June 22, 2005

TO: President Daniel M. Johnson,
University of Toledo

FROM: John A. Taylor, Director, Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality

SUBJECT: Final Team Report

Enclosed is the institution's copy of the final Team Report of a visit to University of Toledo. The Commission encourages you to make additional copies of the Team Report to circulate to your constituencies. In addition, I have attached draft copies of the Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) and the Organizational Profile (OP). These two documents, the SAS and the OP, will be posted on the Commission website after the Board of Trustees validates the accreditation decision of the Institutional Actions Council or the Review Committee. They are enclosed now for your information and for your review. You will receive an official action letter, an SAS and an OP following validation of the action by the Board of Trustees.

You are asked to acknowledge receipt of the Team Report and the SAS and OP worksheets; and to file on behalf of your institution, a formal written response to the evaluation team's report and recommendation. Your response becomes a part of the official record of the evaluation visit. Your response also serves as an integral part of the evaluation process, and it will be included in the materials sent to the next team that visits your institution. Please send your institutional response to me, send copies to members of the visiting team, and set aside some additional copies for the Commission's review process. (See Handbook of Accreditation, Third Edition, Chapter 2.2-2)

In your response, you are also asked to let me know which review option you prefer: the Readers Panel or the Review Committee. A description of these processes appears in the Handbook, Chapter 2.2-2 and 2.2-3. Please review these options and advise me as soon as possible, whether you agree essentially with the team's report and recommendation and therefore choose the Readers Panel, or whether you wish to have the team's report and your materials examined by a Review Committee. The next Review Committee meeting is September 26, 2005, in Chicago.

Enclosed please find three evaluation forms. In an effort to strengthen its professional development program for Peer Reviewers, the Commission is initiating this structured method outside of the institution's formal written response to seek from the institution an evaluation of the team. We recommend that you distribute these to knowledgeable people representative of several constituencies at your institution. You can make additional copies if you wish. Your participation is voluntary but greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions concerning the evaluation team's report, the SAS, the OP or the review options, please let me know.

Enclosures

cc: Shitala P. Mishra, Team Chairperson
REPORT OF A FOCUSED VISIT
(Commission-Mandated)

To

University of Toledo
Toledo, Ohio

April 25-26, 2005

For

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of
Colleges and Schools

Evaluation Team

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(Commission-Mandated)  
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ASSURANCE SECTION

I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit
On April 25-26, 2005, a two-member team of consultant-evaluators conducted a focused visit to the University of Toledo for the Higher learning Commission of the North Central Association. The purpose of the visit was to focus on the progress made toward the development and implementation of a university-wide program to assess the student learning outcomes and progress made toward the development of a strategic planning process aimed at attaining the institutional mission.

B. Accreditation Status
The University of Toledo is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. There are a number of professional organizations in various academic disciplines that accredit a large number of academic degree programs offered by the University of Toledo. The University had its last comprehensive visit in 2001-2002. During the last comprehensive visit in 2002, the evaluation team recommended that the University of Toledo undergo a focused visit on assessment and strategic planning. The team in recommending a focused visit also outlined a set of expectations for providing the visiting team with a frame of reference for its review. The team’s expectations for progress in the areas of assessment were outlined as follows:
At the time of the focused visit the team, in the area of assessment, expected that
- “The University will have an HLC approved institution-wide Student Academic Assessment Plan that is adequately funded and being implemented; ✓
- There is continuous assessment of student learning in all degree programs and the general education core curriculum; ✓
- Assessment data are being used by faculty to inform their curricular and program decisions; and ✓
- Assessment data are being used by the administration in planning and resource allocation decisions” (Comprehensive Site Visit Report, 2002).

In the strategic planning area the team’s expectations were that at the time of focused visit
- “The University will have a strategic planning process for achieving its mission that ensures continual viability with provisions for updating the plan in order to respond to new conditions, opportunities, and challenges; ✓
- There is ongoing and comprehensive program review which is a basis for resource allocation decisions; ✓
- There is an effective mechanism for the ongoing collection and analysis of relevant data; and ✓
- The measurement of progress is analyzed with respect to a group of benchmark institutions” (Comprehensive Site Visit Report, 2002).
The Next comprehensive visit to the University of Toledo is scheduled for 2011-2012.

