were made without consulting the Faculty Senate, notwithstanding the fact that faculty have much to do with, and considerable expertise about, student retention and success. During the 2013-14 academic year, a formal student success and retention plan was developed without consultation of the Faculty Senate until so late in the process that it was necessary to remove from the plan all of its elements that would require faculty approval. The new President has reorganized the administrative structure so that the student success division now reports to the Senior Vice President and Provost. This reorganization offers a basis for hope on the part of the Faculty Senate leadership that, in the future, the Faculty Senate will be consulted on decisions about policies and programs pertaining to student retention and success.

The new President of The University of Akron has been in office only since July 1, 2014. The leadership of the Faculty Senate is hopeful that the views he has articulated about shared governance and his formal and informal consultations bode well for the future of UA. In any event, since the last HLC site visit, significant progress has been made toward the realization of shared governance insofar as the Faculty Senate is concerned.
A-2.3. University Council

This self-study addresses activities of the University Council (UC) since April 2013. The UC is made up of representatives across constituency groups on campus including faculty, staff, contract professionals, graduate students, undergraduate students, deans, department chairs and administrators. UC is the deliberative and representative body that makes recommendations to the President and Senior Vice President, Provost and Chief Operating Officer on long-range planning, policy, operations, and informs decisions on other substantive matters that affect the well-being and common interests of the university community.

All academic decisions are made by Faculty Senate according to its bylaws. Some matters require both academic decision-making and university consideration. Both the UC and Faculty Senate bodies cooperate and coordinate focusing on the goal of shared governance. For example, the University recently implemented a new retention and completion plan that contains both academic and non-academic strategies to improve student success. Both bodies contributed to the report, with UC involved much earlier than the Faculty Senate, and both will be consulted with respect to implementation.

UC comprises three major components: the UC itself, the UC Steering Committee and eight UC Standing Committees. The UC is the main representative and legislative body, which makes recommendations to the President and Provost. The UC Steering Committee is elected by UC from among its members and is responsible for the overall coordination of the body, functioning as an executive committee. The standing committee members are elected or selected by the university community constituencies and report to UC. The UC and the eight standing committees represent all primary campus constituency groups: faculty, staff, contract professionals, graduate students, undergraduate students, deans, department chairs and administrators.

Serving on UC itself, are three Faculty Senate Members-at-Large, with three Members-at-Large representing each of the other constituencies as well. Faculty representatives serve on each of the standing committees alongside members of the other constituencies groups. (See proposed bylaws, page 3).

Currently, UC is operating using the body’s proposed bylaws. This strategy was as suggested by the Board of Trustees Strategic Issues Committee as the proposed bylaws were tabled by the Board of Trustees when it became clear that UA would be doing a search for a new President. These bylaws continue to be the governing UC document and demonstrate that we have a working, effective governance process. President Scarborough has just this month (Dec. 2014) engaged the Board of Trustees on the topic of the UC bylaws, and they have decided to look to best practices recommended by the Association of Governing Boards as they consider the structure of our formal governance processes at UA.
Transition of Leadership

Since April 2013, there have been multiple leadership transitions in UC. The first Chair of UC resigned (May 14, 2013) and the Vice Chair became Chair. Unfortunately, that member could not remain as the Chair due to his position on one of the standing committees. These events led to an election (October 1, 2013) to fill the remaining term limits of the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The current Chair and Vice-Chair were elected and subsequently re-elected in the election process (June 18, 2014). From April 2013 to the present, committees have either re-elected their Chairs or elected new Chairs to represent their committees. As part of the bylaws revision, the UC Steering Committee was restructured to ensure representation by all constituency groups. This inclusiveness has enabled the UC Steering Committee, as well as the entire UC, to consider the full impact of their decisions on the entire campus community.

Organization and Operation of UC

In the last year, UC developed an annual calendar for detailed standing committee reports based on the work schedule set forth by the Board of Trustees. This coordination ensures that that the two bodies mirror one another to work seamlessly regarding critical topics. (See UC Annual Calendar).

The implementation of in-depth standing committee reports is the result of UC membership requesting regular, detailed reports outlining the works and accomplishments of each standing committee. In order to lend structure to the standing committees’ efforts, each committee was tasked with creating defined annual goals and objectives. These goals and objectives are the foundation of the standing committee’s regular report to the body. (See UC Standing Committee Goals and Steering Committee Feedback 2013-14). As UC evolves, the development of the standing committees is important as UC seeks ways to work more effectively together as a consultative body.

