

## APPENDIX II-A: SPECIAL EMPHASIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

### AGREEMENT BETWEEN

### UNIVERSITY OF IOWA AND THE HIGHER LEARNIG COMMISSION

### ON A SPECIAL EMPHASIS SELF-STUDY OPTION FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION SCHEDULED FOR 2007-08

### SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON undergraduate education

#### Purpose

The special emphasis Self-Study is an option made available to accredited, mature institutions that have a recent history of decennial review cycles in conjunction with their comprehensive evaluation visits and with no major interim monitoring. Through this arrangement, an institution seeks Commission authorization to focus study on one or more issues that are critical to significant advancement and improvement in the achievement and realization of its mission and vision. Collaboration between the institution and the Commission staff is essential when a special emphasis focus is contemplated.

#### Eligibility and Background

The University of Iowa ([www.uiowa.edu](http://www.uiowa.edu)) was founded in 1847 as the state's first institution of higher education. Under the 2006 Carnegie basic classification system, the University of Iowa is a Research University-- very high research activity (RU/VH). In the other five classification systems, the University is described as:

Undergraduate Instructional Program	Bal/HGC: Balanced arts & sciences/professions, high graduate coexistence
Graduate Instructional Program	CompDoc/MedVet: Comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary
Enrollment Profile	HU: High undergraduate
Undergraduate Profile	FT4/MS/HTI: Full-time four-year, more selective, higher transfer-in
Size and Setting	L4/R: Large four-year, primarily residential

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The University of Iowa is one of three public universities governed by the Board of Regents, State of Iowa and has been continuously accredited since 1913. In the University's last comprehensive evaluation, the team of consultant evaluators that visited campus identified no challenges that needed to be addressed.

The University of Iowa engages in a five-year cycle of strategic planning with annual reviews of progress. Our strategic plan drives budget decisions, which are shaped by the Regents' Partnership for Transformation and Excellence. The Partnership is a four-year plan adopted by the Board of Regents last year to maintain the excellence of Iowa's public universities. The plan calls for \$40 million in new funding from the state each year, which would be matched by \$20 million of reallocations by the universities. Both measures are designed to moderate tuition increases and retain our best teachers and researchers.

#### Definition of Special Emphasis

The University of Iowa's mission statement notes a "threefold mission of teaching, research, and public service." As the University elaborates on its mission, it announces the intention "...to use [our] research and creativity to enhance undergraduate, graduate, and professional education..." In the recently published strategic plan, *The Iowa Promise*, the University lists as the first of its five goals the "creat[ion of] a University experience that enriches the lives of undergraduates and helps them to become well-informed individuals, lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and productive employees and employers." The University proposes to use the occasion of its upcoming comprehensive evaluation to conduct a special emphasis self-study examining the many facets of *undergraduate education* at The

University of Iowa. The process of critical, evidence-based self-examination will be an integral part of the University's efforts to move forward on this goal.

In choosing this special emphasis, institutional leaders have consulted broadly within the institution, discussing the topic with deans and associate deans from each of the colleges, with elected faculty leadership, and within the vice-presidents group. There is broad support for using this opportunity to examine undergraduate educational opportunities. The consensus on campus is that the time is ripe for a renewed commitment to undergraduate education.

**Structure.** The University has identified five broad themes in undergraduate education at the University of Iowa. For each theme, the steering committee has tentatively identified relevant programs for study. At this stage the listed programs serve more to illustrate the scope of each them than to define the study to be conducted.

- Entry and transition: Becoming a University of Iowa student
  - Recruitment
    - First-year, transfer, Honors Program, diversity, Engineering
    - Role of Financial Aid, Opportunity at Iowa
  - Admission Process
    - Standards
    - Process
    - Early Admission Programs (Business, Nursing, Journalism)
  - Orientation
  - First Year Experiences/Opportunities
    - Learning Communities
    - College Transition, Transfer Transition, College Success
  
- Common academic experiences: The general education curriculum
  - This theme is a bit different from the others. Here the University intends an in depth study of a single program (general education) rather a synthesis of the results of the study of thematically related programs. In the study of the general education curriculum, the University intends to address the following questions:*
  - What learning outcomes should the University of Iowa's general education program promote among our students?
  - To what extent does the current general education program succeed in promoting those outcomes?
  - In what ways does the general education program support the goal of recruiting and retaining a diverse campus community?
  - How does the general education program draw upon the diversity of our campus community to promote excellence in undergraduate education?
  
- Specialization: Education within the major
  - Selecting a major
  - Academic advising in departments
  - Definition and assessment of learning outcomes for the majors
  - New programs and initiatives
  - Interdisciplinary in the context of majors
  
- Getting involved: Education beyond the classroom
  - USA program
  - Special opportunities within majors
  - Undergraduate Teaching assistants
  - Honors

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- Office of Student Life programs
- Residential Life programs/government
- Study Abroad
- Career Center
- Staying Involved: graduation and alumni networking
- Cultivating student success
  - Academic Support (general student population)  
Writing Lab, Math Lab, Business Writing Program, History Writing Center, Chemistry Center, Engineering
  - Academic Support (targeted student populations)  
Opportunity at Iowa, IowaLink, Support Service Programs, Athletic Student Services, Summer Business program, Iowa Biosciences Advantage
  - Health and Wellness  
University Counseling, Student Disability Services, Student Health, Health Iowa
  - Support for teaching  
Center for Teaching, TA training programs, Technology

As noted, the Common Academic Experience theme is unique. For the other four themes, the University proposes to

- *Inventory:*  
Identify and describe the programs, policies, and practices in place at the University of Iowa to meet the criteria for accreditation.
- *Evaluate:*  
Collect information that addresses the effectiveness of these programs, policies, and practices in meeting the criteria for evaluation.  
  
