REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE

Statement Regarding the Report

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

Name of the Institution: University of Alabama

Date of the Review: March 3-5, 2015

COC Staff Member: Dr. Robin Hoffman

Chair of the Committee: Dr. Denise M Trauth
President
Texas State University
San Marcos, TX
Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution

The University of Alabama (UA), the State of Alabama’s oldest public university, is a senior comprehensive doctoral-level institution. The university was established by constitutional provision under statutory mandates and authorizations. Its mission is to advance the intellectual and social condition of the people of the State through quality programs of teaching, research, and service.

In 1818, the federal government authorized the Alabama Territory to set aside a township for the establishment of a "seminary of learning." Alabama was admitted to the Union on March 2, 1819, and a second township was added to the grant. On December 18, 1820, the seminary was established officially and named "The University of the State of Alabama."

In 1827, Tuscaloosa, then the state capital, was chosen as the university’s home. On April 18, 1831, inaugural ceremonies were held and the university opened. By May 28, 1831, 52 students had enrolled. The campus consisted of seven buildings.

Today the university has 36,155 students who are educated in 13 colleges and schools which offer 72 baccalaureate, 67 master’s, six educational specialists, 47 doctoral and one professional degree program.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee visited the university in response to its request for decennial reaffirmation of accreditation by the SACS Commission on Colleges, following a review by an Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee in November 2014. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee would like to thank the university for the hospitality that it extended toward Committee members and its efforts as the university prepared for this visit. The Committee is particularly grateful to Dr. Virginia Bishop for her hard work in planning for and executing this visit.

As noted on the UA Institutional Summary Form, the university offers 16 programs at off-campus sites.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee spent the majority of its visit on the UA campus in Tuscaloosa. However, Committee members also visited the following sites. All were in-person visits unless otherwise noted.

Bogota, Colombia (via Skype)
Mexico City, Mexico
Gadsden, Alabama, U.S.A

The Report of the Reaffirmation Committee is the final committee analysis and report; it includes the findings of the Off- and On-Site Reaffirmation Committees. It will be forwarded to the institution for formal response. Subsequently, the Report and the institution’s response will be forwarded to the Commission’s Board of Trustees for action on the request for reaffirmation.
Part II.  Assessment of Compliance

A.  Assessment of Compliance with Section 1: The Principle of Integrity

1.1  The institution operates with integrity in all matters. (Integrity)

The Off-Site Committee found no evidence of a lack of integrity. The institution’s self-assessment provided evidence of timely and accurate information, and communication with the Commission and the public. A statement attesting to compliance was provided, signed by the Accreditation Liaison and the Chief Executive Officer of the institution.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee found no evidence of lack of integrity in the narratives and documentation presented in the Compliance Certification or during interviews conducted during the on-site visit. Therefore, the Reaffirmation Committee believes that the University of Alabama operates with integrity in all matters.

B.  Assessment of Compliance with Section 2: Core Requirements

2.1  The institution has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies. (Degree-granting authority)

The university adequately documents its degree granting authority by citing the relevant state law from Code of Alabama, Section 16, and By-Laws of the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama, Articles I and IV.

2.2  The institution has a governing board of at least five members that is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The board is an active policy-making body for the institution and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from it. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting members of the board are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

A military institution authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees has a public board on which both the presiding officer and a majority of the other members are neither civilian employees of the military nor active/retired military. The board has broad and significant influence upon the institution’s programs and operations, plays an active role in policy-making, and ensures that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the board except as specified by the authorizing legislation. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting board members are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. (Governing board)
The University of Alabama has a governing board of 15 members, plus the Governor and Alabama Secretary of Education as ex officio members. Because the Trustees elected by the board to represent the state's seven congressional districts must be confirmed by the Alabama State Senate, a safeguard exists to prevent a minority of members from controlling the board. The Board of Trustees is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The board is an active policy-making body for the institution organized into committees that reflect the university's areas of mission and responsibility. Under state law and administrative regulations, the BOT is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from it. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting members of the board are required by law to be free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. The members of the board abide by the Legislative Code of Alabama, Ethics Commission, Title 36 (Public Officers and Employees), Chapter 25, Section 36-25-2. The board's Manual board Rule 106 also addresses ethics and conflicts of interest for members of the board and senior administrators. Under this board Rule, board members are required to disclose any transaction that may be a potential conflict of interest and to abstain from certain activities. The institution cites three instances from BOT minutes when BOT members abstained from votes in which they might have had a conflict of interest.

2.3 The institution has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. (See the Commission policy "Core Requirement 2.3: Documenting an Alternate Approach.") (Chief executive officer)

As one of three universities of the University of Alabama System and thus by state law governed by the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama, the University of Alabama has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. The institution clearly delineates and documents the primary responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer of the institution, the presiding officer of the Board of Trustees, and the Chancellor of the System.

2.4 The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission statement that is specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. (Institutional mission)

The mission statement of the University of Alabama is clear in its definition and addresses teaching and learning, research, and outreach.