In this quest to be transparent and inclusive, the UC Steering Committee established the practice of ensuring timely communication with the entire University community following each UC meeting. These communications provide session updates and invite topic submissions for UC consideration by any faculty, staff, contract professional, graduate student or undergraduate student. The topic submission form is available on the UC website. (Also see UC topic submission process).

If shared governance is to be successful, members must voice their opinions freely without concern over repercussion. In order to ensure that all representatives feel free to voice their opinions and vote, UC uses an electronic voting system that ensures privacy and anonymity.
Annual Survey of the UC

Yearly surveys of the body have been implemented to gauge their satisfaction with the work of the UC and to solicit recommendations for improvement.

The outcomes from the annual survey have included improvements in UC processes and communications. For example, last year’s survey revealed a desire for increased communications. This need led to scheduled communications to the University community and more effective communication processes in and among the committees. In 2014, several ideas for improved productivity were presented resulting in formal committee goals, in-depth committee reports, more effective communication practices on and by committees, committee meeting notes, scheduled meetings and more. The survey process will continue and UC remains open to opportunities for improvement. (See 2013-14 University Council Satisfaction Survey Results).

In addition to the implementation of annual surveys, members of the UC recognize the need for the body to be a “major player” in changing the campus culture towards participation in shared governance as well as the development of an environment characterized by institutional effectiveness. The UC will continue to encourage participation in shared governance by all members of the University community.

Report of Accomplishments of the UC since April 2013

In the PEAQ Comprehensive Evaluation Report, it was stated that “shared governance at UA remains a challenge.” “The general consensus seems to be that there is good engagement around academic issues, but continued problems of a lack of transparency around administrative - financial decisions.”

The major activities of UC are summarized in the Minutes of UC and in Summary Charts - University Council Motion Status Report and University Council Issues Brief Status Report. Many committee recommendations are solved by direct referral to appropriate administrators or are presented as formal recommendations to UC for action. Several standing committees engaged in significant dialogue, accomplished goals and generally demonstrated strong, productive committee work. The following pages include in-depth reports from the following standing committees:

- Budget and Finance
- Physical Environment
- Student Engagement and Success
- Talent Development and Human Resources
In-Depth Report, Budget and Finance Committee

From University Council proposed Bylaws (page 12):
The University Council Budget and Finance Committee (UC B&FC) is responsible for studying monitoring, and making recommendations to University Council on the development of all university budget, finance, and purchasing policies and resource allocations in collaboration with staff, contract professionals, and faculty in appropriate departments. These recommendations shall be forwarded to the University Council for consideration.

Although the bylaws were clear about the mission of UC B&FC, the implementation of this mission was challenging. As the result of a topic submission from UC, the committee decided that in order to fulfill their mission, each year the CFO will provide to the committee:

1. The past five-years’ spending history of each academic and administrative unit.
2. Updates on the progress in developing recommendations for revenue enhancements as well as budget reductions or increases, including:
   a. Feedback from the Effectiveness and Efficiency Initiatives groups.
   b. Deliberations with the Vice Presidents, Council of Deans and the Board of Trustees.
3. An eventual draft of the suggested budget for the following year.

The committee’s responsibilities include, but are not limited to, studying the consistency of the budget draft with spending history data, identifying where dramatic changes have occurred, and considering whether the causes of the dramatic increases or decreases are justifiable. The committee may need to interview the budget representatives of some business units. Also, the committee will study the feasibility of the budget with respect to the revenue and determine the expected surplus or deficit caused by the suggested budget.

After a complete review, UC B&FC will submit to UC its recommendations.

The following response to the aforementioned topic submission was passed at University Council on May 14, 2013.

- The UC B&FC received each unit’s past five-year spending data. There was not adequate time to review and make recommendations about FY14. But, the spending data provided a good starting point for FY15. The committee members had every opportunity to ask questions regarding the provided data and they did ask many questions. Numerous conversations were held about the committee’s role relative to budget development as well as the University’s fiscal condition. On February 2014 (a starting point for the FY15 budget) some substantial reductions for some business units were proposed to the committee. After
working together, the administration and business units were able to prepare and present balanced budgets for their areas.

