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ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

to

CEDARVILLE UNIVERSITY
Cedarville, Ohio

March 19-21, 2007

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

- a. The mission of Cedarville University is clearly articulated and embraced by all constituencies—trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members. Especially noteworthy is the integration of faith and learning called for by the mission as well as the many ministry and service opportunities in which the Cedarville University community engages.
- b. The quality of Cedarville University's students is exemplary. They exhibit a profound understanding of the mission and purposes of Cedarville as they use their education to prepare themselves for lives of academic and professional excellence as well as service and ministry to others.
- c. Cedarville University has experienced significant growth in enrollment, curricular offerings, and faculty size in recent years. At the same time, Cedarville staff and faculty need to be mindful of the complexities of growth and the impact on the organization as corresponding challenges to communication and longstanding relationships are addressed. The Cedarville community will benefit from continued widespread involvement in visioning and creating the future of the University.
- d. Cedarville University operates with a high level of fiscal responsibility. Annual budgets regularly return substantial surpluses which are placed in a capital reserve fund, thus facilitating the impressive construction and maintenance projects. Still, Cedarville's endowment is lower than desirable to provide either a safety net for potential downturns in enrollment or increased financial assistance for deserving and needy students.
- e. Cedarville's physical plant is attractive, functional, well maintained, and designed to support an expanding student body. Except for residence hall improvements, new construction is debt free. The systematic plan to upgrade residence halls was developed with significant input from student development staff and students themselves. The overall campus plan and appearance could well serve as a model for other colleges and universities.
- f. Cedarville University has greatly expanded its technology resources to enhance the learning environment. Particularly noteworthy is the library with access to the full range of Ohio's academic library collections as well as electronic databases and other learning and information resources.
- g. Through strategic planning processes, Cedarville University is wisely exploring additional revenue streams such as online courses and new strategic undergraduate and graduate program offerings that are consistent with Cedarville's mission and capabilities. Essential to the growth of graduate education is the development of a graduate academic culture along with an appropriate graduate governance structure. Enhancement of faculty scholarship and library resources, along with student support services, is a key component in preparing the Cedarville community for this potential expansion of focus.
- h. The creation of a number of specific purpose Centers represents an innovation with considerable potential for Cedarville. There is needed, however, a clear

understanding of these Centers' fit with the University's mission and an appropriate level of funding to allow them to flourish.

- i. The Cedarville University community has engaged in the evaluation of many aspects of the Cedarville experience, and much progress has been made in recent years. A fully functioning assessment model—which measures and enhances student learning—is not yet operational, however. Because of the current organizational structure in which the Director of Assessment reports directly to the President, the Deans of the Schools and the Academic Vice President are not as aware of assessment findings as they might be, thus not closing the feedback loop and thus limiting the kinds of program and curricular changes that should result from regular assessment. Across campus there is a general lack of delineation between evaluation and actual assessment of student learning. The preponderance of data is from instruments such as surveys, which measure program effectiveness rather than student learning.
- j. Cedarville University has increased the ethnic diversity of its student body since the last visit. Continued progress needs to be made in this regard, however, as well as among the faculty and staff. Cedarville will also benefit from increasing other forms of diversity and from promoting learning by seeking opportunities to expose students to diverse cultures, perspectives, and worldviews.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

a. Assessment.

Cedarville University has made a great deal of progress in evaluation and assessment in the last two years as it has focused on these topics. Several areas need to be considered for future growth and development, however.

First, it was apparent from talking with numerous people across the University that the differences between evaluation and assessment were not generally recognized and considered. Numerous surveys and other strategies of program and personnel evaluation have been implemented, and these have provided helpful data to be sure. However, assessment of student learning is limited when the evaluation instruments are removed from the picture. Making a clear distinction between evaluation and program review, as opposed to assessment of student learning, will be essential as Cedarville takes the next steps in its assessment program.

Second, each department developed five objectives which reportedly were supposed to be based upon student learning. However, a study of some of these objectives indicated that many were written in terms of what the instructor will accomplish rather than in terms of what the student learning will be. It is essential to be certain that each objective is written as student learning outcomes in order to make effective assessment possible.

Third, there is some assessment of student learning occurring in the major areas, but this is spotty amongst the departments as some are doing quite a bit and others not so much. It will be important for each department to be involved in assessment of their objectives. It will also be necessary for each department to gather their data, analyze it

carefully, and disseminate it. Right now few people outside of the departments know what the assessment results have shown in regards to the five departmental objectives, and so the question of successful student learning cannot be entirely proven. Results of nationally normed and professional tests tend to be more available than other types of assessment data such as portfolios, internships, capstone courses, and the like.

