Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges
Commission on Colleges

A Full Scale
Evaluation Committee Report

Utah State University
Logan, Utah

October 21-24, 1997

A Confidential Report Prepared for the Commission on Colleges that Represents the Views of the Evaluation Committee
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Utah State University  
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INTRODUCTION
and
EVALUATION OF THE INSTITUTION'S SELF-STUDY

Utah State University made elaborate and very considerate preparations to facilitate the effective working of an evaluation committee consisting of 14 members and one staff member. The entire committee expresses its gratitude to the president, administration, faculty and staff, and especially to the institutional liaison officer and his staff, who made our work both efficient and enjoyable.

Approximately 60 people attended the exit interview, at which the committee presented its general commendations and recommendation. On this occasion, the committee also expressed its overwhelming sentiment that the USU self-study was among the very best that members had yet seen—concise yet thorough and filled with pertinent information and self-judgements. The self-study impressively summarized a much larger collection of data gathered in notebook binders made available to the committee in its working-conference facility, along with computers, printers and recording and copying services.

The USU self-study amply fulfilled another of the main purposes of these studies, namely, a full-scale review of the institution’s current status, achievements, problems and directions. The committee was fully convinced that the entire university community became involved in the self-study process, and the administrators, faculty, students and others to whom we spoke seemed impressively engaged in the process.

By chance, this committee visit occurred less than a full year prior to the final implementation of the conversion of the Utah public campuses from the quarter to the semester system. The committee found the usual ranges of concern and even displeasure and anger at this regential decision, and some of the concerns expressed by faculty and staff, such as those concerning available classroom space, seemed well founded. However, the committee was more impressed by the positive attitude displayed by the entire campus community as it pressed on toward this objective, which it is clearly prepared to meet.

This positive approach to the semester conversion underscores a broader theme that the committee, time and again, encountered during its assessment of Utah State University: the widespread and high level of optimism that pervades all campus constituencies and the exceptional physical appearance of the institution and its grounds. Not only does the campus occupy a lovely eminence flanked by lofty mountains and a handsome valley, its buildings and grounds reflect considerable expenditures and efforts toward deferred maintenance and the caring attitude toward them of the university populace. Faculty, staff and students alike have an exceptional loyalty to the campus, and this attitude finds reflection in many positive attributes: faculty availability to students, an exceptional work ethic, and open friendliness, among others.

This report is organized according to Commission standards. Effort has been made to regularize the sections, but they will of course vary somewhat by size and perspective according to the individuals who prepared them.
STANDARD I

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

Utah State University is formally designated as “one of two major universities in the Utah System of Higher Education” by the Regents’ Mission Statement of 12 December 1986. As the state’s land-grant institution, it has the familiar, tri-partite mission of Instruction, Research and Service.

Its current mission statement was adopted by the Regents in 1993 from a draft prepared by its Strategic Planning Committee, is included in the widely circulated document Quest for Quality, and is reprinted in its catalog. This document sets forth 10 university goals for the 1990's that reach from improvement of core education and undergraduate assessment to enhancement of employee salaries. A newer, more succinct document, Focus on the Future (1995) has now superseded the earlier version with four basic goals that focus, in essence, upon the three land-grant missions, plus a fourth that commits to garnering the resources necessary to accomplish the first three.

In sum, the university has a very active planning process. The incumbent president further elaborated it by turning over its leadership to the provost and adding to the already established Office of Institutional Research (now the Budget Office) an Office of Planning and Analysis. In addition, the Utah System of Higher Education renders a system assessment report to the Regents biennially, and the legislature has similarly mandated accountability reports every two years. These reports include Utah State University, and a new one is due in the fall of 1997.

Standard I is, in conclusion, being met by the university and its governing boards. Mission and goals are widely discussed and disseminated, and the planning process is both elaborate and highly participatory. The committee’s one area of concern in this regard relates to the USU Mission Statement (Self-Study, page 11) commitment to “preparing students to serve the people of Utah, the nation, and the world,” and “encouraging cultural diversity.” As the Self-Study acknowledges, this goal is not being adequately met, as only four percent of USU’s students are American minorities.
STANDARD II

FINANCE

Fiscal planning and management at Utah State University (USU) are conducted effectively and in accordance with the Commission on Colleges’ Standard II. Audits and campus interviews with Regents, Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, and students testify to the overall effectiveness of budget planning and management.

Current the position of vice president for administrative affairs is filled on an acting basis since the vice president recently accepted a position in the Utah Higher Education System office. While decisions are being made regarding the appointment of a permanent vice president, fiscal operations are being management effectively on an interim basis for the former controller and a capable staff.

USU has a $40 million endowment and is in the process of positioning the institution to raise funds to increase the endowment. Currently, a large percentage of the interest and dividend income derived from the endowment enhances the institution’s ability to recruit students by providing funds for scholarships.

The major fiscal concern for USU relates to the adequacy of financial resources to continue to successfully achieve its mission. State appropriations increased slightly (around $5 million annually) during the past three years to accommodate increased enrollments, and tuition and fees increased (approximately $2 million annually). Still, given the increased number of students and inflation-increased costs for goods and services, most programs do not have adequate funds. Over time, many daily costs of delivering academic programs have become underwritten by overhead recovery funds from grants and contracts and campus and department student fees in addition to the tuition and fees established by the Regents. The general perception is that increased funding by the State will not be forthcoming to provide increases in the base funding in either the near or far term. At the same time, an increasing number of students will seek admission to USU. Therefore, it is incumbent on the institution to take the necessary steps to assure maintenance of the quality of its programs and services.

In summary, USU meets the Standard II on Finance with the exception of the adequacy of funding resources. Although presently successful in maintaining adequate financial resources to achieve its mission and objectives through the utilization of a wide variety of sources of funds, there is strong concern that significantly higher reliance on the use of nonstate-appropriated funds to adequately support academic programs and institutional services endangers the institutional quality.
STANDARD III

PHYSICAL PLANT, MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

The external campus environment has an exceptional natural setting. The physical plant appears well maintained and is very attractive. It serves the needs of the institution in relation to its stated purpose. Buildings are spaced so that there are attractive vistas throughout the campus. The institution was recently recognized with a national award for its landscaping maintenance and operations. Several advances for campus safety have been implemented, e.g. a shuttle bus system, reduced traffic areas, and underpasses from parking lots.

A master plan for campus development is revised and updated on an annual basis and reviewed by a campus wide planning committee. Every facility is reviewed annually for changes in function and deterioration. Instructional and supporting materials and equipment appear to be adequate although the operations and maintenance budget has not been increased in many years. Thus, the scarcity of operations and maintenance funds is a serious concern.

Major construction projects include the 110,000 square foot Science & Technology Library which opened in 1995, the expansion of Taggart Student Center in 1996 and current renovation of Old Main/South Wing. $15 million has been spent for improvements to communications capacity and capability, including fiber optic cable for telephones, with the result that the majority of the campus is well prepared for future technological enhancements. $5.5 million has been expended for electrical upgrades campus wide, and $30 million for a new Chemistry Building.

Equipment surveys, space utilization studies, and inventory controls are in place. Numerous facilities are owned or leased throughout the state to accommodate outreach activities. Where improvements are needed there are plans to do so. The grounds of the campus are beautifully maintained and the custodial upkeep of the facilities is appropriate.

**Commendation:**
The University is commended for:
  an exception natural setting with a physical plant which is well maintained and very attractive.

**Recommendation:**
The Committee recommends:
  that opportunities be sought to encourage the State of Utah to provide a meaningful increase in funding for support of the operations and maintenance.
STANDARD IV

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

The array of information resources and services are appropriate to support the teaching, learning and research efforts of Utah State University. The institutional priority to seek membership in the Association of Research Libraries has resulted in budget increases in direct support of additional acquisitions and also for personnel. Consequently, the Library's budget doubled between 1988 and 1996. The holdings of unprocessed collections, such as the Herbarium and Harrison Museum, have been added to the online catalog thus enhancing not only the statistical volume count but more importantly the array of resources available to the scholarly community. Statewide cooperation between all academic libraries also expands the quantity and quality of accessible materials. The Library is currently upgrading its online catalog to improve hardware and software platforms.

Opportunities exist for faculty to participate in the development of the collections. However, the Committee is concerned that the policy for development and management of information resources has not been updated since 1985 with the exception of a statement for the Art collections. Policies and procedures for systematic management of information resources, in all formats should be documented, updated and made available, especially in light of the institutional priority for ARL eligibility.

Facilities have been significantly improved by the construction of the Science & Technology Library which opened in 1995. Use of the libraries increased immediately by over 20%. An array of electronic databases are now available campus wide and user response to these has steadily increased. At the suggestion of a campus dean the Library has added a librarian whose sole responsibility is serving as liaison to the campus community, promoting awareness and use of information resources, especially new ones. Other librarians also participate in the quarterly presentations to colleges and/or departments.

Another library position is dedicated to serving the institution’s distance learners. Document delivery, reference services and literature searches are provided, on demand, for students enrolled in a degree program or a credit course which is taught away from the main campus or outside the Cache Valley. Feedback has been solicited several times from distance learners and key needs have been identified. These include expansion of access to databases and also of document delivery services.

The Library and Computer Services cooperate and collaborate to provide publicity, training, and tutorial materials for electronic resources and emerging information technologies. Improved computer lab locations around the campus further enhance this outreach effort. From the handbook, What Every Student Should Know About the Open Access Computer Labs, to the series of Library Research Guides with searching tips for online databases, members of the campus community can be informed. Additional computers for use in the libraries and in the open access labs has been underwritten by student initiated designated fees and consequently students are involved in determining what is acquired through use of these fees. A 1995 satisfaction survey of graduating students ranked Computer Services and Merrill Library as 1st and 3rd in the highest category.

A formal library instruction program is heavily used by the English Department which includes such a component in a number of its courses and also by the College of Education. Librarians provide reference services for the majority of the 100 hours each week that the libraries are open. The Committee observed students making extensive use of the libraries and the open access labs
from opening to closing times.

Considerable fiscal support for professional development and training is available for Library personnel in order to ensure that instructional services, innovative technologies, and technical linkages among information resources will support emerging teaching and learning practices.

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**Commendations:**

_The University is commended for:_

  - increased fiscal support for library acquisitions and personnel;
  - the students' self-assessed fees towards improvements in library and computing support;
  - continuing support of professional development and training of library staff;
  - expanding and improving open access student computer labs

**Recommendations:**

_The Committee recommends:_

  - review and revision of the Library's Collection Development Policy to reflect current programmatic needs, assessment of accessible materials, as well as the integration of electronic resources;
STANDARD V

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

GENERAL EDUCATION/RELATED EDUCATION PROGRAM (#15)

Traditionally there has long been a general education component to the University curriculum. Before that an excessive number of classes (1200) were included in the general education requirement. In 1980 the listing was reduced dramatically in number and limited to courses below the 300 level. This arrangement reduced the number of courses in a core, but limited the depth of study that a student would pursue. Additionally, few basic knowledge/skills courses were actually required because of a lack of resources to support them. It appears that because of some dissatisfaction with the University standard core, an alternative was developed, "The Liberal Arts and Sciences Program." About 20% of the departments on campus used the alternate core.

Both of these general studies options were offered until 1996 when an alternative program, the "University Studies" program, was approved by the faculty senate and the Board of Trustees. It is intended that the program will be initiated in the fall of 1998. The general education core is a well thought out and innovative program that focuses on the theme of the citizen scholar. It emphasizes development of basic knowledge and competency, breadth and depth of understanding about the human experience, integration of disciplines, and content and process that assists students in transition into their major fields of study.

There has been extensive participation by faculty and administration in the development and design of the current proposed general education program. Extensive preparation has gone into facilitating departmental participation in development of their components and making the necessary sections available. The transition is scheduled to be implemented concurrently with the transition from the quarter to the semester system. It is rational for the two events to occur at the same time. There has been extensive assistance to students in planning for both. It is difficult to imagine more thorough preparation; only the actual implementation will reveal how smoothly the transition will be and what unanticipated problems may arise.

The development of a new general education requirement is a potentially divisive issue. Though there is exhibited some dissatisfaction in some parts of the campus community, there seems to be broadly based acceptance and support of the new model.

Commendation

The university is to be commended for the broad inclusion of faculty, administration and departments in developing the University Studies requirement, for an innovative and integrative approach to the design, and for careful planning for its implementation.
STANDARD V

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The Committee found several departments conducting systematic assessments of its programs and services; other departments making curricular and programmatic changes based on the assessment data; other departments experimenting with various assessment tools; some departments using demographic data; and some departments which have not made assessment a high priority. In a very few departmental cases was the development of an overall plan discussed, or were there campus-wide efforts made that outlined what the institution will do based on the data collected. Generally, the committee found the implementation of educational assessment activities and processes uneven and lacking coordination.