The university's mission statement has experienced only minor wording changes since 1984 and has been deemed appropriate for higher education during the 1984, 1994, and 2005 reaffirmation processes. The primary modification in the mission statement has been to extend the geographic area served by the institution to include "the world." The Off-Campus Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the Undergraduate Catalog, the Graduate Catalog, the Faculty
Handbook, and the University Factbook to confirm that the mission statement is published. The institution’s documentation notes that the mission statement presented in the 2013-15 Graduate Catalog is not consistent with the mission statement approved by the Board of Trustees in February 2014 due to the publication of the Catalog prior to the board’s approval.

In addition, the Committee reviewed the university’s main mission and objectives website to confirm that the mission statement is published in the online environment also.

2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. (Institutional effectiveness)

The University of Alabama mission and mission statement are reviewed periodically by the institution and the Board of Trustees. The institution has developed a ten-year strategic plan that outlines four strategic goals consistent with the mission of the university and 28 performance measures for determining how well those goals are being accomplished. As the institution is nearing the end of that ten-year period, progress toward achieving the goals/outcomes of the plan is being reviewed.

The institution provided evidence that the planning process is integrated and institution-wide. Enrollment management planning is conducted in alignment with the strategic goals of the university. Planning for new information technology needs, including education of the faculty on new technologies is guided by the strategic plan. Resource requests from programs and colleges must be accompanied by explanations that are research-based and describe the impact of the request on the performance measures outlined in the strategic plan. Performance measures in the plan clearly reflect the teaching and research missions of the university. The institution provided evidence that the campus master plan as well as capital construction planning are tied to the goals of the strategic plan and updated throughout the ten year period.

In addition to the unit level assessments described in 3.3.1.1, 3.3.1.2, 3.3.1.3, 3.3.1.4, and 3.3.1.5, a complete review of the institutional performance on the measures in the strategic plan is documented. The review appears to be comprehensive and involves many campus constituencies. It is not clear if this is the only review of institutional performance with respect to these measures during the ten-year period, but the review, at various times, cites data from Fall 2003, Fall 2004, Fall 2007, and 2008-09 as comparators. For most performance measures, growth has been consistent with the strategic direction of the university and thus, signifies that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.

2.6 The institution is in operation and has students enrolled in degree programs. (Continuous operation)
The institution provides evidence, in terms of enrollment data, to demonstrate that it has been in continuous operation since its founding in 1831. Evidence for continuous enrollment is also provided in the institution's Factbook.

2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit. *(Program length)*

The University of Alabama offers 72 baccalaureate, 67 master's, 47 doctoral degrees, a Juris Doctor degree, and 6 educational specialist degrees. The BS degree requires a minimum of 120 semester hours (with the usual definition of one semester hour requiring a minimum of 15 contact hours/semester). A minimum of 30 credit hours is required for all post-baccalaureate, graduate, and professional degrees. The exception to the policy is the LLM degree offered by the Law School that requires only 24 credit hours. The argument that this constitutes adequate program length is based on a comparison to similar programs at other institutions. Although not stated, the argument rests on the assumption that students are given some credit for graduate work by virtue of having completed a JD, which is a post-baccalaureate degree. It is not clear whether admission for the international LLM; however, requires applicants to have a degree that is equivalent of the JD. Rather students are required to have completed a “basic law degree.” Thus, there is insufficient documentation to support the argument that 24 credits is adequate to meet the standard for the LLM.

The Credit Hour Policy provides an explanation of how alternate modes of instruction are equated with face-to-face instruction for purposes of assessing program length. The development and approval of new programs follows guidelines established by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). There is a comprehensive internal process for review, as well as review by the UA System, UA Board of Trustees, and finally, ACHE. Graduate programs are also subject to additional review by the UA Graduate Council. The ACHE forms submitted for new programs require a statement of the number of credit hours required for the degree. Samples of the approval process were provided for undergraduate and graduate degrees. Approved programs are monitored for compliance during periodic reviews that are scheduled every eight years.

With the exception of the LL.M. degree, the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found from the review of documents that the institution's academic programs adhered to requirements for program length, namely 60 semester credit hours at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; and at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. Furthermore, the Committee found that the institution offered appropriate explanations to account for alternate modes of instruction and that the approval of new programs followed
external guidelines established by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) and a comprehensive process of internal review for undergraduate and graduate degree programs, and an eight year schedule of periodic review that monitors for compliance on program length. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee sought additional documentation to justify the length of the institution’s 24 credit hour LL.M. degree program. In response, the institution provided the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee supporting documentation that 1) explained the nature and purpose of the LL.M. degree, 2) established the American Bar Association’s Acquiescence in the institution’s LL.M. degree program (further supported by a site visit in 2013 where accreditors raised no concerns), 3) provided a review of standards of common practice across the nation upholding the institution’s requirements, and 4) revealed that program admissions requirements set as pre-requisite for admission the “basic degree for practicing law in the home country.” A review of these documents demonstrates that the institution adheres to requirements for program length and provides a justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours.