Fourth, the process of disseminating the data is that information is provided to the Director of Institutional Research, who reports directly to the President. This structure bypasses the academic division, resulting in the deans being basically unaware of the results of assessment of student learning in the departments of their schools, as is the Academic Vice President. Since needed curricular change, personnel decisions, and program development are in the hands of the deans and vice president, it seems important that they receive this critical information in order to make sound decisions and close the feedback loop. This seems to indicate that a possible structural change be considered in order to accomplish this critical piece.

Fifth, the general education program is not in the hands of any particular person since courses for this core are distributable across various departments. The general education program will be considered in this next year based upon a clear philosophy of the breadth and depth necessary for students today. When this is accomplished, clear learning outcomes and accompanying assessment of student learning can be designed. Currently there are some attempts at comparing Cedarville students' performance with nationally normed tests in this area, which is good, but more could be done.

b. Diversity.

Cedarville University has doubled the proportion of ethnic minority students in the last ten years, and, because of the institution's significant enrollment growth, the number of minority students has more than doubled, from 88 to 188. Certainly this is a positive development. Strategic initiatives such as establishing the Coordinator for Intercultural Recruitment and funding the Multicultural Learning Community have yielded minority student retention rates which are above the Cedarville norm. Still, in comparison studies, Cedarville seniors and alumni reported less exposure to persons who were different (religiously, ethnically, and culturally) than their counterparts at other faith-based schools. Cedarville students demonstrated less understanding of and appreciation for diverse persons in the 2004 NSSE survey than did Cedarville students in the comparable 2000 survey. Efforts to identify opportunities for students to interact with diverse student populations need to be explored. Attention also needs to be devoted to the limited diversity among faculty and staff and to professional development opportunities to assist faculty as they encourage cross-cultural interaction and communication.

The increase in student scholarship resources that the University plans to make available to deserving and needy students will also be helpful—indeed it is essential—in recruiting a more diverse student body. The various student support services that are already in place should prove helpful here too.

International students represent an excellent source of diversity on campus. The partnership that Cedarville has with Handong Global University in South Korea already brings in six students per year. Perhaps this number could be increased, and additional collaborative arrangements with other international universities could also bring more students to the Cedarville campus as well as provide more opportunities for Cedarville's American students to study abroad. In almost every group with which the team met, wishes were expressed for additional opportunities to study, travel, and engage in

service and ministry abroad. In this vein, many persons expressed an interest in the University's offering more language study possibilities as well. As feasible, an expansion of language studies would seem totally consistent with Cedarville's emphasis on a global perspective.

Diversity on a college or university campus is not limited to ethnic diversity, however. In light of the increasingly global nature of our world, it is essential that educated citizens have some understanding of and familiarity with persons representing cultures and perspectives different from their own, including religious or spiritual traditions. While Cedarville's mission and traditions make it a distinctive institution of higher learning, the University's liberal arts heritage also invites exposure to a range of other belief systems, backgrounds, ideas, and faith perspectives. The team learned of a number of initiatives to bring a range of speakers to campus and to engage students with students from other colleges and universities, and these activities should be continued and even increased. Developing a comfort level with and a respect for persons representing a broad range of backgrounds will have a positive impact on Cedarville students.

In the book *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* (Daloz, Keen, Keen, and Parks, Beacon Press, 1996), the authors identify a number of values, characteristics, and experiences shared by persons dedicated to the common good. One factor that each of the 100 persons interviewed for the book expressed was the impact of "otherness" at a relatively early stage in their lives. Each person recounted with appreciation a formative experience with a person or persons in a way or ways "other than" themselves, and indicated that this experience had in fact helped shape their commitment to a life of service beyond themselves. Any number of books and other resources identify values shared by persons representing different nationalities, ethnic groups, professions, and faith traditions. The lesson of "unity through diversity" is one that seems valuable to college-age students and all who seek to make a difference in the world.

c. Enrollment, Financial Aid, Endowment.

The enrollment growth rate for the university has slowed in recent years. An analysis of the reasons that prospective students choose another institution over Cedarville University has identified two primary factors: the quality of the residence halls and limited financial aid.

Starting in 2006, the university began to update their residence hall facilities. For the next several years, one hall will be redone every summer until all residence halls will have been upgraded and improved. This should prove to be a significant help in recruiting students to the university.

