

THE OTTAWA UNIVERSITY SELF-STUDY PLAN

**In Preparation for the 2013-14
Comprehensive Evaluation by**

THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

**Submitted for Review to
Dr. Mary Breslin, HLC Vice President for Accreditation Relations
November 2011**

**On behalf of the Ottawa University
Self-Study Steering Committee**

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Overview

The year 2011 marks the first full year of Ottawa University's period of self-evaluation that will culminate in its ten-year comprehensive review by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) in 2013-14. Self-study is a requirement for continued accreditation but, more importantly, it is an opportunity for institutional renewal and improvement. Continuously accredited since 1914, Ottawa University also celebrates its Sesquicentennial in 2013-14.

Ottawa University is a significantly changed and stronger institution since its last comprehensive evaluation in 2003-04. President Kevin Eichner has inspired the Self-Study Steering Committee, and the entire University community, to integrate directly into its process the most important initiative in Ottawa University's modern history: Vision 2020—The Ottawa University Strategic Plan. In July 2011, Ottawa University successfully completed Phase I of Vision 2020, a three-year process that greatly strengthened the University's financial resources, operations, and data-driven culture. Now, institutional self-study launches simultaneously with the three-year Vision 2020 Phase II to focus on academic excellence and the substantive redesign and evaluation of the Ottawa University student experience.

Self-study unites all constituencies in engaging the core components of the Proposed Criteria for Accreditation in light of the Ottawa University Mission Statement and the vision and purposes that translate the mission in the life of the University. Self-study requires the best efforts and concerted involvement of administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees. The process will be characterized by individual and collective initiative, by an emphasis on effective communication, and by a commitment on the part of all to increased institutional effectiveness and to student learning for lives of significance.

Steering Committee, Criterion Committees, and Subcommittee Process

The Self-Study Steering Committee, the five Criterion Committees, and specially focused subcommittees include key administrators, faculty, and staff who represent the three Schools—Arts and Sciences, Business, and Education; the Center for Personal and Professional Growth (CPPG) that represents the centrality of general education and academic advisement in conjunction with the three schools; and each of the University's campuses, both the traditional College in Ottawa, Kansas, and the Adult, Professional, and Online Studies (APOS) campuses in Kansas, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Indiana. The Board of Trustees has already engaged in a discussion of all governance-related core components of the Proposed Criteria for Accreditation. Their feedback will be

incorporated immediately into the process and direct Board representation in the committee structure will occur in 2012. Current students and alumni who are University employees bring their valuable perspectives to a range of committees. The self-study committee structure thus unites the talents of University-wide as well as site-based contributors for a successful self-study experience.

The Associate Vice President for Regulatory Affairs and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness reprise their roles in the successful 2003-04 reaccreditation process in leading the 2013-14 self-study process.

Communication loops are assured by the interrelationship of the Self-Study Steering Committee with other Ottawa University structures, including the President's Cabinet, the University Academic Council, the three Schools, and the CPPG. The President has incorporated self-study progress in the agenda of President's Cabinet, Management Team, and Board of Trustees meetings. Administrative, faculty, and staff representatives communicate the work of the Steering Committee to their respective sites at both faculty and staff meetings.

Steering Committee members selected all contributors for the five Criterion Committees and serve as co-chairs of each committee. Special subcommittees support the work of the Criterion Committees. The subcommittees are organized around the concerns cited by the 2003-04 HLC comprehensive team, new regulatory issues, as well as self-identified areas for evaluation and opportunities for exploration through the self-study process. Steering Committee members serve as chairs or members of each subcommittee.

Since February 2011, the Steering Committee has engaged in reviewing the alpha and beta versions of the Proposed Criteria and has created from its discussions the "Criterion Inventory." This inventory includes: (1) each HLC criterion and core component, (2) any related assurance concern or advancement recommendation from the HLC 2003-04 Report of a Visit, (3) prospective "talking points" for each criterion and core component, (4) evaluative evidence or data source documents, (5) location or functional area and/or contact person(s), (6) evaluative evidence or data needs, and (7) notes for follow up or special consideration. The transition between alpha and beta versions of the Proposed Criteria required more re-mapping than expected, and at this writing an additional review and update will be needed upon HLC adoption of the gamma version. The Criterion Inventory is posted on the University's employee portal for wide communication of Steering Committee activity.

The timeline for self-study that is included on the final pages of this plan illustrates the steps and process for Steering Committee, Criterion Committee, and Subcommittee collaboration in developing the final report and documentation for the 2013-14 comprehensive evaluation by HLC.