2.7.2 The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. (Program content)

The Institution’s mission is to “advance the intellectual and social condition of the people of the State, the nation, and the world through the creation, translation, and dissemination of knowledge with an emphasis on quality programs of teaching, research, and service.” Each major supports the university’s mission. The curricula are available on the university’s website. A core curriculum is required of all undergraduate students which includes the state’s mandate, plus more: (1) written composition – 6 hours, (2) 300- and 400-level courses with a writing designation – 6 hours, (3) foreign or computer language – 6 hours, (4) humanities and fine art – 12 hours (5) history, social and behavioral science – 12 hours, and (6) natural science and mathematics – 11 hours.

Accreditation by professional organizations ensures that the academic standards are at the appropriate level. Non-professional programs undergo regular review by faculty from peer universities. The Academic Program Review is used for programs without external accrediting agencies to gauge the coherence of the degree requirements and their consistency with the university’s mission. Its final meeting has the Provost, Associate Provost/Graduate Dean, VP for research, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, review coordinator, academic deans, department chair and review committee. During this meeting, the participants discuss any recommendations from the review committee and the external review. These final reports are available on an appropriate website.

*2.7.3 In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours
or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses. (General education)

The university's undergraduates must complete 53 hours (48 hours for engineering majors) of core-designated courses in the areas of written composition, foreign language or courses that require "writing computer programs," humanities, fine arts, history, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences and mathematics. The core curriculum/general education requirements represent a substantial component (approximately one-third) of degree program length. The university publishes the requirements in the Undergraduate Catalog and on the University Registrar's website where students may also locate courses approved to meet the requirements. UA conforms to a state-mandated general studies curriculum, and is overseen by the Core Curriculum Oversight Committee (CCOC). The CCOC developed a set of review templates for each core designation in the curriculum and a five-year review cycle to cover the courses offered in the core curriculum. The institutional rationale for general education is comprehensively and coherently articulated, and students are guided in their selection of curricular choices.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews with the Chair of the CCOC and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

2.7.4 The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. If the institution does not provide instruction for all such course work and (1) makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia or (2) uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In both cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program. (See the Commission policy "Core Requirement 2.7.4: Documenting an Alternate Approach.") (Course work for degrees)

The University of Alabama offers degrees at the baccalaureate, masters, educational specialist, and doctoral levels. The institution provides instruction for all coursework required for each degree program at each of these levels. The institution provided sample program curricula, catalog requirements, and schedule of courses to demonstrate their compliance. The institution does not utilize contractual or consortium arrangements to provide instruction.
The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of each of its academic programs. (Faculty)

The documents provided detailed evidence that the institution has a sufficient number of faculty to meet its mission. The criteria and standards for appointment are defined in the Faculty Personnel Policies document. The institution defines full-time faculty as those with a teaching load of 12 credit hours/semester, with reductions for research and service commitments. Full-time faculty may be probationary (tenure track), tenured, or temporary with renewable appointments of 1-6 years. Temporary faculty may be full or part-time. Growth in the student body has been accompanied by growth in the full-time faculty. In 2005 there were 922 full-time (and 89 part-time) Faculty with 21,835 students. By fall 2013 this had increased to 1,252 full-time (214 part-time) Faculty with a student increase by 60 percent to 34,852. A $13 million investment was made in faculty lines to accommodate student growth and to maintain research productivity. Using student credit hours as a measure, 87 percent are taught by full-time Faculty. Over 67 percent of all course sections are taught by full-time Faculty (on-campus: 72 percent, off-campus: 83 percent, online: 66 percent). These numbers vary considerably by program but with few exceptions are relatively high, indicating adequate numbers of faculty in both on-campus and distance programs.

In the graduating senior survey, 93 percent said the overall quality of their major was good-excellent, 81 percent rated the intellectual environment as strong-very strong, 57 percent said that the faculty in their major responded quickly to their work, 62 percent said the faculty were interested in their academic success, and 65 percent of the seniors conducted research. The institution also documents that it has a sufficient number of faculty to meet its mission in research and service. Extramural awards for research and other forms of scholarly productivity have increased along with the growth in enrollment and faculty numbers. Data from NSF and Academic Analytics indicate that the institution has grown its research portfolio and compares well with similar universities. The institution has a long list of partners for external service and offers a variety of service learning courses. A summary of faculty service by college indicates that every department has faculty engaged in both on and off campus service.

The University of Alabama employs two types of full-time faculty members: (1) probationary or tenure-track faculty members and (2) temporary faculty usually hired on a one-to-six-year contract to perform specific duties such as teaching, research or clinical supervision. In addition, they hire part-time faculty as well. Given the significant growth in student enrollment over the last decade (about 60 percent), UA has hired a significant number of full-time and part-time faculty members to support the teaching, research, and service missions of the university. About two-thirds of courses are taught by full-time faculty and student satisfaction (as measured by survey data from graduating seniors) is high (93 percent said instruction was good to excellent). With respect to research, data indicated that scholarly productivity is high relative to SEC and other Carnegie Research One institutions. Service productivity is also high. Given anticipated enrollment growth in the future UA is committed to hiring additional faculty despite legislative funding reductions experiences in the last 8 years.
The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the Compliance Certification and conducted an interview with the Associate Provost in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

2.9

The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections and services and to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. Collections, resources, and services are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs. (Learning resources and services)

The University of Alabama's library system has a well-articulated mission statement that builds upon that of the university, and the library system has identified an appropriate set of core functions to supplement its mission statement.

