Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
of
BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY
Lewisburg, PA 17837

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report
And a visit to the campus on March 28-31, 2004

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This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair; it goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission. It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist Bucknell University. This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.

Date when instruction began: 1846

Year of first graduating class: 1851

President/CEO: Steffen H. Rogers

Chief Academic Officer: Stephen H. Bowen

Chair of the Board of Trustees: Susan Crawford

The members of the Middle States Visiting Team would like to express our gratitude to the trustees, administration, faculty, students, and staff of Bucknell University who provided a hospitable and supportive atmosphere for our Team while we were in Lewisburg. Our special thanks are directed to the persons responsible for compiling the Self-Study document, for those persons who met with the Visiting Team, and for those individuals who extended themselves to make our stay as pleasant and productive as possible.

It is important to take note of a significant aspect of the timing in the preparation of this report as it relates to events on the Bucknell University campus. In the course of developing the Self-Study document, the current president resigned his position and, while preparing for the Team's visit, a new president was selected. As such, Bucknell was faced with challenges that are not normally presented to institutions under review.

Bucknell University describes the form of its Self-Study as "comprehensive." Self Studies are intended to be institutional undertakings, involving a wide-range of institutional members. Although much work went into the preparation of the Self-Study report by a few people, there did not appear to be an appropriate high level of community involvement in either the Self-Study process or in writing the Self-Study Report. Furthermore, the Team had questions about how seriously the review was taken by the majority of people with whom we met, as evidenced by those individuals' lack of awareness of the material in the Self-Study.

Standard 1: Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The Mission Statement of Bucknell University was last revised in 1991. About a year ago, the University undertook an effort to modernize that statement. The community did not concur on major themes for inclusion in the new statement, and the effort was abandoned. The 1991 Mission Statement does not contain the clarity of mission required to lead Bucknell today or in the future. Furthermore, roles and responsibilities of community members may not be relevant for modem times.

Recommendation:

- The new president should complete a draft of the Mission Statement and submit it to the Bucknell community for review and the Board of Trustees for approval by the end of the 2004-05 academic year.

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation & Institutional Renewal

The Self-Study chronicled the University's planning efforts of the last decade and the development of Vision 2010, the most recent planning effort that was suspended in 2003. Originally intended as the basis for a comprehensive self-study with thematic emphasis on strategic planning, the Vision 2010 draft is a comprehensive document with significant detail for the major divisions of the University. As such, while the Board of

Trustees did not adopt Vision 2010, implementation of the individual divisional plans is proceeding subject to constraints of current resources. This process has afforded divisions the opportunity to move forward, yet without the guidance of an institution-wide plan or vision, nor with cross-divisional review and consensus on priorities. Such implementation potentially gives rise to diverging programs and priorities, duplication of initiatives, and competing demand for support from University-based services (such as technology or facilities). Further, the lack of a current, institution-wide plan, as noted in other sections of our report, has made it difficult for us to assess Bucknell relative to criteria of other ''Standards of Excellence.''

The Self-Study pointedly highlights the lessons learned from the planning efforts of the last decade. Whether one uses the term "compartmentalized" or "silos" to describe the planning effort, it is evident that, for a variety of reasons, ranging from lack of a shared institutional vision to the basic nature of human organizations, it has been easier for divisions to develop their own plans rather than concur on goals and objectives institution-wide. Similarly, planning efforts have not been fully integrated—educational plan development has preceded development of financial plans and assessment and benchmarking plans. Planning effort has been extensive, so much so that from our conversations, we concur that students, faculty, and staff may in fact be "planning weary and that any efforts to undertake a comprehensive planning process immediately following the arrival of the new president may be too early for the process to yield the desired—and essential—outcomes. Finally, we recognize that current institutional governance structures may not be optimal for undertaking such a planning effort at this time, and we suggest that the current reviews of governance effectiveness be expeditiously completed before a comprehensive planning process commences.

The Team heard clearly the Bucknell community's recognition for the need for renewed focus on planning and linked resource allocation. Yet, before a planning process is undertaken, not only must the lessons learned from prior planning efforts be considered, but there also must be a clear, affirmed mission and vision for the University. We believe that while the community has struggled with this in the past, the new president's arrival affords an opportunity to review the University's mission with the aid of a new perspective.