C. **Organizational Context**
The University of Toledo is one of 13 state universities in Ohio. It offers more than 250 undergraduate and graduate degree programs in eight colleges, which are: Arts and Sciences, Business, Education, Engineering, Health and Human Services, Law, Pharmacy, and University College. The University of Toledo is classified as “Doctoral/Research Extensive”, according to the Carnegie Foundation, and it currently enrolls approximately 21,000 students. According to the General Catalog, the mission of the University is described as, “a student-centered public metropolitan research university, that integrates learning, discovery and engagement, enabling students to attain their highest potential in an environment that embraces and celebrates human diversity, respect for individuals and freedom of expression” (The University of Toledo General Catalog, p. 5).

D. **Interactions with Organizational Constituencies**
The team met with a wide array of institutional constituencies and they are listed as follows:
1. A meeting with the University of Toledo President
2. A meeting with the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
3. A meeting with senior Vice president for Finance, Technology, and Operations.
4. A meeting with the Deans of all the Campus colleges.
5. A meeting with Vice Presidents of Enrollment and Financial Services
6. A meeting with the members of the Campus Assessment Committee
7. A meeting with the Senate Curriculum Committee
8. A meeting with Students
9. A meeting with the Strategic Planning Group
10. A meeting with the members of the EAS Committee
11. A Lunch meeting with students and campus representatives
12. A Telephone interview with the Chair of the Board of Trustees
13. A meeting with the Members of Student Survey Committee

E. **Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed**
The team reviewed a large number of documents, materials, and the contents of the University Web Pages, particularly relevant to the areas of foci. They are as follows:
1. University of Toledo Focused visit Self-Study
2. 2002 Report of Comprehensive Site Visit
3. University of Toledo’s response to the Comprehensive Visit Report
4. The University of Toledo 2004-2006 General catalog
5. Assessment Plan for the University of Toledo
6. Strategic Directions for the Next Decade (Updated October 1, 2004)
II. AREAS OF FOCUS

A. Statement of Focus
The visit to the University of Toledo focused on progress made toward the implementation of a university-wide program to assess student-learning outcomes across its undergraduate and graduate programs and also progress made toward developing and implementing a strategic plan for attaining its institutional mission.

B. Statement of Evidence (Assessment and Strategic Planning)

Assessment

1. Evidence that demonstrates Adequate Progress in the Area of Focus
   a) A conversation with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Toledo showed the importance of student assessment and a clear understanding of both its necessity and complexity. The
documents, such as Minutes of Board Meetings, clearly provided evidence of the need for the University of Toledo to develop a common culture across the University campus, and its authorization to hire a Vice President who would use a shared culture of assessment to help the University develop that common culture.

b) The University President has identified areas of focused excellence and authorized a number of initiatives, such as a commission on diversity, shared governance, outreach engagement and first year experiences, which emphasize student learning that is clearly linked with assessment.

c) Administrative, faculty, and staff representatives of the University of Toledo campus demonstrated a commitment to improving assessment. Since the last comprehensive visit, the University has sought consultation and advice from a respected leader in the field of assessment and has responded to the suggestions made for improvement. Under the leadership of a Vice President for Academic Affairs, the University has made remarkable progress in helping colleges and departments identify student learning outcomes, developing assessment methods and measures linked to those outcomes, constructing rubrics and curriculum maps, and gathering data pertaining to student learning in relationship to learning outcomes.

d) Academic departments/units of colleges across campus have engaged in developing methods for evaluating specific program-related learning outcomes in their units. One example of such an effort is the development of an Electronic Assessment System (EAS) by the College of Education. The EAS system has potential for campus-wide use in evaluating learning outcomes.

e) Institutional commitment for refining the assessment process is also evident by the fact that all of the colleges and academic units of the University have established an evaluation committee, whose roles and responsibilities are to identify critical outcome indicators, selection of valid measures, and processes for using assessment findings to refine and improve institutional delivery systems.

f) Faculty is effectively engaged with the program advisory committees that discuss and help academic units and colleges in their efforts to develop program-specific assessment systems.

g) The university facilities, such as the Office of Institutional Research and Center for Teaching and Learning, generate information that
links with the institutional efforts related to the Area of Focus (student learning).