During the spring, a great deal of progress was made in clarifying expectations and developing a process by which our committee would be consulted about budgetary issues. Of particular importance was the need for timely access so that feedback could be provided before final decisions were made by the Provost, President and Board of Trustees. It has been very helpful that Provost Sherman has been attending UC B&FC committee meetings because budget questions often have implications for academic policies and priorities.

As the result, the UC B&FC was able to recommend a modified budget for FY15 that was consequently reported to UC as well as in a forum to the campus community.

This modified budget was part of the goals that UC B&FC submitted to the UC Steering Committee for the remainder of the year. The overall goals were:

**Goals**

1. **FY2015 Budget Development:** Regular updates will be provided to UC B&FC and reported to UC. The UC B&FC will have opportunities at every meeting to provide input on the budget process, ask process questions, and propose suggestions about priorities, in addition to revisiting the proposed cuts for FY15. A draft budget will be provided to the UC B&FC, giving the committee enough time to study the feasibility of the budget with respect to the revenue, and determine the expected surplus or deficit caused by the suggested budget. After a complete review, UC B&FC will submit to UC, and ultimately to the Board of Trustees, its recommendations for final approval.

2. **Guaranteed Tuition:** Per the presentation at the last UC meeting, UC B&FC was asked to develop an analysis of the fiscal impact of adopting an undergraduate student tuition guarantee. Ohio University intends to implement such a plan in the fall of 2015. The UC B&FC will review and analyze the information gathered by the CFO of Ohio University and other counterparts on this matter and report its recommendation to UC.

3. **Open Forum Presentation:** The UC B&FC will prepare a forum discussing the current financial condition of the University including industry benchmark measurements and FY15 budget developments. The development presentation will address how the starting point was derived, the budget process and an update of the current state of the budget process. The proposed forums will take place in late March or early April.
4. Summer Plateau: The UC B&FC will assign a workgroup to develop an implementation plan for a pilot. UC B&FC would oversee that project and will set a goal of having a fairly specific proposal for UC before the end of the fiscal year.

As the result of Goal 1, FY2015 Budget Development, an effective process is in place for providing input into the budget plan for the next fiscal year. This process was used and refined in the spring for the FY2015 budget. It will be implemented earlier for FY2016, which will enhance the quality of committee feedback.

B&FC role in mid-range planning (3 to 5 years out) has been hampered by volatility and uncertainty in student enrollment, lack of clarity about the mission of the business units and the university as a whole, as well as a lack of unit-level data on costs and revenues. But once the costs and revenues data for all units on campus are received (the President has a template from the University of Toledo), B&FC will be in a better position to provide input into mid-range planning. It is anticipated that B&FC will coordinate its efforts with other groups on campus.

- Goal 2 (Guaranteed Tuition) is completed and has been reported to UC.
- Goal 3 (Open Forum Presentation) is completed.
- Goal 4 (Summer Plateau) is not completed yet. A subcommittee of UC B&FC met a few times with different groups (Office of the University Registrar, Office of Student Success, etc.)

Among other things that the committee has accomplished:

- Reviewed FY13 Audited Financial Statements.
- Reviewed Carry over balances.

See Budget and Finance Committee in-depth report to the UC.

In-Depth Report, Physical Environment Committee

The University Council Physical Environment Committee (UC PEC) is responsible for studying, monitoring and making recommendations related to overall campus planning, safety, and the use and assignment of university space, physical facilities and equipment. These recommendations will be made to UC Steering Committee for consideration.

The specific responsibilities of UC PEC are to:

- Participate in the development of space/facilities long-range plans and capital projects for the campus.
• Participate in the development of long-range plans concerning all safety related issues impacting the campus community.

• Participate in the development of long-range plans concerning the utilization of parking, buildings, services and land use, including ADA compliance.

• Review and provide feedback with respect to facilities decisions for the campus, such as appropriate program space, classroom availability and quality, faculty offices and laboratories, and related topics.

• Review and provide feedback with respect to safety related issues.

• Review and provide feedback with respect to parking and transportation services.

• Review and provide feedback with respect to ADA compliance.

• Review, provide feedback, and make recommendations related to sustainability.