The 1993 fifth year interim visit for Utah State University stated: “The University’s involvement in assessment has increased considerably during the past five years,” and notes the assessment measures that have been used including “an advising survey, a continuing student survey, a counseling client satisfaction survey, a drug and alcohol survey, an educational intention survey, a financial aid survey, a first-year experience survey, general registration services survey, graduating seniors survey, Green organizations survey, international student survey, job placement survey, minority survey, off-campus survey, parent orientation survey, placement survey, recent alumni survey, residence hall survey, staff motivation survey, student center and activity survey, and several evaluations of services.” It is unclear to the committee how these assessment efforts directly influenced future planning processes and decision making.

In this 1997 visit, the committee found many of the reports cited in addition to data collected from a wide variety of sources:

- Demographic information about students
- Portfolios constructed during course work including juried performances with external reviewers
- End of program assessments
- Outcomes of graduating seniors
- Capstone courses
- Standardized testing
- Professional accreditation
- Employer and employment satisfaction
- Student satisfaction survey
- Experimentation with various techniques
- Council for the Advancement of Standards

The committee found a variety of methods in use by specific departments with those using
professional accreditation to be the most utilized in planning, with some departments willing to experiment with assessment and continuing to look for tools that are useful in output evaluation and assessment as well as input measures. While the committee found much demographic data, there were few plans to assess how well the combination of programs related to the actual needs of students.

Central to outcomes assessments are judgments about the educational effects upon students from which planning and action and consensus evaluation for improvement can happen.

The commission’s policy on educational assessment stresses outcomes assessment as an essential part of the ongoing institutional self-study and underlines the necessity for the institution to formulate a plan which provides for a series of outcomes that are internally consistent and in accord with its mission and structure, and provides some examples of a variety of successful plans for assessing educational outcomes.

**Recommendation**

Standard V, Educational Program and Its Effectiveness and particularly Policy #25, Educational Assessment (pp. 57-58, Accreditation Handbook) requests the institution develop a plan which provides for a series of outcome measures that are internally consistent and in accord with its mission. While the committee found assessment activities are evolving in a generally positive direction, it does appear that institutional efforts are uneven and that coordination is lacking. Methodologies which assess outcomes rather than inputs, and quality rather than quantity, need to be improved in some cases and implemented in others. The committee believes there needs to be an increase in the use of results of the surveys and other sources of information to improve academic planning and adjust instructional and program services. Ultimately, the goal of the assessment effort is to directly influence future planning-processes and decision making.

In summary, the committee finds that the university does not currently meeting Commission Policy 25, Educational Assessment and as a result it is recommended that the institution take immediate steps to do so on an institution-wide basis.
STANDARD V

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

The College of Agriculture administers five academic departments: Agricultural Systems Technology and Education (AST), Animal, Dairy and Veterinary Sciences (ADVS), Economics (Econ), Plants, Soils and Biometeorology (PS&B), and Nutrition and Food Sciences (NFS). Economics is jointly administered with the College of Business and NFS is jointly administered with the College of Family Life. In addition, the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station reports to the Dean through the Director of the Experiment Station. The mission of the College strongly supports the University mission and emphasizes the land-grant goals of teaching, research and extension.

The College has engaged in considerable planning and evaluation. In addition to the self-study for this accreditation all departments have, within the past five years, had a comprehensive review of their research extension and teaching programs by CSRS, USDA. They are utilizing the results and recommendations of those reviews to evaluate and improve the content and quality of their programs.

Each department in the College has experienced considerable faculty turnover through retirements. Within resources available, departments have filled these positions with young, well trained individuals resulting in a desirable mix of faculty rank, age and gender. Concomitant with faculty turnover has been considerable change in departmental administrators. Three of the five current Department Heads were appointed during this last year.

The administration, faculty and staff of the College are to be commended for creating and fostering an atmosphere and attitude which places high priority on teaching, student advising, hands on experience, sharing of equipment and facilities and an emphasis on quality education. This “can-do” attitude is apparent also in the way departments have supported the University’s priority on outreach and continuing education by teaching numerous courses off campus and through utilization of various distance education techniques.

Departments are responding to the University’s conversion to semesters with some reservations. With many individual faculty having two- or three-way splits in assignments (teaching, research and extension), they are apprehensive that relatively large teaching loads will force them to teach every semester and they will lose blocks of time needed to travel throughout the state for extension assignments or field research.

They are also concerned that semester conversion will create a severe shortage of classrooms large enough to accommodate the larger class sizes. The new General Education requirements are also viewed with some apprehension based on past negative experiences in getting their courses approved through the University process.

The research mission of the College has long been supported by funding from the Agricultural Experiment Station. In addition, four of the five departments, have aggressively and successfully pursued grants and contracts from other sources. A number of Centers of Excellence and world renowned research programs are found within the College.

In general the facilities and space available to the departments’ missions is adequate and in some cases quite good. There are, however, some areas of concern. These include space and
equipment appropriate for a new and highly popular Culinary Arts program, Horticulture Teaching Greenhouses, and the live animal teaching pavilion.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Cooperative Extension at Utah State University is strongly supported by the University in several unique and enviable (by other state Extension Services) ways. The first is the inclusion of "extension" in the University’s mission statement. Second is the fact that the Director of Cooperative Extension holds the title of Vice President for Extension. This person also administers the continuing education and outreach for the University.

The Vice President and other Extension administrators are commended for their recent actions to distribute cooperative Extension resources directly to departments through college deans. This has resulted in the effective utilization of resources in direct support of program delivery. It has also encouraged the development of Extension specialist programs in all but one of the colleges in the university. Also the College of Agriculture administration is commended for supporting and encouraging the distribution of extension across the university.

Further evidence of the cooperation between extension and continuing education is the distribution of continuing education courses through satellite down links located at cooperative extension offices.

During interviews with county extension agents, it was noted that they were supportive of an integrated and cooperative role with continuing education and recruiting students for the university; however, some had experienced difficulty in obtaining catalogs and other student information for their offices which would help them respond to questions from potential students.
STANDARD V

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

The College of Business is comprised of the School of Accountancy, and the Departments of Business Administration, Business Information Systems and Education (BISE), Management and Human Resources, and Economics; the Economics Department is jointly administered with the College of Agriculture, and offers programs which do not include the business core curriculum. A full range of undergraduate and masters level programs are offered by the College of Business both on-campus, and in Wyoming, Taipei, and at several off-campus programs in Utah. One of the primary areas of emphasis for the College is distance learning, and it has allocated significant resources to this instructional activity. The Economics, and BISE departments have doctorate programs; a doctorate program in Business has not proceeded past the discussion phase. All Business and Accounting undergraduate and graduate programs are accredited by the International Association of Management Education (AACSBS); the College is concurrently in the AACSBS reaccreditation process.

The College has identified itself as the provider of the necessary competencies for the successful practice of business, an educational role. The College's educational delivery process fits the traditional AACSBS model; a segmentation of course work into general education, a business core, and major course requirements. The degree programs offered within the college are well designed, providing a substantial and coherent study plan; a review of course materials indicates the program components are current, rigorous and comprehensive. Although there is evidence of instructional innovation, these alterations in curriculum are confined to refinements and enhancements within a traditional business education model. In the delivery of the educational and research programs in the college, the departments appear to be cooperative, and work well together. In spite of these collegial relationships, information sharing among department is incomplete.

Student admissions requirements are minimal; however, the College has a well structured advising and counseling system in its Student Services Center. This Center provides initial advising and counseling for entering students and insures minimum basic qualifications for advancement. A series of gpa requirements for course clusters screens students in/out of the business programs; this system provides an assurance of fair and equitable treatment, and a reasonable chance of student success. However, there is no evidence presented that performance in the course cluster statistically correlates with subsequent academic performance, or successful business careers.

The most important source of evidence on achievement of College educational objectives is the results of satisfaction surveys of students and employers. Although the Accounting and BISE Departments have comprehensive assessment processes, the College has yet to formally define a common set of competencies to serve as a metric for evaluating student outcomes, a process for measuring degree of competency acquisition, and a method to incorporate the information acquired in curricular adjustments. Although there may be implied competency based testing arising in the retention/advancement gpa rules, there is no objective evidence or process for the indexing of student learning as a measure of teaching effectiveness. Additional non-objective evidence of teaching effectiveness is observable in the extremely high opinion of the faculty expressed by students. In almost every case the students relate positive opinions of the faculty as instructor and advisors.

From an instructor's perspective, teaching effectiveness is measured or indexed by student
evaluations. Any additional information on course delivery-content must be gleaned from syllabi, and testing instruments. Limited classroom visitations by faculty mentors or department chairs does occur; however, there is no systematic process, such as the documentation of instructional materials or peer reviews, for cataloging successful and unsuccessful teaching techniques.

The College faculty is well credentialed in their teaching and research specializations. They are very active researchers, and contribute to their profession by an active participation in professional organizations. Most faculty are full time, tenure track or tenured, recruited from a national pool of candidates from major universities; there is no apparent concentration of any one region or school present in the faculty. Teaching loads and student contacts are sufficient to insure educational program delivery, and to provide windows of opportunities for research and service activities. Using the traditional publication metrics, the college faculty is very productive. Applied research on issues impacting Utah and its residents is most in evidence by the research conducted by the Economics faculty. Service outcomes are demonstrated by the Partners in Business, Small Business Development Center and the Management Institute programs; these business interactions are multifaceted because they also provide career placement opportunities for students. A unique, laudatory interaction with the business community is evinced by the Shinto Prize for excellence in manufacturing.

Several issues arise in the level, and distributions by rank, of faculty compensation. Salaries are highly competitive at the assistant professor level, and the College is able to recruit faculty from some of the better universities in the nation. New faculty are academically strong, perform well in all position description categories, and are highly mobile. At the associate professor level, compensation begins to lag behind peer institution averages; the salary deficiency is exacerbated at the full professor rank and has resulted in salary inversion. However, faculty morale in general is said to be high, and resignations are rare. Some attribute the low turnover rate to a generous fringe benefit package, and an excellent community environment. For whatever reason, most faculty are tenured, and in the senior ranks. From an institutional perspective, the low turnover rates and high morale suggests salaries may not be a major problem for the functioning of the organization. However, low compensation levels may eventually reduce faculty commitment to institutional goals if allowed to persist.

When new faculty arrive on campus they receive an orientation to the campus administered by the University. Shortly after new faculty members arrive on campus the College establishes a tenure committee for each of them; the committee guides and advises new faculty on their professional activities in an effort to make them professionally successful. The chair of the tenure committees serves as a mentor to the new faculty, assisting the faculty member in adjusting to the environment, networking to individuals with similar research interests, and acquainting faculty with the requirements for promotion and tenure. In the College of Business this professional development process functions well, with most faculty being advanced.

The College relies on state appropriated funds for the financial support of its teaching, research and service programs; grants and contracts are not significant sources of funds for the support of College teaching or research activities; revenues derived from off campus instruction accrue to the University. Both the University and College budgets have a pattern of very modest, positive growth. However, the growth of FTE students has produced considerable pressure on financial resources. The major strength is the process of budget formulation and fungibility on appropriated funds at the department level; the major weakness is the need to meet the needs of increasing instructional responsibilities.

The College of Business has excellent physical facilities which more than adequately serve current needs. Their building has several computer labs, classrooms equipped for multi-media
presentation, and private faculty offices. Some of the expenses associated with establishing, maintaining, and staffing the computer laboratories located in the College’s building are born by student fees, which the students imposed on themselves. Each department is housed on a separate floor in the College’s building, has adequate space for support staff, and conference rooms. Computers in faculty offices and student computer labs are kept reasonably current, and both software and databases are generally available to support instruction and research. Future needs are difficult to predict due to the College’s involvement in distance education, but any increases in on campus faculty or students will exceed current capacities.

The data and information on library holdings, and usage evince adequate support for both undergraduate and graduate educational programs, and faculty research; the proximity of other universities augments local capacities by inter-library loan with a quick turn around on requests. A different outcome is obtained when comparisons are made with peer institutions for research libraries. However, for business related programs, the text and journal holdings are more than adequate to support faculty and student academic activities.

Commendations:

The College has an exceptionally well qualified and productive faculty; the students rate their faculty as very good teachers. The faculty are very productive in their research activities.

The faculty mentor program for promotion and tenure functions well and serves both faculty and the institution by improving instruction and scholarship.

Students are loyal to the institution, hardworking, and willing to impose additional fees to improve their educational experiences.

The College has been a campus leader in the development of distance education.

