Chapter Five
Criterion Three: Accomplishing the Mission

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.
—Handbook of Accreditation, second edition; a publication of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

Criterion Three focuses on the coherence, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the institution’s educational offerings – primarily in terms of graduate and undergraduate curriculum, quality of instruction, and research and scholarly activity. The Higher Learning Commission states that:

Higher education requires students to master a rigorous body of knowledge, but also to conceptualize, analyze, and integrate. Additionally, higher education
- Requires students to use their intellects,
- Stimulates students to examine their values,
- Teaches students the importance of considering divergent values as expressed in research, and
- Challenges students to engage each other and their teachers in a free exchange of ideas and attitudes. (Handbook of Accreditation, 1997, p. 41.)

The Commission further expects that the institution demonstrate a shared commitment to these values in its stated purposes and “...that its educational programs provide strong evidence that the commitment is acted upon.” (Handbook of Accreditation, 1997, p. 41.) Criterion Three specifically highlights general education, graduate education, and learning resources as programs to be evaluated for such evidence. Criterion Three also emphasizes the effective use of assessment to evaluate, document, and improve teaching, learning, and student academic achievement.

The University of Akron’s mission and vision, strategic directions, general education curriculum, and curricular goals of undergraduate and graduate programs of study all reflect a widely shared commitment to the above-mentioned values and expectations. As noted in Chapter Three, the University of
Akron’s core commitment to its educational purposes is evident in the Mission Statement and, more specifically, in the related Goals and Stated Purposes (see pages 1-2). As the demographic characteristics of the student body may indicate (Chapter 4, page 39), the university has a long tradition of serving the needs of part-time and full-time, traditional and non-traditional age students. The diversity of our student body dictates the diversity of our offerings; we have day and evening class schedules, weekend classes/programs, certificate programs, associate degree programs, baccalaureate programs, and graduate programs. We offer more than 200 undergraduate majors and areas of study leading to associate and bachelor degrees, and more than 100 graduate degree programs, in 10 degree-granting colleges. (For details please consult the Graduate Bulletin http://www.uakron.edu/gradsch/pdf/Gradbulletin.pdf and the Undergraduate Bulletin. http://www.uakron.edu/studentaff/2002-2003.pdf). The University also provides alternative modes of instructional delivery including offerings of web-based and distance learning courses.

Over the past three years, the University has made much progress in aligning planning, budgeting, assessment, and instructional development efforts in focused, coordinated, and effective ways to improve academic quality and enhance student success. In the late 90’s, The University of Akron embarked on two major initiatives to enhance and improve the creation and dissemination of knowledge: In 1997, University Research Council recommended that The University of Akron strive to attain Carnegie Research II status, and in fall of 1998, the University began its participation in the Teaching Academy project of AAHE sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trust.

The underlying goals of the research initiative are to increase the external funding, enhance scholarly productivity, and increase the scope and range of our graduate programs – particularly interdisciplinary programs. Although the Carnegie Foundation has recently changed its classification system, the agenda inherent in the original research initiative is still being pursued vigorously. The University sets aside $1.5 million dollars annually to pursue the research initiative, and emphasized the research mission by creating the new position of Vice President of Research and Dean of the Graduate School. In fiscal year 2001, as compared to fiscal year 1999, Research expenditures increased by 40 percent. In the same time period, the dollar value of research awards from external sources increased by approximately 34 percent.
The twin goals of Carnegie Teaching Academy project are to improve the quality of student learning, and elevate the status of teaching. The effort was led by the Provost’s office under the stewardship of a university-wide steering committee representing all the academic units of the campus. The University commits an annual allocation of more than $300,000 for the Teaching Academy initiative. During the academic year 1999-2000, attendance at Campus Conversations produced 300 faculty volunteers, who became the Teaching Ambassadors for the project. Two major themes emerged from these conversations: (1) the revision of the University and departmental RTP guidelines to reward excellence in teaching as well as scholarship in the areas of teaching and learning, and (2) the establishment of an Institute of Teaching and Learning, to promote professional development with regard to teaching and learning, provide resources for experimentation in teaching paradigms, and coordinate learning assessment efforts on campus. The Carnegie Steering Committee endorsed and forwarded these recommendations to the Provost. The committee also recommended the creation of a new position of Associate Provost of Teaching, Learning and Faculty Development, one of whose responsibilities would be to head the proposed Institute of Teaching and Learning. The committee recommendations were accepted by the Provost, and approved by the President and the Board of Trustees.

In recent years the administration, in consultation with the faculty, has proposed important changes in the strategic directions and organizational structure to increase accountability and to continuously monitor programs to provide feedback to the departments and colleges enabling them to maximize their contributions to the overall mission of the institution. Chapter Six discusses Charting the Course and the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) Initiative in detail. Here, it will be sufficient to note that, through the BSC process, Student Success was the first among the six strategic themes that emerged, followed by Differentiation, Research, Information Technology, Communications, and Standards. These strategic themes are being implemented through five University-wide strategic initiatives already in progress: (1) design and implementation of enrollment management and student retention strategies; (2) commitment to assessment of educational effectiveness; (3) diversification of revenues; (4) creation of a new technology infrastructure; and (5) development of the New Landscape for Learning and Landscape for Living. While all of these BSC elements are interrelated, the overarching Student Success theme and Initiative Two – assessment of educational effectiveness – are most relevant to Criterion Three and thus, to this chapter.
As a campus we are proud of the accomplishments to date with regard to the Teaching Academy and Research initiatives. We are also fully cognizant that much work needs yet to be done. The University and its faculty are poised and determined to move from a culture of teaching to a culture of learning and to become the public research university in Northern Ohio. Many aspects of a conceptual, structural, and policy foundation for maintaining and improving student success and scholarship are already in place or in development.

At the undergraduate level, the University offers 51 Associate programs, 183 Baccalaureate programs; at the graduate level, 110 masters programs, 17 Doctoral programs and one professional program in Law. In addition the University offers 115 Certificate programs. The listing of the programs, the curricular requirements, and other relevant details can be found in Graduate and Undergraduate Bulletins and Section 2 of the Fact Book.

The Associate degree programs are housed in the Community and Technical College (C&T) and in Wayne College. Wayne College has its own accreditation process. C&T programs enable a diverse student body to achieve their educational and/or career goals throughout their lives. Thirteen percent of the University’s undergraduate enrollment is in C&T. Progress is being made, with a target of fall 2003, for all C&T programs to incorporate a core curriculum of general education and require each associate degree program to include a minimum of 18 load hours from the university’s general education curriculum. By doing so, C&T students will find the transition into four-year baccalaureate programs much more manageable in terms of preparation and time to graduation.

Seven degree-granting colleges offer Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs. The College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering offers only graduate programs. Each of the seven degree granting colleges has graduate programs. The number of these programs has remained fairly constant over the last three years. Some stylized facts, which pertain to Fall 2001, (Source: Section 2 of the Fact Book) are worth noting. The University enrolled 3,481 graduate students, 15.2 percent of the total student body, in all the graduate programs (data from The University of Akron Fact Book 2001 which can be found online at http://www.uakron.edu/vpcio/iplan/factbook/) This percentage has also held steady over the past three years.
The average class size for lower division lecture sections was 23, for upper division lecture sections, 19, and 12 for the graduate lecture sections. The average ACT composite score was 20 and, on the average, students came from the upper 53 percent of their graduating class with an average high-school GPA of 2.89. The average course GPA was 2.8 and 3.48 at the undergraduate and graduate level respectively. The School of Law had an average course GPA of 2.76.