Five discipline-based libraries serve the campus as a whole, and a non-public annex stores less frequently used journals and monographs. Six libraries and reading rooms, separately administered by colleges and schools include a law library and a health sciences library.

The UA Libraries belong to the Association of Research Libraries, placing the system among the largest in North America. The Libraries owns over 4 million volumes (3.1 million titles), with over 1.2 million e-books, 120,000 journal subscriptions, and 400 databases. The UA Libraries is a Regional Government Document Depository, and the law library is a Selective Depository.

Special collections emphasize materials related to Alabama and the South, literary collections, publishers' bindings, and manuscript collections. In 2010 the Libraries acquired the collection of A. S. Williams III; this extensive collection of books, manuscripts, photographs, and pamphlets is now being processed and enriches the Libraries' holdings of primary source materials. Recent staffing hires have allowed the Libraries to expand its emphasis on special collections and digital projects.

Subject specialists, working closely with academic departments, guide the growth of the collection by making selections and overseeing an approval plan. Subscriptions are reviewed annually in accordance with established criteria. The Libraries has received funding to keep pace with inflation, and funds are available to support new faculty during their first three years with the university. In recent years the Libraries has emphasized the acquisition of electronic resources, and statistics indicate a large increase in the number of such materials.

For information resources not owned by the university, students and faculty can utilize the interlibrary loan service and track the status of requests online. RapidILL retrieves and delivers journal articles and book chapters within 24 hours through arrangements with the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) and other libraries within the Southeastern Conference (SEC).
The UA Libraries is a member of the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) and the Hathi Trust, a digital preservation repository that provides access to five million titles in the public domain. The Alabama Virtual Library and the Network of Alabama Academic Libraries support resource sharing within the state.

Electronic resources are available 24/7; the UA Libraries provides over 500 computers and laptops can be checked out. For physical access, the system is open a maximum of 159 hours a week. The UA Libraries' website contains links to each branch and its services. Discovery systems for the collections are not uniform across the entire campus, but the vast majority of resources can be readily located. Qualified staff are available to provide assistance online or at service desk(s) within each library.

For distance education students, the Libraries offer a designated liaison, a webpage, and a LibGuide. Librarians work closely with staff members in Continuing Studies to fine tune services, and distance education students can have physical resources delivered to them via the U.S. Mail or UPS.

The Libraries utilizes a variety of methods to gauge the adequacy of its collections: feedback and consultations with individual faculty and the University Library Committee, online suggestion forms, surveys of users, collections statistics, and use statistics. Evidence suggests that collections are being utilized, with retrieval of 2.2 million full text articles and initial circulation of 118,000 physical volumes in 2013.

The Libraries' collections and arrangements with other institutions cover general and specialized needs for information resources, and services offered online or in person are appropriate to support the mission of the university.

For further comments about the Libraries' facilities and information resources, see Comprehensive Standard 3.8.1; for instructional services, see Comprehensive Standard 3.8.2; and for staffing, see Comprehensive Standard 3.8.3.

*2.10 The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that are intended to promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. (Student support services)

The University of Alabama offers a wide range of student support services that assist student learning from the first year of attendance through graduate and law school. The programs and activities adhere to the institution's mission to promote learning and student success. Several orientation programs are designed to assist undergraduate, transfer students, international students, online and off-campus students, in addition to graduate students and students attending the School of Law. Advising is provided at the college level using both professional and faculty advisors. Students taking online and distance education programs are assigned advisors coordinated by the College of Continuing Studies. The Office of the Registrar and the Office of Student Financial Aid assists students with their records; assure confidentiality and security of files; and administer student aid as well as provide information about grants, scholarships and additional funding sources. Other support services are provided by the Center for
Academic Success, the Universities Libraries, the Writing Center, the Office of Information Technology, the Office of Disability Services, the Graduate School, the Honors College, the Office of Housing and Residential Communities, the Capstone International Center, and the Bill Battle Center for Athletic Student Services.

Additional offices providing services and activities that enhance student learning and development are the Office of Community Service, the Dean of Students Office, the Office of Greek Affairs, the Women's Resource Center, the Office of Veteran and Military Affairs, the Office of the First Year Experience, the Office of Student Conduct, the Office of Student Media, the Counseling Center, University Recreation, and the Student Health Center. Further, the University Police and Bama Dining and Transportation Services offer services to assist students in their day-to-day living and learning activities by providing safety initiatives, nutritious eating options, and safe and dependable transportation.

