QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

University of Indianapolis

Indianapolis, Indiana
October 24-26, 2007

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Academic Quality Improvement Program

Background on Quality Checkups conducted by the Academic Quality Improvement Program

The Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) conducts Quality Checkup site visits to each institution during the fifth or sixth year in every seven-year cycle of AQIP participation. These visits are conducted by trained, experienced AQIP Reviewers to determine whether the institution continues to meet The Higher Learning Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*, and whether it is using quality management principles and building a culture of continuous improvement as participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) requires. The goals of an AQIP Quality Checkup are to:

1. Affirm the accuracy of the organization's online Systems Portfolio and verify information included in the portfolio that the last Systems Appraisal has identified as needing clarification or verification (System Portfolio Clarification and Verification);

2. Review with organizational leaders actions taken to capitalize on the strategic issues and opportunities for improvement identified by the last Systems Appraisal (Systems Appraisal Follow Up);

3. Alert the organization to areas that need its attention prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation, and reassure it concerning areas that have been covered adequately (Accreditation Issues Follow Up);

4. Verify federal compliance issues such as default rates, complaints, USDE interactions and program reviews, etc. (Federal Compliance Review); and

5. Assure continuing organizational quality improvement commitment through presentations, meetings, or sessions that clarify AQIP and Commission accreditation work (Organizational Quality Commitment).

The AQIP peer reviewer(s) trained for this role prepare for the visit by reviewing relevant organizational and AQIP file materials, particularly the organization's last *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* and the Commission's internal *Organizational Profile,* which summarizes information reported by the institution in its *Annual Institutional Data Update.* The report provided to AQIP by the institution is also shared with the evaluator(s). Copies of the Quality Checkup report are provided to the institution's CEO and AQIP liaison. A copy is retained by the Commission for the institution's permanent file, and will be part of the materials reviewed by the AQIP Review Panel during Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

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Clarification and verification of contents of the institution's *Systems Portfolio*

The Quality Checkup team reviewed the Systems Portfolio, the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, the Institutional Summary, the 1997 NCA Visit Report, the Quality Program Summary, the Federal Compliance Material Package and portions of the University's website to gain an understanding of University of Indianapolis before arriving for the visit. During the visit, the team verified and clarified the contents of the Systems Portfolio and other documents submitted by the University through discussions with various individuals and groups, including the President, the Provost, Vice Presidents, Deans, Directors, the Strategic Plan Monitoring Subcommittee (most members of this committee had previously served on the Strategic Planning Task Force that developed the University Strategic Plan 2006-2011), the AQIP Committee (the University's Quality Advancement Council includes both the Strategic Plan Monitoring Subcommittee and the AQIP Committee), AQIP Action Project Subcommittees, faculty members, student leaders and several community partners. The team also reviewed additional materials provided during the visit.

Discussions with campus groups focused on strategic issues and opportunities identified in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report. Information presented in the Feedback Report was understood, and the University of Indianapolis agreed that the report was accurate. There have been some personnel and organizational changes since the Systems Portfolio was written. It should be noted that the President, Dr. Beverley Pitts, assumed her position in March 2006 shortly before the Portfolio was submitted in June 2006. It is also worth noting that the University sent a team to the CIC "Data and Decisions" workshop in St. Louis, October 5-7, 2006; and a University team, including Dr. Pitts, attended a Strategy Forum in Spring 2007 and a follow-up report was submitted in May 2007.

In those instances where information in the Systems Portfolio was incomplete or difficult to understand, clarification was provided onsite, either through discussion or additional documents. For example, addition information was provided regarding default rates, the University's complaint procedures, its relationship with the Methodist Church and links between the AQIP committee and strategic planning.