Issues:

The shift from quarters to semesters will force a reallocation of resources and further curricular changes as it evolves. Although planned for, the effects of the change cannot be reliably predicted. Those changes will be augmented by the shift in the method, process and structure for delivering the liberal arts core.

A college-wide structure and process for student outcome assessment, and a process for incorporating the information produced, needs to be put in place.
STANDARD V  
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS  

EDUCATION  

The College of Education is one of eight colleges within Utah State University. It is comprised of seven departments, a Center for Persons with Disabilities, a Bureau of Research Services the Edith Bowen Laboratory School, and several other significant projects. It offers bachelor’s through doctoral degree programs (including an interdepartmental doctorate), has the second largest on-campus enrollment, generates the largest number of degrees, and has the largest number of off-campus students.

College faculty are housed in five buildings located in proximity to one another. The main education building is six years old, and a sixth building, the Human Service Research Center, is under construction. The college shares the limitations of classroom space experienced by the rest of the University.

The College of Education is an active, vital college. It is well organized and managed and, consistent with general university practice, is decentralized in functioning. College administration consists of the dean and two associate deans. There is a good balance of leadership at the college level and autonomy and responsibility at the departmental level. Of the seven departments and other centers and support units, all exhibit good faculty morale and productivity.

The College of Education has aligned itself well with the purpose, mission and goals of the University, both in its written documents and in its practices. The mission of the University embraces traditional focus on teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels, research and public service, and to prepare students themselves for service to the state, nation and world. Among the college’s departments, there is a universal level of belief that the purposes and programs of the respective departments directly support the purpose, mission and goals of the University. In the case of one department (Psychology), even the structure of departmental goals parallels that of the University.

The College of Education has a very ambitious agenda and productive faculty; it has a high and balanced level of productivity in teaching, scholarship, external grants and contracts, service to schools, and outreach to clientele throughout the state. It has both breadth and high quality in its academic, professional and research programs. Preparation of school personnel is dominant in elementary, secondary and special education; however, there are also programs in the college that prepare professional personnel for other sectors, such as instructional designers for business and industry and licensed clinicians in communication disorders, psychology and vocational rehabilitation. The Edith Bowen Lab School is a Utah Centennial School and is recognized by the National Association of Lab Schools as one of the nation’s finest. The Center for Persons with Disabilities is recognized as one of the premier University Affiliated Programs in the nation. The SKI*HI program is recognized as being one of the best research and training units for persons with hearing impairments. The Center for the School of the Future holds promise for significantly influencing school reform.

The college is significant in the number and quality of accreditations for its different programs. Education, psychology, school psychology, rehabilitation, communication disorders, deaf education all have received high marks in receiving national accreditation.
The major instructional programs of the College of Education relate to the preparation of school personnel. There are specific and rigorous requirements for entry into these programs, both for the entry of undergraduate students into initial preparation programs and for graduate students into advanced programs. Other programs which do not prepare students for school environments require conformity to particular professional accreditation requirements and or to university standards for entry into, continuation in and exit from the programs.

There has been a high student demand to enroll in the programs of the college. In several cases, that has led to actual or defacto higher standards for admission. Consequently, the caliber of students admitted to programs has either remained stable or increased during the past five years, depending upon the specific program. Data support the thesis that the quality and qualifications of off-campus students are comparable to those of resident students. On the exit level, more than 90% of teacher education graduates who seek employment locate teaching positions, an exceptionally high percentage.

The University states a goal of institutional assessment aimed at evaluating the efficacy of programs and at providing formative information upon which to make judgements and decisions about programs and program modification. Although this assessment process has some traditional, institutionally driven components (e.g., fiscal and enrollment data), much of the programmatic detail and implementation is expected at the college and/or departmental levels. The College of Education reflects the Decentralized® philosophy of the University as a whole, and its assessment procedures reflect that decentralization. The college and its departments have extensive data collection and assessment processes, perhaps shaped by their major accreditation organizations and their standards. The college gathers limited initial follow-up data on graduates, while the various departments have developed and implemented more extensive assessment measures, including performance and outcome measures. The self-studies of the individual departments reflect these practices and they are verified through case examples of decisions which were based upon these data. Some of the departments in the college model exceptional assessment and decision making uses of assessment data, whereas others are only acceptable. The college falls short of commendation in this area because of the lack of consistently exemplary practices across departments.

The college has a highly qualified faculty. Most have doctoral degrees, and many are recognized nationally as leaders in their respective areas of specialty. Some master's level personnel are affiliated with the college, particularly where they have field experiences or specialized expertise that add value to specific instructional or research functions of the college.

The college implements very well the University system of mentoring of new faculty, which supports the mission and functions of the College. New faculty receive mentoring and support from a tenure and promotion faculty advisory group immediately upon employment. The mentor group provides guidance to the faculty member until the member is tenured/promoted. Following tenure and promotion, the mentor group continues to provide guidance, but at a less intensive level. In addition to this support, extensive annual faculty performance reviews are conducted in relation to written role descriptions. This process results in a high level of success of new faculty within the college.

Several departments within the college show a willingness to eliminate programs and courses when external and internal conditions warrant such action. In one case, an entire program (dance) was eliminated because it was viewed as a duplication of programs offered elsewhere in the state, and because of low enrollments. In several other cases, courses were eliminated which were judged to be no longer needed.
The college has been extraordinary in developing external support for its major goals through external grants and contracts. This will be a commendation below. However, both the college and university should be careful to evaluate the effects of and articulation of these resources with state appropriated resources. For example, the consequences of compensation to long term soft-money faculty at crucial juncture points (for example vacation or retirement benefits) is a potential liability. This issue should be faced and resolved before a crisis emerges for the university.

Commendations

1. The exceptional productivity of the college faculty in creating innovative programs and obtaining external funding is to be commended. In an arena where there is a perpetual lack of state level appropriation and support, the faculty continually seek external grants and contracts to deliver and extend the goals of the college. They have been extraordinarily successful, and the funding seems to merge well with college and departmental objectives and significantly enables the work of the college. The commendation extends to the specialized centers sponsored by the college, which exemplify the college vision for state, regional and national leadership in selected areas of education.

2. The college has shown an exceptional leadership role in extended learning. It has delivered several of its programs at sites throughout the state. It has shown a commitment to maintaining the quality of program delivery by using regularly appointed faculty and consistently collecting feedback about courses and instruction.

3. The college should be commended for its initiative in using technology, both within instructional programs and for extended learning opportunities. The college has initiated a program in instructional technology, which serves graduate students, but which also provides organized assistance to faculty throughout the college in acquiring knowledge and skill in use of technology that will serve the college well in its several functions (teaching, scholarship, service).

4. In extended learning, the college has shown an exemplary attitude and practice toward the collection and use of data to improve instruction. For example, the Instructional Technology program has collected student reactions to program delivery at all of its remote delivery sites for several consecutive quarters and formally studied the results of those evaluations. This process revealed a willingness to ask the tough questions (What did you like least?). As well, it reflected student opinion that courses were improving with each subsequent delivery. This example illustrates the use of data collection to assess program delivery and to improve instruction over time based on student critique and analysis.

5. The rehabilitation program is to be commended for its work in distance delivery. It has developed and refined a procedure for delivery of the rehabilitation counseling program by distance that uses a variety of delivery components (CD-ROM, Video, Website and on-campus residence). It is proposing to use this refined model of distance delivery to create a consortium program that includes five highly regarded special education/rehabilitation programs from throughout the United States. This program, also, has collected and used data extensively in evaluating and shaping the program.
STANDARD V

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

ENGINEERING

The mission and objectives of the College of Engineering are well defined and understood. Although the College is noted for the research productivity of its faculty, there appears to be a good balance among the teaching, research, and service efforts in addressing the overall mission. Undergraduate and graduate students are provided a very strong educational experience, with the teaching and research programs complementing each other. Service activities are effective in linking the College’s resources to the private and public sector, specifically Utah industries.

The five departments within the College (Biological and Irrigation Engineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Industrial Technology and Education, and Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering) appear to be strong and functioning well. The College has been responsive to the changing needs of industry and student interest in establishing new undergraduate degree programs in Aerospace Engineering, Environmental Engineering and Computer Engineering within the last decade. Undergraduate Engineering programs in the College were recently evaluated by ABET, the professional body responsible for accreditation of Engineering programs. Findings from that review confirm the overall quality of the undergraduate degree programs.

The administration of the College is solid and well-regarded. Leadership is provided by an experienced dean and a seasoned cadre of department heads who appear to cooperate and communicate to a high degree. Faculty are well-qualified and dedicated to fulfilling the mission of the College. New faculty have provided needed expertise in growing disciplines and have been integrated well into the departments. Students are motivated and morale is good. Effective and respectful relationships exist at all levels within the College.

Ongoing assessment of the educational programs is an integral part of the College’s activities. There is evidence of multiple assessment measures of student performance, including the well-established senior design capstone course. The requirements to meet the accreditation standards of ABET help ensure that appropriate assessment activities are incorporated as formalized processes within the College.

Sponsored research continues to be a hallmark of the College of Engineering and has benefitted the College and University in substantive and multiple ways. Indirect cost returns on research grants and contracts have enhanced the flexibility of the College and University to address its overall respective missions in a positive light. The College administration judiciously evaluates the extent to which its programs are dependent upon sources other than state appropriations and plans accordingly with prudence and foresight. A collaborative research environment exists among the College departments and other academic units to the benefit of all components of the University.

Growth within the college has been well accommodated to the extent possible given limitations of financial resources. There has been a concerted effort to manage student enrollment growth by means of a pre-professional program which screens new students. This program appears to be working well. Increased class sizes in some areas have strained the ability of faculty to maintain the high quality of the instructional programs.

The College has been appropriately creative in use of discretionary funds to address the needs of its programs. Student fees have significantly enhanced the ability to provide a quality laboratory
experience for the undergraduate programs. Funds derived from the Engineering Initiative have increased the flexibility to meet the capital and operational needs of the College. The level of state-funded operations budgets continues to be of concern among administrators and faculty.

Facilities for the Engineering programs are presently adequate. Additional space and capabilities, which would be provided by the proposed new engineering complex, will allow the College to advance in pursuit of its educational mission. Because this building project has yet to receive state funding, strategies to meet the space needs of the College with its present infrastructure will remain a significant issue.

Conversion to the semester system, which is scheduled to take place in 1998, appears to be adequately planned within the College. Most College constituencies have approached this issue with a positive attitude and view it as an excellent opportunity for re-examination of the curriculum.
STANDARD V

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

COLLEGE OF FAMILY LIFE

There is an excellent fit between the stated mission and goals of Utah State University and the mission and goals of the College of Family Life. The College provides professional programs of teaching, research, extension and service with a focus on the interaction of human beings with their near environments, emphasizing in-depth study of reciprocal effects (physical, biological, social, psychological, economic, cultural and aesthetic). The College is organized into three Departments: (1) Family and Human Development, with majors in Family and Human Development and Early Childhood Education, (2) Human Environments, with majors in Apparel Merchandising, Interior Design, Family and Consumer Sciences and Family and Consumer Sciences Education, and (3) Nutrition and Food Sciences, with emphases in Food Science, Dietetics, Nutrition Science (Public Health and Nutrition) and Culinary Arts/Food Service Management. The major in Early Childhood Education is jointly administered with the Department of Elementary Education in the College of Education, and the Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences is jointly administered with the College of Agriculture.

The College participates fully in all three areas of the land grant university mission. Over the last five years, enrollments have grown significantly, and annual extramural funding has increased from $2.2 million to $3.7 million. The College delivers degree programs throughout the State of Utah via distance learning and it delivers an extensive informal education program through the efforts of the Cooperative Extension Service.

In recent years, the College has been extensively reviewed through the Utah Regents' Review process (1996), and the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences accreditation process (1997). While findings of this review were derived independently, there is remarkable congruence in the results of all three comprehensive reviews.

There is evidence that the programs in the College are well received by students. Over the past five years, enrollments have increased dramatically, from 613 in 1990-91 to 1019 in 1995-96, with an unofficial count of over 1100 for fall 1997. Enrollment increases have occurred in all programs in the College, with the most dramatic in the Department of Family and Human Development- from 140 majors in 1986-87 to 478 majors in 1995-96. Although no official enrollments were available for Fall 1997, there was evidence that this department's enrollments continue to increase. The effects of these unprecedented increases are discussed in subsequent sections of this report.

When interviewed concerning the College’s strengths, students reported the strengths to be:

1. Friendly, caring faculty
2. Varied and high quality course offerings
3. Pleasant learning environments
4. Good graduate student handbook and orientation

However, students in the impacted Family and Human Development Department, which has a student faculty ratio of 49.6, indicated that undergraduate classes are too large (average 100+), graduate classes are too large (range 20-30), there continue to be too many temporary and part-time instructors in the lower division undergraduate courses, graduate courses are limited and faculty are not as available to students as they desire to be.

