

Executive Summary

TO PREPARE THE
OKLAHOMA
STATE
UNIVERSITY
COMMUNITY
FOR A SITE VISIT
SEPTEMBER 26-28,
2005
FROM THE
HIGHER LEARNING
COMMISSION
OF THE
NORTH CENTRAL
ASSOCIATION

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INTRODUCTION

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY is engaged in an institutional self-study in preparation for an accreditation site visit from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association on September 26–28, 2005. Every decade an evaluation team from the HLC visits campus to assess the institution for continued accreditation. An integral part of the accreditation process is a thorough institutional analysis, called a self-study, and the preparation of a self-study report that demonstrates how OSU satisfies the accreditation criteria and formally requests continued accreditation from the Commission.

Accreditation is important for OSU in maintaining the eligibility of its students for federal grants and loans and for the university's continued recognition by employers, governmental agencies, professional licensing boards, and other institutions of higher learning as an outstanding university that provides excellent educational opportunities.

Institutional improvement is an important goal of the accreditation self-study. Faculty, administrators, staff, and students have studied the university in an effort to assess whether current policies, plans, and practices ensure fulfillment of the mission and the established accreditation criteria. Through this process, challenges to and opportunities for the institution have been identified. Broad discussions have focused on how its inherent strengths can help the institution meet its challenges and benefit from its opportunities.

This document is designed to assist you in preparing for the Higher Learning Commission site visit. During the visit, the evaluation team from the HLC will hold conversations across campus with many groups and individuals. It is important that you be aware of the new HLC accreditation criteria and understand how OSU meets the core components associated with each criterion. The following pages are organized around the criteria. The criteria and core components are stated along with brief descriptions of how OSU addresses the components. Recent highlights and significant achievements at the university since the last site visit are also included.

You can review the self-study report on the accreditation website. The site also provides the previous self-study report (1995), the NCA response to that report, and additional details about the self-study process. Included in the materials on the site are the “Source Writings,” the original draft documents produced by the faculty criterion teams on which the report is based. During the academic year 2005–2006, the website will display the self-study report and the resource room materials that support the document.

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CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY

The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

As a land-grant university, OSU has a clear and distinct mission to pursue teaching, research/scholarly activities and outreach/extension priorities. The university has many programs that carry out these priorities, and OSU's vision for the future allows the university to build on its legacy of educational quality and service, while addressing emerging challenges and opportunities.

OSU's defined values are embodied in its organizational structures, policies, and the work of students, faculty, staff, and administration. With input from all its constituents, OSU has established clear goals and core values, as well as highly effective evaluation systems to help ensure that the university's mission is carried out with integrity and accountability.

CORE COMPONENT 1A

The organization's mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization's commitments.

The OSU Strategic Plan ensures that the system's mission statement and those of the various OSU entities are clear and articulate publicly OSU's commitments.

OSU's strategic plan was developed to help the system reach higher levels of achievement and recognition in the fulfillment of its mission.

CORE COMPONENT 1B

In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituents, and the greater society it serves.

Because OSU recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves, diversity is a core value in the OSU Strategic Plan. (*Diversity — We respect others and value diversity of opinion,*

freedom of expression, and other ethnic and cultural backgrounds). The institution strives to create an environment of respect for all individuals.

CORE COMPONENT 1C

Understanding of and support of the mission pervade the organization.

OSU's strategic planning process involved every unit of the university and gave all employees an opportunity to better understand the university's mission and to have input into planning aimed at supporting

the OSU mission. Many OSU students also were involved with the planning process, thereby gaining a better understanding of the university's mission and supporting its implementation.

CORE COMPONENT 1D

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

OSU is governed by the OSU/A&M Board of Regents. The board's stated mission is to strive to provide service that is characterized by the highest degree of cooperation and communication among system institutions, program quality that meets or exceeds the expectations of people seeking service of any kind at any tier of the system, efficiency

of operations in order to focus resources in a manner that will best support the educational needs of the people served, and accountability to the people of Oklahoma in providing an appropriate array of high-quality educational opportunities in accordance with the constitution and laws of the State of Oklahoma.

CORE COMPONENT 1E

The organization upholds and protects its integrity.

OSU has shown its commitment to integrity by including it as a core value in the OSU Strategic Plan (*Integrity — We are committed to the principles of truth and honesty, and we will be equitable, ethical, and professional*).

This core value is evident in many policies and procedures in place to help ensure that all of the university's missions and practices meet the highest standards of integrity.

CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

The organization's allocation of resources and its process for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

OSU's vision for the future is outlined in the university's strategic plans. These planning documents contain strategic goals, critical success factors, and objectives for addressing educational quality in a diverse, complex, and technological world.

CORE COMPONENT 2A

The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

OSU's various internal assessment and evaluation processes, as well as data gathered from outside sources, help the university to learn more about the needs of the society it serves. These processes monitor changing societal and economic trends to help OSU respond effectively to future student needs and continue to fulfill its mission.