In the team's judgment, the University of Indianapolis presented satisfactory evidence clarifying and verifying the contents of its Systems Portfolio, meeting this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and

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comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Review of specific accreditation issues identified by the institution's last Systems Appraisal

The Systems Appraisal team that wrote the Feedback Report concluded the University of Indianapolis presented evidence that it complied with each of the Five Criteria for Accreditation and each of their core components. In the Quality Checkup team's judgment, the Feedback Report's conclusion that the University has no accreditation issues was supported during the visit. Thus, the University of Indianapolis presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. Its approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Review of the institution's approach to capitalizing on recommendations identified by its last Systems Appraisal in the *Strategic Issues Analysis*.

The University of Indianapolis addressed the strategic issues and the significant opportunities identified in the Feedback Report. The first strategic issue identified by the Systems Appraisal team dealt with measurement of student learning outcomes. The University was encouraged to review and systematize its approach to assessment, track results of direct measures of student outcomes, and "close the feedback loop."

Recognizing the need to link learning goals to measurable outcomes, one of the University's current action projects is aimed at clarifying and assessing core abilities, and every syllabus is expected to indicate connections to learning goals. The University's strategic plan commits to ongoing assessment of critical thinking, creativity, performance, social responsibility; and it prioritizes assessment of student learning in the major. Units report on goals, benchmarks and other results of assessment of student learning as part of their contributions to the Annual Report. Because the University of Indianapolis is committed to serving a diverse student body and roughly half of its students are first-generation college students, the University is interested in measuring value added, as well as benchmarking with other institutions.   Emphasis on assessment of learning goals was described as part of a paradigm shift for the University.

Assessment efforts are facilitated by the fact that so many of the University's programs are

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accredited, and faculty members are aware of how objectives are typically operationalized and measured in their fields. In general, the College of Arts and Sciences is somewhat less experienced with adjusting to dictates of accrediting bodies and is less accustomed, for example, to curriculum mapping and outcome measures other than assignments and tests; but faculty in that College are largely willing to learn best practices from more experienced individuals and groups inside and outside the University.   Faculty in Arts and Sciences may also contribute a healthy skepticism about the limits of and extent of resources devoted to measurement that may further encourage the University to select the most meaningful measurement tools and develop understandable assessment processes. Overall, the University seems to be doing a good job of ensuring that the quantitative data collected is adequate for assessment and utilized. The University also collects qualitative data, including stories of students' successes and university activities. The University of Indianapolis is clearly addressing the first strategic issue identified in the Feedback Report.

The second strategic issue identified by the Systems Appraisal team was related to the first. The team noted an apparent disconnect between plans for improvements and processes/results, suggesting that "targets for improvement appear to be *ad hoc* and do not necessarily seem to arise from the processes established or data collected." (p. 9) This was consistent with the 1997 NCA Visit Report comment: "Much data has been collected, but their use and connectedness/relationship to the assessment plan seems to be either poorly understood or valued." (p. 48) As implied previously, the University of Indianapolis is making a focused effort to examine best practices for assembling and sharing information so that data is not collected and ignored. Processes are designed to make use of data so that assessment can both contribute to and measure effectiveness of planning. For example, orientation activities have been revised to increase meaningful student engagement based on NSSE data. Wise use of data is a particular focus of the Strategic Plan Monitoring Subcommittee of the Quality Action Council and the Director of Institutional Research. Progress in this area is evident, but the University recognizes an ongoing need to integrate strategic planning, AQIP, program review, unit planning and the Annual Report so that targets for improvement are informed by research and reflect integrated planning processes.

The third strategic issue identified by the Systems Appraisal team involved human resources, professional development for faculty and staff, rank and tenure procedures and scholarship among faculty. The Feedback Report recommended that the University consider developing an

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action project focusing on "human resources processes including, compensation strategies, classification, career progression and the like." (p. 9) The University has taken the Appraisal team's advice and is targeting human resources issues. The new Faculty Development Center plays a significant role in the University's development efforts, e.g., the Faculty Development Director offers workshops on topics of interest to the faculty. The "four square" project brings faculty together to share innovative approaches and best practices. Another innovative project provides travel grants that pay expenses for inexperienced faculty members to accompany experienced faculty and students on international travel study.   These grants help the University achieve its goals for increasing international experiences for both faculty and students.   With respect to external grant application, the University hired an experienced person in the Office of Grants and Sponsored Research.