Faculty reported strengths of the College to be
1. Continued growth of enrollments
2. Several new academic program thrusts which take advantage of cross-departmental expertise
3. Quality, stable leadership at the College and department level, and
4. Appreciation of the College by central administration.

Faculty are concerned about the heavy dependence on research and grant funding to support the teaching mission. One faculty member summarized it as, “If you don’t have research funds, you don’t have anything.” Faculty are also concerned about strategic planning for the future, when it appears that enrollments will continue to grow, with no expected significant increases in state support.

Assessment of teaching and learning is uneven across the College. Professional programs such as Interior Design, Dietetics, and Teacher Education have well developed assessment strategies and processes for using outcomes to improve programs. Other programs are engaged in various activities such as alumni and employer surveys. Discussions are underway in all departments concerning the need for development of meaningful assessment strategies and feedback loops for program improvement.

College curricula include the university’s general education component, and considerable planning has gone into planning for implementation of the new University Studies program in 1998. The College will participate in offering courses in the new University Studies Program, to the extent possible with available resources. However, faculty in Family and Human Development indicated concern they would not be able to implement the writing/communication intensive courses because of the large class sizes.

Commendations:

1. Reviewers agree with commendations from the recent Utah Regents’ Review and American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences’ Review on the effectiveness of the college leadership, the quality and commitment of the faculty, the attractiveness of the learning and working environments, and the cooperative relationships with other colleges.

2. The College should be especially commended for the development of several centers and foci which are designed to take advantage of the expertise and interests of the faculty. An example is the emerging teaching, research, and service emphasis in Gerontology. Focusing on this emerging societal issue will give the College the opportunity to strengthen its integrative focus and serve as a cornerstone for future strategic planning. A second example is the development of the Family Life Center, which serves as a teaching and research site for integrating the expertise of the faculty in service to families. Other examples are the new Culinary Arts/Food Science emphases in the Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences. The development of these programs revitalizes traditional curricula, while taking advantage of their traditional strengths.

Recommendations

1. The 49.6 student/faculty ratio in the Department of Family and Human Development is compromising an otherwise excellent program. Both faculty and students report that the quality of the program is being eroded by the rapid increase in student majors and credit hours, without a concomitant increase in resources. Temporary relief has been provided by funds from the Provost’s Office, and it is reasonable to expect that some additional relief may be forthcoming with the switch to the semester system next fall. However, the situation is serious enough that it is affecting the morale of an otherwise excellent faculty
and the quality of the educational program being provided to the students. The College should continue to work with the university administration to develop a long-range plan to bring the student/faculty ratio more in line with those of comparators at the university.

2. The College should develop a college-wide plan for assessment of teaching and learning in all of its programs. Results of each program assessment should be used in strategic planning for the future.
STANDARD V

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

The College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) has a well articulated mission which is consonant with the university’s land grant status. Its teaching role focuses on undergraduate and general education and it has expanded from a narrow service function to the offering of comprehensive programs in humanities, arts, and social sciences. The HASS faculty has a strong research and creative activity profile. Together with the College of Science, it forms the educational core of the university. Its academic service outreach to the campus is central and crucial to general education, to the underpinnings of most academic programs, and to the training of elementary and secondary teachers in the basic disciplines. Service outreach to the campus and wider community provides cultural and educational enrichment of the first order.

The college is home to a number of non-departmental programs (e.g. Folklore and Women’s Studies), centers (e.g. Intensive English Language Institute, International Studies and the Mountain West Center for Regional Studies), and journals. Discussion with faculty and administrators revealed that these special enterprises are well integrated into the teaching, research and outreach mission of the college and that they are often useful in providing additional avenues for student learning.

While the curricula of the college are mature and substantial, they are experiencing change forced by a confluence of external influences -- system efforts at discipline by discipline articulation of courses and programs across the state AND mandated conversion from a quarter to a semester system. The former has at least caused useful conversations among department heads across the state. The latter -- more a matter of local activity -- has created some opportunities and raised some concerns.

Some of the specific concerns regarding the conversion may require additional institutional attention. First, the impact of a) a smaller number of courses offered by each program and b) a natural tendency on the part of departments to want to serve majors first may create access problems for non-majors. Second, if in the attempt to serve an equal or greater number of students with fewer classes leads to larger class size, the classroom stock may not be adequate to the task. Third, if meeting general education demand or staffing the refigured majors requires a larger teaching force, the college will face a near impossible situation, given current funding levels. Finally, the matter of how students will work their way through restructured programs and general education offerings, the enrollment patterns, will warrant watching. The change may push some baccalaureate programs to five years.

Departmental response to the conversion seems responsible and creative. While all have been dealing with the difficult matters of recasting a discipline’s content into fewer courses or realigning learning sequences, some see advantages to longer terms for such things as skills acquisition courses.

General Education - HASS programs are undergirded by a substantial general education program. The Liberal Arts and Sciences Program (LASP) -- also offered as a certificate, minor, and major program -- has provided a special interdisciplinary track through the current broad array of general education offerings. Beginning with a freshman seminar, proceeding through clustered courses including both science and liberal arts courses and ending with a capstone course, LASP is an excellent vehicle for ensuring lifelong learning skills. It is good to note that the program will continue as a certificate or minor program, despite the changes in general education.

The college takes general education quite seriously, both as a provider of coursework to the rest of
the campus and as consumer of its own product. Its involvement in the new University Studies program will be central and extensive.

Faculty Evaluation - Faculty evaluation is alive and well in the college. Processes that are essentially supportive of the continuing professional development of faculty at all stages of their careers typify the approaches. All are predicated on the creation of a role statement, an allocation of the faculty member’s time by percentage to the traditional areas of professional service. The role statement is then used by administrators and faculty committees in annual reviews as well as promotion and tenure reviews. For tenure track faculty who will face external peer review at tenure time, mentoring and annual review by department heads and committees, a review process with an ombudsman feature, and a thorough fourth year review have led to a high level of performance that is reflected in the successes of the college’s tenure candidates. Annual review of tenured faculty as part of the merit system is taken seriously. That the merit system survives despite concern over salary levels and recent small increments testifies to that seriousness. This typifies evaluation in a college that prizes first rate performance. Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology (SSWA) has recently been a model department in this regard and the college is urged to assist other units in exploring the efficacy of the SSWA process well as those in English and LAEP.

Educational Assessment (#25) - Each department is pursuing some form of analysis or assessment of the effects of the programs on students. While some rely on input measures (we follow the accreditation agency’s curriculum, we admit only good students, we have an advising system), most are attempting to take the measure of learning. From portfolio reviews to capstone courses, to success on standardized examinations, to job or graduate school placement statistics, to alumni and employer satisfaction surveys, and to juried exhibitions and recitals, the efforts are varied and rich. There is anecdotal evidence that programs are responding to the information so garnered by adjusting programs, adding internship opportunities, or providing additional advising. There is, however, a lack of consistency in these efforts. Not all departments operate at the same level of understanding regarding the "how to" and value of assessing the educational impact of their programs.

Commendations: HASS faculty productivity is noteworthy, in teaching (including the production of solid, current curricula), research and creative activity, and service to the campus and wider communities.
-- The college -- administration and faculty -- is coping well with the triple threat of general education change, articulation, and quarter to semester conversion.

Recommendation: There is unevenness in the college’s approach to assessment of student learning.

Honors -- This university-wide program may preserve the essence of a classical liberal arts experience for qualified students. It provides a different approach in a higher education milieu which increasingly is non-residential, training oriented, peopled with students who must work numerous hours off campus, and unable always to foster closer contact with professors and other students. Admission is offered to new students in the university’s various full scholarship programs, national merit scholars, and continuing students with a 3.5 GPA after at least two terms of study. The program will marry itself to the new University Studies Program and afford three options for honors degrees -- university honors, university honors with department honors, or department honors. The program has funding adequate to its mission and is able to attract departmental faculty to its courses. It has yet to determine an exact assessment strategy but may seek to reinstate a scholars’ day program as vehicle for the demonstration of student learning.
STANDARD V

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Utah is a state of rich natural resources and renowned natural scenic beauty. In such a place one should expect a strong, vibrant, and progressive College of Natural Resources, which is what we find at Utah State University. USU’s College of Natural Resources for a long time has been recognized as a national leader in producing graduates for multiple use land management. Both solid traditional and innovative cross-disciplinary educational programs have characterized the educational offerings at USU, providing multiple opportunities for students to develop expertise for managing natural resources in the intermountain region and beyond. Additionally, the College has been an aggressive participant in fundamental and applied research dealing with ecology and ecosystems, sustainable management, and social issues about natural resources, and it has actively participated in continuing education, Extension, and other outreach activities.

The College encompasses four departments that offer seven undergraduate majors, six undergraduate minors, and masters and Ph.D. degrees. The Department of Geography and Earth resources is a relatively new addition to the College and as such has brought benefits and challenges to the College. The undergraduate majors, representing the breadth of the College’s offerings are Environmental Studies, Fisheries and Wildlife, Forestry, Geography, Range Science, Recreation Resource Management, and Watershed Science. Common across all of these majors is a set of natural resource core courses that provide an identity and commonality for USU natural resource graduates, and which foster integration across the functional areas of natural resource management.

The College and each of the departments have clearly articulated missions that generally are nested within the University’s mission, though each mission is more a statement of input to rather than outcome of educational and research processes. These mission statements, when considered together, appear appropriate for the University and for Utah, addressing both the aspirations of the College and the needs of the State.

The various undergraduate curricula are consistent with the stated missions, and they have emerged to meet external needs while responding to desires of students, perceptions of faculty, and emergent developments in society. They each appear to be well conceived and crafted, giving consideration to fundamental scientific underpinnings, liberal education, and natural resource knowledge, techniques, and issues necessary for developing graduates capable of effecting sound natural resource management decisions and practices. The graduate programs, though more individualized and research focused, also are consistent with the stated missions and reflect the expertise of the faculty and the nature of current research activities. Assessment of the successes and benefits from these programs is in an early phase of development and practice with different methods and measures employed by different departments with varying degrees of success.

In general, the undergraduate student body appears to be of good quality, reflecting the general admission criteria of the University and the College’s higher standards for graduation, and it includes some very talented performers. The 40 Quinney Scholars, about eight percent of the undergraduate student body, are a significant asset in raising the level of student intellectual and leadership talent and thus influencing the entire undergraduate program. The graduate enrollment is of very high quality with most programs only able to accept a small fraction of those who apply, thus affording them the opportunity to be very selective. While the graduate students of the College come to USU from many different places and disciplinary backgrounds, the undergraduate population lacks geographic and other kinds of diversity. This is a marked change from earlier times when the majority of the College’s undergraduate students were non-residents, and this likely has had a
negative effect on the breadth of experience and the perspectives that are part of learning how to manage natural resources.

The faculty likewise is of very high quality. Due to its location in the Rocky Mountains which are attractive to natural resource professionals, the reputation of its programs, and its competitive salaries, the College has been able to attract and retain outstanding teachers and scholars. Some long-time members of the faculty describe the current faculty as the best the College has ever had and the growth in research and outreach activities and the apparent quality of graduates supports this impression. Undoubtedly helping to nurture and foster personal growth of faculty members is the faculty evaluation system that ensures relevant feedback to new and continuing faculty. An annual evaluation is completed for each faculty member by each department head and an annual evaluation is completed by a faculty promotion and tenure committee for each probationary faculty member until tenure is awarded.

Research programs are a vital part of the College. They have grown steadily over the years and provide tremendous benefits to the educational programs of the College. The breadth and disciplinary diversity of the faculty is due in large part to the research programs since the College has far more faculty and faculty specialties than would be provided by the amount of resources provide by the State. Since virtually all faculty have split appointments across the major university functions, this larger and more diverse faculty brings a higher level of expertise to individual subjects and courses than would otherwise be the case. Research also supports graduate students (most are on research assistantships) and it provides the money needed to support academic and research infrastructure. Given the low level of operating budgets, it is research that makes operations possible for the entire College and research very heavily subsidizes instruction in this College.

In a similar manner, but to a lesser extent due to size of program, outreach activities also are critical to the mission and future of the College. Extension and continuing education are the primary and visible outreach activities. They are vital and active programs in the College, with the Extension efforts especially noted for their excellence in service to the State’s citizens.