Suggestions:

- The new president lead the next comprehensive planning effort.
- The Mission Statement be completed in the context of the purpose of a residential liberal arts and professional studies institution and the complete educational experience of students which includes their curricular, co-curricular, personal and professional development; private higher education; economic and demographic realities—and with a focus on stating the mission clearly to communicate the distinctive characteristics and strengths of the University.
- Initial planning and thinking be informed by the wealth of data and information gathered in the Vision 2010 and Self-Study processes, divisional planning,

assessment and benchmarking efforts undertaken by Institutional Research, and observations and suggestions made in this report.
- The resulting plan be an "institution-wide" plan that outlines University priorities that subsequently lead to coordinated action plans within divisions, goals and benchmarks, timelines for accomplishing plan objectives, a financial/resource allocation plan, and periodic assessment plan.
- The timeline for the planning process be determined by the President, giving consideration to effectively balancing the demands of a presidential transition and the need for a plan to establish institutional priorities to inform resource allocation and generation decisions.

Recommendation:
- An update on the University's comprehensive planning process be provided by the end of the 2004-05 academic year.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

<u>Finances, Facilities, and Personnel</u>

As a result of the lack of closure of Vision 2010, and the concomitant lack of clearly stated goals and objectives, resource allocation continues to rely on the 1997 "Excellence & Access, A Financial Plan for Bucknell," as the source of guidance. That plan is well-integrated and has clear and measurable goals and objectives, together with a timeline. However, that plan was designed to be complete in 2001-02.

The operational financial planning processes are in place and functioning in spite of recent turnover in the Vice President for Finance and Administration (VPFA). The VPFA develops a 5-year financial model that incorporates evaluation of external parameters such as the comprehensive fee of admissions overlap schools, integrates enrollment and financial aid assumptions and projections, and utilizes the University Committee for Planning and Budget for discussion of the assumptions. The 5-year model is used as the beginning point of the one-year budget and the University has been able to balance its budget since 1972. There are two significant expense drivers that are garnering significant attention. Benefit costs have been capped as a percent of salaries by direction from the Board of Trustees; benefit programs are under review to understand how significant the changes to the benefit program might have to be to meet this cap. The second area of concern is the additional costs driven by the new construction around the campus.

There is a robust process for setting aside funds for capital equipment purchases, technology investment, and facilities repair and replacement based on a percentage of asset replacement value that allows for multi-year planning within each area. However, the annual budget preparation process does not substitute for an integrated resource allocation process. Each of the departments attempts to integrate its plan, but the lack of clearly stated goals and objectives makes this difficult. It is a testament to the skill and

dedication at the operational level of each division that Bucknell continues to do as well as it has.

The institution has several committees that help to assure that adequate resources, within the financial limitations of the University, are in place to accomplish the mission of the University. The University Planning and Budget committee has budget oversight, the allocation of academic positions is reviewed by the Committee on Staff Planning and reallocated as necessary, and each open administrative position is reviewed by the President's staff. The funds for capital projects are part of a robust planning process as noted above, and there is a comprehensive campus master plan.

Suggestions:

Once the strategic planning process is completed and the 5-year plan reshaped by the goals of the strategic plan, we suggest that:

- The University establishes strategies to measure and assess the level and efficient utilization of institutional resources required to support the institution's mission and goals
- Conduct periodic assessments of the strategies

Information Technology, Library & Information Resources

Throughout the Self-Study reference is made to information technology resources and information (library) resources. At Bucknell, Information Services and Resources (ISR) is an integrated organization consisting of information technology and Library services. The two functions were merged in the late 1990's, and it is well known that mergers of technology and library organizations do not always succeed. ISR is an exception—the division's strong philosophy of integration coupled with service, mutual respect of technology and library disciplines, and a strong leadership team have contributed to the success of the organization, success that is recognized by both the campus as well as the ISR staff. Our visits to the Library clearly indicate that students take advantage of the services and resources available.

As noted in the Self-Study, we found that ISR conducts formalized assessment of its services and customer needs, and allocates resources—both financial and human ₋ to address both large and small, one-time and recurring projects. ISR consults with advisory committees in determining program and resource priorities, and was commended by those with whom we spoke for their ability to solicit needs from the campus community, as well as to work effectively with these advisory committees and senior staff in planning and building consensus on priorities. The division strives to plan on a mid- to long-range cycle, so that adequate resources are available for projects. The University funds an Information Technology Reserve Fund, the intent of which is to maintain and upgrade the University's technology infrastructure and to provide modest support for a number of new technology projects.