In addition, while the University has heavy teaching loads, it does provide opportunities for course reduction/release time. It is also increasing recognition of faculty for teaching, research and service. Faculty and staff development is further enhanced by the fact that full-time faculty and staff are eligible for a 100% tuition discount for both graduate and undergraduate classes, with pro-rated discounts for part-time employees. Work in this area, however, is not complete, and the University continues to examine hiring, promotion and tenure processes and salary schedules.   Also, the University's strategic plan includes focus on supporting faculty research, scholarship and creative endeavors.

The fourth issue identified in the Feedback Report related to the University's admission that it did not have a systematic campus-wide program to develop continuous improvement processes. The Appraisal team suggested that the University of Indianapolis could benefit from a systematic strategic planning process that involves all stakeholders.   The University of Indianapolis has been particularly active in addressing this issue. The Quality Advancement Council (QAC) plays a critical role.   The Council has two subunits, the Strategic Plan Monitoring Subcommittee and the AQIP Committee. The two groups have complimentary and, perhaps to some extent, overlapping responsibilities. There is a continuing need to weave their efforts into an integrated planning process. This is facilitated to a significant extent by the fact that some members "co-participate," and there seems to be a good working relationship between the groups which includes a great deal of informal, as well as formal, communication.   Efforts are also made to incorporate AQIP Action Projects into ongoing planning.   Implementation of the Banner system has allowed for more sharing of information, which facilitates planning

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processes. Further, the Strategic Plan Monitoring Subcommittee is exploring best practices for summarizing data most widely utilized around the University so that it can be shared and help inform and integrate plans for continuous improvement.   The University is expecting a great deal from QAC—monitoring projects, updating the portfolio, monitoring the strategic plan and facilitating collection, storage and retrieval of data.

The University of Indianapolis is also using its Annual Report to help systematize continuous improvement. The Annual Report, which formerly had a very limited audience, is now being framed to serve the needs of the University at all levels.   In developing the Annual Report, all units contribute indicators and outcomes related to progress on the strategic plan initiatives: focus on student learning through engagement; strengthen and expand learning community for students through varied formative experiences on campus and in the surrounding community; expand the impact of the university beyond its physical boundaries. They also report on efforts to monitor benchmarks and targets and record achievements. The University's broad definition of the Annual Report, which may or may not expect too much of a single document, is an interesting approach to the essential task of integrating strategic planning.

With respect to continuing improvement, the University of Indianapolis, especially in recent years, has also made a conscious effort to identify and examine limitations and flaws as a part of planning for improvement in the future.   Visitors were frequently told and were convinced that the University is not afraid to confront its weaknesses and were impressed with the modesty and humility of the University's representatives. This willingness to examine weaknesses as well as strengths bodes well for the University's ability to identify and capitalize on its opportunities.   Overall, the University of Indianapolis is in the process of taking a fresh look at goals, processes, measures, the Annual Report, technology and strategic planning. The objective is to systemize and align continuous improvement activities across the University, rather than in independent "silos" and avoid confusion and redundancy.

The fifth issue identified in the Feedback Report questioned the relationship between the University of Indianapolis and the United Methodist Church and the significance of the Methodist Church as a stakeholder. During the course of the visit, the team was informed of many significant connections between the University and the church body.   The University endeavors to provide a welcoming environment informed by the beliefs and values of the Methodist Church. Even though less than 13% of the student body is Methodist, students generally indicate an awareness of the role of the Church in the University's history, mission and current

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operation. There are purposeful conversations about the Christian tradition and character of the institution, but these conversations never exclude and always respect other Christian or non-Christian religious traditions.