Distance education students are offered the same programs and services that are made available to all students. The College of Continuing Studies manages services to distance education students by providing student services counselors and academic advisors to help students navigate the educational process.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with the Senior Associate Dean for the College of Continuing Studies, Vice President for Student Affairs, Assistant Vice President for Student Life, Director of Assessment and Planning for Student Affairs, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, Director of First Year Experience & Parent Programs, Associate Dean of Students, and Director of Graduate Student Services. The On-Site Reaffirmation also met with students representing multiple student organizations and academic colleges. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee toured facilities that provide direct student services such as the Presidential residence halls, Student Activities Center, Ferguson Student Center and Capstone International Center. The On-Site Reaffirmation reviewed Compliance Certification Report (CCR) documents including the division and department missions as well as multiple resource materials provided to students. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted these interviews in support of accuracy of the CCR document and the institution's case for compliance, and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

2.11.1 The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (1) an institutional audit (or Standard Review Report issued in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a system wide or statewide audit) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or Standard Review Report) guide; (2) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent
year; and (3) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board. (Financial resources and stability)

PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP (PwC) conducts the financial audits of the university. As a public institution, the university prepares its financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, as prescribed by the Governmental Accounting Standard Board. The Committee reviewed the audit report including the opinion and the management letter for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2013, the most recently completed fiscal year. In PwC’s opinion, the financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the university at September 30, 2013 and 2012. A review of various key ratios and financial measures for the last five fiscal years confirmed the university’s continued financial strength.

Pursuant to the Code of Alabama 1975, Section 41-5-21, the university is also subject to examination by the Chief Examiner of Public Accounts. In May 2014, the Department of Examiners issued results of their most recent examination of the university for the period October 1, 2008, through September 30, 2012. The report stated that tests performed did not disclose any significant instance of noncompliance with applicable state laws and regulations.

The statement of unrestricted net assets reflects an increase from $271.0 million to $478.7 million from September 30, 2009, to September 30, 2013. Included in this net increase, however, is a $52.7 million reduction in unrestricted net assets for the most recent fiscal year. As described in the audited report and other provided evidence, the decrease was not the result of operations but a transfer of real estate, valued at $87.6 million, from investments to capital assets. The university purchased 168 acres of property contiguous to its campus in 2010 as an endowment investment. The long-term use of the property was undetermined until the campus master plan was finished. It was subsequently determined that the property would be used for operations and the value of the property was transferred into capital assets reducing the university’s unrestricted net position.

The university’s annual budget process encompasses a 12-month planning cycle. The process begins with preparing the annual legislative request in October for the subsequent fiscal year. A budget model is created to assist executive leadership with resource allocation decisions. Mandatory training is provided to campus users responsible for the development, completion and submission of the fiscal year budget. The President, Provost and Vice President of each division evaluate budget submissions. The proposed budget is presented to the Board of Trustees in September for approval.

2.11.2 The institution has adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. (Physical resources)

The university has provided strong compelling evidence to confirm that the institution has adequate physical resources to support its mission and current programs as well as comprehensive plans to continue to do so in the future. The university’s main campus includes 249 buildings with over 14 million square feet
of dedicated classroom, research, administrative, residential, library, clinical, athletics, recreational and other functional space.

Pursuant to the University of Alabama's Board of Trustees' board Rule 415, Section III, the board is responsible for the overall planning and management of the physical facilities on the campuses of the University of Alabama System. Further, the planning for capital assets shall include the following for each campus: 1) a comprehensive Master Plan; 2) a Five-Year Facilities Development Plan to be prepared annually for presentation to the board; and 3) an Annual Capital Development Plan which lists all projects that are anticipated to be submitted to the board for action or information during the fiscal year.

The board developed 18 guiding principles for the University of Alabama's Campus Master Plan such as:

- The primary purpose of the campus is to provide appropriate settings for teaching, research, creative activity and service.
- The core of campus is for learning and for selected supporting spaces and services essential to learning.
- Historic resources are respected and supported
- Parking is managed as a limited resource, especially toward the campus core.

The development of the Campus Master Plaster Plan was completed in 2007 and the board approved an amended updated plan in November 2012 to incorporate the university's purchase of 168 acres of adjoining property (Bryce Hospital). In addition to the Five-Year Facilities Development Plan and the Annual Capital Development Plan, the university prepared a detail Growth Plan in September 2013 to accommodate future potential enrollment growth. The Growth Plan addresses a broad array of future campus needs including operation and maintenance of facilities.

The university's headcount enrollment increased 28.8 percent from fall 2008 (27,052 students) to fall 2013 (34,852 students). The university has increased its space by 2.3 million gross square feet or 18.23 percent, during this same period. According to the Campus Master Plan, new academic growth is to be accommodated primarily through renovation of existing academic buildings and adaptive use and expansion of other existing facilities.

The university asserts extensive effort to evaluate the quality and quantity of space. As reflected in classroom utilization reports, the number of classrooms has increased from 285 in the fall 2009 to 309 in fall 2013, or 8.4 percent. More revealing is the average station occupancy ratio (percentage of seats filled within a given section). The ratio declined from 75 percent to 73 percent during this same period – a result of additional space and more efficient use of existing classrooms.