The primary on-campus facilities of the College are very good and provide space for classes and laboratories, the Quinney Natural Resources Library, administrative functions of the College, and meeting and interacting space. The Natural Resources Building is particularly well suited to the interaction of students and faculty, students and students, and faculty and faculty. The juxtaposition of administrative, student and service offices around a common atrium in this building facilitates frequent interaction among members of the College. The Quinney Natural Resources Library is another space facilitating frequent interaction, while at the same time providing a modern learning resource center complementary to the two major libraries on campus. Finally, the College has good facilities off campus at such locations as Bear Lake and the Forestry Camp and School Forest in Logan Canyon.

There are several commendations one can make regarding the College of Natural Resources. The College is commended for:

1. building a very high quality and productive faculty which provides leading-edge learning opportunities and well prepared natural resource managers and scientists, relevant and timely research results, and effective outreach activities;

2. making the College a student and employee friendly place, particularly for its making spaces which facilitate interaction of members of the College community;

3. fostering a nurturing environment which has produced a generally happy and productive student body;
4. developing a leading-edge vision which has led to targeted allocation of discretionary funds toward emerging issues and future development of the College;

5. embracing the Geography and Earth Resources Department as a new member of the College portfolio, providing benefits from this merger and giving benefits to this department;

6. being highly competitive in securing research and other funds which have allowed building a much more diverse and vital College than would otherwise be the case.

There also are recommendations that can be made for enhancement of the College.

1. Continued nurturing and developing of the Department of Geography and Earth Resources is necessary to ensure its full integration into the College.

2. Investigation of the causes of the shift in proportion of non-resident students and investigation of ways to attract a larger proportion of non-resident students are desirable for enhancing the intellectual diversity of the College’s student body.

3. Attention to the seemingly high degree of leveraging of faculty salaries on soft money research funds and development of mitigation strategies given the transitory nature of such funds would provide a greater sense of economic security.

4. Greater attention focused on educational assessment concept and practice would allow better documentation of the effectiveness of educational programming and would lead to more information based program planning and modification.

5. Given the changing world of natural resources management and the many cross-cutting activities of units of the College which reflect external changes, an examination of the fit of the current organizational structure and of alternatives to it might prove useful to facilitating the continuance of the College as a leading natural resource education and research institution into the twenty-first century.
STANDARD V
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

Along with the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, the College of Science forms the liberal arts core of Utah State University. Its six departments play a major role in service teaching, general education, and graduate education and research. There is a good spirit among the faculty and students in the College. There are very low barriers to collaboration in research across departmental boundaries. The relationship between the departments and the Dean’s Office is warm and collegial. The Dean has worked hard to create a “sense of college” among departments and individual faculty, including an open budget process, and individual meetings with faculty on a regular basis.

Departments have taken the move to a semester system as an opportunity to revise courses and to participate collaboratively in meeting each other’s needs. They have also been sensitive to the needs of units outside the College -- such as Engineering -- that rely on College courses. There is some frustration when departments outside the College change degree requirements without prior notification to the department providing service courses. This makes academic planning difficult, and it would be helpful if the University would develop mechanisms for informing affected departments in advance when significant changes in degree requirements or course prerequisites are about to be implemented. In general, however, there is a good sense of collegiality across campus.

Interviews with department heads revealed uniform satisfaction with the quality of the faculty USU is able to attract. The level of research activity in the College provides sufficient overhead funds so that start-up of new faculty is usually not a problem. There is some anxiety with retention of successful faculty due to salary compression at the senior ranks, however.

A well-established and meaningful system of faculty evaluation exists in the College. The department head reviews every faculty member on an annual basis, and also visits at least one class per year of every faculty member. Most department heads schedule face-to-face meetings at which the annual review takes place. Faculty members appear to view this as a regular part of doing business. A five-year review of tenured faculty procedure is taking shape. Some faculty members wonder why so many university offices require incompatible reports of faculty activity, however. “The more successful you are, the more reports you have to file,” was one comment. The University might wish to consider establishing a common data base of faculty professional activities to alleviate this problem.

The sciences at USU are experiencing significant growth in undergraduate enrollments. This is most dramatic in biology, and biology prerequisites in chemistry, physics and mathematics have caused these departments to increase also. This growth causes several problems. First, flat state appropriations mean that faculty size has not kept pace with the undergraduate student body. Consequently class sizes are burgeoning, even at the upper division level. A second problem is space. A new chemistry building will soon be constructed, and a science learning center is slated to follow. New space for biology is already critical, and is planned to follow the science learning center. The latter two projects are expected to be funded entirely by private gifts. A third problem
is attracting sufficient numbers of graduate students to serve as teaching assistants. Departments desire to waive in-state tuition for TAs in order to be more competitive in a national market, but difficult priority setting would be required to do this through reallocation of funds (estimated to be $1 million for the campus). The inescapable conclusion is that the quality of undergraduate instruction will decrease if enrollments continue to grow without an increase in resources for new faculty and operating budgets.

It does not seem possible for the University to establish enrollment caps in order to maintain quality. The state expects the University to maintain access and would cut funding if such a step were taken. Some accept as inevitable and even desirable the creation of formal accountability for how faculty members spend their time, hoping that this move will encourage the legislature to be more responsive to university needs. Disappointment was expressed that a well-crafted plan to fund remedial mathematics through a special fee was scuttled at higher levels, even though state high schools had welcomed such a move.

Undergraduate advising is acknowledged to be a problem in most departments, and is verified by conversations with students. Some departments have hired a full-time professional advisor, while others rely solely on the faculty. In the latter case, there is concern that the load is not evenly distributed and that advising is not adequately rewarded. The problem is particularly acute in Biology, with 800 majors and 35 faculty. There is sentiment in the College to require advising before students register, but so far other colleges in the University have not joined this initiative. Students give high marks to the faculty for quality and accessibility. Those who have participated in internship programs have been pleased with their ability to compete successfully against students from other universities. A major Howard Hughes grant to the Biology Department has increased research experiences for undergraduates.

The faculty seem to take assessment very seriously, at least for undergraduate majors, and there continues to be a great deal of experimentation to find the most effective means. A variety of outcomes assessment techniques have been tried, including exit interviews and questionnaires, standardized exams, capstone courses, and questions embedded in course exams. The Dean interviews approximately forty percent of graduating students every year about their experiences at USU. From these interviews have come specific changes, such as the introduction of new courses or modification of existing ones.

There is some anxiety that the new general education program will put undue demands on some departments, such as Statistics and Computer Science. The worry is that new courses will have to be taught without any new resources. The Provost has instructed the general education committee to design a program that does not involve any new resources except for additional funding that may become available due to enrollment growth. There is disappointment that this budgetary decision has forced the removal of some of the most attractive aspects of the new general education program, including small classes for freshmen. Faculty who have created the highly regarded Liberal Arts and Sciences program are fearful that funding will be removed from their program and re-directed to the new University Studies program.

In general, the College of Science is in fine scholarly condition with excellent leadership by the Dean and the department heads. Its greatest challenge will be to obtain adequate resources to meet student needs, particularly in biology. It should continue to give high priority to meeting student demand.
Working with the campus administration, it should try to establish enrollment limits to protect quality.

Commendations for the College of Science:

- The College has an excellent faculty and administration who exhibit mutual respect and a warm sense of collegiality.

- The faculty of the College are genuinely interested in their students and in adapting departmental courses in the new semester format to serve student needs.

- Undergraduate and graduate students are eager learners and are pleased with the quality of their educational experience.

- The faculty of the College are taking assessment seriously and are experimenting with a variety of approaches.

- The Dean is aggressively pursuing private fund raising to support capital projects, graduate student fellowships, and other high priority needs.
STANDARD VI

CONTINUING EDUCATION AND SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

At Utah State University, Continuing Education (CE) is part of University Extension and is led by the Vice President for Extension and Continuing Education. The Vice President reports to the University President and is a member of the President's cabinet. University Extension has two major divisions, Continuing Education and Cooperative Extension Services. Cooperative Education Services is led by the Vice President for Extension and Continuing Education, and Continuing Education is led by an Associate Vice President for Continuing Education. This section of the team report will address the assessment of Continuing Education. Another section of the report will address Cooperative Extension Services.

While Continuing Education and Cooperative Extension Services have been combined for many years, the current administrative structure is recent and has been established following the recent retirement of the Dean of Continuing Education. That position will not be filled by a new person and Continuing Education will be the responsibility of the Associate Vice President. While this administrative structure is new, it appears to be working well and the team believes that it is a structure which will serve both the University and the extensive network of continuing education programs conducted throughout the State of Utah.

Credit programs offered by Continuing Education are Off-Campus Center, Evening Programs, Independent Study (Correspondence Courses), and International Program. Non-credit programs are offered through the Division of Conferences and Institutes and include youth programs, telecommunication conferences, and general conferences. One group of credit programs is also administered through this division of Continuing Education - Summer credit workshops and travel study.

The program is extensive, reaching into all regions of the State of Utah, as well as into bordering states. The self-study shows credit enrollment statistics on page 128 in Table VI-3 and Figures VI-2 and VI-3. The table heading indicates that the student credit hours are "annualized full-time student equivalents." The team found that the FTE reported was incorrect; it was a total of the three quarterly FTE reports added together. The correct annualized full-time student equivalents was the figure shown divided by three. The total full-time equivalent for Continuing Education, as corrected, is 2,971 FTE (excluding summer credit workshops). When these workshops are included, the total FTE exceeds three thousand. Since nearly all Continuing Education students are part-time students taking limited loads, this figure represents a per quarter registration of over five thousand five hundred individual students. This is over one-quarter of the total (both on- and off-campus) headcount reported by the campus. In addition CE, through its Conferences and Institutes Division, serves an additional 30,000 non-credit students each year.

All credit programs offered through Continuing Education are under the academic control of a campus department. All degree programs offered are the regular campus degree programs with all courses taught either by the regular campus faculty, full-time Center or Branch Campus faculty approved by the campus faculty, or adjunct faculty approved by the department. In all degree programs full-time campus faculty teach a significant portion of the program. Academic standards for on-campus and off-campus programs are the same.
Continuing Education has established a policy of offering full degree programs at Centers and Branch Campuses in order to assure the distance learning students that they will have the opportunity to complete degree goals.

Commendation

The committee commends the University for establishing a Continuing Education program which supports the mission of the University in reaching out to the citizens of the state with academic programs of instruction, for selecting a well qualified and dedicated staff to lead and develop the instructional program, and for supporting this group in establishing full degree programs at Centers and Branch campuses throughout the State of Utah.

Centers and Branch Campuses

CE maintains seven Branch Campuses (some are called Centers) at distance locations throughout the State. These units bring collegiate instruction to the remote and sparsely populated regions of the State as well as to the populations centers of the State. Branch Campuses and Centers are usually responsible for providing instruction at a number of locations in surrounding areas. As a result over thirty locations provide degree programs. Instruction is delivered in three modes: satellite television, full-time and adjunct faculty at distance locations, and campus faculty driving or flying from campus to Centers to teach courses one evening per week. Prior to and during the visit one member of the team visited four of these locations: Roosevelt and Vernal in Eastern Utah, Price in Central Utah, and Randolph in Northeastern Utah. Roosevelt and Vernal are the largest, Randolph among the smallest, and Price representative of most of the rest.

Satellite Television. CE offers six graduate and five baccalaureate degree programs via televised instruction using the new DBS (Direct Broadcast Satellite) system developed by USU. The system provides one-way video and two-way audio and has a capacity of four channels, with only two currently in use. In addition, USU is the largest collegiate user of the Utah Education Network (EdNet) which is a two-way video and audio. Televised courses are the primary source of instruction for the smaller Centers and Branch Campuses. However, even the large Centers and Branch Campuses rely heavily on televised instruction. During the current semester, 2630 DBS student registrations were recorded at all off-campus locations.

Most televised courses originate on campus and are taught by regular university faculty. The Unitah Basin Branch Campus has the capability to originate televised courses and some of the twenty full-time faculty assigned to the campus originate courses.

The campus tapes televised broadcasts but only uses the tapes if the transmission is lost due to equipment failure. Tapes are not made available for student viewing when absent, even when absent for valid reasons. The tapes are also not made available to students as supplemental study materials permitting students to see a tape to gain knowledge missed during the live presentation (a recognized and valid means of improving student learning). The rationale provided the team was that they wanted students to attend class and not be indiscriminately absent and then watch tapes; and also that intellectual property rights of faculty prevented other uses. (The team was advised that there is no written policy or faculty agreement on intellectual property rights).
The committee found this restriction unduly harsh and suggests that the policy be reviewed in light of procedures used by other major collegiate institutions providing televised instruction. Other institutions require attendance and use such techniques as added assignments (a written report on the lecture, for example) when a class is missed, or a reduced grade after a certain number of absences. Either technique will eliminate indiscriminate absences while using the advantages that the technology provides to solve student problems resulting from legitimate absences.