The last strategic issue included in the Feedback Report dealt with "shared governance" and communication. The Appraisal team expressed concern that various entities within the University, faculty in particular, did not appear to be consulted or engaged in many institution-wide endeavors. This concern about governance was consistent with a comment in 1997 NCA Visit Report suggesting a need for "on-going, systematic and participatory planning process." (p. 51) During the visit, several respondents referred to the traditional governance style of the University's administration as more "paternal" than shared, even as a "benign dictator" approach.

Visitors were assured that engagement of students, staff and faculty has increased. The University of Indianapolis has addressed shared governance with faculty primarily through the recently-established Faculty Senate, whose responsibility and activity was described by a key faculty member as "robust." The current milieu of the University was defined by another faculty member as "collaborative and collegial," with little evidence of "turf wars." Input from faculty members, particularly on key committees, appears to be significant and appreciated.   Also, structures currently in place appear to give autonomy to units within the University and their administrators, rather than concentrating all authority at the top of the administrative structure. For example, the Provost, rather than the President, meets regularly with the Deans; and two recently-designated half-time associate provosts monitor how multiple roles integrate into the decision-making structure.   As a further example, the thirty-six member Board focuses more than in the past on broad oversight rather than engaging more directly in strategic planning.

As laudable as autonomy is in promoting shared governance, it remains important that information critical to wise decision-making reaches those ultimately charged with key decisions. For example, there is no question that members of the President's Cabinet are keenly aware that the central role of the University is to provide the best possible education for students. Nor is there any doubt that the Cabinet is dedicated to that end. However, multi-directional processes and communication are essential to ensure that Cabinet members receive the best current information available from those who have more direct student contact,

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including faculty and senior staff members.   Overall, the University has and continues to conscientiously address the issue of shared governance.

In the team's judgment, the University of Indianapolis presented satisfactory evidence that it has and continues to capitalize on recommendations identified in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report and has met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

There is much evidence of the University's commitment to systematic improvement. In addition to what has been previously discussed, the Visiting team identified positive action focused on opportunities identified in the Feedback report, e.g., concerns about retention rates in the Honors Program (1I1b). The team also observed commitments to quality and quality improvement beyond those included in the University's portfolio. To mention a few examples, the team was extremely impressed with the University's partnerships in the Southeast neighborhood of Indianapolis, particularly the Wheeler Arts Building and the Fountain Square Center. In cooperation with its partners, the University of Indianapolis provides educational and service learning opportunities for students and contributes programming and needed services for community residents.

Second, there is a warmth and hospitality among and between administrators, faculty and students, sometimes characterized as a "culture of caring." This culture contributes to the recruitment and education of both students and faculty, enhances the educational experience and encourages ongoing quality improvement.   Community partnerships, the campus culture, and the emphasis on students' engagement in activities on and off campus indicate that the University takes its motto, *Education for Service*, seriously and continues to find more and better ways to express it.

Third, although the Feedback Report recognized that the University "holds internationalization of its campuses in high value," (O2e) the checkup team was impressed with the expanding number and variety of international experiences offered at the University. This includes international students on the Indianapolis campus, the fact that these students generally have

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local roommates, the international extension sites, the branch campus in Greece and efforts to send more faculty and students abroad.

Fourth, the location of a wide range of student services, including tutoring, career counseling, study abroad, the chapel, bookstore, food services and recreational activities in one "shopping mall" location in the Schwitzer Center fosters student use and access. The University's plans to renovate and expand the Center certainly seem warranted. The University's Lecture and Performance (LP) series, the enthusiasm and sense of empowerment among student leaders, the high percentage of students involved in athletic activities, and the average GPA and graduation rate of student athletes are among other positive features noted during the visit.

One of the ongoing challenges is re-structuring and building an infrastructure that will provide centralized support for graduate education, maintain quality, maximize efficiency and avoid redundancy.   Another may be creating a workable number of levels of, and positions in, the administrative structure to represent all units, without reducing the role and voice of middle-level and lower-level administrators or creating barriers to communication around the institution. The most significant challenge, however, results from the University's success in increasing enrollment. The University is working on plans to manage growth to ensure that the quality of education and the campus experience can be maintained.   The University's best efforts at assessment and strategic planning will be needed to determine how best to create a vision for the future that will maintain the mission and character of the University of Indianapolis.