The university implemented an instructional space scheduling software system in 2006 to assist with the efficient use of space. Based upon reports generated from this system using fall 2013 data, the average utilization of all instructional rooms
during a standard 70-hour week (8 am to 10 pm, Monday – Friday) was only 37 percent. And, during the prime 24-hour week (9 am to 3 pm, Monday – Thursday), the average utilization of all instructional rooms was 60 percent. Of course, utilization varies by size category with large auditorium rooms that seat at least 400 students reporting an 86 percent utilization ratio during the prime 24-hour week. As a result, the university is developing data-driven scheduling policies to increase room assignment efficiency.

Pursuant to a study by a third-party, Sightlines LLC, 74 percent of the university’s campus was built or fully renovated since 1987 resulting in only 26 percent of the university’s campus facilities being in at least a high risk category for failure of major envelope, mechanical or other building components. This percentage compares favorably to the institution’s peers with an average of 58 percent of facilities categorized as subject to high risk for failure.

2.12 The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that includes an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution. (Quality Enhancement Plan)

The University of Alabama developed an acceptable QEP. See Part III for additional information.

C. Assessment of Compliance with Section 3: Comprehensive Standards

3.1.1 The mission statement is current and comprehensive, accurately guides the institution’s operations, is periodically reviewed and updated, is approved by the governing board, and is communicated to the institution’s constituencies. (Mission).

The mission statement of the University of Alabama is clear in its definition and addresses teaching and learning, research, and outreach.

The university’s mission statement has experienced only minor wording changes since 1984 and has been deemed appropriate for higher education during the 1984, 1994, and 2005 reaffirmation processes. The primary modification in the mission statement has been to extend the geographic area served by the institution to include “the world.”

Evidence was presented demonstrating that the mission statement was revised in January 2014 and approved by the Board of Trustees in February 2014, and thus, the committee found the mission statement to be current and approved by the governing board. While it was unclear if the mission statement is reviewed on a regular schedule, the committee found evidence that suggested the mission statement is periodically reviewed and updated.
With three of the four strategic goals of the university explicitly referring to teaching, learning, research, scholarship or service, the committee found that the mission statement guided the strategic planning activities of the institution.

The Committee reviewed the Undergraduate Catalog, the Graduate Catalog, the Faculty Handbook, and the University Factbook to confirm that the mission statement is published. The institution’s documentation notes that the mission statement presented in the 2013-15 Graduate Catalog is not consistent with the mission statement approved by the Board of Trustees in February 2014 due to the publication of the catalog prior to the board’s approval. In addition, the Committee reviewed the university’s main mission and objectives website to confirm that the mission statement is published in the online environment also. As a result, the committee found that the institution communicated the mission statement to its constituencies. The Committee noted that the narrative indicated that the university’s mission statement was linked to the Division of Financial Affairs’ website, but the committee could not locate that link; this did not alter the judgment of compliance.

3.2.1 The governing board of the institution is responsible for the selection and the periodic evaluation of the chief executive officer. (CEO evaluation/selection)

As one of three universities of the University of Alabama System and is by state law governed by the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama. The University of Alabama has a chief executive officer, whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. The institution clearly delineates and documents the primary responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer of the institution, the presiding officer of the Board of Trustees, and the Chancellor of the System.

3.2.2 The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution’s governance structure: (Governing board control)

3.2.2.1 Institution’s mission

The Compliance Certification Report states that the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama is responsible for the institution’s mission, in consultation with the System Chancellor and the campus President. Board Bylaws, Article V, Section 2, states that the Chancellor recommends the mission, role and scope of each institution in the System to the board. In accordance with board Bylaws, Article V, Section 3, the President is responsible for the overall planning, resource allocation and program evaluation of the university and reports directly to the Chancellor and through the Chancellor to the Board of Trustees. Therefore, the board, through the University of Alabama System governance structure, is responsible for the university’s mission. In January 2014 the President requested that the Chancellor present to the board a revised and updated mission statement for consideration of approval. The board approved the revisions to the university’s mission in February 2014.

3.2.2.2 – Fiscal Stability
The Compliance Certification Report states that the board Manual specifies in its Bylaws under Article I, Section 6, the essential functions that the board performs. Of the functions noted, ten are specifically related to fiscal stability:

- Approve admission policies and levy fees and charges;
- Review and approve legislative requests for appropriations;
- Review and approve annual budgets and budget changes;
- Approve all gifts where restrictions are indicated, designate the use of unrestricted gifts, and approve and designate the use of testamentary gifts;
- Approve all loans, borrowing, and issuance of bonds;
- Approve or authorize the Executive Committee to approve all purchases and sales of real property, and ensure that all properties of the university are preserved and maintained; and, by board Rule, authorize the Chancellor, after review by the General Counsel, to convey rights-of-way or easements for utilities that serve university facilities, programs, or activities;
- Establish objectives, policies, and practices which provide for effective and prudent management, control, and preservation of the investment assets of the university;
- Establish auditing policies and standards and appoint independent auditors;
- Approve architects, engineers, and project managers, preliminary and final budgets, and award construction contracts for certain capital projects, as well as the acquisition of certain new equipment and computer software and all land; and
- Approve all depository agreements for the deposit of funds.