Collect real life stories from relevant constituencies to illustrate the findings of the study.
- *Propose:*  
Suggest changes that will allow the University of Iowa to better meet the criteria for evaluation.

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In carrying out these tasks, the University will be mindful of two overarching questions related to diversity:

- In what ways do the programs, policies, and practices under study support the goal of recruiting and retaining a diverse campus community?
- How do the programs, policies, and practices draw upon the diversity of our campus community to promote excellence in undergraduate education?

**Outline Format for Self-study**

The time line begins with activities undertaken beginning in the summer of 2005.

June, 2005	Provost commissions the University of Iowa Center for Research in Undergraduate Education (CRUE; Ernest Pascarella and Elizabeth Whitt, co-directors) to perform a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative study of the undergraduate experience at the University of Iowa.
October, 2005	Steering committee convened to develop self-study proposal and plan process.
January, 2006	Study of current status of outcomes assessment in the majors.
April, 2006	Study of teaching assistant preparation.
March-April, 2006	Subcommittees appointed.
May, 2006	Subcommittee preliminary work plans due to steering committee.
September, 2006	Subcommittee final work plans due to steering committee.

Fall, 2006	Appointment of team to assemble evidence relevant to the criteria from areas outside the special emphasis.
Summer, 2006 (and continuing)	Collection of data identified in subcommittee work plans.
March, 2007	Draft reports from subcommittees due to steering committee
May, 2007	Final reports from subcommittees due to steering committee
May, 2007-September 2007	Draft self-study written based on subcommittee reports
September 2007-October 2007	Campus comment period, refinement of draft based on campus comments, finalize text.
November 2007-January 2008	Self study print and web production.
February, 2008	Contingency
February 28, 2008	Distribution of self-study to consultant-evaluator team.
April 27-30, 2008	Consultant-evaluator team visits campus
Summer, 2008	Prepare response to consultant-evaluators' report.
Summer, 2008	Convene steering committee to produce "lessons-learned" document.
Summer, 2008	Identify meta-review team. Charge team with evaluating and setting priorities among recommendations of consultant-evaluators and preparing an implementation plan, to be delivered by November 2008.
Summer, 2010	Report to inform HLC of recommendations and utilization of findings.

### **Institutional Capacity and Commitment to Special Emphasis**

The self-study will be guided by a steering committee consisting of four faculty members, a senior academic services staff member, and an associate provost. The steering committee will appoint a subcommittee to study each of the five themes, as well as a subcommittee to identify additional information needed to demonstrate fulfillment of the *Criteria*. Each subcommittee will include faculty members, staff members, and students. Faculty members who chair or co-chair subcommittees will be released from teaching one course. Staff in the Office of the Provost will provide support for the subcommittees.

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The findings will form a section of the self-study report, which will be available to the campus community and the public as well as submitted to the Higher Learning Commission. It is understood that the evaluation will be based on this portion of the self-study as well as the sections of the criteria for accreditation. Furthermore, University of Iowa is committed to publicly reporting the findings and recommendations of the HLC and to work with the HLC in the follow-up to the report and recommendations.

### **Summary of Agreement**

University of Iowa agrees to completion of the special emphasis self-study under the terms set forth above, which are listed in summary form below.

- defined need for and nature of the special emphasis self-study focus;
- use of outline format for the self-study that indicates how continued fulfillment of the *Criteria of Accreditation* will be addressed;
- statement of institution's capacity to support the *special emphasis* initiative;
- statement of institution's commitment to report the comprehensive results of the special emphasis as a part of the self-study and to being evaluated, in part, on the conduct of the outcomes achieved through the special emphasis;
- commitment to provide the Commission with follow-up, through a later report, on the recommendations (internal and external) and utilization of the findings resulting from the self-study and evaluation processes.

Upon execution of this agreement, Commission staff will work with institutional representatives in organizing the special emphasis self-study, selecting team members, arranging the on-site visit, following the review process to completion, and reviewing institution follow-up.

The Consultant-Evaluators Team conducts the comprehensive evaluation visit to (a) determine the institution's fulfillment of the *Criteria for Accreditation*, (b) evaluate the special emphasis initiative under the agreed upon format and (c) provide consultative advice regarding the outcomes achieved. The institution may request a pre-visit by the team chair devoted to establishing the details and logistics of the team's visit. The pre-visit provides the team chair the opportunity to develop an understanding of the context so the team can work with minimum lost time and maximum effectiveness.

**Cost Factors**

The team visit (and pre-visit, if requested) will be based on a *Cost-Plus Basis* which is calculated as follows: actual expenses of team members (travel/lodging/food/honoraria) times a Board-determined percentage of the actual costs plus a base fee. The approved rates for 2006-07 visits are 17% of actual costs and a base fee of \$1,500. The rates for the 2007-08 year will be determined in early 2007 and applied to the spring 2008 visit.

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David J. Skorton, President

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Date

Special Emphasis request accepted by the Higher Learning Commission.

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Steven D. Crow, Executive Director

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Date