This executive summary provides a brief description of The University of Akron’s 2003 Self-Study Report. We see this Self-Study Report and the attainment of a 10-year re-accreditation as necessary steps in an ongoing process of continuous improvement and institutional renewal. We believe the contents of the Self-Study will reveal a dynamic, forward-looking institution that is mindful of its traditions. The University has emerged stronger, wiser and more sharply focused from its recent transition in leadership, an institution firmly committed to providing an environment where our many stakeholders can dream, dare and do the things that are needed to change the world.

During the past five years, The University of Akron has been faced with many challenges and changes. Based on our current and predicted fiscal environment, the future appears no less challenging. Our institution has worked to address the concerns identified by earlier Commission on Higher Education teams of the NCA, and we feel that we have made great strides toward solving those concerns. The vision of Charting the Course, operationalized and implemented through the Balanced Scorecard management tool, will guide us as we continue to respond to past concerns and future challenges.

In response to the concerns and suggestions of the 1997 comprehensive site-visit team of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The University of Akron has made the following changes.

1. **Address the urgent need for a stable and credible central administration to effectively lead the university:** Dr. Luis M. Proenza assumed office as the 15th President of The University of Akron on January 1, 1999. President Proenza launched a national search for a Senior Vice President and Provost in August 1999, which resulted in the appointment of Dr. Terry L. Hickey in January 2000; Dr. Hickey assumed his duties May 1, 2000. Four new vice presidents have since been named and have assumed their duties.

2. **Address the need to correct the absence of an effective institutional budget-development process and criteria for the allocation and reallocation of university resources:** The budget review process is now extensive and includes significant faculty involvement. The Faculty Senate has approved a Return on Investment (ROI) model of budget allocation. College deans now have complete authority to use their entire budget allocations in ways they deem most beneficial to their college and the University. Far more than in the past, decision making is based on accurate and widely shared data.

3. **Address the need for effective strategic planning to guide the development of academic programs, the management of facilities and other resources:** The April 2000 Focus Visit report found that “the university has designed a strategic planning process, Charting the Course, that is inclusive and has encouraged the campus community to think broadly about the university’s future.”

4. **Address the need to develop a co-operative working relationship between Human Resources and Affirmative Action functions so they can be more effective in establishing, communicating and implementing sound employment practices:** While HR and EEO functions were previously distinct, efforts were made to provide more cooperative coordination between the two offices. By 2000, both offices were involved in collaborations relating to the functions of the employment process and provided more streamlined services to both departments and employees for economies in tracking, reporting and responding to employee concerns.

5. **Address the processes for the creation, communication, implementation and adherence to University policies and procedures:** The Senior Vice President and Provost initiated and conducted
an internal search for the new position of Associate Provost for Academic Policies, Procedures and Reviews. Nancy L. Stokes was named and chairs the Faculty Senate Academic Policies and Calendar Committee that is charged with recommending and interpreting academic policy on university-wide matters such as admission, retention, graduation, and dismissal requirements, as well as recommending changes for the improvement of the academic program of the university. Rules and policies relevant to faculty are reviewed by the committee and recommendations are presented to Faculty Senate for approval. If approved, the recommended changes are forwarded to the President and to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

Over the past two years, many University rules, regulations, and policies have been reviewed and revised, including: Officers of the Academic Administration, Organization of Instruction, University Research, Copyright and Patent Policy, Sick Leave and Vacation Policies, Faculty General Personnel Policies, Guidelines for Initial Appointment, Reappointment, Tenure and Promotion, Part-Time Faculty, Joint Appointments and Joint Titles, and College Lecturer (term faculty appointments).

Of particular note, shortly after his arrival at The University of Akron, the new Senior Vice President and Provost called for a complete review and revision of all retention, tenure and promotion (RTP) policies, procedures and criteria throughout the University. After nine months. The Faculty Senate recommended and the Board of Trustees approved a single university-wide policy with consistent procedures and enhanced criteria. The new document also recognizes the value of the scholarship of teaching and learning, in line with the University’s stated goal of becoming a Carnegie Teaching Academy.

6. While the university has made appropriate plans to create a data management system and has hired leadership for that area, the design of the system is still in its infancy. Further, it is not clear that there is a shared understanding of the data elements that are critical to the system: In 2001, the University successfully implemented the PeopleSoft administrative system suite. The implementation involved a complex conversion of historical data and included additional strategic data maintained in paper files, with full implementation scheduled for 2003. Each semester, dozens of training sessions are offered on administrative systems, collaboration tools, e-Learning, and data querying tools for acquiring student, program financial and personnel information. Proposed or required changes to information systems procedures, data or reporting are reviewed by joint user-IT work groups prior to programming; changes are communicated through direct email alerts to appropriate user communities and via division’s new online newsletter to ensure improved communication to all stakeholders.

The planning process for the University clearly requires data-guided decision-making. One of the institutional strategic themes is “communication” which is defined by the providing of open, timely and accurate information. With the implementation of PeopleSoft, the University moved from a “data-rich, information poor” institution to one that can and does provide management information for decision-making. Further, the Office of Institutional Planning, Analysis, Reporting and Data Administration provides accurate and timely information to support institutional decision-making by analyzing, interpreting, and disseminating institutional data.