3.2.2.3 – Institutional Policy

The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees bylaws clearly defines the legal authority and operating control of the University of Alabama for the review and approval of major policies. The board Manual, Article I, Section 6, defines the primary functions of the board as follows: "In the exercise of its management and control of the university, the board recognizes that it must determine major policy, review existing policy, define the missions, role and scope of the university and each of its major divisions or component institutions and provide ultimate accountability to the public and the political bodies of Alabama. Any authority delegated by the board shall be subject always to the ultimate authority of the board."

3.2.3 The governing board has a policy addressing conflict of interest for its members. (Board conflict of interest)

The University of Alabama Board of Trustees has a policy addressing conflict of interest for its members. board Rule 106, Ethics-Conflicts of Interest-Members of the board and Senior Administration, addresses ethics and conflict of interest for the members of the board as well as senior administrators. The policy applies to business practices, employment, revealing or using confidential information, and other matters. Potential conflicts in business practices with an entity in which the board has entered into a transaction require disclosure by board members and senior administrators when they or family members: 1) have a substantial interest
in an entity; 2) hold a director or senior executive role with the entity, and/or 3) receive compensation from the entity. The Compliance Certification Report documents that the governing board also has specific policies governing conflicts of interest in employment, confidentiality of information, and accepting gifts or services of value from entities that have business with the university. The institution cites three instances from BOT minutes when BOT members abstained from votes in which they might have had a conflict of interest.

3.2.4 The governing board is free from undue influence from political, religious, or other external bodies and protects the institution from such influence. \((\text{External influence})\)

The University of Alabama’s Compliance Certification Report cites two policies in the Board of Trustees Manual that specifically address undue external influence and protect the institution from such influence. board Rule 106, Ethics and Conflict of Interest, applies to board members and senior administrators of the institution and calls for board members and senior administrators to base decisions solely on their understanding of what is in the best interest of the institution, and proscribes "any other activity that a reasonable person would expect to impair, or that would appear to impair, the independent judgment of a board member or senior administrator in the performance of his or her public duties. Rule 106 addresses and creates a process for managing conflicts of interest related to business practices, employment, revealing or using confidential information, and other matters to ensure that outside influences do not affect the decision making process at either the board or campus level. The Office of Risk Management at the UA System monitors procedures related to conflict of interest policies, including the annual filing of the conflict of interest disclosures by members of the board and senior administrators.

3.2.5 The governing board has a policy whereby members can be dismissed only for appropriate reasons and by a fair process. \((\text{Board dismissal})\)

The institution documents that Article I, Section 2 of the University of Alabama board Bylaws provides that a Trustee may only be removed from office “for cause.” The institution goes on to state that “cause” would include a violation of board Rules or other derelictions of duty. The fairness of the dismissal process is protected by several procedural stipulations. First, the board must give the member subject to dismissal notice of the reason or reasons for the proposed dismissal. Second, the member is entitled to a hearing where he or she would be allowed to defend or respond to the reasons given for dismissal. Notice and hearing are the quintessential elements of due process as defined by the Supreme Court of the United States. The board requires a two-thirds affirmative vote of the total number of Trustees, both elected and ex-officio, in order to finalize the dismissal process. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee notes that no cause to dismiss a governing board member is reported to have occurred within the UA System. Therefore, no example of implementation of the dismissal policy and process is available.

3.2.6 There is a clear and appropriate distinction, in writing and practice, between the policy-making functions of the governing board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy. \((\text{Board/administration distinction})\)
The Compliance Certification Report documents that there is a clear and appropriate distinction, in writing and practice, between the policy-making functions of the governing board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy. These distinctions are codified in board Manual, Article I, Section 6, which states that the board determines major policy and reviews existing policy. Further, board Bylaws, Article V, Section 2, states that the Chancellor of the UA System is delegated full authority to formulate and issue regulations and orders not inconsistent with board policy. The Chancellor is in turn the principal link between the board's responsibility for policy and each President's responsibility for operations. board Bylaws, Article V, Section 3 describes the President's authority and duties, which are distinct from those of the board or Chancellor. Campus Presidents are delegated authority for regulating faculty tenure and promotion, and they in turn delegate this authority to deans, chairs, and faculty. Each campus in the System has its own policies and procedures related to tenure. While board Rule 301 provides guidance on what should be contained in the policies and procedures, the university may develop additional policies and procedures related to faculty as deemed necessary (board Rule 301, Section II. B.2). The University of Alabama developed criteria and standards for awarding tenure to probationary faculty (UA Faculty Handbook, Chapter II, Section IV) and procedures for making tenure recommendations (UA Faculty Handbook, Chapter II, Section VIII).

3.2.7 The institution has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies. (Organizational structure)

The university's Compliance Certification Report contains links to the UA organizational chart. The narrative describes clearly the organizational structure and the ways in which it delineates responsibilities for the administration of policies. Under the leadership of the system Chancellor, the campus President is the CEO of the campus. He oversees six major university divisions. The Provost, who also serves as the Vice President for Academic Affairs, is the Chief Academic Officer. The Provost plans, coordinates, directs, and facilitates the university's efforts in fulfilling its comprehensive mission of teaching, research, and service. According to the Faculty Handbook, the Provost is responsible for coordinating all instructional and degree-granting activities of the undergraduate, graduate and professional disciplines. Other top-tier divisions are the Office of Research, Office of Community Affairs, Office of Student Affairs, Office of University Advancement, and the Office of Financial Affairs.