The University aims to utilize its outstanding student-focused faculty, and offer creative and innovative programs and services, coupled with state-of-the-art instructional technologies, and thus position itself to anticipate and respond to community and global workforce needs well into the 21st century.

The Honors Program at the University was founded 26 years ago. In recent years the program has expanded rapidly. In Fall 2002 it had 650 students. The program supports highly motivated students who are also high academic achievers by providing both an academically challenging and rigorous program and by making available scholarship awards (approximately 600), special student support services, an Honors residence Hall and state of the art computer, library and study facilities. Each honors student is required to submit a capstone project/paper; these are available for review at the Honors Program office. Examples of Honors course syllabi are located in the resource room.

Many of our undergraduate students participate in internship or cooperative education programs to gain work experience related to their curricular studies. The largest single program of this kind is the co-op program administered by the College of Engineering. Established in 1914, this structured program allows students to alternate periods of academic study with periods of paid employment in industry, business, or government. The employment constitutes a regular, continuing, and essential element in the educational process. A minimum of three co-op periods totaling approximately 12 months of employment, completed to a minimum standard of performance, are required for a degree with a co-op certificate. The program requires that the student’s employment be related to his or her field of study, and that the work increase in difficulty and responsibility as the student progresses through the curriculum. Although the co-op program is optional, about 87 percent of engineering undergraduate students participate in it. The following chart outlines the available programs and an estimated number of students who participated in academic year 2001-2002.

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**Honors Program**

**Cooperative Education, Internships, and Experiential Learning**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>Geography and Planning: Internships</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sociology: Internships</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Sport Science and Wellness</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Student Teaching</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine and Applied Arts</td>
<td>Arts Administration</td>
<td>1,200</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Art/Graphic Design</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Child Development</td>
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<td>Child Life Program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Communication: Internships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dietetics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family and Consumer Sciences: Internships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family Development</td>
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<td>Fashion Merchandising</td>
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<td>Food Sciences</td>
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<td>Music Education</td>
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<td>Music Performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social Work: Field Experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Speech/Language Pathology and Audiology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Theatre</td>
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<tr>
<td>College of Nursing</td>
<td>Clinical Experience</td>
<td>350</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community and Technical College</td>
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<td>225</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allied Health</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criminal Justice Technology: Internships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Emergency Management: Internships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hospitality Management: Internships</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medical Assisting Technology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Office Administration: Internships</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bliss Institute for Applied Politics</td>
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<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Career Management</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
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Experiential Learning
There are internship programs and other experiential learning opportunities integrated into the curricula of various other departments and colleges as well. In all of these programs, the students receive practical experience that is not only personally edifying, but also helpful for employability. For example, by conservative estimates, 90 percent of all engineering co-op students since 1988 have been placed in permanent engineering jobs within three months of their graduation.

The **Career Advantage Network** is a university-wide career preparation program under the Career Management Office at The University of Akron. The Career Advantage Network provides a guaranteed, major-related experiential learning opportunity for every qualified undergraduate student regardless of academic major. Experiential learning opportunities include internships, parallel/alternating co-ops, student teaching, clinical/field-based experiences, practicum experiences, and service learning on an undergraduate level. The Career Advantage Program affords students experiences that will better prepare them for entry into the work force and give them the necessary edge they need to successfully compete in today’s competitive job market.

International experience and global awareness are important qualifications for University of Akron students entering today’s workforce. In addition to enhancing the student’s academic background, studying abroad is an excellent way to develop academic and professional skills that will afford both graduate and undergraduate students a competitive edge in today’s job market. Among other abilities, the study abroad student develops critical thinking, decision-making, and language skills. Further, the experience enables students to better understand inter-cultural, political, and economic issues.

There are a variety of programs available for students who wish to work, study or travel abroad. The following experiences abroad are available to all graduate and undergraduate students at The University of Akron:
- Study abroad programs for a semester or year
- Studying and working abroad
- Joining a study tour delegation
- Organized tours with academic credit
- Internships
- Teaching assignments
- Travel to an event (conference, festival or sporting)

The University of Akron sponsors study, work, and travel abroad programs to sites around the world. A number of these programs
are for a semester or an academic year. These programs offer direct UA credit, and UA financial aid may be used to help cover the costs. Other opportunities are short-term programs that may or may not have a “for credit” component.

The faculty of The University of Akron is responsible for the development, management and assessment of the curriculum at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Each college and all academic departments have their own undergraduate curriculum committees, composed mainly of full-time, tenure-track faculty. In addition, at the University level, curricula are reviewed by the Curriculum Review Committee (CRC), and when appropriate the General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC), and the Graduate Council. More detailed information about these committees is found in Chapter Four.

Both GEAC and the CRC are university-wide, representative bodies with members from all colleges and relevant related units. As such, these committees can invite faculty to explain and discuss their curriculum proposals and answer questions raised through the online review process and by committee members. As needed, GEAC offers advice on curriculum proposal design and revision, and CRC mediates curricular challenges and disputes between units and individuals.

In 1994, after several years of faculty-led planning and development, The University of Akron’s General Education Program was instituted. The NCA 1997 Visiting Team lauded the University for its GE program. It is a restricted “cafeteria” credit-distribution program, with students required to complete 42 credits distributed across eight categories. Just over 100 undergraduate courses are currently certified to meet the GE requirement in each of the categories and subcategories. The eight general education categories and required credits in each are: English Composition (7 credits), Mathematics (3), Natural Sciences (8), Oral Communication (3), Social Sciences (6), Humanities (10), Area Studies & Cultural Diversity (4), and Physical Education/Wellness (1). In the Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities categories, there are distribution requirements among subsets of courses. (For more information, see http://www.uakron.edu/colleges/univcoll/gened.php) Students in the Honors Program have a different set of GE requirements, called the Honors Distribution Requirement. Honors students are required to distribute their GE credits among four broader categories, thus allowing them a bit more flexibility in the selection of courses.
At the undergraduate level, control over content, quality, and appropriateness of curriculum is maintained through an iterative, six-step process. At any point in this comprehensive process, curricular proposals can be – and often are – discussed, critiqued, returned to the previous committee for revision, or rejected. Rejections can, of course, be appealed.

**Step One:** Proposals for new courses and revisions in existing courses are reviewed first by the relevant departmental (or program) committees. **Step Two:** Proposals passed by the department committees proceed to the relevant college-level committees. **Step Three:** Curriculum proposals which pass both departmental and college committees are then open for comment and review by the college faculty. **Step Four:** Proposals approved by the relevant college faculty are reviewed by the Library, Institutional Research, Graduate School, General Education Advisory Committee, and Distance Learning Steering Committee for appropriateness, completeness, and errors in fact, as well as to determine whether the University has the resources needed to support the courses as proposed. **Step Five:** Proposals are posted for open, online review and comment by all faculty at [http://www3.uakron.edu/provost/proposal02/](http://www3.uakron.edu/provost/proposal02/). Any comments and objections are addressed with the Curriculum Review Committee (CRC). **Step Six:** The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate reviews each proposal and recommends approval to the Senior Vice President and Provost who gives the final approval for changes in the curriculum. New certificates, minors, majors and program options are also approved by the Board of Trustees and new programs are approved by the Ohio Board of Regents.

Courses proposed for inclusion in the General Education Program, as well as changes in GE courses, are subject to the review process described above. These proposals typically receive very close scrutiny at all levels, and particularly from the General Education Advisory Committee. As a result, the total number of GE courses has remained relatively stable since 1994.

