THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON
PLAN FOR A SELF-STUDY

March 23, 2001

I. Introduction

The University of Akron has been affiliated with the North Central Association since 1914. A large, mature, and comprehensive institution of 23,000 students, the University offers more than 200 programs ranging from certificates, associate, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees to 17 doctoral degrees. In 1987-1988, North Central extended the University's accreditation through 1996-1997 with a strong endorsement of its programs and future prospects that was typical of the institution's long and successful history with NCA.

The University's recent past was marked by turmoil that attracted the attention of NCA. Beginning in 1996, there have been four visits by North Central consultant-evaluators to campus: a focused visit on governance in late February 1996; a second focused visit on governance in late April 1996; a comprehensive visit in late October 1997; and a focused visit on planning and budgeting in April 2000. The first focused visit on governance raised the possibility of a recommendation of probation. Two months later, a return focused visit declared the conditions that the earlier team had observed were now sufficiently altered so that no further visits on the subject would be needed. The 1997 comprehensive visit extended the University's affiliation status only for five years, to 2002-2003, and it mandated a focused visit on the "planning process and budget reallocation" for 2000. The focused visit of 2000 charted the university's progress in the planning and budgeting process.

One cause for the flurry of visits was the perceived instability of senior leadership. During the 1990s, the University was served by five presidents and six provosts. In January 1999, the Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Luis M. Proenza as the Fifteenth President of the University. President Proenza has a distinguished career of service to three land-grant institutions (University of Georgia; University of Alaska; and Purdue University); he most recently served as Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School for the West Lafayette-based, 90,000-student, five-campus Purdue University system. President Proenza said that he was attracted to The University of Akron in part by the 1997 Self-Study Report, and he enthusiastically accepted as his own the two institution-defining challenges which the University had set for itself after the 1997 comprehensive visit: achieving at least $15.5 million annually in federally-funded research by 2005, and being admitted as a Carnegie Teaching Academy.

As of January 1, 2001, President Proenza had assembled his senior leadership team. Anchored by Senior Vice President and Provost Terry L. Hickey, it includes the Vice President and General Counsel and Secretary to the Board of Trustees; the Vice President for Business and Finance; the Vice President for Public Affairs and Development; the Vice President for Capital Planning and Facilities Management; the
Vice President for Information and Instructional Technologies, Libraries, and Institutional Planning; the Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School; and the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Even before attracting the six new members of this senior leadership team, President Proenza launched an institution-wide Strategic Thinking Process; its current results are called "Charting the Course," and its current articulation is described later in this document and a summary attached as an appendix to this plan. Designed to be continuously updated, this strategic thinking process is now moving into the action planning stage, from strategic to tactical. The 2000 NCA focused visit team predicted success from this approach, if key data elements can be captured and used, as the Vice President for Information and Instructional Technologies, Libraries, and Institutional Planning has been charged.

II. Self-Study Plan

The Self-Study Steering Committee will establish through clear and unequivocal evidence that The University of Akron merits being returned to a 10-year comprehensive visit cycle, given the restoration of stability in leadership and a shared plan of action.

Chaired by the Associate Provost for Policies, Procedures, and Reviews from the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost and advised by the Dean of the College of Fine and Applied Arts (who served as NCA Self-Study Coordinator from 1996 until 2000) as liaison, the Self-Study Steering Committee will organize its work to coordinate with the strategic thinking process already in place.

The Self-Study will include a comprehensive description and analysis of the University's major characteristics and operations including its strategic intent, core and enabling competencies, priorities, and strategies; academic programs and support services; human, physical, informational, and financial resources; and its opportunities and future plans. In order to accomplish that comprehensive self-evaluation, subcommittees, consisting of steering committee members as well as representatives from other campus and community constituencies, will be formed to assess the University's fitness in regard to the NCA's five evaluative criteria and General Institutional Requirements (GIRs). Topics for the subcommittees to consider will include the strategic plan, mission, students, faculty and staff, colleges, departments, and programs, and functional units such as departments within student affairs, academic support, capital planning and facilities management, information technology and libraries, research and graduate studies, business and finance, athletics, and public affairs and development, and ongoing processes such as assessment of student learning outcomes, academic program review, strategic thinking, and resource analysis and budgeting.