Intellectual property rights are important and should be protected. Other institutions provide this protection by reserving tapes only for use by students registered in the course, and erasing all tapes at the end of the semester or quarter the course if offered. The team did observe that the USU courses delivered via EdNet were routinely taped, via EdNet policies, at delivery sites for student use.

Campus Faculty Campus faculty teach courses at many of the Centers and Branch Campuses. They drive to Centers and Branch Campuses within commute distance or are flown to more distant locations by the airplane owned by the campus. The Unitah Branch Campus has two instructional flights per week, with eight faculty on each flight. Two other Branch Campuses share a third flight each week. This method plus televised instruction helps provide full-time faculty involvement in the delivery of instruction.

Support Services All Centers and Branch Campuses provide library, computer and student services to all students. The campus library is fully on-line and all distance locations are able to search the campus collections and have books forwarded to them. Centers and Branch Campuses are also on inter-library loan and books are often obtained from other campuses in the state. Journal articles and other materials are sometimes more difficult to obtain, but journal library services are being put on-line to accommodate distance learning student needs. Other student services, including financial aid, advisement and counseling, and registration and records are provided students either by site directors or professional on staff at the distance location.

The committee reviewed the 1997 Annual Report of Distance Library Services - USU Libraries. The report showed usage figures by Center and Branch Campus students of the USU campus library. The report also identified four “Service Priorities” and the team suggests that the campus work on accomplishing all of these priorities. They are: (1) develop on-site resources for students in Utah correctional facilities - students at these sites are unable to use the Internet due to facility concerns for security, (2) extend services to USU Cooperative Extension Agents, (3) address access problems to off-campus users - access is complicated by technical and licensing issues, and (4) expand library instruction to off-campus users.

This latter priority is critical, and the team further suggests that CE establish some type of instructional program which would be required of new students (unless they demonstrate appropriate knowledge and skills) and provide instruction on how all types of research and class support information can be obtained through the electronic support provided by USU.

Faculty Full-time faculty employed at the Branch Campuses and Centers are identified as “Extension Faculty,” a classification that distinguishes them from the regular campus faculty. The faculty selection criteria parallel the campus criteria, and campus departments are involved in the selection of full-time faculty for the Branch Campuses and Centers. A tenure and promotion process
which parallels the campus process has been established for Extension faculty.

The reason given for establishing separate systems was to prevent Branch Campus and Center faculty from gaining retreat rights to campus departments. While the process protects the campus faculty, it has the negative effect of creating a 'less than equal faculty' group. The team suggests that Continuing Education and campus departments continue to study and assess procedures and seek ways to establish a cohesive faculty with equal rights and responsibilities for both campus and Branch Campus and Center faculty.

**Branch Campus and Center Administration** The committee found that the administrators and support staff of each of the Branch Campuses and Centers visited were well qualified, enthusiastic, and sensitive to the needs of the students attending classes and working toward their degrees. They reported receiving excellent community support facility acquisition and student recruitment. The communities sought the establishment of Centers and Branch Campuses in their areas and provided full support when established.

**Commendation**

The committee commends the high level of support and enthusiasm provided to Branch Campuses and Centers by the communities they serve. There appears to be a continuous dialogue between community and institution as to the ways assistance can be provided. The committee also commends the knowledge, abilities, and enthusiasm of the Branch Campus and Center administrative staff.

**Evening Program**

Evening courses offered on campus are administered by Continuing Education as a separate university program. The program serves both campus students and working adults from the local community with selected course offerings. The program is quite small, approximately fifty classes, a condition resulting from having no full degree programs offered in the evening coupled with minimal past effort to solicit classes from departments and recruit students for the classes.

The committee suggests that the University consider offering a selected number of full-degree programs in the evening, thereby permitting working adults from the surrounding communities the opportunity to complete an academic degree at USU. The team further suggests that departments be encouraged to offer additional evening courses and programs announced to surrounding communities.

**Summer Institutes**

Continuing Education offers a series of one to three quarter unit summer workshops which are from two to five days in duration. During the past summer the typical workshop was offered for seven hours per day with an appropriate lunch break. The team was advised that the workshops providing three quarter units of credit in one week have outside assignments which need to be completed after the one week workshop ends. In some cases students have an option of receiving two units for participation in the five day class, and an additional unit if they complete the after course assignment. Some classes identified the follow-up assignment in the summer catalog, others did not.
The committee noted that the Commission definition of a quarter unit of credit involves a total of in-class and outside study of 30 hours per unit. Sixty class hours of classroom instruction and outside study for two units of credit in a Monday morning to Friday afternoon period is difficult and almost impossible to accomplish. While the instructional content is excellent and relevant, unit values seem high compared to regular campus courses and the Commission definition of a quarter unit of credit.

The changes from quarter to semester units which will soon occur should include a review of policies and procedures for assigning credit to summer workshops. Since the measurement is in larger increments, it will be all but impossible to offer multiple unit courses in one week.

**Recommendation**

The committee recommends that, as part of the conversion to semester units, Continuing Education review Commission policy on quarter and semester units of credit, and study campus policies and procedures for assigning credit levels for summer workshops to make certain that credit levels are appropriate and that they adhere to Commission policy. (Standard VI, Page 63 and Definition of Credit, Page 193)

**International Programs**

Continuing Education has, at the present time, only one degree program which is offered internationally. It is the MBA program offered in Taiwan. In developing the program, the University entered into an agreement with the Informatics Group, a company which promotes, advertises, recruits students, and provides site facilities to offer international programs. The company then contracts with collegiate institutions to offer degree program, paying the institution a guaranteed amount to offer their program. The institution retains all academic control and responsibility, including admission of students, and instruction.

For this MBA program, Utah State uses campus admission standards and sends its regular faculty to Taiwan for two week periods to teach an intensive three quarter unit course. Instructional materials and assignments are sent to the students prior to the instructor teaching the course, and follow-up assignments are required prior to completion of the course. The substantive change process of reviewing this program is underway, but was not completed prior to the visit of the accreditation committee.

The University is interested in developing additional programs as well as established programs to bring international students to campus for credit and non-credit instructional programs. The committee suggest that Continuing Education monitor agreements with private non-accredited agencies to make certain that all requirements of the Commission Policy on Contractual Relationships with Organization Not Regionally Accredited are met. The committee found no indication that policy violations existed. However, the University needs to recognize that private groups recruiting students often place pressure on institutions to accept unqualified students, a condition which must be resisted.

**Internet Programs**
Continuing Education currently offers four courses which permit students to complete the entire course via Internet. CE has established an Internet Program Development office which assists faculty in developing courses and degree programs for Internet delivery.

A full Masters Degree in Technical Writing will soon be completed for Internet delivery. The University also has three additional degree programs being developed. They are: (1) Masters Degree in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, (2) Bachelors Degree in Liberal Arts, and (3) Bachelors Degree in Technical Writing. Continuing Education expects to have over 100 courses on the Internet by next year.

**Independent Study**

Continuing Education maintains a large program of Independent Study, more commonly identified as Correspondence Courses. Registrations have been stable for the past several years with approximately 3000 registrations recorded each year. Approximately half of the students are fully matriculated USU students meeting a specific course requirement via this medium of instruction. Courses are revised on a three year schedule, and taught mostly by regular campus faculty. The Independent Study staff plans on making courses more interactive, taking advantage of the Internet for communications and interactions.

**Substantive Change**

USU recognizes the need to submit Substantive Change proposals to the Commission on Colleges of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. In discussion with the campus accreditation liaison officer, the committee was advised of the campus understanding of the substantive change process as it affects the campus outreach efforts. Whenever a degree program is planned for out-of-state delivery, a Substantive Change proposal is prepared and submitted to the Northwest Association. However, no Substantive Change proposals are submitted when an existing campus degree is offered off-campus within the State of Utah, whether by satellite or regular faculty instruction. As a result, whenever a new campus degree is added to television or offered on-site at one or more of the Centers or Branch Campuses, or whenever new in-state receive-sites are added for distance learning degree programs, no Substantive Changes proposals are submitted.

The committee recognizes that the campus is developing some new and different programs which will soon be ready for delivery. A Masters Degree in Technical Writing with delivery fully on the Internet will soon be completed and made available to students. Other Internet degree programs are in preparation. CE is working with a number of other accredited universities in the development of some cooperative degree programs which will be delivered both in Utah and in neighboring states. Delivery of televised degrees to Agriculture Cooperative Centers located throughout the state is being seriously considered. Many of these are small communities with only a few students interested in degree programs. The campus EdD degree program is being planned for delivery to remote locations. The model planned will have courses broadcast or taught on site with students attending campus for three consecutive summer sessions.

These programs will provide numerous additional opportunities for students to complete degrees. At the same time, some of these locations may have just a few students participating and difficulty questions regarding library, computer and student services need to be addressed by the campus. The
EdD program represents a new level of degree programs offered off-campus. Some or all of the programs may be viewed by the Commission as “Major Changes” and require Commission approval prior to being offered.

The Commission is only interested in Major Substantive Changes and what constitutes a Major change for a new institution may be a minor change for an established institution. Commission policy states clearly, however, that it retains the authority to make the decision on what is and what is not a major substantive change. The policy states:

“The Commission on Colleges is concerned primarily with major substantive changes and relies upon the staff of the Commission to determine if a proposed substantive change is a major or minor in nature. Usually it is possible for the Commission staff to make such a determination. The institution is requested to describe in letter to the executive director of the Commission the nature and purposes of the change.”

The committee believes some new initiatives planned by the University will be viewed by the Commission as major substantive changes. The Commission has indicated that the addition of an Internet degree programs is a Major Substantive change. Come of the others, such as the use of Agriculture Cooperative Centers for degree programs may be viewed initially as a major change due to need for special quality control measures, library and information resources, and student support services.

**Recommendation**

The committee recommends strongly that USU follow the Commission policy pertaining to matters of substantive change. The Commission’s responsibility is to advise the campus as to whether the change is minor or is considered major and requires further action. This procedure should be easy to implement since current campus and state procedures require campus approvals as well as considerations by Regents and other Utah collegiate institutions when offered in Utah. It adds just one letter to the process and has the advantage of having the program cleared through the Commission and keeping the Commission informed of University distance learning activities. (Substantive Change Policy, p. 120)

**Contracting with Non-Accredited Agencies**

The committee noted that the campus had many arrangements, agreements and contracts to provide University services and instructional programs to both private groups and public agencies. These are all appropriate within existing Commission policies. CE also contracts with two agencies assisting the campus with international programs, primarily in the areas of seeking potential students or groups interested in having USU offer their regular instructional programs on site. These are also appropriate. The committee, however, found one agreement which raised some questions.

The Brigham City Branch Campus has a cooperative agreement with the Round River Conservation Studies group, a group which has classes which “can be held any place in the world” (Self-study, p. 125). The Round River Conservative Studies group does not hold regional accreditation. The committee received one report that the University awarded credit for Round River courses - verses a second report that courses and faculty were approved by the University and offered as University
courses.

The campus did not have a copy of the agreement and Brigham City Branch Campus personnel were not available to interview. The committee believes the agreement should be reviewed to determine whether it meets the requirements of Commission Policy on Contractual Relationships with Organizations Not Regionally Accredited. This policy has numerous requirements with the primary requirements centered on the concept that all “courses offered for credit must remain under the sole and direct control of the sponsoring accredited institution.”

**Recommendation**

The committee recommends that the University review the agreement or contractual relationship with the Round River Conservation Studies group to determine whether the agreement meets all requirements of the Commission, especially Section 17 d. Which addresses academic control of the instructional program. If not, the contract or agreement should be brought in compliance or terminated. (Policy on Contractual Relationships with Organizations Regionally Accredited, Pages 152-157)

**Assessment**

Continuing Education administrators reported that they had taken an initial step in assessing the success of Center and Branch Campus programs. An assessment process which is designed to identify the economic impact, as well as the economic and personal impact on students earning degrees, is being planned and will be tested at the Unitah Branch campus. After testing modification based on the testing process, the assessment will be conducted at all Centers and Branch Campuses.

The team has prepared a major recommendation, presented elsewhere in this report, which addresses the need for the establishment and implementation of a strong university assessment program. The committee suggests that Continuing Education take an aggressive role in this assessment process so that all Continuing Education students and programs are included.

**Summary of Commendations and Recommendations**

**Commendations**

The committee commends the University for establishing a Continuing Education program which supports the mission of the University in reaching out to the citizens of the state with academic programs of instruction, for selecting a well qualified and dedicated staff to lead and develop the instructional program, and for supporting this group in establishing full degree programs at Centers and Branch campuses throughout the State of Utah.