Graduate curriculum proposals follow a process similar to that outlined above for undergraduate curriculum proposals. The Graduate Council, mainly through its Curriculum Committee, exercises oversight to ensure that proposed graduate courses and programs have substantial graduate content and are not redundant with existing courses or programs. The Graduate School, through committees established by the Graduate Council, is responsible for the initial approval of new graduate courses and the evaluation of existing graduate courses. The Bylaws of the Graduate Faculty contain the rules governing this oversight activity. (See the following website for more information: [Undergraduate Curriculum Review](http://www3.uakron.edu/provost/proposal02/) and [Graduate Curriculum Review](http://www3.uakron.edu/provost/proposal02/).)
In general, the graduate faculty in each department or school has the responsibility to establish curricula within their disciplines, but a university-wide faculty committee has the responsibility to evaluate curriculum proposals to ensure the courses they describe are rigorous, current, and clearly distinguished from undergraduate courses.

All graduate level course numbers must adhere to the Ohio Board of Regents guidelines established to differentiate courses for undergraduate, Master's level graduate, and Doctoral level graduate courses. (This differentiation is required in order to document student credit hours for state subvention.) Each different course has a different course number and must have separate course requirements. If a single course is taught for advanced undergraduates and beginning graduate students, there must be separate course numbers with different requirements. In evaluating new course proposals, the curriculum review committee pays attention to the sources used for instruction; all new proposals must include a syllabus, a list of texts, and a bibliography including journal articles to be used. This ensures that the course content is reviewed for rigor, recentness and relevance. Many disciplines must structure their graduate curriculum to conform to professional guidelines or to satisfy accreditation criteria established by professional associations or organizations. (See Appendix B and page 5 of the 2002-2003 Graduate Bulletin for a list: http://www.uakron.edu/gradsch/pdf/Gradbulletin.pdf.)

The University of Akron has launched four major academic development and improvement initiatives in the past three years, all of them integrally related to the Mission and Balanced Scorecard process. The four initiatives are:

- The Coordinated Assessment Project
- The Institute for Teaching and Learning
- The First-Year Experience Task Force
- The Center for Collaboration and Inquiry and related PK-16 efforts

Ongoing assessment is key to all of the University’s academic improvement efforts. In relation to the Higher Learning Commission’s “Levels of Implementation” in the assessment of student academic achievement (Handbook of Accreditation, Second Edition, Addendum to Chapter A), The University of Akron’s efforts can be characterized, overall, as moving toward or already at Level Two of the three levels. In 1996, the University formed the Student Assessment Task Force (SATF), a group of faculty that provides advice, guidance and oversight regarding
academic assessment efforts at the university level. In that same year, the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost allocated an annual budget of $55,000 for institutional academic assessment efforts, a figure that has remained constant despite several rounds of institution-wide budget cuts. The SATF, chaired from 1996-2001 by Dr. Chand Midha, Professor of Statistics, made recommendations to the Provost regarding the allocation of funds from the assessment budget. SATF’s recommendations were approved in virtually every case. The assessment budget funded institution-wide standardized testing, including the “Academic Profile,” and the homegrown writing portfolio project, as well as assessment projects focused on individual courses and departmental curriculum.

A first round of departmental assessment plans were developed in 1998. In 2000-2001, all academic departments were asked, at the suggestion of the Student Assessment Task Force (SATF), to submit updated departmental assessment reports to the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost. Eventually, all did comply with this request. Unfortunately, the timing of this request did not sequence well with the newly launched Balanced Scorecard Initiative, and there was no timely follow up to the submission of assessment reports. Because the BSC process requires the sequenced development of University, college, and then department-level “strategy maps” – with objectives and measures at each level clearly linked to those above – the SATF subsequently decided to delay response to the reports until the department-level strategy maps are completed and until the University has developed the institutionalized, systematic Program Review required and outlined in the Academic area objectives, measures and targets of its strategy map.

The syllabi of all General Education courses were reviewed in 1996-1997, by GEAC, to assess compliance with the officially approved GE objectives. Since that time, individual GE course syllabi have typically been reviewed when questions are raised and when revisions or new courses are proposed.

Student “inputs” to the General Education Program are assessed as part of the diagnostic evaluation process that takes place during New Student Orientation. Traditional-age students who are required to present ACT or SAT scores for admission may be required to take the COMPASS placement test in writing, mathematics, and/or reading depending on their standardized test scores. Adult learners are admitted to the University without ACT or SAT scores; these students must complete the full battery of COMPASS placement tests during their NSO appointment or at another convenient time. During NSO the student’s academic
adviser discusses appropriate course placement with the student based on the results of the placement test. Twenty-seven percent of the University’s first-year students test into a developmental math class, while 14 percent tests into a developmental writing class. Fewer students need a developmental reading class such as College Reading and Study Skills. Students who do need to improve their reading skills are advised not to take General Education courses with rigorous reading assignments until they have made up their deficiencies. Students who have minor problems with reading are encouraged to enroll in an Applied Study Strategies class along with their GE social science class, such as Introduction to Psychology or Introduction to Sociology.

Many of the students admitted directly to the degree-granting colleges present Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate test scores. These are evaluated based on criteria established by the departments in which the course credit will be awarded. In some cases these academically prepared students are able to satisfy General Education requirements based on their AP or IB scores.

While advisers can and do take other information, such as student’s major and high school grades, into account in assisting the student to select classes, course and test score prerequisites are strictly adhered to in the advising process. The faculty wants to be sure that students have the necessary skills in order to be successful in the General Education course.

Although there have been attempts to assess aspects of GE, using the ETS “Academic Profile,” a standardized instrument, and a locally developed writing portfolio approach, the “outcomes” of the General Education Program have never been systematically assessed. A significant amount of faculty and staff time and effort in addition to funding for the Academic Profile and for holistic scoring, was invested in these GE assessment attempts. Unfortunately, despite the use of incentives, student participation rates were so low that the results were not meaningful. For these reasons, in 2001-2002 the SATF made the decision to stop collecting data for these two assessment efforts.

University-wide, several large-scale, standardized surveys have been administered from 1996 through 2001, under the aegis of the SATF; the Vice President for Student Services; the Vice President for Information and Instructional Technologies, Libraries and Institutional Planning; the Vice President for Public Affairs and Development; or some combination of these entities. The “Student Satisfaction Inventory,” for example, and the “Alumni

Standardized Surveys

NCA Self-Study Report: Chapter Five: Criterion Three: Accomplishing the Mission
Survey,” have both been administered several times in the past
decade, and the resulting data has been analyzed and reported.
The 1999 Alumni survey was the fourth annual administration.
The SSI was administered in 1998 and 2000. Within the last two
years these valuable assessment results have begun to guide
improvement efforts. Perhaps their most important legacy is in
having established critical baseline trend data that allows the
University to measure current and future performance more
meaningfully.

As is the case on most campuses, those programs that seek
professional accreditation or re-accreditation — such as
engineering, teacher education, nursing, business and music —
have been compelled to provide a great deal of information on
their curricular content and instructional effectiveness. (For
example, see the College of Education assessment information at
http://www.uakron.edu/colleges/educ/NCATE/standard2.php.)
Within accredited colleges, several departments and programs
have demonstrated notable creativity and leadership in
assessment. Several faculty in the Daverio School of Accountancy
have done excellent, innovative work in the assessment of
writing and leadership values. While non-accredited programs and
colleges typically have done less assessment, there are
nonetheless good examples here, as well. The sociology
department, for example, is already involved in an ambitious, self-
generated assessment plan.