Progress reports to be developed and submitted in accord with the timetable will be presented to the faculty, staff, students, and to the Faculty Senate, Council of Deans,
Vice Presidents, and the University Board of Trustees for their review and endorsement. Through the self-study process, extensive efforts will be made to solicit reactions from all members of the University community through an NCA web site, written updates, open forums, focus groups, and rough drafts of the Self-Study Report placed in college and support unit offices.

III. Timetable

Using a participatory process, preparation of the self-study report will require involvement and input throughout the institution. A summary of the proposed process and a timetable follows.

February 2001
- Finalize composition of the Self-Study Steering Committee
- Submit Self-Study Plan to NCA
- Determine the subcommittee structure
- Create the accreditation web site

March 2001
- Organizational Meetings of the Subcommittees

April 2001
- Draft the Subcommittee plans - goals, strategies/methodologies, and timetables to collect data and develop reports
- Campus Kick-off
  - Launch the web site
  - Announce the Steering Committee
  - Form the subcommittees
  - Share the time line with the campus

May 2001
- Submit subcommittee plans to the Steering Committee

September-December 2001
- Subcommittees gather data and develop draft reports for submission to Steering Committee by end of fall semester.

October 2001
- Invite NCA Commission staff liaison to visit campus

January 2002
- Steering Committee or subcommittee analyzes the draft reports against NCA criteria and GIRs to determine gaps in information

February 2002
- Request further information to address gaps from appropriate groups and/or individuals

March 2002
- Additional data returned to “analysis” group
  - Steering Committee receives the report of the “analysis” group
April - May 2002 Prepare first draft of Self-Study

June-August 2002 Disseminate first draft for review/revision

September 2002 Incorporate comments from first draft review in second draft

October 2002 Disseminate second draft for review and comment
Prepare institutional data forms

November 2002 Prepare final self-study document
Plan editing and printing of Self-Study

December 2002 Final report completed for a last review
Final institutional data forms received

January 2, 2003 Final report sent to printer

February 15, 2003 Submit report with accompanying materials to NCA

March 2003 Prepare resource area for site visitors
Finalize visitation schedule

April 28-30, 2003 SITE VISIT

June 2003 University receives evaluation team report

May – August 2003 University responds to evaluation team report as necessary

Fall 2003 Celebrate receipt of 10-year continuing NCA accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission

IV. Self-Study Committee Roster

Mrs. Nancy L. Stokes, Chair
Associate Provost for Policies, Procedures, and Reviews
Professor of Bibliography
Chair, Faculty Senate Academic Policies and Calendar Committee
Chair, Faculty Senate Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee
Chair, Faculty Senate Curriculum Review Committee
NCA Self-Study Coordinator

Dr. Mark Auburn
Professor of English; Professor of Theatre
Dean, College of Fine and Applied Arts
Liaison to NCA
Dr. Kim Calvo
Professor of Chemistry

Mr. Dan Chafin
Chair, Associated Student Government

Ms. Janet Dawson
Member, Staff Employee Advisory Committee
Member, Campus Well Being Committee

Ms. Carolyn Dessin
Associate Professor of Law

Dr. David Durst
Professor of Finance

Ms. Bonnie Filer-Tubaugh
Instructor, University College
Member, Faculty Senate
Member, Part-Time Faculty Issues Committee
Member, Athletic Committee

Dr. H. Don Fox
University Registrar

Dr. Thomas Gaylord
Vice President for Instructional and Institutional Technologies, Libraries and Institutional Planning (CIO)
Adjunct Professor Education; Adjunct Professor of Statistics

Mr. Michael Jalbert
Professor of Social Science
Interim Associate Dean, Community and Technical College

Dr. Devinder Malhotra
Professor of Economics
Associate Dean, Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences

Ms. Dolli Markovich
Assistant to the Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School
Member, Campus Facilities Planning Committee
Dr. Chand Midha
   Professor and Chair, Statistics
   Director, Center for Statistical Consulting
   Faculty Coordinator, Student Outcomes Assessment

Ms. Shanna Mills
   Senator, Associate Student Government

Dr. Charles Monroe
   Professor of Geography and Planning
   Associate Dean, Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences
   Member, General Education Advisory Committee
   Member, Student Assessment Task Force
   Member, Curriculum Review Committee