The other factor, limited financial aid, has been addressed but it needs additional focus and resourcing in the next few years. It is highly possible that one of the university's strengths, their strong and careful budgeting plan, is actually working against them in the area of financial aid.

A review of the university's discount rate, which is extremely low in comparison to similar institutions, makes it very difficult to be successful in a highly competitive marketplace. In addition, a review of the borrowing rate for graduating students and their families shows that many students are leaving the university with high levels of debt, a fact which significantly impacts their ability to move forward in career and graduate education.

Accordingly, the team recommends that the Board of Trustees and the university administration give careful consideration to a gradual increase of institutional aid in three ways:

First, since many students and their families need to access additional financial loans to fund their education, it would be wise for the institution to implement a need-based factor in determining institutional aid. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that 70% of Cedarville students are from out-of-state and are therefore unable to take any state-based aid with them to school.

Second, modest annual increases in the discount rate for the next several years will yield significant additional resources for student recruitment. While the school has clearly benefited from the ability to place significant dollars into capital reserves each year, this has been done at the expense of student aid. The result is that facilities are being constructed or upgraded, at least in part, through student tuition payments.

Finally, additional emphasis needs to be placed on increasing endowed scholarships to continue to make a Cedarville education affordable and manageable. While much emphasis in recent years has been on the physical development of the campus, it is now time to invite the university's financial partners to increase their support of students as they pursue a Cedarville education.

Cedarville University's recruitment efforts are beginning to show the effects of the extremely competitive environment in which they are recruiting students. In the end, many students and their families are forced to make educational decisions based, not first on philosophical grounds or worldview orientation, but on finances. To remain competitive, and to continue to be able to recruit the kinds of students that Cedarville wants, it will need to increase the amount of institutional aid that it makes available to students.

d. Graduate Programming.

Cedarville University designed a master's program in administration for educators some years ago, which unfortunately ultimately proved unsuccessful. The University then changed its master's program to the master of education, and this program currently enrolls approximately 25 students, with half being non-degree seeking. The program graduated three students last year.

At the time of the visit, the team was told that Cedarville is considering adding the doctor of pharmacy program. Such a move will, of course, have to receive approval by the Higher Learning Commission. In the team's judgment, much more infrastructure needs to be in place before the University moves into a doctoral program.

First, Cedarville has yet to develop a culture of graduate education. The team found that the entire university is definitely not supportive of graduate programs at this time, with feelings expressed that this direction could undermine the success of the undergraduate programs. Indeed, this is a viable concern since pharmacy is an expensive program requiring sizable expenditures to fund it appropriately. It could also create a dilemma and raise a potential morale problem if faculty in pharmacy are paid more (as is entirely

likely) than those who have been committed to Cedarville for many years. In order for graduate education to be successful at Cedarville, the University community needs to be brought along to understand and support graduate education as part of the University's mission.

Second, a culture of graduate education needs to be developed in faculty scholarship. Currently faculty members are involved in some writing and presentations at professional conferences. However, faculty involvement in scholarly activities is not as substantial as it often is at other institutions which support strong graduate programming. Furthermore, faculty members are not officially reviewed after tenure, nor are there clear and evenly applied rules for promotion, especially as scholarly expectations are concerned. Therefore, faculty members are not required to continue their professional growth and development, and that which does take place is distributed unevenly across the faculty as a whole. A culture of graduate education needs a strong base of consistent faculty scholarship.

Third, a doctoral program appears to the team to be premature at Cedarville University. It would seem more reasonable if other master's degree programs were fully developed and successful rather than having only the one, which is quite small. A number of majors at Cedarville would seem logical candidates for the development of a fifth year program, thus bringing more faculty members into thinking about and supporting graduate programs in general. These would also be less costly to initiate since undergraduate facilities, laboratories, and faculty expertise already exist.

Cedarville is talking of constructing a new building to house its pharmacy program, and the team was told that a donor had already pledged a substantial amount of financial support for it. If, however, this program should not materialize as hoped (the same person did the feasibility study for pharmacy as did the one looking at administration earlier), an empty building and hired faculty in a new area would pose a considerable problem for the institution. Teams of faculty developed the Master of Education degree, thus creating support for it—an approach which may be more viable for Cedarville to consider. As usual, all aspects of new program services would need to be considered, including building up a new area of research and study in the library, providing housing for older students/families, and assuring the availability of other student life and support services. The overall impact on the campus as a whole needs to be carefully considered before launching a program of the magnitude of pharmacy.