2. Evidence That Demonstrates Further Organizational Attention is required in the Area of Focus

a) Assessment of achievement of the University level student learning outcomes such as general education core outcomes and other intellectual competencies in the areas of ethics and values and information acquisition is limited to only some of the general education competencies (reading, writing, mathematics, science, and critical thinking). As the assessment plan matures and is broadly implemented the Institution needs to extend its assessment focus on competencies in the areas of higher order intellectual learning and problems solving.

b) While the catalog contains a statement describing the assessment program, the statement does not provide information to the students about their role and responsibility in the assessment activity, i.e., what are the expectations of the students.

c) Once the guidelines for the development of the general education courses have been approved, the student outcome objectives for each area should be included in public documents such as the catalog.

d) Given the few instances of closure on the feedback loop for students, the Template for College Assessment Plans could be revised to include the feedback component: It should be helpful for the college assessment plans to include procedures for providing students with their outcome assessment information as a way to encourage their self-reflection and responsibility for their learning. Most department assessment programs provide student learning outcome information and feedback to faculty but rarely include students in the feedback loop.

e) To assist departments in writing measurable student outcome statements, experienced faculty and staff on the campus could provide assistance, e.g., providing examples, offering a working session, etc. The University has many highly qualified faculty and staff who could assist in this task.

f) Although great progress has been made campus-wide in the area of assessment, the University of Toledo will need to continue to refine learning outcomes so that they are approximately measurable. Some of the department assessment programs have not articulated
measurable student outcome objectives and many of the current learning outcomes are still in the early draft stages and need to be refined to reflect best practices in the field of assessment.

g) One of the critical elements of any assessment process is the utilization of feedback from obtained results. The paradigms for the use of evaluation findings for improving evaluation methodology and instruction are still at developmental stages across colleges and programs. Sufficient attention needs to be paid to this aspect of assessment.

h) The University of Toledo employs a number of adjunct/part-time faculties. Many of these faculty members appear to be deeply aware and are engaged not only in delivering classroom instruction but also in their department’s efforts to implement assessment processes. Nonetheless, the University will certainly be required to sustain its assessment efforts in the future. Therefore, it will be critically important for the University to find creative ways to encourage, reward, and motivate both adjuncts as well as tenure-track faculty to sustain their continued involvement in assessment processes.

3. Evidence that demonstrate further organizational attention and commission follow-up are required in the area of focus

None noted

Strategic Planning

1. Evidence that Demonstrates Adequate Progress in the Area of Focus

a) The team’s interactions with the Chair of the Board of Trustees gave the team a very convincing impression suggesting that the Board has a high level of commitment to ensure that significant steps are taken to develop and implement a strategic plan to guide decisions for attaining institutional mission. The Board granted its approval of the university administration’s request for taking several critical steps, such as realignment of responsibilities of key campus committees, and to develop plans and procedures not only for looking to ensure that the progress has been made and questions and issues have been resolved but also to ensure that there exists a support system for sustaining the implementation of planned activities.

b) The university has demonstrated a clear commitment to developing a strategic plan by spending about two years to develop a vision of
its strategic plan. The process during these years of work involved the systematic gathering and analysis of data, development and approval of a mission statement by seeking and incorporating into the mission public input, and Board’s support and approval of its final version of the Strategic Directions for the Next Decade.

c) Administrators, faculty, and students involved in the strategic planning process have repeatedly given the visiting team impression about the validity, relevance, and usefulness of the overall goals, objectives, and activities for moving the university forward. Some of the steps the university has taken, such as establishment of the University-wide Diversity Commission, newly created center for African Americans, FYE project for retention, substantial allocation of fiscal resources for first year enrichment programs, and long-term plans for hiring research-oriented faculty to enhance research and scholarship mission of the university, are closely linked with the assessment and strategic future visions of the university.

d) The plan developed by the university contains objectives, which are prioritized and are linked to various implementation committees to facilitate the accomplishment of institutional goals and outcomes. The benchmark indicator system is useful to monitor progress in various areas.