Despite relatively favorable annual budget allocations and reserve funding, ISR faces resource constraints. First, as is the case at other colleges and universities, the "technology agenda" continues to grow. In ISR's case, the lack of integrated university-wide planning has resulted in growing individual demands for technology services and infrastructure across the institution. Second, the cost of library acquisitions, whether they be books or electronic journals, continues to escalate, and this cost has created an additional "long-term expense driver" for the University. While the "Core Journal Project" in which library staff have worked with departments to eliminate lower-priority and lesser-used journals in order to stretch resources, longer-term planning needs to address the appropriate level of resources and the balance of electronic and print journals. Finally, collections are approaching the maximum number of volumes that can be accommodated in the current physical facility, and planning needs to address longer-term programmatic and facilities needs and options in this regard.

In its assessment and planning, ISR has identified activities to further support the academic mission of the University, maximize utility of the University's data resources, protect and preserve University resources, provide access to services and resources, and enhance ISR's service model and its collaborative work environment. ISR has also recognized the potential for greater leverage of the University's technology investment across the organization to enhance effectiveness and operational efficiencies.

Suggestions:

> The University, in the context of its institution-wide planning should explore the potential benefits of greater leverage of its current and on-going technology investment, in support of educational program and administrative effectiveness.

- In its planning, the University reconsider its technology adoption philosophy, balancing the need to embrace emerging technologies with prudent investment in technology.
- Future planning for library and information resources considers some of the current thinking about undergraduate libraries, particularly those pertaining to physical facilities, digital resources, and the library as an "information commons.
- ISR appears to be well-connected across campus and has effective advisory groups. However, given the institution-wide utilization of technology and implications for technology decisions, growing pressures on the ISR organization, and in light of the potential for ISR to assist the University in enhancing operational efficiency and effectiveness, consideration should be given to including ISR leadership in senior staff discussions, particularly when technology-related issues or projects are agenda topics.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance
Standard 5: Administration

Bucknell's success is a tribute to the men and women who labor on behalf of the University, not to its governance structure. Although ostensibly shared, governance is

mainly "shared" by trustees and faculty at the expense of the President. As recognized in the Self-Study, this structure needs to change.

We feel strongly that the President and chief academic officer need to reclaim their authority. Without a realignment of authority, Bucknell will not be able to maximize its obvious potential and move forward. Opportunities have been lost in the past; if future opportunities are not to be lost, both the Board of Trustees and the faculty must do their part to insure a successful, long-standing presidency. By doing so, they will help insure the University's success and make it more likely that the turnover in senior administrative personnel, which is unusually high, can be significantly lessened.

To its credit the Board of Trustees has begun the process. The Board has been tremendously generous to the University with both its resources and time. However, it has also engaged over the years in micromanagement, ranging from involvement in matters normally within the purview of the President to interference in athletics. By making the President a voting member of the Board, the Board has begun to reverse a process by which it has not been well-served. More needs to be done than simply making the President a voting member of the Board.

Suggestions:

- The President should have the right to participate actively in all Board committees, except the Audit Committee;
- Agendas for full Board meetings should be set by the President and Chair of the Board and committee agendas should be set by the President (or his delegate) and the Board committee chair;
- The Board should re-examine its By-Laws to reflect the conclusions of its self-assessment;
- Trustee Access Days should be terminated; and
- The practice of "backchanneling" should be ended and all communications with Board members should be through the President, or, in the alternative, the President should be kept fully informed of any communications between members of the Bucknell community and individual Board members.

The issue of faculty governance is more problematic. Unlike the Board of Trustees, the faculty does not understand that its role in governance needs to change. While we recognize that every institution is different and that the processes in place at Bucknell, from the faculty point of view, work well, it is clear to us that the President and chief academic officer do not lead academically, since they lack the normal authority that people in their positions have. Although the faculty is incredibly committed to Bucknell and the process that has existed for more than two decades, we suggest that the self-assessment that the faculty has agreed to undergo result in some basic changes.

- The President should chair faculty meetings, rather than be treated as a guest at those meetings;
- The President should be given the ability to review, and, if necessary, to change salary recommendations; and
- The Faculty Manual should be amended to give the President the right to reject a tenure recommendation, as is standard at institutions across the land.