Self-Study Objectives

The Steering Committee developed the following self-study objectives which were communicated by President Eichner in his self-study announcement to the entire University community: "We do many things that are important for our future, but few are

as critical as this. So let's do this work with vigor and creativity." Ottawa University will engage in self-study pursuant to the following objectives.

- To evaluate Ottawa University's effectiveness in light of its mission and purposes, to identify strengths and challenges, and to integrate learning from the self-study process itself to inform and fulfill strategic planning.
- To evaluate progress made in response to concerns of the 2003-04 HLC team and to continue development of improvement strategies.
- To respond to HLC's heightened expectations for the assessment of student academic achievement, beginning with the conversion to an electronic assessment process, as an integral part of the University's commitment to accomplishing its educational purposes more effectively, as evidenced in continuous improvement in teaching and learning.
- To demonstrate Ottawa University's preparedness to request removal of stipulations on its Statement of Affiliation Status in regard to expansion of existing graduate programs to already established campuses.
- To demonstrate formally how Ottawa University satisfies each core component of the HLC Criteria for Accreditation and positions the institution for the future.
- To involve all University constituencies in a self-evaluation characterized by thoroughness, integrity, and commitment to institutional improvement.

Self-Study Committee Structure and Responsibilities

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SELF-STUDY COORDINATOR

1. Serve as Chair of the Steering Committee
2. Serve as contact person with HLC
3. Serve as resource person to interpret HLC guidelines
4. Draft the Self-Study Plan—Objectives, Timeline, Committee Structure
5. Draft short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term objectives for Criterion Committees and Subcommittees, with the assistance of appropriate personnel and groups
6. Distribute appropriate HLC and internal resource materials to Steering Committee members, Criterion Committee chairs, and Subcommittee chairs
7. Serve as resource person for the Steering Committee, Criterion Committees, and Subcommittees
8. Co-Chair Criterion Four: Academic Programs—Evaluation and Improvement (emphasis on Ottawa University Program for the Assessment of Student Learning)
9. Review Criterion Committee plans for data gathering to avoid redundancy
10. Communicate progress in self-study to the University community
11. Develop writing guidelines for Criterion Committees and Subcommittees

12. Collaborate in the development of format for self-study production
13. Serve as chair of the writing/editing team for the final Self-Study Report
14. Write Self-Study Report Introduction Chapter, Resolution of 2003-04 Concerns Chapter, Strengths and Challenges summaries, and Conclusion
15. Collaborate with University Registrar on completion of Institutional Snapshot
16. Collaborate with Director of Institutional Effectiveness on leadership of Electronic Resource Room Subcommittee
17. Coordinate the HLC Evaluation Team Visit
18. Coordinate with HLC Team Chair the onsite arrangements and schedules.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

1. Understand all HLC materials, the 2003-04 HLC Report of a Visit, new guidelines for the self-study process, and areas of overlap in the Proposed Criteria for Accreditation
2. Keep written documentation/minutes of all meetings and forward them to the Self-Study Coordinator for communication via the portal
3. Endorse and support the Self-Study Plan and its phases as clarity emerges on HLC Criteria and Core Components
4. Serve as co-chairs or members of Criterion Committees for gathering and analyzing data and producing reports, and as co-chairs or members of Subcommittees in accomplishing needed work as self-study progresses
5. Review all short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term objectives of Criterion Committees and Subcommittees
6. Update the Criterion Inventory “talking points,” data sources, and data needs to support the work of Criterion Committees and Subcommittees
7. Assist in the communication of the self-study process at all University sites
8. Review all final reports of Criterion Committees and Subcommittees
9. Work with Self-Study Coordinator in the preparation of the final Self-Study Report and supporting documentation
10. Assist in preparing all personnel at all University sites for the HLC visit

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FIVE CRITERION COMMITTEES

Each of the five Criterion Committees is co-chaired by members of the Self-Study Steering Committee, including a member of the President's Cabinet, as well as representation from all parts of the institution. Selected members of the Ottawa University Board of Trustees will participate actively in the self-study process in 2012 while others will serve in an advisory capacity.