Mr. Michael Morsch
   Director of Developmental Programs

Dr. Elaine Nichols
   Associate Professor of Nursing
   Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, College of Nursing
   Member, Curriculum Review Committee

Mrs. Phyllis O'Connor
   Associate Professor of Bibliography
   Associate Dean of University Libraries
   Head, Circulation Department, University Libraries

Dr. Charlene Reed
   Director of Administrative Services, College of Education
   Member, Faculty Senate, 1999-present
   Member, Faculty Senate Reference Committee
   Vice Chair, Planning and Budgeting Committee

Mr. Greg Rogers
   Director of Institutional Planning

Dr. Marlesia Roney
   Vice President for Student Affairs
   Adjunct Professor of Education
   Member, Student Assessment Task Force
   Member, Planning and Budgeting Committee
   Member, Student Affairs Committee
   Chair, Academic Support Services Committee
   Chair, Commencement Committee
V. Charting The Course

Over its rich 131-year history, The University of Akron has transformed itself to meet the demands of changing times. The University moved successfully from its founding in 1870 as a private liberal arts college, to its transition in 1913 to the Municipal University of Akron, and to its becoming a state university in 1967 that today is recognized regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Today the University stands on the threshold not of another change in form but rather a fundamental shift in thinking and a sweeping re-commitment of institutional talents, energies, and resources toward attaining preeminence. As noted earlier and presented in summary form as an appendix to this plan, the blueprint for change is "Charting the Course," which provides a common framework of understanding and
"Charting the Course" is an ongoing and dynamic process of strategic thinking that begins with the University's core competencies and strategies and builds to where the institution envisions itself in the future.

The 1997 NCA Self-Study Report articulated six principal goals of the University, which are regarded as necessary competencies underlying all campus activities:

1. Attract and retain a higher quality and more diverse student body.
2. Identify and eliminate barriers to a campus culture of service and make every effort to improve the campus environment.
3. Increase student retention and progress toward completion of their academic programs.
4. Improve the quality of the undergraduate experience.
5. Cultivate scholarly and creative activities that are recognized regionally, nationally, and internationally, and
6. Acquire and efficiently utilize the human, informational, financial, and physical campus resources needed to fulfill the mission of The University of Akron.

The planning process further identifies six enabling or core competencies, which represent the special differences, the strengths that the institution is building upon as the basis for strategic intent. These core competencies are: people, documented excellence, student success, community engagement, and shared leadership.

Based upon these competencies, The University of Akron's vision has been framed in the following statement of strategic intent:

*The University of Akron intends to be recognized as the public research university for northern Ohio. It intends to achieve a prominence in northern Ohio comparable to that which Ohio State has long enjoyed in central Ohio and which the University of Cincinnati has begun to achieve in the southern part of the state.*

Dr. Proenza also introduced the concept of clusters to better communicate the institution's breadth and diversity as well as to achieve greater synergy from collegiate investments of time, resources, and personnel. The four clusters of excellence are: discovery and innovation, cultural enrichment, community well being, and economic development.

Two priorities and five fundamental strategies have been articulated to guide institutional decision making and deployment of resources. Above all, enabling student success will continue to be the hallmark of The University of Akron. Moreover, in today's knowledge economy students must be technologically competent, and toward that end the University must employ only the best management information systems. Thus, as a point of comparative advantage, The University of Akron will be a leader in information technology. Five primary strategies have been identified to further these
goals: campus enhancement, enrollment management, revenue enhancement and diversification, focused differentiation, and telling the story. Further information about "Charting the Course" may be accessed at http://www.uakron.edu/home/chart.

VI. Conclusion

While we are committed to regaining the full confidence of the NCA that we have enjoyed throughout most of our institutional history, we do not see the Self-Study Report nor the attainment of 10-year reaccreditation as ends. These are merely necessary steps in an ongoing process of continuous improvement and institutional renewal that involves all constituencies. We believe the contents of the Self-Study will reveal a dynamic, forward-looking institution that is mindful of its traditions and has emerged stronger and wiser and more sharply focused from a period of transition, firmly committed to a future as a place where students, faculty, staff, and the public can dream, dare, and do the things that it takes to change the world.