Recommendation:

With a governance structure that is weak, the Board should continue to address this issue, the faculty should begin to do so, and the authority of the President should be reclaimed, and evidence of progress should be submitted by the end of the 2004-05 academic year.

Standard 6: Institutional Integrity

A comprehensive review of the University's compliance with the standard of "Integrity" is provided in the Self-Study. Descriptions of University policies and procedures pertaining to the fundamental elements of this standard illustrate the University's commitment to this standard. The University has established policies and procedures to address each of the fundamental elements of integrity as described in *Characteristics of Excellence.*

Responsibility for establishing and reviewing processes and policies resides with various individuals and groups in the University's governance process. Reviews of the many policies and handbooks are periodic. The University's counsel is involved in these periodic reviews, as well as in the development of new policies.

The Self-Study notes "academic freedom and due process" as a current challenge. Proposed revisions to the Faculty Handbook to address this issue, in accord with the AAUP *Recommended Institutional Regulations* Regulation 7, are pending review. Issues of diversity and campus climate continue to be addressed, and have been recommended by the University as a priority for the next institution-wide plan.

The University has identified the issues of intellectual property rights, course "ownership" in light of for-profit entities which may solicit Bucknell faculty to provide courses for sale on media, patents for faculty-developed products and marketable methodologies, trademark registration, and continuing review of policies pertaining to student conduct and Greek organizations as requiring on-going research and review. Similarly, the University is continually addressing issues of risk management and regulatory compliance, and the Board has taken the provisions of Sarbanes-Oxley into account in its review of its audit committee membership and procedures.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

Bucknell University has an active and vibrant institutional assessment program that provides the institution with a wide range of information that can be used for institutional improvement. Assessment of institutional effectiveness addresses educational offerings, services and processes and takes many forms. Activities include:

- An extensive survey research program that tracks student satisfaction and success, faculty and staff satisfaction, and alumni outcomes;
- Benchmark data on comprehensive fees, faculty salaries, the endowment and other indicators;
- Periodic reviews of administrative offices;
- Periodic reviews of academic departments through self-study and external review;
- Departmental assessment plans for assessing student learning (see Standard 14);
- Assessment plans for general education programs;
- Tracking of financial strategic indicators; and
- Analysis of institutional data such as that related to admissions, enrollment, student financial aid, retention, and graduation.

Bucknell has a written assessment plan that has not been adopted. The plan covers an articulation of the fundamental principles guiding assessment, a conceptual framework for educational outcomes assessment, a comprehensive description of the assessment activities already in place at Bucknell, and an inventory of what assessment measures are used by various divisions on campus.

Central to any assessment plan is the degree to which it reflects the strategic priorities of the institution. Standard Seven of the *Characteristics of Excellence* requires that the assessment plan have "a foundation in the institution's mission, goals and objectives" and that the institution's "written institutional (strategic) plan…reflects a consideration of data from assessment." Evaluation of the degree to which Bucknell meets this standard is complicated by the fact that there is no current strategic plan. As noted earlier, the team found that divisions were using their own planning documents to guide their assessment efforts. There are many examples of assessment activities geared towards areas of institutional priorities. For example, an ad hoc survey on the campus climate for diversity was conducted to better understand Bucknell's strengths and challenges on this issue. The institution also began administration of the CORE alcohol survey to better understand alcohol use on campus.

Suggestions:

- The institution should review the proposed assessment plan and finalize it as soon as possible. This is necessary so that expectations concerning assessment can be better understood across campus. Once the institution establishes a strategic plan, the assessment plan should be reviewed and modified as necessary in order to ensure that strategic priorities are adequately assessed.

- More efforts should be made to share relevant assessment results with segments of the campus community that may benefit from that information.
- The institution may benefit from creating a better way to document how assessment results are used for institutional improvement.

Standard 8: Student Admissions

The admissions picture at Bucknell is strong and growing stronger. There has been a steady increase in the size and quality of the applicant pool, selectivity has increased permitting a more active shaping of the class in ways consistent with the character of the University. The overall appropriateness of the admissions program is indicated by the increasing yield from admitted applicants. The financial aid program has been generally successful in opening opportunities at Bucknell for students of limited means. A pilot program of ''merit'' aid utilizing ''new money'' has provided flexibility to address several other institutional needs while opening up several questions which will have to be addressed in the next few years. There is a widely shared determination to use enrollment management to sustain significant professional programs while maintaining the traditional Bucknell liberal arts categorization within the Carnegie classification scheme. The recent consolidation of various functions in the Office of a Vice-President for Enrollment Management and Communications (VPEM) has produced a more rational oversight of a number of related activities.