In the team's judgment, the University of Indianapolis is committed to systematic quality improvement and has presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

USDE issues related to default rate (renewal of eligibility, program audits, or other USDE actions)

Data regarding default rates was provided by the University of Indianapolis. The Stafford Loan default rate, which has averaged 1.4% over the last three years, and the Perkins Loan default rate of 7.66% reported for 2006-07 are well within expected limits. Although there were five non-substantive findings for the 2005-06 academic year and two issues needing resolution, all

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findings were resolved except for one that continues to need refinement. There were no other audit findings during for the 2006-07 academic year. Further, findings for the 2005-06 academic year were caused primarily by conversion to the Banner computer system, and the continuing issue is also related to Banner and is being investigated. The recertification application was submitted to the Department of Education in October of 2006. The review of this application is still in process at the Department of Education, and the University's eligibility to participate in the Title IV aid programs is extended until action is taken on the application.

In the team's judgment, the University presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Compliance with Commission Policy IV.A.8, Public Notification of Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

The University of Indianapolis website includes information about its AQIP involvement, including information regarding the Quality Checkup visit.   Everyone on campus the team met officially or unofficially was aware of the visit. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Compliance with Commission policy 1.C.7, *Credits, Program Length, and Tuition*

Online and hard-copy catalogs and program listings were detailed and current. Conversations, meetings and documents confirmed the accuracy of program requirements, length, and overall cost of programs.

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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Compliance with Commission policy IV.B.2, *Advertising and Recruitment Materials*

Some key public relations/marketing and informational material did not include full contact information for the Higher Learning Commission. However, UIndy had produced and distributed addenda with necessary additions and has made or is making appropriate revisions in materials.

In the team's judgment, the institution has moved to present satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Compliance with Commission policy III.A.1, *Professional Accreditation*, and III.A.3, *Requirements of Organizations Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation*
University of Indianapolis does not hold dual institutional Accreditation. Individual program accreditations appear up-to-date.

Compliance with Commission policy IV.B.4, *Organizational Records of Student Complaints*
Notifications for public comment were included in both state-wide and local newspapers. The HLC address was clear. At the time of checkup visit, no complaints were on file.

As far as internal processing of student complaints, according to the official procedure, when complaints cannot be resolved by a faculty member or a department chair, the matter is to be referred to the Dean of the College or School. If the matter is related to a specific process outlined in the Student Handbook, then that process is followed. The Dean of Students is sometimes involved as a third party to guide the student through the process. If the complaint involves a faculty member, the Faculty Handbook becomes the guide for resolving the complaint. In the case of either a faculty or student complaint, if the matter cannot be resolved at the unit level, the Associate Provost serves as the Provost's designee in further attempts to resolve the complaint. Although a complaint could then be referred to the Provost, and subsequently, the President, these steps have typically not been necessary.

Unofficially, there is a long-standing open-door tradition at the University of Indianapolis. As a

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result, it is often the case that when a complaint comes forward, the first contact is with the President's Office. In these instances, the current President, Dr. Beverley Pitts, typically refers the matter to the appropriate Cabinet member for resolution. If the matter is academic in nature, the Provost will refer it to the Associate Provost, who will, in turn, work with a Dean or Department Chair. The goal is to resolve concerns at the local level, because those closest to the situation will have the most knowledge, background, and expertise to achieve a successful resolution. The University is working to clarify and institutionalize complaints policies and practices that do not involve the Provost or President unless absolutely necessary.

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it has met this goal of the Quality Checkup, and is working to establish even better practices regarding submission and resolution of complaints. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

As part of one of their strategic goals, the University is working on a "systematic method for collecting, analyzing and responding to complaints."

Other USDE compliance-related issues

None noted.

Other AQIP issues

None noted.

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