The UC PEC has been active and has made reports at most UC meetings. Many recommendations can be carried out by referral to appropriate administrators. Below are some examples of effective committee function as well as some issues based on implementation.

• The temporary move of the College of Education has been a concern of UC PEC. The committee was informed regarding the plan to move the College of Education to Central Hower on a temporary basis while Zook Hall was renovated. The UC PEC did approve the move with very little detail regarding space design. In a visit to the proposed area in spring 2014, UC PEC members were informed that faculty would be assigned to open carrels. Ongoing concerns were expressed to UC PEC including how the faculty and staff of the College of Education would be housed, the number of private offices available, the number of conference rooms for use, and other facilities including classrooms. In addition, there was concern regarding how faculty would be assigned space. The UC PEC was assured by the Interim Dean of Education that faculty and others were informed of the decisions that were made regarding space assignments. A lottery system was used to assign office locations.

• At the beginning of the summer 2014 term, faculty, administrators and staff were to prepare to move. At this time, UC PEC became aware of the space configuration details, specifically the open carrels. The carrels had only four foot dividers which raised the issue of privacy. This issue has not been resolved satisfactorily as there are still issues of privacy.

• The UC PEC became concerned about the involvement of faculty and staff in the renovation plans for Zook Hall. The UC PEC Chair contacted the Interim Dean of Education to discuss the concerns around college committee involvement in the relocation planning process so that adequate input could be provided before the final plans went forward. UC PEC members met with the Interim Dean and College of Education representatives to outline their concern for adequate faculty and staff input into the renovation plans. The Interim Dean of Education has been working with her
college committee, and it can be reported that there has been faculty and staff input into the renovation plans.

- Another example of UC PEC’s work concerned a proposal from the Interim Dean of University Libraries regarding the combining of the Science Library with the Main Bierce Library. This proposal took into consideration plans suggested by Sasaki Associates, Inc. that Bierce Library would be renovated. The Interim Dean of University Libraries recommended the Science Library and Main Bierce Library collections could be brought together with more efficient staffing. Upon further study by UC PEC, it was determined that students felt that the study space in the Science Library was very important. This issue was discussed by the UC Steering Committee. Provost Sherman, as a member, informed the UC Steering Committee that no action would be taken for at least a year. Subsequently, UC PEC raised the issue with the Faculty Senate Library Committee that is now reviewing the issue. The UC PEC will not make recommendations until we receive a report from the Faculty Senate Library Committee. This is an example of how the two governance committees can coordinate recommendations.

The UC PEC has carried out its charge with active participation and reviewed issues presented with careful consideration. UC PEC has presented formally its Planning Process Document to be followed at all levels of the university and it has been adopted by UC. The UC PEC is aware that there are some issues that have not been presented to the committee where their involvement would be beneficial. Although UC PEC Co-Chair Vice President Curtis and Chair Sterns have worked well together, the members believe that University Administration has made some decisions that should have gone through the formal planning process. This is an area of opportunity and growth that UC PEC continues to pursue.

See Physical Environment Committee in-depth report to the UC.

In-Depth Report, Student Engagement and Success Committee

The University Council Student Engagement and Success Committee (UC SESC) is responsible for studying, monitoring and making recommendations regarding the university’s student engagement and success strategies and practices in collaboration with staff, contract professionals and faculty in appropriate departments. These recommendations shall be forwarded to the University Council for consideration.
Goals:

1. Increase the Yield Rate from applicants to admitted students and from admitted students to confirmed students.
   
   Metrics:
   • Maintain our recent yield rate which coupled with our much larger and broader applicant pool will result in an increase in new freshmen in 2014-2015. The first metric measurement will take place based on the May 1, 2014 Confirmation Deadline. Realize increased percentage of Direct and College Ready Admits and decreased percentage of Emergent and Preparatory Admits among the entire Confirmation pool.

2. Work with New Student Orientation (NSO) Team to incorporate more information about Greek Life and Student Involvement in NSO.
   
   Metrics:
   • Inventory of activities for 2014 compared to 2013.

3. Submit a proposal to UC for Campus Culture of “The Blue & Gold Promise”: a new service model proposal to shift campus culture to respond to student problems/questions with an attitude of: “No matter the problem or question, I will help you resolve” and includes UA Pride Days every Friday whereby UA attire is encouraged.
   