The committee commends the high level of support and enthusiasm provided to Branch Campuses and Centers by the communities they serve. There appears to be a continuous dialogue between community and institution as to the ways assistance can be provided. The committee also commends the knowledge, abilities and enthusiasm of the Branch Campus and Center administrative staff.
Recommendations

The committee recommends that, as part of the conversion to semester units, Continuing Education review Commission policy on quarter and semester units of credit and study campus policies and procedures for assigning credit levels for summer workshops to make certain that credit levels are appropriate and that they adhere to Commission policy. (Standard VI, Page 63 and Definition of Credit, Page 193)

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STANDARD VII
INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

Utah State University’s faculty is professionally qualified with primary commitment to the institution and is representative of each field and program in which it offers major work. The faculty participate in academic planning, curriculum development and review, and institutional governance. USU’s advising model is a mix of professional, faculty, and peer advisors. Faculty involvement in advising varies considerably from department to department and college to college. All faculty have the election to advise students academically; however, the election of that course of action depends on program and departmental needs. As enrollments have increased, faculty workloads have increased with the growth in the number of faculty not keeping pace with the increase in student credit hours. Faculty assignments are in concert with the talents and competencies of the faculty. It appears that sufficient resources are allocated to support faculty professional growth, development, and renewal.

Although institutional surveys indicate almost half of the faculty do not consider faculty salary as an issue, it nevertheless is an issue for the other half who point out two primary problems: (1) absence of parity with peer institutions and (2) internal salary equity. The committee is concerned, as was expressed ten years ago by the evaluation committee and again in the 1993 Fifth-year Interim Evaluation Report, that faculty salaries are often not adequate to attract competent, talented faculty nationally or internationally in today’s highly competitive marketplace. An ameliorating factor to the compensation picture is that USU’s benefits package is well above the national norm. Although the institution’s faculty salaries were nearly 18 percent below the average of peer institutions in 1995-96, after adding in the benefits, the percentage below the average drops to 8.4. This percentage has remained constant over the past three years, which indicates little movement by the state to achieve parity for its Utah State University faculty.

A second salary-related issue confronting the institution is that of achieving internal salary equity. Salary survey data indicates substantial inequities in the administration of faculty salaries within and among departments and colleges. Although the institution has made improvement of faculty/staff salaries a priority, the committee is concerned with respect to the large disparities both within and across professional ranks that presently exist in departments and colleges. Unless addressed in the immediate future, present and future new hires will only exacerbate this problem.

The university provides for regular and systematic evaluation of faculty performance in its effort to ensure teaching effectiveness and the fulfillment of instructional and other responsibilities. The institution’s policies, regulations, and procedures provide for the evaluation of all faculty on a continuing basis.

Utah State University defines an orderly process for the recruitment and appointment of full-time faculty. University, college, and departmental personnel policies and procedures are published, made available to faculty, and are systematically and periodically reviewed. Included in the USU Faculty Code of Policies and Procedures - 1967 and the USU Policy Manual - 1996 are statements that indicate institutional commitment to an environment that fosters and protects
academic freedom for faculty. Faculty overwhelmingly believe they have sufficient academic freedom at USU.

Although participation by faculty in institutional governance is addressed in Standard VIII - Administration, it is clear that USU faculty are provided the widest of opportunities to participate in the governance of the university at all levels.

Part-time and adjunct faculty are qualified by academic background, degrees, and/or professional experience to carry out their teaching assignment and/or other contracted duties and responsibilities in accord with the mission of the university. Employment practices for part-time and adjunct faculty include dissemination of information regarding Utah State University, the work assignment, rights and responsibilities, and conditions of employment. The university periodically assesses its policies concerning the use of part-time and adjunct faculty in light of the university’s mission and objectives. Part-time faculty salary levels were a concern in 1987, and remain so. Salary increases reflect inflation increases but not the necessary gains to provide the increases recommended in 1987, and still needed.

The Faculty Assistance Center for Teaching

This facility was created in recent years to support the design, development, and the production of multimedia materials for classroom instruction and distance learning. Staff in this unit provide consultation and assistance in the design and implementation of computer-based multimedia presentation. State of the art hardware and software is available. In addition, a 24-station laboratory is provided for faculty for hands-on training. Faculty who have taken advantage of the Center to prepare materials indicate FACT is very successful in helping to improve instruction both on and off campus, but they expressed concern that the majority of their colleagues do not take advantage of the service. Even though workshop schedules are distributed to faculty and staff each quarter, it is suggested that additional marketing of FACT may be warranted so that a larger number of faculty and staff avail themselves of this professional growth opportunity. The committee is concerned that if this useful service is not more fully utilized in its current location, there could be a tendency to replicate the service in facilities at the college level.
FACULTY EVALUATION

Faculty evaluation receives appropriate attention and is of significant importance at Utah State University. The processes are seriously considered at all levels within the University. The multiple procedures for faculty review have been thoroughly developed and are well articulated in the *USU Policy Manual*.

Formal annual reviews of all faculty for merit increases constitute a major component of the overall evaluation process. Because the specific criteria for these reviews are determined at the department or college level, significant flexibility exists to appropriately evaluate faculty for their contributions to the mission of the academic unit. Evidence exists that multiple indices are used in the evaluation of faculty which are consistent with the role assignments for those individuals. There appears to be widespread agreement that annual reviews based upon role assignments have been an effective measure of faculty evaluation.

Revision of the *USU Faculty Code of Policies and Procedures*, which resulted in the recently approved *USU Policy Manual*, appears to represent a significant improvement in the documentation of faculty evaluation policies. Because these policies and procedures are a reflection of current practices, little change is anticipated in most aspects of faculty evaluation due to the adoption of these new policies. However, there is faculty sentiment that the approved manual is an “evolving document”, and that minor revisions will likely be suggested for implementation in subsequent years.

Annual reviews by the tenure advisory committee for each tenure-tracked faculty are an effective and well-regarded means for mentoring and evaluation of probationary faculty. There exists strong concurrence among faculty and administration that these peer committees play a crucial role in the pre-tenure evaluation process. Faculty are in general agreement that these reviews are highly beneficial to probationary faculty and well serve the best interests of the University.

Significant effort has been expended in the development and implementation of a new course evaluation instrument. This project resulted in a course evaluation form which is generally perceived to be a significant improvement over the previously-used instrument. The additional information derived from this new form assists faculty and others in analyzing student evaluations of courses to a much greater depth.

As indicated in the self-study report, the newly-adopted policy manual mandates a review of tenured faculty by a peer committee at least once every five years. The self-study acknowledges that “The University currently is at work to determine what form this review should take and what its consequences should be”. It is suggested that University-wide efforts in addressing this mandate incorporate procedures to help ensure a consistent degree of review across academic units. Efforts to institutionalize these procedures should appropriately consider the benefits from an in-depth review and the commitment of human resources to such reviews.

**Commendations and Recommendations:**

1. Utah State University is commended on the high quality of the newly approved *USU Policy Manual 1996* that finally received Board of Regents approval after a decade in the
development of the document.

2. Opportunities for faculty involvement in institutional governance abound at USU. The university is commended for its open, candid approach in providing opportunities to faculty to participate in matters of governance and faculty concern. There exists a unique working relationship among faculty and institutional leadership that is built on trust and confidence that may be unique in the region.

3. The issues of salary parity and internal equity at USU continue to haunt the institution. This is the third evaluation in a row that NASC evaluators have found salary levels to be substantially below the norm for peer institutions. Likewise, the inequities of salary administration within and across departments and colleges have lead to serious cases of salary compression and inversion. When new faculty hires earn more salary at the outset than longtime faculty do in higher ranks or in the same rank, problems of morale and commitment are sure to follow. It is recommended that the university accelerate its efforts to address salary inequities within departments and colleges and to make faculty/staff compensation improvement its number one priority.
STANDARD VIII
ADMINISTRATION

Utah State University operates under an unusual arrangement of two governing boards. Both gubernatorially appointed, the 16-member Utah Board of Regents exercises general authority over public education in the state, while the USU Board of Trustees, with eight members, offers advice and direction to this campus in particular. Performing many of the functions of advisory councils on other campuses, the Trustees are empowered both by law and by the Regents, who of course exercise final authority. For instance, the Trustees scrutinize USU budgets and offer their suggestions to the Regents.

This arrangement makes for many board meetings, but both the members of the two boards and campus administrators favor it. Committee members met separately with two members of the Board of Regents and six members of the Board of Trustees. They were unanimous in their commitment to the current arrangement and in their positive attitude toward the university and its current status and direction.

The administrative structure at Utah State University is typical of those at similar, large state research institutions. There are five vice-presidents including, in addition to the Provost, those for Administrative Affairs, Student Services, Extension and Continuing Education, University Relations and Development, and Research. The “President’s Cabinet” consists of these individuals, plus the campus Legal Counsel and chief assistant; a more broadly based “Administrative Council” adds to the Cabinet the deans, the associate and assistant provosts, the Director of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, and others.

There is currently quite a lot of administrative turnover, including one vice-presidential and four dean-level positions. The structure of university governance committees is, similarly, typical of land-grant campuses across the land. There is a full measure of faculty and student participation.

In summary, the committee finds that Utah State University meets the elements of Standard VIII – Administration concerning its governance system, leadership, and management. In addition, the committee finds that the university exceeds the Commission’s expectations regarding student and faculty participation in governance.

University Relations and Development: Utah State University has an unusual history in this area of its operation. Only in the early 1990's did it begin intensive efforts in Alumni development or in focused fund-raising. Its USU Research Foundation is, obviously, focused upon research and development, while the university relies upon the national “Common Fund” to manage its endowments and other privately raised funds. This vice-presidential office has charge of fund-raising, which is conducted both centrally and through dispersed development officers, while governmental relations are handled by a presidential assistant. In addition to development, this office also has responsibility for Alumni Relations, media and publications. For an institution of its achievement, Utah State is surprisingly new at alumni and development prioritization, but it is now on a fast track and is preparing for a major capital campaign.
STANDARD IX

STUDENT SERVICES

Student Services in Transition

The team’s visit came during an interesting transition in Student Services because of the recent (March 1997) appointment of a new Vice President for Student Services. Her title has been expanded to include Dean of Academic and Support Services. The new Vice President has been in office for just a few months and had little to do with the self-study. Hence we were looking at an organization in transition. Her added title resulted from a reorganization just before she came: slightly altered reporting relationships in an effort to bring the work of Student Services closer to the academic administration. Consequently she has dual reporting relationships to the provost and president.

There are some daunting challenges facing the organization and its new leader. Her predecessor was a highly respected 30-year member of the University who created much of the form and substance of Student Services. While all with whom we talked realized that change is inevitable, the thought of it is a mix of welcome and trepidation. That’s not surprising since USU itself is changing in some important ways as outlined in the Self-Study. For her part, the Vice President recognizes the need to listen aggressively, to range widely around the University and to become a student of USU’s campus cultures. She has made few changes but more will surely come after she has been at USU longer. She is recognized for her demonstrated professional competencies and shares many of the most important social, educational and personal values of USU.

Effective Services

The University and its students enjoy a quality set of Student Services. The array is large, important to the missions of Student Services and the University; they are traditionally organized and administered. USU comfortably meets Standard IX.

At the same time, the organization and its role in the University is poised to change. There will be challenges to preserve key aspects of an educationally nurturing campus climate, one marked by good student/faculty relations, a friendly environment marked by warmth and civility, and distinctive sets of personal values. Achieving this in the face of changes such as more students, greater demands for services, the need better to serve Extension students, all with continued financial restraints. Also, the organization and its parts are challenged to rethink their missions, to revisit the educational reasons that they exist, and the beliefs and assumptions that animate their work.

Organizational Health, Missions and Assessment

The self-study used recognized standards to help clarify functions, use, demographics and student satisfaction. Other assessment techniques were used as well and included year-end reports and recent data. Although much data was provided to the committee it was unclear how it was interwoven into a fabric which can be shared, and how it is used for planning for the future at the department and institutional levels.
The self-studies at the unit level tended to describe well what they do and how they do. Mission, however, was a clear view of why they do it, and why they do it the ways that they do it, and the “so what?” analyses of consequences. The team wondered whether the organization was unduly task-oriented with a touch of organizational hardening of the arteries. Does it share, communicate and address problems that transcend its boundaries? We suggest that Student Services would benefit immensely by becoming more catholic in its views and wading deeper into the seas of institutional and professional perspectives.