CORE COMPONENT 2B

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

Evidence indicates that the resource base provided to OSU has been adequate to maintain the educational quality over the past ten years, but recent budget downturns have not allowed the university to fill some faculty positions or to grow in various areas. OSU's strategic plan will help the university use its resources wisely to maintain, strengthen, and improve the quality of educational programs.

CORE COMPONENT 2C

The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

OSU's evaluation and assessment processes are widely recognized as providing reliable evidence of the institution's effectiveness. Outstanding student achievement, student and alumni satisfaction with their educa-

tional experiences, and the accreditation of many specific discipline areas within the university all provide evidence of OSU's effectiveness.

CORE COMPONENT 2D

All levels of planning align with the organization's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

OSU's strategic planning process focuses on aligning all levels of planning with OSU's mission, which enhances its capacity to fulfill that mission. Coordinated planning

processes center on mission documents that define vision, values, goals, and strategic priorities for OSU.

CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING

The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

OSU has demonstrated progress in developing a culture of assessment in the past 10 years. The university has created review structures and learning goals that aid the academic review process. The results from teaching and learning assessment are used throughout the university to facilitate assessment-driven curricular and program changes.

OSU also encourages innovative and effective teaching methods while it supports diversity and provides effective learning environments. Despite budget constraints, OSU's commitment to the highest quality of instruction is evident in budgeting priorities and planning efforts.

CORE COMPONENT: 3A

The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

OSU clearly differentiates its learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs by identifying the expected learning outcomes for each. These learning outcomes are stated in several OSU publications and in the program assessment

plans. The assessment plans are developed and implemented by the faculty in each unit. Effective assessment occurs when outcomes are examined in light of clearly stated expectations and results are used to improve programs.

CORE COMPONENT 3B

The organization values and supports effective teaching.

Despite budget constraints, OSU provides support and rewards for effective teaching. The university emphasizes assessment of teaching methods, development of quality

curricular materials, teacher education or professional development, and rewards for outstanding teaching and innovation.

CORE COMPONENT 3C

The organization creates effective learning environments.

In and outside the classroom OSU emphasizes programs, develops facilities, and promotes attitudes that support effective learning environments. Various programs offered through residential life, student union activities, multicultural organizations, and numerous other OSU and student organizations promote effective learning in diverse circumstances. Facilities such as campus life structures enhance the learning environment by sponsoring events and activities to bring together a variety of students. The newly organized Institute for Teaching and Learning Excellence will assist faculty in creating even more effective learning environments. Continual technological advancements in the classroom have contributed to greater learning effectiveness. Assessment results give OSU vital information about



improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, instructional resources, and student services that promote continual improvements in learning environments.

CORE COMPONENT 3D

The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

A university-wide survey indicates that many resources, including computer labs with technical support and specialized software, library resources and services, and

learning partnerships are available to and utilized by students and faculty to enhance learning and teaching.

CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

OSU's commitment to a life of learning is clearly articulated in its mission and planning documents and practiced on a daily basis. All members of the university community have the opportunity to participate in a variety of studies and activities that broaden outlooks and contribute to well-rounded and educated citizens.

In addition to traditional classroom work, both undergraduate and graduate students

are involved in research, creative projects, travel, internships, and cultural and community service experiences. These experiences, in addition to coursework, help students become lifelong learners and apply their knowledge. OSU's faculty and staff also provide excellent models of lifelong learning as they pursue ongoing scholarly and professional development, research, creative endeavors, and community involvement.

CORE COMPONENT 4A

The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

The university's board and administrators work to assure that students, faculty, and staff are presented with many opportunities to pursue a life of learning. These opportunities entail general education, scholarships, internships, study abroad programs, academic honor societies, and extracurricular activities. Opportunities for staff and administrators

include professional development and the chance to pursue an OSU degree. Faculty opportunities include support for teaching, travel, and sabbaticals and honors and awards, such as Regents Distinguished Teaching and Research Awards, college teaching awards, regents professorships, and endowed chairs.



CORE COMPONENT 4B

The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

University-wide expectations in general education demonstrate the integral nature of a breadth of knowledge, skill, and intellectual inquiry at OSU. Beyond the academic requirements, units within OSU encourage interdisciplinary inquiry through such

programs as the Wentz Scholarships for research, the Freshman Research Scholars, special programs at the college level, national and international travel, student clubs and organizations, and cultural events.

CORE COMPONENT 4C

The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

Every OSU graduate and undergraduate program is assessed through plans developed by faculty and staff, incorporated into university-wide assessment, and designed

for feedback into program development. The overall assessment plan includes entry level, general education, end-of-degree, and alumni components.

CORE COMPONENT 4D

The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

Various OSU administrative units assist in creating an environment that encourages the responsible discovery, acquisition, and application of knowledge through efforts to make faculty, staff, and students aware of the values of such an environment. All of these units maintain websites that are regularly updated with information about

OSU policies in regard to such issues as intellectual property rights, use of human subjects, use and care of animal subjects, plagiarism, sexual discrimination, and disability services. In addition, these offices provide printed documents, seminars, and consulting services.

CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE

As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

As a land-grant university, OSU's central mission is a commitment to serving the common good. OSU serves the common good in diverse ways, including the multi-faceted offerings of its fine and performing arts programming, service provided by



faculty and staff members on local, state, regional, national, and international boards, and student volunteerism and service learning.

As an educational institution, OSU engages in the effective and useful assessment of student learning. It strives to create learning environments supportive of the learning needs of its students and other key constituents, and it supports broadly defined student and faculty scholarship and lifelong learning for its constituents. It also strengthens its own capacity to learn by listening to multiple constituents and through evaluation and assessment processes.

OSU's planning efforts are driven by its mission and core values and a dedication to understanding changing social, demographic, economic, and technological factors that affect the university and its constituents.

CORE COMPONENT 5A

The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

OSU's many entities continually evaluate their effectiveness in meeting their constituents' needs. When it is found that these needs are not being met in the most effective way,

changes in existing programs and services are implemented, and innovative new programs are developed.

CORE COMPONENT 5B

The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.

OSU serves its constituencies through engagement, a two-way relationship through which the organization is open to learning. Outside advisory boards for many units, educational service programs that engage outside constituencies, and collaborative work with organizations such as the Oklahoma

Historic Society are activities that promote engagement. OSU engages with constituencies on- and off-campus through various publications and electronic messages; the daily electronic OSU Headlines provide an example.

CORE COMPONENT 5C

The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.

OSU continually develops and improves its capacity and commitment to respond to the needs of its constituencies. University faculty and staff understand that as a land-

grant university, OSU serves the needs of citizens with many diverse personal circumstances and interests.

CORE COMPONENT 5D

Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.

OSU interacts with all its constituencies and provides them with services they find valuable. This commitment spans OSU's academic and support units and benefits all OSU's constituencies, including students, faculty,

and staff. OSU is present in the cooperative extension offices in each of the 77 counties of the state and in sixteen agricultural experiment stations across the state.

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

TOP VALUE IN AMERICA: *Consumers Digest* magazine in June 2004 named OSU as one of America's top 20 values in public higher education.

TOP WESTERN SCHOOL: *The Princeton Review* selected OSU as one of its Best Western Colleges for two consecutive years. The listing showcases the top colleges and universities in 15 western states.

GROWTH OF SCHOLAR RECOGNITION: Since 1995 scholar recognition has increased dramatically with more than 50 scholars and finalists from OSU for the major scholarships. The listing includes three current students, Kyle Jones, Pickering Fellow, and two Gates-Cambridge Scholars for 2005, Ashleigh Hildebrand and Joel Halcomb.

NATIONAL RANKINGS AND TOP TEN PROGRAMS: Over the past decade, several of OSU's academic programs have been identified as top ranking in their fields by prominent national publications or professional associations; among them are the Occupational Education program and the School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration.

NATIVE AMERICAN DEGREES: OSU ranks second nationally in the number of doctorates in psychology awarded to Native Americans.

INTERNATIONAL ENGINEERING PRIZE: OSU School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering students took first and second places in the International Design, Build, Fly Competition in 2004 and in 2005; OSU is the only university to have back-to-back 1st and 2nd place wins in this competition.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENT ATHLETES: Ninety-seven percent of the OSU senior student-athletes who exhausted their eligibility in 2003 graduated.

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITORS: OSU's architecture students have won more national and international competitions than students from any other school in the nation except the University of Illinois.

BEST RECREATIONAL CENTER: The newly renovated Colvin Center, which reopened in fall 2004, was named by the National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association as one of the top collegiate sports facilities in the nation.

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED TRANSIT SYSTEM: The OSU-Stillwater Community Transit System was the cover story in an issue of *BusRide Magazine*, a leading trade publication of the motor coach tour, charter, and transit bus industry.

TRADING FLOOR PROVIDES RARE OPPORTUNITY: OSU's Spears School of Business Trading Floor is one of only a few such facilities in the nation. The state-of-the-art trading floor gives students hands-on experience in managing information to assess financial risk.

NEW STUDENT HOUSING: Since 2000, OSU has spent more than \$150 million renovating and building new student housing that includes all modern amenities, high-speed internet connections, living rooms, kitchen areas, and private bedrooms and baths.

BEST ARENA IN THE NATION: OSU's historic Gallagher-Iba Arena was named the top collegiate basketball venue in the nation by *CBS Sportsline*.



SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS AT OSU 1995–2005

- ▲ increased graduation and retention rates
- ▲ national recognition as a high-quality, but affordable, university
- ▲ national rankings for numerous academic and research programs
- ▲ development of a nationally recognized scholars' program
- ▲ improved evaluation and assessment processes
- ▲ development of the university's system-wide strategic plans



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