2. Evidence that Demonstrates Further Organizational Attention is required in the Area of Focus.

a) As the university begins to implement the plan to accomplish the desired mission and goals on a broader scale, it would also be necessary to take a close look at financial projects, which the current version of the plan does not include.

b) The University’s Strategic plan is well conceptualized, is closely linked to the institutional mission, and provides a realistic framework for the utilization of campus resources and administrative support for accomplishing short as well as long-term goals. However, the institution must continue making efforts to sustain the momentum, which has just begun.

3. Evidence that Demonstrates Further organizational Attention and Commission Follow-up are required in the Area of Focus.

None Noted

C. Recommendation of the Team
The team’s observations, after a careful review of all the materials and documents and after having made the site visit to the University of Toledo, led to the conclusion that the university has effectively addressed all the issues and concerns raised during the last comprehensive visit with regard to the areas of assessment and strategic planning. The team recommends that no further reports or visits be required until the time of next comprehensive visit in 2011-2012.

D. Rationale for recommendation

There is significant and remarkable progress since the last visit in the area of assessment. Evidence has validated the self-study documents provided by the University of Toledo in preparation for the focused visit. Examples of progress regarding assessment of learning outcomes include University’s articulation of measurable outcome objectives for the general education curriculum, Faculty Senate approval of the General Education curriculum, establishment of assessment committees in all campus units and colleges, developed assessment plans of colleges, and allocation of necessary university resources to support the implementation of assessment efforts campus-wide. Similarly, the university has done exemplary work in developing a strategic plan, which is clear, straightforward, and is approved and supported by the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees.

III. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Summary of Commission Review

B. Nature of Organization

C. Conditions of Affiliation

1. Stipulation of Affiliation

2. Approval Degree Sites

3. Approval of Distance Education Degree

4. Reports Required

5. Other Visits Scheduled

D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

NO CHANGE

NO CHANGE

NO CHANGE

NONE

NONE
ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A FOCUSED VISIT
(COMMISSION-MANDATED)

TO

THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

APRIL 25-26, 2005

FOR

THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Evaluation Team

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REPORT OF A FOCUSED VISIT
(COMMISSION-MANDATED)

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

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ADVANCEMENT SECTION

IV. CONSULTATION OF THE TEAM

A. Observations of the Team Regarding the Areas of the Focus.

In 2002 a team of consultant-evaluators that conducted a site visit to the University of Toledo made a recommendation that the university be required to undergo a commission-mandated focused visit on assessment of student learning, and strategic planning in the academic year 2004-2005. The team, in recommending a focused visit, outlined in the report a set of expectations for the focused site visit team to use in evaluating the progress made by the university in the areas of concern.

In response, the university provided two documents to Commission in preparation for the focused visit that took place on April 24-25, 2005. These documents are: Assessment Plan for the University of Toledo, and Strategic Directions for the Next Decade. A review of the chronology of events that took place in developing these materials clearly reveals that the university has taken serious steps over a period of past two to three years and has involved a wide array of constituencies and incorporated their input in developing institution-wide assessment and strategic plans.

The team found during its visit that both documents (on assessment and strategic planning) were prepared with great care and with the involvement of all institutional constituencies. The documents provide a detailed description of the process that was undertaken in developing assessment and strategic plans. In the area of assessment, the available evidence convincingly demonstrates that the university has made a concerted effort in developing a university-wide culture that puts a heavy emphasis on student learning and assessment of learning outcomes. The university has gathered necessary resources to support broad ranging assessment efforts campus-wide.