   Metrics:
   • Written proposal submitted to UC for approval that includes e-survey instrument to be administered campus-wide; purpose will be to determine baseline and specific areas which need to be improved.

See Student Engagement and Success Committee in-depth report to the UC.

In-Depth Report, Talent Development and Human Resources Committee

The University Council Talent Development and Human Resources Committee (UC TD&HRC) is responsible for studying, monitoring and making recommendations on the development of all university policies and practices relating to inclusive excellence and to the wellbeing of employees of the university, subject to existing contractual agreements. Issues of wellbeing would include but are not limited to fringe benefits, insurance, employee performance, recreation and wellness and other aspects of working conditions in collaboration with staff, contract professionals and faculty in appropriate departments. These recommendations shall be forwarded to UC for consideration.

Goals:

1. Workforce Planning: Conduct a comprehensive review of the University’s workforce to assist in planning for future needs. Evaluate how planned changes in state retirement system might affect current employees’ decisions to retire/continue working. Evaluate options for program on individual retirement planning. In addition, evaluate possible alternatives that would allow employees to gradually reduce their workload prior to retirement.

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Metrics:
- Complete evaluation and provide recommendations in 2014-2015 academic year.


Metrics:
- Complete evaluation and recommendation by the end of the 2013-2014 academic year.

3. Comprehensive Campus Health Program: Evaluate possible options/programs we can provide for our employees to encourage and promote a healthy lifestyle. A wide range of options will be considered to determine what the University can do to encourage employees to engage in positive activities. Conduct a survey of UA employees to identify current issues with UA program offerings and identify areas of interest for future consideration. In addition, review current best practices to see what other employers are doing to reduce premiums and health care costs for possible application at UA.

Metrics:
- Complete evaluation and recommendation by the end of the 2014-2015 academic year.

See Talent Development and Human Resources Committee in-depth report to the UC.

Ongoing Discussions for Continuous Improvement

Opportunity: Administrative Support

Formal administrative support to UC has been identified as a need. A number of members have expressed concern that UC does not have dedicated administrative support. Several motions related to support have been entertained and to date, none have passed. There is an incredibly talented administrative support staff member working with UC who is employed full-time with many other duties. At this point, the UC Steering Committee, in collaboration with the Provost’s Office will continue conversations and develop acceptable solutions.

Opportunity: Strategic Planning Process

Involvement by UC in the current strategic planning process at The University of Akron is a high priority. The UC Steering Committee plans to work with the Provost and the President to discuss how UC and the appropriate standing committees can collaborate and contribute significantly to the new strategic planning process.

Opportunity: Presidential Involvement

UC representatives feel that the President should include updates from UC as a regular part of the Board of Trustees meeting schedule. It would also be helpful to have more of a parallel with
the Faculty Senate by holding regular meetings between the UC Steering Committee and the President and Provost. It is also possible that the President could have a formal role at each UC meeting.

**A-2.4. Steps Moving Forward**

The UA administration, under the leadership of President Scarborough, plans to continue its formal involvement in shared governance processes as discussed above (i.e., collective bargaining, Faculty Senate and University Council) as well as through more informal means. Examples of the latter include:

- President’s Book Club – UA faculty thought leaders have open discussions with the President.
- Faculty Researcher Luncheon – a time for the President to meet the faculty with significant external research funding.
- Budget Primer – Faculty Senate Chair, Akron-AAUP President, and a department Chair from the UC Budget and Finance Committee meet regularly with the President, CFO and Budget Director to fully understand the UA budget.
- Staff Meeting – biweekly meetings run by the President with Deans, VPs and leaders from Faculty Senate, UC, GSG and USG present to discuss topics of interest to the Board of Trustees.
- Academic Leadership Team – monthly meetings of Deans, VPs, Assistant and Associate Deans, Department Chairs and School Directors with the President and Provost for information sharing.
- College Strategic Planning Meetings – the President and Provost are meeting with the leadership of each college three times in Fall 2014 to iteratively arrive at a forward-looking direction for each unit, which is then being shared with the entire college for discussion and revision. Subsequent meetings will be held until consensus has been reached to enable proper allocation of budget resources for the new college strategic plans in the next fiscal year (by April 2015). The President has target dates in February 2015 at which the campus will consider revising Vision 2020 to align it with the new college-level plans.