In 2001-2002, the University’s assessment infrastructure and
planning took several steps forward. The Office of the Senior Vice
President and Provost created a new position – Associate Provost
for Teaching, Learning and Faculty Development – which also has
responsibility for promoting and coordinating university-wide
academic assessment efforts. In August 2001, Dr. Thomas A.
Angelo, former director of the AAHE Assessment Forum, was
hired as the new Associate Provost. He immediately set out to
meet all the pertinent persons, discover the range of
assessments in place or underway, and began to coordinate
efforts. Angelo was soon invited to co-chair SATF with Dr. Chand
Midha, and has worked closely throughout with Institutional
Planning director, Gregory Rogers, and staff. This Associate
Provost is also the Director of the Institute for Teaching and
Learning, and a member of GEAC, the Freshman Year Task Force,
and the Council of Deans. Having an Associate Provost focused
on teaching, learning and faculty development, with assessment
as a key part of his portfolio, has meant that assessment efforts
have received more sustained attention and faculty engaged in
assessment have received more support.
Members of the Student Assessment Task Force, Institutional Planning, and the Associate Provost for Teaching, Learning and Faculty Development are working to develop a coordinated assessment plan for university-level academic assessment. The aims of this collaborative initiative are to ensure that assessment efforts at The University of Akron:

- Focus on improving student learning, development, and success
- Meet the expressed needs of “invested” campus stakeholders
- Are well-designed, well-implemented and effectively communicated
- Make efficient and responsible use of resources
- Are linked, to the extent possible, to other related assessments
- Are planned as “action research” from the start
- Are followed up

As one consequence of this effort, the University now has, for the first time, a multi-year, prospective schedule of major assessments, such as diagnostic tests, recurring standardized surveys, and annual internal data gathering. This has allowed the University to make better use of resources by alternating large surveys on different years, thus spreading the costs more evenly. While such a schedule had been developed in earlier years, it had not been implemented as budgets and personnel changed.

An early goal in support of creating a coordinated assessment plan was to take part in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in order to gain better insight into students’ academic engagement and experience. The impetus behind using the NSSE was the need to improve student retention and academic success, particularly in the first year. Three administrative units, the Senior Vice President and Provost, the Vice President for Student Affairs, and the Vice President for Information and Instructional Technologies, Libraries and Institutional Planning, shared costs equally.

The University administered the NSSE in Spring 2002 and, concurrently, administered a parallel, pilot faculty version of the instrument to relevant instructional staff. Student and faculty NSSE responses have now been analyzed, at university and college levels, and will be presented to deans, chairs and faculty early in Spring 2003 for discussion and planning. Select results have already been used to inform the First Year Experience Task Force and in planning sessions with Student Affairs. The University of Akron’s innovative work piloting the “faculty NSSE”
has led to recognition by AAHE and the NSSE’s creators, and several invitations to present, including at the AAHE 2002 Assessment Forum and the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) 2003 national conference.

At present, the Associate Provost for Teaching, Learning and Faculty Development and representatives from both the Student Assessment Task Force and Institutional Planning are working closely with the FYE Task Force to develop a comprehensive assessment program focused on student learning, retention and success in the first year. Together they are preparing to help design a process for comprehensive program review, and to develop a set of “key indicators of academic performance” in response to the Senior Vice President and Provost’s stated Balanced Scorecard objectives.

In terms of academic assessment, The University of Akron is definitely making progress and, therefore, at or approaching “Level Two” in NCA’s “Levels of Implementation.”

The University of Akron’s Institute for Teaching & Learning (ITL) promotes, coordinates, and supports efforts to improve, assess, and document teaching effectiveness and student learning quality – and to advance, disseminate, and apply the scholarship of teaching, assessment, and learning.

The ITL is a unit with university-wide responsibilities, reporting directly to the Senior Vice President and Provost. The ITL’s director is the Associate Provost for Teaching, Learning and Faculty Development. The ITL’s staff consists of a full-time administrative assistant and one or two graduate research assistants. Its director is advised by the ITL Advisory Council, with representation from all major university units and stakeholders. The ITL’s annual budget, which funds all ITL activities, as well as grants for projects in the scholarship of teaching, assessment, and learning, is just over $300,000, not including the salary of the Director.

The ITL’s responsibilities include:
   - Consulting with colleges, departments, and individual faculty on teaching, learning, evaluation and assessment issues
   - Developing and providing targeted professional development activities for full- and part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants
   - Coordinating the various University-level teaching-related awards processes

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The Institute for Teaching & Learning (ITL)
Documenting, publicizing, and celebrating teaching and learning innovation and excellence
Providing information, advice and leadership on teaching and learning matters

The drive to create an Institute for Teaching and Learning was initiated and carried forward by faculty over a three-year period—and strongly supported by the deans, the Provost and the President of the University of Akron. It began as a loosely structured Carnegie Teaching Academy in 1999. University-level, budgeted faculty development activities began in Fall 2000, and the ITL was launched with its new director in Fall 2001.

In 2001-2002, its first year of operation, the ITL offered some sixteen University-wide teaching and learning seminars, workshops, and symposia open to all full- and part-time faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and related academic and student affairs staff. Total attendance was 870. Some 583 individuals – 330 of them full-time and 94 of them part-time faculty – participated in those events.

Interest and participation in ITL-sponsored events continues to grow. By the end of Fall Semester 2002, total attendance at 25 ITL-sponsored events had already surpassed 1,500, representing more than 700 individuals.

In its second year, the ITL continues to offer workshops, seminars, and demonstrations led by UA faculty and staff. In addition, this year it is sponsoring a series of “Distinguished Visiting Scholars,” well-known innovators in teaching, learning and instructional scholarship from the Universities of Michigan, Indiana, Minnesota, Sydney (Australia) and elsewhere. The ITL also offers instructional consulting to departments, colleges, and individuals and supports faculty travel to teaching, assessment, and learning-related conferences.

While the above-mentioned activities are fairly common on campuses with teaching and learning centers, the ITL has launched two uncommonly innovative, ambitious programs to raise the quality of teaching and learning on the University’s campus.

The first is the Scholarship of Teaching, Assessment, and Learning (SoTAL) Symposium. The SoTAL (pronounced “subtle”) Symposium is an intensive, yearlong professional development activity that involves 20-plus faculty and instructionally related staff from across the University. This select group – nominated by chairs and deans – meets biweekly to read and discuss current

SoTAL Symposium
research, and experiment with innovative teaching and learning techniques. SoTAL Symposium participants revise courses and propose fundable projects to understand and improve learning in their classrooms and beyond. Currently, 14 members of the first SoTAL Symposium are carrying out projects supported by the ITL, as the second Symposium cohort meets to develop their proposals. The SoTAL Symposium is a comprehensive effort to create a cadre of well-informed, effective and scholarly faculty and staff who will assist, advise and inform their departments, colleges and the University on teaching and learning matters throughout their careers. In other words, the SoTAL Symposium is building the University of Akron’s overall capacity for academic excellence.

The ITL’s second major initiative is “Starting with Success,” a comprehensive effort to assess and improve UA student learning, retention, and success in the first two years of college. “Starting with Success” involves a large, diverse core of faculty and staff – known as the First-Year Experience Task Force – and focuses on coordinating lower-division undergraduate curriculum, teaching, advising, academic support, and assessment efforts to achieve greater “returns on investment” for all involved. To that end, the ITL is emphasizing and coordinating efforts, events, and programming relevant to improving lower-division undergraduate teaching and learning, advising, academic support and assessment.