In spite of repeated affirmations of a commitment to diversity, little progress has been made; the percentage of students of color (and international students as well) remains lower than Bucknell's aspirations and in need of attention considering University's insistence that enhanced diversity "is essential to [the] kind of educational quality that Bucknell seeks to provide (Self-Study, p. 4)." Indeed, the Self-Study report itself observes that the lack of diversity in the faculty, staff, student body and Board of Trustees is "a recurrent theme in the recent history of Bucknell (p. 27)." Some specific plans have been suggested but have yet to be embraced as institutional priorities, made the focus of specific planning or provided with adequate resources.

As the "merit" program grows in size and scope, it will be challenging to develop some consensus and strategy for an appropriate definition of the spheres in which merit judgments will be rewarded in the Bucknell context, specifically the balance between using non-need-based-aid to support the athletic program and other Bucknell values.

Nevertheless, issues highlighted in the report and in conversations with the Visiting Team remain to be addressed in the coming years.

Suggestions:

- A much higher priority should be given to developing and implementing specific strategies and plans for minority and international student recruitment and program support.

- Criteria for the use of "merit" aid should be widely discussed and accepted at Bucknell along with realistic proposals to insure funding without reducing the commitment to income diversity.

- Careful consideration should be given to the goals and purposes of the various facets of the communications program and the resulting structure of administrative oversight and should include a careful assessment of the appropriateness of the range of responsibilities recently assigned to the VPEM.

Standard 9: Student Support Services

Student Affairs

The absence of a comprehensive list of institution-wide learning objectives and an approved Athletics Department mission statement and strategic plan have negatively affected the Student Affairs program; that is, the program lacks a University-approved theoretical foundation and a set of broadly approved goals. Nonetheless, the staff have written specific goals for each department that reflect widely held best practices. The programs appear to be comprehensive and well-conceived and are dedicated to the advancement of student learning and personal growth.

There are many strengths of the Student Affairs program. The Student Affairs staff are reported, and in some instances have been observed, to be creative, focused, student-growth oriented, and aggressive in addressing students' out-of-classroom learning and development. Students hold the staff in extremely high regard. Student Affairs facilities are appropriate and generally in good condition. The community is dedicated to the education and well-being of the student community of color.

Challenges also exist for Student Affairs. A separation clearly exists between academic and student affairs, and little partnering is present. Furthermore, many faculty and students possess conflicting opinions about the value of fraternities and sororities. Despite a successful history of reforms, behavior of some Greek-letter organizations remains problematic. One solution is purchasing and actively managing the houses in order to better manage the facilities and the behavior that occurs within the houses.

Creative alcohol education and disciplinary programs resulted in a decrease in abusive behavior, but recent incidents of untoward alcohol-related behavior required immediate action during the 2003-04 year. On-going educational and policy structures are being developed.

Increasing the number of students, faculty and staff of color is difficult in central Pennsylvania. A non-residential, multicultural center is being considered as one means of accomplishing and supporting this effort.

Numerous strengths of the Athletic Department are present. The Athletic and Recreation program appears well-conceived despite the lack of a strategic plan. Gender equity issues have been successfully addressed, a fact that deserves special praise. The graduation rate of athletes is among the highest in the country. The new facilities are an advantage for the overall recruitment of students.

Program leadership by the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Director of Athletics are reportedly strong. The recommendation to make the Committee on Athletics a stand-alone committee, reporting to the full faculty, is viewed as appropriate by the Committee on Instruction, and should provide higher levels of faculty governance and communication.

One overriding challenge is present in the Athletic program. Athletic facilities and athletic merit aid serve to exacerbate already strained faculty relations because some members of the faculty believe athletics are capturing a disproportionately high share of scarce resources. The results of this strained relationship permeate the experience of student-athletes and those who work in the athletic department.