7. The 1997 comprehensive site-visit team was concerned that there was insufficient feedback to various constituencies regarding reasons why a unit’s budget priorities were not funded. It was recommended that the University implement a feedback mechanism that is timely and meaningful to the departments: The Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) met regularly over the past two years and was instrumental in the design and implementation of the Return on Investment (ROI) budgeting model. To date, the ROI has been implemented in the academic units. The PBC has requested that all non-academic units prepare means of estimating their own return on investment measures. One subcommittee of PBC is charged with evaluating the results and implications of budget reallocations based on the ROI model and to make recommendations to the larger committee for action. A second subcommittee deals with identification of quality measures that will be used as an additional means of further apportioning the University budget. If the PBC determines that the model needs to be altered, it is empowered to make recommendations leading to such changes. Its recommendations are made to the Faculty Senate that, in turn, recommends to
the President. Finally, a report from the PBC is delivered at each meeting of the Faculty Senate for clarification, debate and action, and is published in the proceedings of the Senate.

8. **The 1997 comprehensive site-visit team suggested that a process be put in place to more fully capture information about budget reallocations that take place at all levels of the university.** Budget allocations made through the new ROI budget allocation process are a “product” of the PBC process and are publicized accordingly. The PBC meets for two hours each week. Minutes of each meeting are kept and approved at the following meeting. In addition, the Senior Vice President and Provost has made a practice of providing regular campus-wide electronic communications documenting significant budgetary allocations. Most recently those communications have described in detail the allocation of compression salary adjustments totaling $1.2 million.

9. **The team suggested that the president closely monitor progress on this charge [to develop a process for ongoing strategic thinking] to assure that a continuing process is developed and implemented.** Under the leadership of President Proenza, the strategic thinking process begun in 1999 has continued through the vision of *Charting the Course* and the implementation of the Balanced Scorecard methodology to operationalize *Charting the Course*. As the institutional strategy map is cascaded through the administrative units to the colleges and the departments, all members of the campus community are intimately involved in the process, and are consequently actively participating.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON STRENGTHS

**CRITERION ONE: MISSION**

- Comprehensive programs of instruction, a vigorous agenda of research and a rich tradition of service to the community
- Units with clearly defined missions and articulated goals that focus on student success and educational excellence
- *Charting the Course* and the Balanced Scorecard Initiative helping align strategies, goals and priorities across the University
- The Institute for Teaching and Learning stimulating renewed excitement about teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning
- The recent review and enhancement of University rules and regulations, including those procedures and criteria that guide the hiring, retention, promotion, and granting of indefinite tenure for faculty, providing processes that are both fair and well understood
- An exemplary relationship with the surrounding community and region, including playing an increasingly important role in the economic vitality of the region
- A strong intellectual property portfolio
- An expanded academic calendar to include a 15-week summer session
- A thriving General Education program, lauded by the 1997 NCA Visiting Team

**CRITERION TWO: RESOURCES:**

**Part I: Human Resources**

- Organization of governing structure in keeping with shared leadership
- Commitment to increasing faculty salaries to the 75th percentile of state public institutions
- Creation of one integrated classification and compensation program, through the Mercer Study, for the staff for contract professionals, classified and unclassified non-bargaining unit staff members
Part II: Physical Resources
- The New Landscape for Learning project that includes a new student center building, parking decks, Arts and Sciences building, and others
- A continuing record of a safe campus environment
- New capital improvements to existing buildings as a solution to deferred maintenance

Part III: Financial Resources
- Return On Investment (ROI) allocation of budgets rewarding productive units
- Reversal of enrollment decline – 93 percent of the University revenue is directly tied to student enrollment
- Creative financial diversification within administrative units, colleges and departments

Part IV: Support Services
- New student center
- Strong network of support services in place
- University Libraries membership in OhioLINK

CRITERION THREE: ACCOMPLISHING THE MISSION
- Establishment of the Institute for Teaching and Learning
- Assessments in place in individual academic units to meet national discipline accreditation guidelines

CRITERION FOUR: PLANNING
- A well-developed planning process to aid the University in carrying out its mission
- Detailed plans in place for many of the individual academic units and their integration into the Balanced Scorecard methodology
- A commitment to bringing issues and problems to the fore, whether by the administration or by the various constituency groups, that forges compromise and resolution
- A well formulated and functioning Balanced Scorecard Initiative
- Shared leadership
- Broad capacity and input into decision making
- Established objectives, measures and targets for each of the institutional and administrative unit strategic themes
- Enrollment manager in place
- Implementation of enterprise resource planning system and data warehouse

CRITERION FIVE: INTEGRITY
- Electronic access for everyone to all of the University’s rules and regulations
- A record of never having been fined or had federal funds withheld for non-compliance
- Achievement of remarkable consistency with the University’s corporate image
- University-wide committees continually addressing and refining policies and procedures
- Charging of existing university committees or the establishment of task forces to address issues such as equity, conflict of interest, and spousal hires

CONCLUSION: For 132 years, The University of Akron has educated teachers, lawyers, artists, musicians, nurses, business executives, politicians, technicians and countless other professionals. Today innovation, creativity and research take many forms at the University, which now has 79 buildings, more than 788 full-time faculty members, and students from 41 states and 83 foreign countries, with approximately 128,000 of its alumni living and working around the world. To ensure the most promising learning environment for future students, faculty and staff, the University is confident that in our 2003 Self-Study Report we demonstrate that we meet all of the criteria for accreditation set forth by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.