The First Year Experience (FYE) Task Force began by reviewing the written reports of three previous task forces: on student success, retention and graduation (2000), the community college (2001), and campus diversity (2001). The FYE Task Force also assembled, analyzed and organized, for the first time, all relevant University assessment data on first-year students. Building on this foundation, the FYE Task Force held a large-scale planning retreat in March 2002, inviting all involved in these previous efforts as well as all faculty, staff and a panel of undergraduates. Nearly 200 people took part in the retreat, which generated a broad consensus on the goal of improving retention, success, and graduation by systematically improving the FYE at UA. The initial Task Force, consisting of eight individuals, met throughout Summer 2002 – as well as participating in the AAHE Summer Academy – and developed a discussion draft, called “A Blueprint for Starting with Success.”

Throughout, Provost Hickey has been deeply invested and supportive of the FYE Task Force process, often attending meetings with the group. Beginning in Fall 2002, the Provost and Associate Provost, usually accompanied by members of the FYE
Task Force, have met to discuss the proposal with deans, department chairs, the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate, faculty, staff, students, and all of the above in open meetings on the “Blueprint.”

In October 2002, the FYE Task Force was expanded from eight to thirty members, greatly increasing representation from all areas of the University that might be affected by and involved in the First Year Experience. That expanded Task Force has worked to develop specific recommendations for changes to be implemented in Fall 2003 and beyond. Those recommendations will be shared with the University community, for discussion and debate, beginning in January 2003. This is a high-stakes effort, one that is critical to the University’s success in improving enrollment, retention and student success. Consequently, it is both very popular and very contentious. It is also important to note that the Provost has set aside $200,000 as a “first round of investments” in initiatives recommended by the FYE Task Force. This represents a particularly significant action given the budget cuts the University has experienced.

A strong national movement is under way to integrate the liberal arts and sciences more fully into the process of preparing and developing pre-service, in-service and post-secondary teachers. At the same time, many P-16 educators are also moving away from the traditional model of teacher-centered learning to one characterized as inquiry-based learning, where students take a more active role in their education. Partly in response to these changes in education philosophy, numerous faculty members in Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences began to work collaboratively with colleagues in the College of Education. Faculty in the two colleges have collaborated to write grant proposals for teaching and learning, design and implement workshops for teachers, construct new ways to offer University courses, and seek ways to strengthen teacher preparation programs.

Evidence suggests that these efforts are improving instruction at The University of Akron and enhancing programs for producing well-prepared P-12 teachers. Furthermore, these efforts are also helping teachers in our schools, the University, and two-year colleges become more effective educators.

The Center for Collaboration and Inquiry (CCI) is an administrative unit, founded in Fall 2002, under the direction of both the College of Education and Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences. The CCI’s website is http://www2.uakron.edu/cci/index.html. Its mission is to:

PK-16 Collaborations
Foster student ownership of the learning process and integration of discipline specific knowledge with the development of lifelong learning skills

Assist in the preparation of pre-service, in-service and post-secondary teachers with content, methods, assessment, and new technologies as recommended by the learned societies (specialized program associations)

Provide resources, tools and infrastructure necessary to promote innovative and effective inquiry teaching and inquiry learning

Develop collaborative research efforts into inquiry teaching, inquiry learning and interdisciplinary studies

Pursue external funding in support of faculty research and provide resources, tools and infrastructure to promote innovative and effective teaching and learning

Serve the needs of students, faculty and administrators within the P-16 education community.

The founding director of CCI is Dr. David McConnell, professor of geology at The University of Akron. McConnell has worked with faculty in the College of Education to incorporate inquiry-based learning strategies into large introductory science courses. He also directs the Northeast Ohio Center of Excellence for Mathematics and Science Teacher Education, a regional collaborative of higher education institutions in northeast Ohio. Dr. Claire Oberst is the project coordinator of the Muehlstein Academy in Mathematics and Science that pairs high school students with area teachers, university students and faculty to engage in research during the school year and summer residential experiences.

All four of the academic development and improvement initiatives described above work collaboratively toward a shared vision of educational excellence and student success. There is much overlap among the individuals involved, and many shared goals and commitments. These efforts are helping to further develop a campus culture that is well informed, scholarly, effective and focused on evidence.
University-wide control of the 105 Master’s and 18 Doctoral programs is exercised by the Graduate School, which regularly reviews Graduate faculty credentials and reviews, recruits and admits graduate students. Also, in consultation with the individual departments, it establishes degree requirements, reviews the academic progress of students, approves dissertations and theses, and grants degrees through the authority of the Graduate Faculty. In conjunction with the academic departments, the Graduate School oversees and approves all transfer credit for graduate students. Graduate credit transfer requires the use of certified copies of transcripts from other universities and colleges. In case of questionable information, the Graduate School personnel contact the student’s previous university to seek clarification of course comparability.

All graduate assistant stipends are administered through the Graduate School. Graduate course curricula proposed by individual departments and schools are reviewed and approved by the Graduate School based on guidelines established by the Ohio Board of Regents.

The Graduate School is headed by the Vice-President for Research and Graduate Studies who also serves as the Dean of the Graduate School. A staff of eight supports the Dean and the Associate Dean in administering the duties of the Graduate School.

The Dean of the Graduate School shares governance responsibilities with the Graduate Council. The Graduate Council consists of 15 members, 14 faculty who are elected by the graduate faculty in all the colleges that posses graduate programs and one student elected from the Graduate Student Council. The duties of the Graduate Council include:
   o Examining proposed graduate programs and course offerings
   o Recommending policy for all phases of graduate education
   o Recommending persons for membership in the graduate faculty
   o Counseling the dean in administrative matters

The purpose of a graduate education is two fold. First it provides courses and instruction in specialized and advanced areas of specific professions or disciplines. This requires instruction of current knowledge and methods and of how this current knowledge was obtained. It is necessarily historical in nature and must be structured so that students can learn to critically evaluate
models and methodologies. It requires a careful attention to curriculum development in order to ensure students obtain knowledge that is both current and relevant.

Second, graduate education trains students in the acquisition of new knowledge. This research component draws on past models and methodologies to encourage students to ask new questions, develop new methods, and fashion new models. Some areas of graduate education do not require the research component as much as other areas might, but both aspects must be present to some extent for every graduate discipline. In the following, we describe how The University of Akron ensures a quality graduate education by encompassing both aspects of graduate education.

In the past, the University carried out an internal review of every academic unit. Review committees consisting of faculty from across the university were established and asked to review academic areas based on curriculum, faculty, academic productivity, and assessment activities. In part, this review was meant to ensure that the curriculum in each area was still meeting the needs of the students. A written review was given to each academic unit, which was then required to provide a written plan on how to overcome any deficiencies that were identified. This review was last done in 1995, and while a new review has not yet been scheduled, it appears as a prominent objective and measure on the Senior Vice President and Provost’s balanced scorecard.

In summary, the graduate faculty in each department or school is responsible for devising the curriculum for their graduate program. The quality of the curriculum is ensured by two mechanisms. First, there is university oversight of this process through the committees of the Graduate Council, which is composed of faculty from across the campus. Second, external review and accreditation of a majority of the graduate programs ensures that programs meet regional and national standards.