Criterion Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs

1. Understand the core components of the assigned criterion while distinguishing where they overlap with other criteria
2. Keep written documentation/minutes of all meetings and forward them to the Self-Study Coordinator for communication via the portal
3. Continue to expand Criterion Inventory "talking points," data sources, and data needs for each core component
4. Understand 2003-04 HLC Report of a Visit and other supplementary material provided by Self-Study Coordinator
5. Lead full committee to achieve the following:

With Full Committee Membership

6. Identify major institutional changes in respective criterion area of self-study that have taken place since 2003-04
7. Identify strengths and challenges, continuing since 2003-04 or new since 2003-04 in the assigned criterion
8. Identify short-term plans to address challenges that can be accomplished during the period of self-study (that are not already being addressed through subcommittees such as Library or Student Services Assessment)
9. Identify resources and data currently in place that can be used to substantiate the core components in the assigned criterion
10. Identify resource and data needs that are not currently in place to substantiate the core components in the assigned criterion
11. Develop and implement instruments and processes to gather new data/information, as needed in the assigned criterion
12. Gather all information from #8, #9, and #10 necessary to write the report and present the related documentation for display
13. Develop and communicate plans to address challenges identified in #6 and #7 above, so that resolution (or progress) can be demonstrated in the final self-study report and documentation

Criterion Committee Final Report for Self-Study

14. Describe and analyze institutional changes in respective criterion that have taken place since 2003-04

15. Describe and evaluate Ottawa University according to each of the core components of the assigned criterion
16. Incorporate the work of related Subcommittees
17. Analyze data to determine and describe strengths and challenges (and provide supporting documentation for strengths) for the assigned criterion
18. Develop recommendations for addressing challenges and strengthening overall institutional effectiveness in the assigned criterion
19. Write Criterion Committee Chapters, using writing guidelines provided by Self-Study Coordinator
20. Respond to all requests to coordinate documentation for Electronic Resource Room

ELECTRONIC RESOURCE ROOM COMMITTEE

The Electronic Resource Room Committee will produce the portal-based resource room for the 2013-14 HLC Comprehensive Visit; will communicate data sources and analyses to all committee chairs; will supervise and verify records retention systems at all sites for documents that are not part of the electronic resource room (e.g., syllabi, faculty files, financial aid files, academic records); and will provide to HLC through the leadership and participation of the University Registrar the required Institutional Snapshot.

SELF-STUDY SUBCOMMITTEES

The Self-Study Steering Committee has established subcommittees for specific purposes or converted long-existing committees to self-study subcommittees. These subcommittees include:

- Federal Compliance Subcommittee
- Library Improvement Subcommittee: The Library Improvement Subcommittee has been a permanent standing committee since 2003-04 under the name Library Advisory Board. Its charge is to demonstrate sweeping improvements called for by the 2003-04 HLC Report of a Visit and a studied response to the recommendations entailed in the Commission's evaluation of Ottawa University's 2006 Progress Report.
- Student Services Assessment Subcommittee (SSAS): Vision 2020, Phase I, called for the creation of an entirely new student services model for Ottawa University. The new model is based on holistic student development and support and is utilized in the Adawe Center at the College and the Center for Academic and Professional Services (CAPS) at APOS campuses making them central to the success of entering and continuing students and the enhancement of the student experience. Due to the potential impact on student experience and retention, the Self-Study Steering Committee established a two-part, multi-site subcommittee to evaluate the effectiveness of the model and to identify areas in need of improvement: Advisement, Extracurricular, Co-Curricular Assessment and Support Services Assessment.

- **HLC Assumed Practices Confirmation Subcommittee:** This subcommittee works to review all changes in the new HLC Minimum Expectations to ensure that all expectations are substantiated and fully documented in Ottawa University policies, documents, and files prior to the 2013-14 HLC comprehensive evaluation. In addition, this subcommittee works to ensure that the Institutional Profile of quantitative data required by HLC is consistent with data reported and analyzed in the Self-Study Report. The Institutional Profile will be submitted to HLC with the Self-Study Report, the Audited Financial Statements for the two most recently completed fiscal years, current copies of all institutional catalogs, and copies of faculty, staff, and student handbooks.

ADDITIONAL SUBCOMMITTEES

The work of several University standing committees will contribute information and analyses to the five Criterion Committees. These include: The Adjunct Faculty Continuous Improvement and Support Committee, the Faculty Development Committee, and the Center for Personal and Professional Growth (CPPG). Members of each of these committees also serve on Criterion Committees.

Two ad hoc committees are planned for 2012: The Marketing Improvement Subcommittee and the Graduate Program Expansion Subcommittee that will engage in work exploratory to a request of Substantive Change to accompany the 2013-14 Self-Study.