We suggest that Student Services build bridges of understanding and collaboration at all levels of its organization and further to identify, clarify and celebrate the high values of their missions. Also, find ways to cross boundaries and participate in transcendent issues. For example, are there plans, as a group or several subgroups to anticipate the demands to result from the conversion to semesters? Will these groups look beyond their specific services and include other areas in Student Services?

Assessment

Student Services does not meet Policy #25 (p. 57 of the Accreditation Handbook). The Self-Study was evidence of a good beginning, but there is a need for more use of qualitative data, discussion about all data, and a collective search for meaning and implications. These latter steps are needed to plan for the present as well as the future. Assessment is essential to planning.

We recommend that Student Services make assessment more a habit than a special chore and that it include looking beyond the workings of a single office, program or service.

Human Resources

We commend the staff for their hard work, dedication, belief in the mission of the university and commitments to serve students. They give wonderful meaning to the phrase “a wonderful work ethic.”

The team, however, was unclear about how substantive performance reviews have been to the staff. Are the reviews designed to identify an individual’s strengths or weaknesses, major achievements and the quality of his or her work?

The team also saw the need to encourage more professional development. We suggest that Student Services continue to give priority to creating a staff with diverse personal and professional backgrounds.

We found ASUSU to be well led with imaginative leadership, a strong belief in the positive power of students in institutional governance, constructive and soundly dedicated to USU.

Technology

Student Services are commended for recent changes in the use of technology. Some functions associated with Admissions, classroom scheduling the Registrar, academic advising and Financial Aid have significantly changed in ways that serve students and the University better.
These electronic changes have reduced the time of paper-work and increased students’ access to information. Computer labs throughout the campus help students get the information to register, make academic plans, drop, add and to get grades with ease.

Policies and Regulations

Policies and regulations affecting students are clear and well articulated in publications. They appear to be applied equitably.

However, there is an exception that requires additional University attention: the implementation and enforcement of the Century 2000 policy. Students and staff are unclear about how and by whom the policy is enforced, concerned about the apparent absence of equal enforcement, and the seeming absence of consequences when the policy is violated. Yet all agree that the policy has merit.

We recommend that the University improve the implementation of its policy about Greek Letter Organizations, and further that students be a significant part of that effort.

Diversity

The committee recommends that Student Services pay special attention to the dissonance between the mission statement about cultural diversity (p. 11, Mission Statement, Self-Study), the goals of Student Services to “recruit and retain minority students” (p. 165, Self-Study) and the actual performance in achieving greater diversity in the student body (p. 2, Self-Study).

Athletics

The committee noted a successful athletic program, a staff of respected coaches, the achievement of gender equity, the creation of new facilities and a balanced budget for the past five years. It was also aware of the controversy about Athletics that was reported in the local and campus press.

General Commendations

We commend the staff for their hard work, their friendliness, dedication, belief in the mission of the University, and commitments to serve students. They give wonderful meaning to the phrase “a wonderful work ethic.”

Student Services are commended for recent changes in the use of technology.

General Recommendations

The committee recommends that Student Services pay special attention to the dissonance between the mission statement about cultural diversity (p. 11, Mission Statement, Self-Study), the goals of Student Services to “recruit and retain minority students” (p. 165, Self-Study) and the actual performance in achieving greater diversity in the student body (p. 2, Self-Study).
We recommend that Student Services make assessment more a habit than a special chore and that it include looking beyond the workings of a single office, program, or service.

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We recommend that the University improve the implementation of their policy about Greek Letter Organizations, and further that students be a significant part of that effort.
Since the last Commission on Colleges accreditation visit in 1988, Utah State University (USU) was granted Research University I status by the Carnegie Foundation. As the USU self-study reports, "Research and scholarship have both increased in scope and volume during the past ten years." This is evidenced by the fact that USU received over $429 million in grants and contracts in the last five years; had 38 patents issued between 1986-96; developed 40 food, plant, instruction, and other commercial products; helped 50 companies develop; and released 19 new plant variations under the Plant Variety Protection Act. In accordance with the 1988 accreditation visitors' recommendation, USU revised its Mission Statement to include basic and applied research for the purpose of furthering "the quest for knowledge, and to help society meet its scientific, technological, environmental, economic and social challenges."

While effectively coordinated by a vice president for research, USU's research and scholarship programs are decentralized. In the land-grant university tradition, USU conducts research through an agricultural experiment station and a water research laboratory. Additional research consistent with the institution's mission takes place in the academic departments and in centers devoted to persons with disabilities, biotechnology, space science, and ecology. These centers provide infrastructure in support of the institution's research mission, encourage interdisciplinary studies by bringing together faculty from the various colleges, and provide basic equipment and resources necessary for research projects. These centers promote the institution's research function by encouraging grant proposal development and the actual carrying out of research. This decentralization seems to stimulate faculty involvement in research and scholarship; at the same time, the vice-president for research provides oversight by developing and implementing policies and procedures with the advice of a Research Council, consisting of school deans, center directors, faculty members, and students.

Overall, income in support of research and scholarship is stable -- $90 million annually. While defense funding for research declined in 1993, most USU programs, with the exception of engineering and education, have maintained or slightly increased their levels of research funding. In 1995, research and scholarship grant and contract funding was over $84 million, of which approximately $13 million was from private sources, $10 million from the State of Utah, and the remaining $61 million came from federal agencies. During the prior five years, the highest annual sponsored research income was just over $93 million and the lowest was just over $79 million. Thus, while there are modest variations from program to program over the years, USU's grant and contract funding is stable. This stability in a time of reduced amounts of federal grant funding is a result of conscious decisions on the part of faculty to de-emphasize defense-related research to move to post-cold war priorities. For example, while they are still doing research related to satellites, the faculty have moved from star wars projects to those related to precision agriculture, telecommunications, geographic information systems, and the environment.

USU's policies and procedures for faculty evaluation, which include elements on scholarly performance and research productivity, appear to be consistent with the Commission on Colleges' Standards and Policy related to faculty evaluation. Faculty members' research and scholarly productivity are evaluated in the promotion, tenure, sabbatical leave, and merit pay
processes. At the same time, USU recognizes a certain level of risk exists because a number of tenured and tenure track faculty members have a percentage of their salaries regularly covered by grant or contract income.

USU takes pride in the fact that research and scholarship are integral parts of the educational process. There is significant evidence of advancements in the frontiers of knowledge and development of faculty expertise that gets carried into the classroom. It is generally believed that scholarly and research programs enrich instruction on campus by making additional faculty and sophisticated equipment available and providing opportunities for students to be exposed to methods of inquiry in their disciplines, or participate in or observe actual research and scholarly projects. In addition, many graduate students earn income working on research and scholarly projects. At the same time, programs seem to be relying more and more on overhead recovery funds to underwrite their basic operations.

Based upon the institution’s self-study and the campus visit, the evaluators conclude that USU meets the Commission’s Standards related to research and scholarship.

Commendations and Recommendations:

- USU faculty, staff, administration, and students are commended for the designation as a Research I institution and the increase of grant and contract funds to $90 million annually.

- USU is urged to carefully monitor the extent to which tenured and tenure track faculty’s salaries and academic program operations are dependent upon grant and contract funds or the related overhead recovery income to assure that the institution does not become dependent on sponsored projects to support its basic instructional programs.
The level and nature of Utah State University's 141 graduate programs -- 40 doctoral, 96 master's, and five others -- offered through 42 of the institution's 5 academic departments appear to be consistent with the university's mission. At the same time, some low enrollment programs with low graduation numbers may not be of sufficient size to offer an effective curriculum and graduate education experience.

While some graduate programs track their graduates' success in employment or admission to advanced graduate degree programs at other institutions, the university has not adopted an assessment scheme for outcomes assessment and utilization of the information to improve programs. Overall, the USU graduate program does not meet the Commission on Colleges' Policy #25 regarding educational assessment.

Special efforts are made through catalog information, catalog supplements, and the Graduate Gazette to communicate graduate policies, procedures, and degree requirements. These publications are clear and well-presented. The special efforts to detail the implications of the conversion from a quarter academic calendar to a semester calendar are especially appreciated by students.

 Appropriately, USU concludes in its self-study that the graduate program "is doing well, in large part because of a committed, talented, and hard-working faculty who are able to continue the University's growth as a Research University I while actively contributing to its traditional role as a teaching, land-grant institution." In other words, there is significant evidence that faculty members keep pace with the expansion of knowledge and are involved in advancing the frontiers of knowledge. At the same time, they are actively engaged in students' learning in the classroom and in more informal settings. Students repeatedly praise faculty availability and indicate their appreciation for the extensive mentoring faculty members provide for graduate students.

Institutional recognition of the importance of graduate education and the support of graduate programs are demonstrated by the recent increases in funding for graduate fellowships and assistantships, the granting of an annual Outstanding Graduate Mentor Award of $2,000 beginning in 1996, and an ongoing commitment to improve the libraries. Also, there is evidence of an ongoing teaching assistantship training program which prepares graduate students to be effective in their teaching assignments.

With the exception of the absence of an assessment program and the concern about the quality of low enrollment graduate programs, the USU graduate program meets the Commission on Colleges' Policies and Standard XI.

Commendations and Recommendations:
• USU faculty members are commended for their careful mentoring of graduate students.

• USU is commended for maintaining a significant teaching assistantship training program.

• USU is encouraged to examine graduate programs with low enrollments and low graduation numbers to be sure the programs are of sufficient size to offer an effective curriculum and graduate educational experience.

• USU does not meet the Commission on Colleges’ Policy regarding educational assessment of its graduate programs. Consequently, USU is strongly urged to move immediately to institute an institution-wide assessment program with processes to use the outcomes to improve its graduate programs.
CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS, GENERAL COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General recommendation regarding reaffirmation of accreditation will be confidential until the Portland meeting.

GENERAL COMMENDATIONS

1. We commend Utah State University for distinctive qualities that make it a special place to learn, teach and work. It is friendly, civil, respectful, caring, and humane. Students have good access to faculty. These qualities make the university an unusually fertile place for teaching and learning.

2. Utah State University is commended for its designation as a Research I Institution, and for increasing its grants and contracts income level to approximately $90 million. This is a major achievement, which places the campus in a national leadership position, and which makes a significant contribution to the Utah economy and to the educational progress of the institution.

3. The committee commends Utah State University for strongly supporting its mission by establishing and maintaining collegiate programs providing graduate and baccalaureate degrees to students at centers and branch campuses throughout the state, including the sparsely populated areas of the state. These programs provide opportunity to gain the personal and professional growth which accompanies collegiate education.

4. The establishment of a university-wide mentoring process for new tenurable faculty for the purpose of guiding professional development and career advancement is most commendable. The long-term effects of this program will enhance the educational experience of students as well as the professional growth and scholarly productivity of the faculty.

5. The university and its constituencies are especially commended for the exceptionally attractive appearance of the campus, which, in its superb natural setting, is most appealing. Major efforts have obviously been made to maintain and renovate buildings and grounds, and staff and students clearly treat their handsome physical campus with respect.
GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

As with the general commendations, the reader will find recommendations specific to individual colleges, divisions and other headings made throughout the report. The following recommendations apply more broadly to the entire institution and represent the consensus of the committee.

1. While the committee found assessment activities are evolving in a generally position direction, institutional efforts are uneven and coordination is lacking. Methodologies which assess outcomes rather than inputs, and quality rather than quantity, need to be improved in some cases and implemented in others. The committee recommends, as others have done in the past, that the university meet the requirements of Policy 25, Educational Assessment.

2. Over the past decade, Utah State University has found means of providing financial resources, primarily from grants and contracts and student fees, to support its program in the face of inadequate state funding, particularly funding for operations. Both the 1988 and 1993 evaluation committee reports addressed concerns about the extent to which such non-state appropriated funds must be generated to maintain the quality, scope, and range of the university’s programs and services. This heavy reliance on outside funding appears to have become an institutionalized mode of operation in lieu of an appropriate level of state support. This committee recommends that the university’s planning and budgeting process set forth realistic requirements to achieve the mission and goals of the institution, as a step toward achieving increased state support, particularly of its general operations budgets. The long established reliance upon grant overhead funds and rising student fees reflect on the one hand, an admirable level of achievement and commitment in the absence of adequate state funding, but this reliance is placing USU in an increasingly precarious position.

3. The committee recommends that, as was recommended ten years ago, Utah State University reexamine and reassess its substantial number of graduate programs that have low enrollments and low graduation rates, in order to assure that these programs are of sufficient size to offer an effective curriculum and a rewarding educational experience.

4. The committee recommends Utah State University address the dissonance between the university mission statement in its goal to encourage cultural diversity (p. 11, Mission Statement, Self-Study), namely, the objective of Student Affairs to “recruit and retain minority students” (p. 165, Self-Study), and the actual performance in achieving greater diversity in the student body.