Suggestions:

- Insure that Student Affairs and Athletics are included in the Strategic Planning process.
- Obtain University approval for an Athletics Department Mission Statement. Some aspects of that statement might include,
    o Create a seamless student-athlete learning environment by better connecting coaches and faculty.
    o Establish and honor clear and effective lines of Athletic Department governance.
    o Make the Committee on Athletics a stand-alone committee, reporting to the full faculty.
- Develop on-going alcohol education and policy structures.
- Increase the number of students, faculty and staff of color.
- Thoroughly consider the establishment of a multicultural center.
- Purchase and actively manage fraternity and sorority houses.

Standard 10: Faculty

Bucknell has a strong, committed and productive faculty reflecting the articulated ideal of teacher-scholar.

Students and faculty both comment enthusiastically about the attentiveness and skill of faculty fulfilling their teaching responsibilities. The research and publication record of the faculty is impressive. An extensive program of faculty development supports the

teaching and research efforts of the faculty and review and assessment processes are carefully worked out.

Thus, the Bucknell faculty performs its primary functions effectively. The high level of turnover in the senior ranks of the administration in recent years, however, has inevitably led to a backlog of accumulated needs and concerns. The faculty is committed to moving to a five-course load, a proposal reflective of practice at most peer institutions but one with major financial implications requiring careful consideration. Both faculty and administration have worked to develop a considered approach to the adjustments that will be required by the move. The Self-Study devotes considerable attention to differences between the trustees and the faculty over alternative approaches to post-tenure review of faculty. Although the issues are complicated, it is important that they be resolved in order to implement a system of post-tenure review in which both faculty and trustees can have confidence. As with student enrollment, the stated commitment to diversity at the faculty and staff levels has not been met and remains a serious concern. Bucknell's program of faculty development is both extensive and varied and supports both the research function and teaching, especially the use of innovative pedagogies. We have heard suggestions that a teaching and learning center could provide more sustained support for teaching development than episodic workshops and lectures. The upcoming review of the faculty role in governance is welcome but does not appear to be widely understood or embraced by the faculty, many of whom view it as an exercise required only because the Board of Trustees has undertaken a similar review. There has not been a thorough, institution-wide review of curriculum in more than ten years. It is overdue. Although the faculty have continued to give fine service to their students, broader curricular matters have been addressed with some apathy, demonstrated, among other ways, by a precipitous drop in attendance at faculty meetings.

Suggestions:

- Matching the rhetorical commitment to diversity with a serious, sustained effort and result.
- Exploring the establishment of a teaching support center in addition to existing workshops and orientation programs; improving assessment of the effectiveness of the various facets of the faculty development program through the use of methods beyond exit questionnaires and number of participants.
- A serious, substantial and self-critical review of faculty governance which we think essential to empowering the faculty to work effectively with the incoming leadership of the University in moving Bucknell to the next level of its potential.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

Bucknell's College of Arts and Sciences and College of Engineering display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The academic departments throughout the University are to be commended for providing a highly engaged and interactive curriculum using appropriate pedagogical theory. When

asked, students consistently remarked that the "faculty are accessible, concerned about them, and willing to give extra help." Students by and large believe the academic demands are appropriate in their courses. Particularly impressive are the undergraduate research opportunities, including independent studies, available to the students. University culture not only sustains but also stimulates research opportunities, and the faculty members are generous in their contributions to this culture.

The University remains a liberal arts institution. The professional programs within the College of Arts and Sciences adhere completely to the Common Learning Agenda. The College of Engineering, does not adhere to the CLA (a College of Arts and Sciences document), although it does regard the liberal arts as an essential part of its learning experience.

The University defines the degrees it offers by creating a coherent program of study both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. However, departments within the College of Arts and Sciences have just recently completed draft documents which identified, among other things, their mission, and expected student learning objectives and goals, as part of their assessment plan. Some are more complete than others and few have implemented any type of analyses, plans or time-line for improvement. The Education Department, which is accredited by Pennsylvania Education Department and the College of Engineering, which is accredited by ABET, have plans in place and have been involved in assessing their effectiveness.

Without a strategic plan it is difficult to determine if the educational offerings are congruent with the mission of the University, if student learning outcomes are being met, or if periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of any curricular or co-curricular experiences provided to the students result in an improved educational program. The ten-year evaluation system is not being adhered to in all departments.

The number of majors is extensive for the size of the institution and 11 majors have fewer than 20 students. Course offerings are plentiful yet 16% have fewer than 10 students per class. The University may want to review programs and course offerings in light of sufficient student interaction and cost-effectiveness.