Finally, Cedarville has stated that, in their area of Ohio, there is already a large number of pharmacy programs at other universities and colleges—"the highest in the United States," in fact. It could well be that the area is thus saturated, and, although Cedarville indicates it expects to draw a national student population for the program, staff members also indicate that there may be difficulty with the sixth year rotation/internship placements since there are not many pharmacies in the general vicinity of the University and many are already taken up with interns from the other neighboring programs.

e. Liberal Arts Core.

Historically, Cedarville has focused on being a liberal arts college with a strong Bible

department, and that remains an apt description of the University today. The general education requirement with its Bible minor is considered a key component of all undergraduate degree programs. The last significant liberal arts core redesign was initiated in 1992. In 2007-2008, the University's Strategic Plan calls for a comprehensive review to ensure that all students achieve the objectives of the core curriculum requirements. Several considerations should be addressed in this upcoming appraisal.

First, Cedarville needs to determine if the Bible minor is accomplishing what it was intended to do. A valid instrument must be developed to measure what students are expected to know, to do, and to value as a result of having studied 16 credit hours of Bible. It is also vital to determine how the student learning outcomes for the Bible minor link and facilitate integration within the liberal arts core.

Second, it is important to verify ways that the integration of faith, learning, and living are infused throughout the curricular and co-curricular experiences at Cedarville.

Third, University documents affirm a liberal arts core that "goes beyond the Bible minor and biblical integration" to prepare well-educated students for graduate education and professional careers. With these objectives in mind, it is key that the "broad liberal arts emphasis" exposes students to a breadth of ideas and worldviews so that they are informed, prepared, and confident to discuss a wide range of perspectives in the marketplace of ideas. As Cedarville conducts its comprehensive review of the core, it is essential that a broad liberal arts emphasis be woven throughout the general education requirements.

Fourth, the global awareness requirement "is designed to expose students to the breadth of cultures outside their own that have contributed to the world of ideas." The ways that students fulfill the global awareness proficiency is spotty and uneven and, as a result, this objective may or may not be achieved. Cedarville University should consider creating its own international study or mission experiences abroad that are specifically designed to accomplish its student learning objectives. Furthermore, the University should consider offering programs in foreign languages that would prepare students for global communication and interaction.

Fifth, while the General Education Assessment Committee reports to the Academic Vice President on the assessment of the liberal arts core requirement, no one has direct oversight of the liberal arts core itself. It may be helpful to appoint a general education coordinator to oversee the comprehensive general education review, to articulate the need for a broad liberal arts perspective, and to handle student appeals to ensure the coherence and breadth necessary to accomplish the stated outcomes.

Cedarville University's commitment to integration throughout its curriculum and to a broad liberal arts emphasis, along with its concern to stay current, places the institution in an advantageous position as it redesigns the general education core. Studying and scanning the environment and attending to the changing world will assist Cedarville students to think critically, solve problems efficiently, and communicate effectively in the context of today's world.

f. Strategic Planning.

The planning process at Cedarville University appears to have improved in recent years since it has become more pervasive throughout the institution. The SALT (Strategic Assistance Leadership Team) teams enjoy their involvement, and they have positive feedback regarding their part of the process. They say they feel "heard" and that the sharing and consensus building across the SALT teams have been very beneficial.

The plans for the SALT teams are passed on to the Administrative Council by each of the vice presidents, who are all involved in the SALT team discussions. The Administrative Council, however, does not include any other members besides the President and vice presidents in their strategic planning decision making and deliberations. Often university strategic planning committees include persons such as the director of institutional research, the director of assessment, and faculty, staff, and student representatives as well. The incorporation of some or all of these persons may well be considered at Cedarville to extend further the communication process.

Cedarville University has a vision statement which appears to be little known. At least it was not readily recited by members of the Cedarville community when they were asked about it by the team. Therefore, it seems that this statement may not be providing an impetus to move into the future. It may be in Cedarville's best interests to devise a short and memorable vision statement which could become a clear focus for the institution's future directions.

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

- a. The quality of the physical plant and overall campus appearance could constitute a model for any institution of higher education. Cedarville University has been extraordinarily successful in raising funds and generating the resources needed for new construction and renovation and has kept student learning and development needs uppermost in mind in campus planning and growth.
- b. Learning resources available through the Cedarville University library are commendable. On-site staffing and materials are exceptional, and the extensive electronic access to Ohio's academic libraries could support a broad range of student and faculty research and scholarship.