



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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November 14, 2021

President James Tressel
Youngstown State University
One University Plaza
Youngstown, OH 44555-3101

Dear President Tressel:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission staff received the report on program review. No further reports are required.

The Open Pathway Assurance Review is scheduled for 2022. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2027– 2028.

For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Manager, at lnakutis@hlcommission.org. Your HLC staff liaison is Andrew Lootens-White (alootenswhite@hlcommission.org).

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: November 14, 2021

STAFF LIAISON: Andrew Lootens-White

REVIEWED BY: Lee Bash

INSTITUTION: Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: James Tressel, President

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES: An interim report is required by 9/1/2021 on program review.

This report needs to provide evidence of adherence to an established schedule of program reviews at the undergraduate as well as the graduate level, with examples of completed program reviews. The examples provided need to include the departmental self-study and documentation of review having occurred at all levels specified in the new program review model. Finally, the report should include evidence of how information from the program review process was used to inform changes at the department, college, and/or institutional level.

This interim report derives from the Team Report of the institution's 2018 Comprehensive Evaluation.

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The Youngstown State University (YSU) interim report abstract is presented in a succinct one-page narrative supported with a series of supplementary materials pertaining to the institution's program review concerns. The responses provide information and evidence to support compliance with the identified Core Component. The evidence presented in the report reflects the thoroughness and transparency of the document in its preparation and presentation.

REPORT SUMMARY: The interim report's supportive material is explicit in the timeline and steps taken by the institution to arrive at its present state of compliance, and it is supported by extensive data, attendant analyses and indications of next steps. The response describes the institution's efforts, beginning in AY2019-2020, to address its ongoing program review areas of concern with greater focus and commitment by building new initiatives and ways of thinking about program review

Initially this included the implementation of the 2019 Academic Program Enhancement and Effectiveness Initiative (APEEI), its full integration into YSU's 2020 strategic plan, the partnership with Gray Associates, utilizing its Program Evaluation System (PES)

and the formative steps relating to YSU's realization of new systems and ways of thinking and actualizing program review. The partnership utilized the extensive background and experience Gray Associates had gained academic institution data collection and its interpretation, but without them taking any active role in decision-making on the part of YSU.

Subsequent to the formation of their partnership, a series of faculty workshops and meetings focused on program review characterized much of the next year, resulting in the extensive collection, and discussion of related matters that helped stakeholders to make better and more informed decision relating to the future of program review at YSU. These discussions included topics such as market data on student demand, employment, relevant competition, instructional cost and revenue, (largely provided by Gray Associates). Based on the criteria established at the Workshops, Gray Associates collaborated with YSU to create scorecards and through other ways to make measurable and informed decisions.

The Board of Trustees (BOT) resolution from the June 2, 2021 meeting documents the institution's intent to "close the loop" regarding resource allocation based on the Provost's updates and summary of progress made, drawn from outcomes derived from the discussions and results of work outlined above. An important element of the Board's resolution was its emphasis on shared governance principles that highlighted the entire APEEI process.

This process continued through the period leading up to the September 2, 2021 BOT meeting when the Provost made recommendations regarding the YSU's academic programs. The Provost's presentation featured graphs, illustrating the number of students, student credit hours, graduates, and average contribution/student credit for each of the rating categories, reflected in "grow+, grow, sustain, adjust and sunset" options which the YSU BOT formally adopted as a resolution.

REPORT ANALYSIS: Materials presented in the Youngstown State University's interim report demonstrate that the institution has made meaningful progress regarding its program review issues. Specifically, the institution, with partial support from Gray Associates, has created a system (APEEI) that is closely linked with the YSU strategic plan and Board of Trustees, and reflecting a process utilizing strong faculty governance principles. The system is data-driven and has the capacity to monitor current practice and reinforce future program initiatives.

With leadership provided by the Provost, the Deans and special-focus faculty teams, using short-term objectives to help move the process along as approved by the faculty, and supported through their partnership with Gray Associates, programs were enabled to demonstrate how they are mission-aligned, fiscally aware and margin-sensitive.

Progress in the past 18 months is marked by the institution moving from a conceptual and preliminary, foundational discussion basis that assisted institutional focus to reach

more concrete outcome-based results, including assignments for programs, based on data reports and dashboards to systematic scheduling that lays out programmatic expectations. Furthermore, the APEEI utilized by YSU relies on transparency and full participation among all programs at both the undergraduate and graduate level, ensuring a robust and dynamic program review system for the future.

Now that YSU has completed one full cycle of program review under APEEI, the initiative will follow an annual cycle of continuous improvement. In year 2 and beyond, the APEEI will focus on the Goals and Actions for Continuous outlined in each program dashboard. The dashboards were intentionally constructed to encourage this perspective for ongoing and continuous improvement.

ANALYSIS CONCLUDING STATEMENT: Youngstown State University has addressed the interim requirements set forth in the institution's Team Report from its 2018 Comprehensive Evaluation. The new program review process was begun in 2019, in partnership with Gray Associates and, after extensive workshops, meetings collection and definition of appropriate data with designated areas that best defined the institution's focus required to maximize the program review process. Having completed its first annual cycle of systematic program review, derived from data that extend back three years to provide longitudinal perspective, it appears that the University has placed systems, timeline, and infrastructure in place to move into a meaningful manner of achieving program review for its future.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) 4.A

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report on program review. No further reports are required.

The Open Pathway Assurance Review is scheduled for 2022.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2027– 2028.