Graduate Faculty Status

There are two levels for graduate faculty status. The higher level (category II) allows the faculty member to teach courses and direct research at the Master’s and Doctoral levels. The lower level (category I) allows teaching at all levels, but permits research advising for Master’s level only. The criteria for inclusion in graduate faculty include: the quality and experience in upper-level and graduate-level teaching, the possession of a terminal degree in the field, the demonstration of a solid record of scholarly publication, the demonstration of activity in research, and the demonstration of service activity in the profession or
discipline. The Bylaws of the Graduate Faculty specify the criteria for membership in the graduate faculty. In order to achieve graduate faculty status, a prospective graduate faculty member must be nominated by his or her own home academic department for a specific category of graduate faculty status. This nomination is forwarded to the dean of the requisite college who approves or disapproves the application. The dean then notifies the Graduate Council, which reviews the credentials and makes a recommendation to the Graduate School. The faculty member may then be granted Graduate Faculty status by the Graduate School at either category I or II. While the Bylaws establish minimum criteria for each level of graduate faculty status (e.g. four refereed publications in five years for Doctoral level), the various academic units have recorded with the Graduate School any more stringent criteria or any particular interpretation of the criteria that are appropriate to their respective disciplines. Once approved, a faculty member’s graduate faculty status is valid for a period of up to five years. In order to maintain a given status, faculty must reapply and again meet the established criteria. As of the 2001 academic year, there were 513 graduate faculty who all held full-time, tenure track status. Of these, 92 percent held a doctoral degree in their academic area and 100 percent of the category II faculty held a doctoral degree. This general data concerning graduate faculty has held fairly constant over the last five years. The average age of the graduate faculty is 48 years, which places them near mid-career. Over the years from 1996 to 2001, there was a 5 percent increase in the number of graduate faculty.

The university provides several types of support to encourage faculty professional development. The Faculty Improvement Leave is available every seven years to any full-time faculty member (http://www2.uakron.edu/ogc/Rules_1-19/11-04f.pdf). The leave can encompass up to one academic year. The purpose of the leave is to promote the professional growth and new or renewed intellectual achievement of faculty. The Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs has regularly scheduled workshops for faculty to enhance their grant proposal writing activities. During the academic year, the university provides release time from teaching for graduate faculty for the purpose of conducting research. In some cases this can be up to one-third of a faculty member’s effort in a semester. Similar load credit is available to provide salary to faculty in the summer as they direct graduate student research.

The quality of a graduate program is reflected in the quality of graduate students that are attracted to the program. Students are admitted to the Graduate School based on their undergraduate
grade-point average (GPA) and letters of recommendation. Some departments require the applicants to take standardized tests such as the GRE. There are several admission categories, but the most common is full admission. This category requires a Baccalaureate degree with a minimum 2.75 GPA from an accredited college or university (a student can be admitted in this category if they earned a 3.00 GPA during the last two years of their Baccalaureate degree). Admission in this category is also given to students who hold an advanced degree from an accredited college or university or who hold a Baccalaureate or Master’s degree with first-class standing or its equivalent from a foreign college or university. Foreign students must provide satisfactory evidence of competence in English by a score of at least 550 on the paper TOEFL or at least 213 on the computer-based TOEFL. Some departments require higher scores than these. No student is admitted without the approval and acceptance by a department within the university.

In 1996, the total number of graduate students was 2,961 (2,251 in Master’s programs and 710 in Ph.D. programs). In 2000, there were 2,832 total students (2,278 in Master’s and 654 in Ph.D. programs). For 2000, this represents 12.3 percent of the total enrollment in the University. Full-time graduate students represented about 50 percent of the total graduate enrollment during the period 1996 to 2000. In 2000, 38 percent of all graduate students (76 percent of full-time graduate students) held graduate assistantships. In 1998, the percent of non-resident alien graduate students was 56 percent in the College of Engineering, 65 percent in the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering, and 18 percent in the College of Arts and Sciences. In 2000, the percent of non-resident alien graduate students was 64 percent in the College of Engineering, 69 percent in the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering, and 22 percent in the College of Arts and Sciences.

There has been a steady increase in the number of foreign graduate students admitted to the science and engineering departments over this period. This occurs in spite of increases in the stipend levels. In the past, the budget for graduate assistantships came from the Graduate School, although stipend levels were not specified. In order to have enough graduate assistants to teach laboratory and recitation sections, the stipend each department could pay was fairly low. For example, in the Department of Chemistry, the stipend for 12 months for a graduate assistant was $11,500 in 1996 and had increased to $16,500 in 2001 (this number was comparable to 12-month stipends given by Ph.D. granting chemistry departments in the National Research Council third quartile ranking). With the start of
the 2002 academic year, the VP for Research and Graduate Studies established a fixed graduate-assistant stipend across the University but did not increase the overall budget for graduate assistantships. This will lead to an overall decline in the number of graduate assistantships.

The University of Akron, because of its historic close ties with the rubber industry in the US, has always had a focus on graduate programs in the sciences and engineering. Many of the graduate programs at the University have strong national and international reputations. The Department of Polymer Science ranks 2nd in the country for the chemistry subspecialty of polymer science. The University of Akron ranks 48th in the country in research funding for chemistry related research (this includes the Departments of Chemistry, Polymer Science and Chemical Engineering. The Psychology department ranks in the top ten in the nation for its industrial and organizational psychology program.

Faculty and graduate students are engaged in productive research activities as evidenced by the number of collaborative publications that result from this research. Many graduate students serve as graduate research assistants receiving tuition assistance for their research work with faculty. The number and frequency of presentations at national and international symposia are also evidence of the research activity of graduate students and faculty. In the arts, the number of performances and the number of gallery showings also reflects the creative activity of the faculty and graduate students. The quantitative measure of these activities is the number of grant proposals submitted and funded based on these research publications and presentations. During the period 1996-97 to 2001-02, the number of successful proposals submitted to external agencies for funding increased by 13.4 percent. During this same period, the dollar value of externally funded grant proposals increased by 31.9 percent. In actual dollars, in 1996-97 there were 414 proposals awarded with a dollar value of $19,890,143, while in 2001-02 there were 478 proposals awarded with a dollar value of $29,188,634. The productivity of the graduate faculty in terms of proposals has increased steadily since the last accreditation review in 1996 and the national competitiveness of this research has improved dramatically over this time.

The RTP guidelines (university rule 3359-20-03.7 (http://www2.uakron.edu/ogc/Rules/KeywordSearch.htm) used to evaluate faculty require that research, scholarship and creative activities be considered as major activity components required for the granting of tenure and promotion. Recently, these guidelines underwent a university-wide standardization process, so that all
Academic units must now consider equally both disciplinary and pedagogical research, both discipline-based scholarship and the scholarship of teaching and learning, and creative activities in granting tenure and promotion. As part of the review process for tenure and promotion, college-wide committees review the credentials of every faculty member being considered for tenure and promotion. In this way, not only do the faculty of each department impose standards for research and scholarship productivity, but the faculty of the college as a whole reviews those standards. The new guidelines also require external evaluation of every candidate for tenure and promotion with specific expectations that research, scholarship, and creative activities will be reviewed by the external referees. On a university-wide basis, annual salary raises are based entirely on merit. Merit is defined by three activities: research, teaching, and service. In all academic areas, annual merit raises are based in part on the research, scholarship, and creative activities of each faculty member.

The importance the university places on faculty and graduate student research, scholarship, and creative activities is also reflected in the types of monetary and facilities support dedicated to this area.