The Self-Study describes the University's commitment to information literacy in a number of "core" University documents. Information Services and Resources (ISR) has developed a highly tailored approach to information literacy consistent with Middle States' standards. The University does not have an information literacy curriculum or course; rather, ISR staff work closely with faculty to tailor instruction to the specific objectives of a particular course, assignment, or project. In this approach, librarians and faculty jointly establish goals for information literacy instruction.

While the approach appears to have benefits because students can readily link information literacy instruction with the requirements of their course, the approach is highly resource intensive. The perceived adequacy of the current approach is considered to be one reason why the University has not adopted an institution-wide articulation of

what it means to be "information literate." ISR staff participate in various University committees where information literacy is discussed.

ISR has historically assessed the information literacy effort.

Suggestion:
- ISR staff should lead an effort in conjunction with Academic Affairs and faculty to develop a clear definition of "information literacy;" this effort would be in response to the characterization that the term is "nebulous," and it would be a starting point for informing discussions of a University-wide standard for information literacy, as well as framing assessment efforts.

Standard 12: General Education

Introductory note: Recognizing that the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Engineering share similar though not identical general education curricula, these comments apply to each of the colleges, although it should be noted both that the College of Engineering has just completed a very successful accreditation review by ABET and that the Common Learning Agenda is a College of Arts and Sciences effort.

Common Learning Agenda (CLA) meets the Middle States General Education standard and includes some notable strengths. Initiated with significant resource allocations from the University, the CLA appears adequately supported, not only financially but through department and faculty contributions to its functioning. By all accounts the foundation seminars, though perhaps difficult to staff always with full-time faculty, appear to be meeting their well-articulated goals, including attention to foundational skills, offering students the opportunity to choose from a broad array of intriguing course offerings, and collaborative teaching and learning with an instructor who is also the student's advisor. Similarly, the University has adopted an effective integrated approach to writing beyond the foundational level, using advanced "W2" courses, usually within the student's major. Actions and plans to infuse information literacy throughout the curriculum seem particularly well-drawn. Recognizing that CLA is now more than a decade old, the University is to be complimented for its efforts to review the program.

Results of the CLA review already have begun to be implemented. Are there important elements of CLA which are distinctly Bucknellian? Is there a direct line from institutional mission to CLA? (This observation is made in the spirit of the Self-Study itself: that Bucknell University is a very fine institution whose general education program should reflect if not trumpet that institutional distinctiveness and quality.)

Suggestions:

- The CLA appears to have taken a very traditional distribution requirement and added the bookends of foundation seminar and capstone experience. The "broadened perspectives" dimension of CLA is clumsy and the "natural and fabricated world" dimension is not intuitive.

16

- Though the CLA has been reviewed, concerted attention to outcomes assessment (as opposed to inputs such as the number of writing courses required) is strongly suggested. The University should develop direct measures through which it can more directly assess student learning related to the institution's general education programs and majors.

- Assessment of some elements of CLA, e.g., the capstone experience, may require a more careful articulation of the capstone's goals before meaningful outcomes assessment can be undertaken.

- The oral communication dimension of CLA is not readily discernible.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The primary focus of related educational activities in the Bucknell Self-Study is on study abroad programs.

Bucknell offers a remarkable range of Study Abroad opportunities for its students including three Bucknell run programs (London, France, Barbados) and almost 200 approved additional programs. Many Bucknell students participate in these programs adding an important dimension to their education.

While the Bucknell-run programs tend to be assessed effectively by the relevant disciplinary faculty, the same cannot be said for the other programs which have sometimes been subjected to only rudimentary assessment at best. Often the reputation of the provider has been the chief— sometimes the only—assessment datum. Many programs remained on the approved list although no student had participated in them for a number of years.

With new leadership in the Office of International Education, efforts are beginning to address some of the problems. The list of approved programs is to be pared by eliminating those used infrequently or not at all. Efforts are also underway to enhance both the availability of programs to students on financial aid and faculty involvement in the assessment of approved programs. Several potential new Bucknell programs are in various stages of development.