In the area of strategic planning, the final version of the plan is complete and links well with the mission of the institution. The development of the plan has involved a good deal of data collection and analysis and was approved by the faculty, administration, and by the Board of Trustees. The documents, that the team has reviewed and examined, amply demonstrate strong institutional commitment to use planned strategies to make decisions for accomplishing the institutional mission.
In summary, the team firmly believes that the University of Toledo made an excellent preparation for the visit through its reports. The team also believes that the University of Toledo has made outstanding progress in regard to both assessment and strategic planning processes since the last comprehensive visit. The institution has met all the expectations in the areas of focus as outlined in the 2002 comprehensive visit report.

B. Consultations of the Team

As the university attempts to seek and sustain the efforts it has taken in the areas of assessment and strategic planning, the team offers the following advice in its friendly consultative role:

I. Assessment

a) **Ensuring public documents contain adequate emphasis on assessment.** While the general catalog of the university contains a statement describing the assessment program, the statement can also provide information to the students about their role and responsibilities in assessment activities, such as the student's responsibilities in utilizing assessment feedback to improve outcomes of learning.

b) **Provide mini-grants to faculty interested in research in the area of assessment and classroom learning.** The university should continue supporting faculty research and scholarship activities by providing funds to conduct research related to teaching learning issues such as instructional effectiveness, achievement motivation, and evaluation of learning outcomes. Individual faculty members having particular responsibility related to instructional delivery and student learning should particularly be invited to apply for these mini grants.

c) **Encourage faculty to apply for extramural funds for conducting assessment research.** Some governmental agencies have funds available for research in the areas of improving teaching learning process and faculty should be encouraged and given incentives such as release time to explore and apply to obtain extramural funds that support research and personnel training programs.

d) **Develop training programs for new faculty and department heads.** The faculty and administrators may benefit greatly through training and orientation sessions for faculty members and administrators with major responsibilities for assessment. These training programs should be particularly useful for sustaining interest and curiosity necessary for continued improvement of assessment efforts.
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e) **Continue the policy of holding deans and department heads accountable for the conduct of assessment.** It is critical to the continued development and refinement of the assessment program. The unit administrators may be required to include assessment activities in their annual reports.

f) **Develop a Master Course Syllabi.** It might be helpful for the university to create master syllabi, which can be used by faculty university-wide. Such syllabi would contain details of expected learning outcomes for students, evaluation criteria, and procedures for utilization of assessment feedback for improving instruction as well as maximizing student learning.

2. **Strategic Planning**

The team commends the university’s dedication and efforts in making significant progress in developing a strategic plan, which is clear, well conceptualized, and links well with the university’s mission of teaching, scholarship, and outreach activities. It is aligned with the university’s assessment plan. Although the university has made an excellent start in developing and implementing its strategic plan, the team offers the following advice to assist in further strengthening and sustaining the well-begun start over the next several years.

a) **Establish a budget for sustaining critical activities that have been started.** Projects, such as a University-wide Diversity Plan, First Year Experience, faculty recruitment plans for enhancing research and scholarship mission of the university, are of paramount importance for the university to develop a strategic niche and to strive for focused excellence.

b) **Establish rewards for faculty and administrators for their creative and innovative work that enhances the university’s overall mission and visibility.** The criteria used for promotion and tenure may include activities that enhance the university’s mission related to teaching, mentoring, and enhancing undergraduate education goals.
Team Recommendations for the STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

INSTITUTION and STATE: University of Toledo, OH

TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS): Focused Visit

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW: A visit focused on assessment of student learning and strategic planning

DATES OF REVIEW: 4/25/05 - 4/26/05

Nature of Organization

LEGAL STATUS: Public

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

DEGREES AWARDED: A, B, M, S, D, 1st Prof

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS: None.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF NEW DEGREE SITES: Prior Commission approval required.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES: No prior Commission approval required.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

REPORTS REQUIRED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

OTHER VISITS REQUIRED: Focused Visit: 2004 - 2005; A visit focused on assessment of student learning and strategic planning

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: None

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2001 - 2002