Each department or school’s annual budget contains money to support research directly or indirectly, for example money available to faculty for travel to national and international symposia to present the results of their research. In addition, the Faculty Research Committee of the Faculty Senate solicits proposals from all faculty and awards small grants to support faculty research activities. Regular faculty research proposals are supported at a level of up to $4,000 for one year and are meant to provide seed money so a researcher can obtain preliminary results that will enhance the opportunity of obtaining major federal support. Summer fellowships of $8,000 are awarded to faculty to provide salary or supplies for carrying out research with the expectation that this research will lead to publications and/or grant proposals. The current budget for these types of grants is $208,000 annually. For any grant that allows the recovery of indirect costs, the University gives a percentage rebate of the indirect costs it obtains to the faculty, chairs, and dean or vice president. In 2002, this amounted to $1,789,643. The rebated money can be used for any activity, but most often is used to further research activities in the departments and colleges. All grants and contracts have the opportunity for matching support for equipment as well as access to State-matching support that is managed by the University.
The University Library is housed in four separate locations on campus. Bierce Library is the main library building, the Science Library is located in newly expanded facilities in the Auburn Science Center, the Law Library is located in West Hall, and the University Archives is located in the basement of the Polsky building. The University’s 1996 self-study documented the decline in the library’s operating and acquisitions budget over the previous ten-year period. Recent University-wide budget cuts due to declining tuition and state subvention income have again put pressure on this budget. The library has become one area targeted for greater than average budget cuts. In 1995-96 the Libraries’ total budget (operating and acquisitions) was $3,201,028. The budget for 2002-03 allocated $3,086,335 to the library for operating and acquisition. This represents a negligible decrease in dollar amount but a 28 percent decrease in real-terms buying power for library materials. Recent declines in the number of faculty and staff in the library (there has been a loss of nine librarians and support staff, which represents a 12 percent decline) have been offset by increased reliance on technology improvements. ZipLINK (http://www.uakron.edu/libraries/) provides access to the library catalog to anyone with a desktop computer. Many electronic databases are available for on-line searching through this network. Through OhioLINK, the statewide network of public university libraries, faculty and students have access to interlibrary loan materials, electronic research databases, and many full-text electronic periodicals. The University of Akron is currently involved in a $200 million building program, “Landscape for Learning”, which will enhance the academic surroundings as well as enhance the environments in which faculty teach and conduct research.

As part of the educational and research mission of the graduate program, several research center and institutes have been established on campus. The University of Akron has as one of its goals the fulfillment of this Statement of Strategic Intent:

The University of Akron intends to be recognized as the public research university for Northern Ohio.

To accomplish this vision, the University is dedicated to providing faculty with state-of-the-art research facilities. The following is a selected list of these centers and institutes. A more complete listing is found in the Graduate Bulletin (http://www.uakron.edu/gradsch/pdf/Gradbulletin.pdf).

The **Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics** is a public education and research adjunct of The University of Akron and its Department of Political Science. The broad purposes of the
The Institute for Health and Social Policy was established in 1999 for the study of the delivery of effective health and social services. The goal of the Institute is to improve the quality of services delivered to specific target groups most at risk of health and social consequences in order to decrease morbidity and mortality and the burden of health and social problems on the community and on individuals. The Institute will address issues along a research continuum to include: Epidemiology Intervention Development Service Delivery Technology Transfer Policy. The Institute will also serve as an educational resource for students and the community for the most up-to-date social and health services research available and to the latest advances in behavioral and social science research technologies. Since its establishment in February 1999 through July 2002, this institute has received $13,793,965 in external funding. In addition, it recently received a $13.5 million, five year grant from the Robert Woods Johnson Foundation to create a research-based substance abuse prevention curriculum to be offered nationally through the DARE program. This was the largest single research grant received by the University.

The Institute for Global Business offers a variety of degree programs to interested students including an undergraduate major, minor, and certificate program. It also offers a Master of Business Administration in International Business.

The William and Rita Fitzgerald Institute for Entrepreneurial Studies is a research and development center that focuses on ventures, development and growth. It provides the necessary link to enhance entrepreneurship and business development for Ohio’s future. It also conducts active and applied research to foster student learning and improve business ventures and participates in assessment and analytical activities for entrepreneurs, corporate entrepreneurs, and new ventures.

The Microscale Physiochemical Engineering Center (MPEC) has a mission to conduct research and transfer technologies in physiochemical processes with enhanced effects due to surface contacts found in microscale systems of flows, particulates, and porous materials. Its goals are to: (1) Enhance Research Funding by identifying funding sources and then facilitating and organizing teams from faculty and professional sources, and coordinating
proposal submission. (2) Reinforce and establish ties with the public and private sector by developing outreach programs in research and education. (3) Synthesize and integrate College of Engineering activities in research and education by providing central lab facilities for faculty and graduate students of all departments.

The **Center for Gerontological Health Nursing and Advocacy** advances knowledge about appropriate and effective health promotion/interventions for elders. The Gerontology Center has a tripartite focus of education, research and service in addressing health care issues and advocacy for elders. Knowledge will be expanded through research, theory construction and testing. These tools will be used to develop "best practices" for multidisciplinary elder care and to develop educational strategies to prepare professionals in the delivery of elder care. The primary goal of the center is to improve the health care and quality of life for elders.

The **Maurice Morton Institute of Polymer Science** conducts basic and applied research, focusing on the creation of new polymers and the study of their physical properties. The Institute has evolved from the original Institute of Rubber Research, which was established by the University on 1956. It is named after the late Dr. Maurice Morton, its founder, and one of the world’s pioneers in polymer research and education and a UA faculty member for more than 40 years. From FY97-FY02, this institute was supported by $18,467,590 in gifts and grant funding which has been prorated over the period of the award and among the co-investigators. The Institute for Polymer Engineering has generated $ 6,599,372 over the same period.

The **Center for Urban and Higher Education** is a public education and research unit in the College of Education with the purpose of improving student achievement pre-K through higher education. It fosters collaboration among faculty, students, practitioners and community leaders in educational conferences and seminars, research, evaluation and training.

The **Center for Organizational Research** is a business research and consulting center managed by the Industrial/Organizational Psychology Department. It provides consultation and research-based interventions to the business community as well as training and research opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students.
The University, with the approval of its Board of Trustees, established **The University of Akron Research Foundation (UARF)**, in December 2001 to promote, encourage and provide assistance to the research activities of University faculty, staff and students. Incorporated by the State of Ohio in 2001, this not-for-profit organization provides a means which discoveries, inventions, processes and work can transfer products of The University of Akron faculty, staff and students from University laboratories to benefit the public. Funds generated by such discoveries are used to enhance research at the University. Because of the often-excellent opportunities for acquiring valuable intellectual property as well as the requirements for diligent management of technology assets, certain contracts and grants may be entered into by the UARF for administration as well. The new initiative holds great promise for improving research opportunities. The University of Akron has been issued 466 invention disclosures and 200 patents by the US Patent Office (one of the largest patent portfolios of any state university), which can provide royalties through the UARF.

As an independent foundation, a board of directors is required and composed of Dr. Luis M. Proenza, Chairman, Ms. Kathryn W. Dindo, Mr. Clifford Isroff, Dr. George R. Newkome, and Mr. Peter J. Piglia, Directors. Dr. George Newkome serves as the President of the foundation, Mr. Kenneth G. Preston serves as the Executive Director, and Mr. Wayne H. Watkins serves as the Secretary/Treasurer. The University of Akron rules that govern the foundation and the ability of faculty and staff to have financial interest in companies licensing university intellectual property are found at [http://www.uakron.edu/research/uarf/pdf/3359-02-05.pdf](http://www.uakron.edu/research/uarf/pdf/3359-02-05.pdf).
There are numerous support programs and initiatives at The University of Akron. Nearly every department on campus offers some sort of academic support ranging from supplemental labs to tutoring. Many of these programs offer scholarships and other incentives. The bulk of academic support lies in University College (detailed in Chapter 4). Over 8,000 students each fall receive direct academic support in the following ways:

- Academic Advisement
- New Student Orientation
- Adult Focus
- Transfer Student Services
- Developmental Programs
- Basic Writing, Basic Math, Applied Study Strategies, and College Reading and Study Skills courses
- Writing, Math, and Study Skills Lab
- Learning Communities
- Faculty Mentor/Learning Assistant Program
- Individualized PLUS agreements (Prescribed Learning for Undergraduate Success) for all at-risk students
- Peer Tutoring
- University Orientation Course
- IAM workshops (Individualized Academic Management) for returning students who had been dismissed

In addition to these programs, University College sponsors events like Akron Traditions and Majors Mosaic. University College also works cooperatively with The Office of Multicultural Development on the Passage Program and the Counseling, Testing, and Career Center on their Bridge to Success workshops.