The faculty and administration of the University are to be commended for their support of appropriate study-abroad opportunities for Bucknell students. It is important to note that the Engineering College has been unusually active in support of such opportunities.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

In response to the new *Characteristics of Excellence,* the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment developed a template that departments could use to document the assessment plans of academic programs. The office met with faculty, both one-on-one and in larger settings, to explain Middle States' expectations and to provide assistance with the development of assessment plans. Initially, an ambitious timeline was set that required departments to document assessment results by Spring 2003.

Bucknell has made progress on the implementation of program assessment but not to the degree originally anticipated. Almost all programs have written assessment plans. These plans have several strengths. Departments have clearly made an effort to articulate clear mission statements. Care and attention have been given to the development of goals and learning objectives. Most programs have made an effort to articulate ways to assess these goals. A wide variety of measures are planned, including the use of surveys, focus groups, exit interviews, and student portfolios.

While much emphasis and support have been given to the development of assessment measures, less progress has been made on the implementation of assessment strategies and the documented use of assessment for program improvement. This may be understandable, given the time necessary to implement an assessment program. However, the institution has left it up to the departments to decide upon a timeline for implementation. Few departments have set deadlines for the implementation of assessment activities, the analysis of results, or the use of findings. While some departments have already begun using innovative and exciting strategies to assess their programs, others are still in the very early stages of implementation.

One strength of Bucknell's assessment efforts is that institutional support for assessment comes in a number ways. Staff from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment have been willing to take the time to work with individual departments and to provide suggestions about assessment mechanisms appropriate for their discipline. The Office has created briefings for faculty on key aspects of the assessment process. In addition, it has developed an extensive website that provides faculty with valuable resources that can be used in the development of plans. Some funding is available for professional development and assessment support. In addition to the assistance provided by the administration, an Assessment Committee has been formed to assist with assessment efforts.

As Bucknell moves forward in its assessment efforts, it faces two main challenges. First, it must continue to demonstrate a commitment to regular, sustained, continuous assessment. It is clear that the Middle States Self-Study was a major incentive for departments to develop assessment plans and that faculty recognition of the advantages of assessment varies significantly across units. In order to ensure that this standard is met, the institution must be able to create the "culture of assessment" mentioned as one of the institutional challenges in the Self-Study.

Second, it must develop a clearer plan for how assessment activities will be supported and monitored. While faculty must have "ownership" of department assessment plans, it is reasonable to expect that the institution have some way to monitor the degree to which plans are implemented and, when appropriate, to offer suggestions to departments on how plans can be improved. At this time, there is no clear timeline for when assessment activities are expected to be implemented or used. The process for regularizing assessment is still under discussion.

Suggestions:

- The institution needs to develop a more robust plan for continued support of the implementation of learning outcomes. As departments move forward on implementing assessment, the demand for assistance with data collection and analysis will increase. At the same time, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment indicated that they may not be able to sustain the same level of individualized support that they have managed to provide to date.

- The institution needs to more clearly define the role of the Assessment Committee. A "culture of assessment" is often best created by faculty and the Assessment Committee may be best able to lead this effort. This may necessitate the committee taking a larger role in facilitating the sharing of "best practices" and in developing a reasonable timeline for the development of assessment goals.

Conclusion

The Middle States Visiting Team focused on several areas where it felt Bucknell University needed to make improvements. In particular, there is the issue of the absence of an updated, widely-accepted mission statement, an absence which interferes with the development of a strategic plan that can ultimately guide resource allocation decisions at Bucknell. Given demographic and economic problems facing American colleges and universities, and Bucknell's desire to rise to the next level of excellence, it is clear that a plan needs to be developed that will help the University make orderly and well-informed decisions with regard to priority-setting and resource allocation.

Beyond a mission statement that needs to be revisited and a strategic plan that needs to be developed, the most glaring issue concerns governance. Simply stated, Bucknell's Board of Trustees has for some time overstepped its boundaries (which it now recognizes) and the faculty has for several decades assumed powers not normally within its purview. In each instance, the authority of the presidency has been weakened, with resulting high turnover in senior administration.

Bucknell University is a very distinguished institution. By addressing the issue of a revised mission statement and a new strategic plan and by restoring appropriate authority to the president, Bucknell will continue to play a leading role on the education stage. It is the shared hope of the Middle States Visiting Team that the considerable

Resources—financial, personal, and physical—possessed by the University will be employed in a fashion that will add further luster to Bucknell's rich history, that will bring distinction to the University, and that will provide excellent programs and opportunities for those who work, learn, and grow in this special place.