Of these programs, several involve Supplemental Instruction. These include:

- Applied Study Strategy Courses
- Learning Communities
- Learning Assistants
- Academic Skills Workshops
- Academic Support Labs

The Office of Student Development, a component of Student Affairs is committed to enriching the collegiate experience through involvement in non-academic programs. The Office of Student Development provides information about registered student organizations, fraternities and sororities, and much more. The departmental web site provides an ever-changing electronic calendar of events where students can find information about joining a student group, starting a new group, helping plan campus-wide activities such as Zip Fest, Diversity Fest, All
Campus Recognition Dinner, or just to browse through our pages to see what is out there.

Student Development provides a wide range of services and programs for the benefit of students as individuals and as members of student groups. Students will find help managing budgets, recruiting members, planning programs, and registering a new group. University funding of groups by means of the EAF funding procedure is administered through Student Development with the assistance of the Coordinator of Budget Services. Student Development oversees the areas of Student Conduct, Greek Life, and Associated Student Government.

Working closely with UA’s other academic colleges, Work Force Development and Continuing Education (WFD-CE) delivers training and development programs using a variety of formats: distance learning, onsite courses, certificate programs, conferences, workshops, and continuing professional education seminars. Current course offerings can be viewed at www.uakron.edu/ce. The Division annually offers over 1,200 public courses at numerous locations in a multi-county area as well as numerous customized contract programs for business and industry. Over 10,000 people per year enroll in WFD-CE programs. Major programmatic areas include information technology; leadership, management, and supervision; quality; industrial, technical, and manufacturing; customer service; and workforce development business services. A sampling of the business services available through WFD-CE include organizational needs assessments, skill gap analysis, job analysis, customized programming, development of position descriptions, post-assessment of training, Web-based learning and training delivery, position benchmarking and industry-specific certification.

The University’s Workforce Development and Continuing Education Office uses the laboratories of the Akron Polymer Training Center to offer expanded noncredit courses for technicians, operators, mold designers and first-line managers.

The University of Akron’s 18,500-square-foot Akron Polymer Training Center is a teaching facility that serves the region’s academic and industrial needs by offering a wide variety of credit and non-credit courses. The revamped structure contains three classrooms, two polymer-processing laboratories, and a laboratory devoted to chemical measurement and instrumentation.

The University of Akron’s traditional role in polymer education has been at the master’s and doctoral levels, but it is well known that
growth of manufacturing jobs occurs in geographic regions that have a labor force trained for the shop floor. To better meet the needs of the polymer industry, this unique venture, which began in the fall of 1993, pulls together three components of the University for expanded job-related training.

In addition to our new Landscape for Learning, we are developing a New Landscape for Living, in which we have partnered with the University Park Alliance, to launch a community revitalization project in the 40-block neighborhood immediately surrounding our campus. In December 2001, The University Park Alliance submitted the University Park Revitalization Plan to the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation for funding the implementation portion of the community-based revitalization plan.

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation generously awarded the University Park Alliance $2.5 million over the next five years to undertake implementation of the University Park Revitalization Plan. Besides the University and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, major contributors to the project include the City of Akron, Summa Health System, and the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority. "As The University of Akron has brought a needed revitalization to the campus through our New Landscape for Learning program, this plan will help to create an attractive, clean and safe residential area for a diverse population, and a commercial area that encourages private investment," says Dr. Luis M. Proenza, President of The University of Akron. The University Park Alliance is staffed by University of Akron personnel with the Alliance’s operations directly reporting to the President of the University.

The College of Fine and Applied Arts is actively engaged with the Community. A new initiative called “Arts Lift” is serving underprivileged and artistically gifted high-school students in the Akron Public Schools. It also nurtures the community through its music concerts, theater and dance performances, campus art galleries and Arts Awareness Month. The Audiology and Speech Center serves almost 1,000 clients annually. It also provides the community with around-the-clock service from the student-operated WZIP-FM radio station. According to the Arbitron Radio Ratings Service, WZIP-FM is one of the most popular public-radio stations in Ohio.

The University of Akron’s E.J. Thomas Performing Arts Hall is the flagship performance venue for our region and an economic boon for downtown Akron. Each year E.J. Thomas Hall presents Broadway musicals, world-renowned entertainers, ballet, opera, jazz, comedy, and a prominent speakers series. Plus, E.J. Thomas
Hall serves as home to the Akron Symphony Orchestra, Ohio Ballet, Tuesday Musical Club, Children’s Concert Society, Akron Youth Symphony, and the Summit Choral Society. The professional staff of E.J. Thomas Hall also manages the historic and newly renovated Civic Theatre in downtown Akron. Together, E.J. Thomas Hall and the Akron Civic Theatre bring nearly 600,000 visitors to downtown Akron annually, with a yearly economic impact of more than $15 million.

The University of Akron offers comprehensive and rigorous academic programs from associate through doctoral levels. The faculty ensures the integrity of these programs through a systematic process of curriculum management and review. The evidence of the soundness of our programs includes the accreditation by various national boards, the statistics on the employment and professional licensure of our alumni, and the data gathered in internal assessment efforts. Large-scale efforts are currently underway to more fully establish and develop the institutional processes for assessing and improving both curriculum and delivery.

Our graduate programs are rigorous and sound, and are distinguished, in substance and in form, from the undergraduate offerings. The graduate faculty possesses the credentials and demonstrates the level of scholarship appropriate to their participation in graduate instruction. The faculty and the students collaborate in vigorous programs of scholarly research and creativity. The institution as a whole has embraced the goal of raising the stature of our research programs, and has increased the level of external research funding and of scholarly publication in recent years.

To complement our academic programs, The University of Akron has established numerous structures for community service. A large number of local citizens and companies, as well as our own students, take advantage of the programs for continuing education and consultation offered through Workforce Development and dozens of research and service centers and institutes. In addition to meeting the needs of the community, these programs extend and enhance the graduate research curricula and the practical professional training of our students.
## STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, FUTURE PLANS

### STRENGTHS:
- Establishment of the Institute for Teaching and Learning
- Assessments in place in individual academic units to meet national discipline accreditation guidelines

### CHALLENGES:
- Establishing the cultural shift indicating that the scholarship of teaching and learning and discipline-related research is valued equally
- Assessment of student learning for the entire campus

### FUTURE PLANS:
- Design a process (including review of viability and excellence) and establish standards to implement systematic, consequential undergraduate and graduate program review
- Design and implement four-year (two-year for associate programs) course map for every undergraduate degree program showing curricular offerings structured so that a baccalaureate degree can be completed within four years (associate degree within two years)
- Adopt a form of standardized student assessment that is reliable and valid
- Implement standardized faculty teaching/course evaluation system including a standardized instrument, and a process with central collection, analysis, and reporting of the information
- Diversification of academic programs through personnel, course content and instructional approaches