*3.2.8 The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience and competence to lead the institution. (Qualified administrative/academic officers)

The Committee's review of the University of Alabama's organizational chart, the position descriptions and resumes of the administrative leadership as well as the deans of 14 academic colleges and schools indicate the institution has competent and experienced administrative and academic officers. Many of these leaders have published in refereed journals, written and/or co-authored numerous books and publications, secured grants and research funds, and
conducted important research. Several of these leaders have been practitioners in their disciplines.

The University of Alabama has demonstrated to the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee that all administrative and academic officers are appropriately qualified by providing curriculum vitae, position descriptions, educational attainment, and professional experience for each officer. The interaction of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee members with all the academic and administrative officers involved with the array of meetings and interviews was very positive.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.2.9 The institution publishes policies regarding appointment, employment, and evaluation of all personnel. (Personnel appointment)

The institution publishes policies regarding appointments, employment, and evaluations on its electronic policy library webpage and in the Faculty Handbook. The Office for Academic Affairs is responsible for policies and procedures pertaining to faculty employment. The Department of Human Resources establishes policies and procedures and aids in the hiring process for professional, office, clerical, technical, and facilities staff. The evaluation process for each employee category occurs annually.

The institution provided evidence of pertinent policies and several redacted examples to demonstrate that appointment, employment, and evaluation practices are consistent with their policies.

3.2.10 The institution periodically evaluates the effectiveness of its administrators. (Administrative staff evaluations)

The Committee's review of the University of Alabama Staff Handbook, and two HR memos to Deans, Directors and Department Heads and to Presidents, Vice Presidents, Associate and Assistant Vice Presidents regarding performance evaluations suggests the institution has a policy to evaluate administrators on an annual basis. The evaluation form is very comprehensive and allows for an acceptable review based on specific criteria. The samples provided of recent administrative staff evaluations indicate recent assessments have occurred.

3.2.11 The institution's chief executive officer has ultimate responsibility for, and exercises appropriate administrative and fiscal control over, the institution's intercollegiate athletics program. (Control of intercollegiate athletics)

The Compliance Certification Report states that the institution's chief executive officer has ultimate responsibility for, and exercises appropriate administrative and fiscal control over, the institution's intercollegiate athletics program. The Athletic budget is a component of the university's overall budget, so its development and approval is integrated within the framework for the university's overall budget development process. The process as described in the Compliance Certification Report incorporates scheduled meetings whereby
internal leadership consisting of the President, Provost and Vice President for Financial Affairs meet with university constituencies (department heads, deans, athletic director, etc.) to discuss budgetary needs and allocations. Internal leadership evaluates these needs and resources and reaches agreement as to allocations. The process culminates with the presentation of the university's operating budget for the entire university, including the athletics operating budget, to the board by UA system Executive Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations and the university's Vice President for Financial Affairs. The institution supports this statement by describing and documenting the organizational chart in which the Director of Athletics reports directly to the President, who also appoints the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee (IAC), which in turn oversees the athletics' department mission statement; periodic review of student-athlete handbook and compliance manual(s); compliance with NCAA and SEC rules and regulations; academic services, admissions profiles and graduation rates; financial affairs; gender equity and equal opportunity policies and practices; coach/student-athlete relationships and discipline; competitive event scheduling; and student-athlete exit interviews and general reputation of the athletics program. The Faculty Senate also provides a Faculty Athletics Representative to observe and serve as a liaison between the faculty and the President.

3.2.12 The institution demonstrates that its chief executive officer controls the institution’s fund-raising activities. (Fund-raising activities).

The institution documents that the University of Alabama President has complete authority to administer campus affairs as delegated by the UA Board of Trustees. This authority includes responsibility for supervising and administering fund-raising related activities as spelled out in the UA Board of Trustees Manual, Article V, Section 3.6. The university’s organizational chart shows that the Office of Advancement, led by the Vice President of Advancement, performs its fund-raising responsibilities under the direction of the President. According to the Compliance Certification Report, the Office of “University Advancement promotes and develops support for the University of Alabama and assists all university organizational units in securing gifts from private sources. It is directly responsible for gift and estate planning, as well as corporate and foundation relations. In close coordination and consultation with the President, the Office of Advancement assists and oversees college and unit fund-raising efforts and establishes unit and individual fund-raising performance metrics.” The institution is in compliance.

3.2.13 For any entity organized separately form the institution and formed primarily for the purpose of supporting the institution or its programs: (1) the legal authority and operating control of the institution is clearly defined with respect to that entity; (2) the relationship of that entity to the institution and the extent of any liability arising out of that relationship is clearly described in a formal, written manner; and (3) the institution demonstrates that (a) the chief executive officer controls any fund-raising activities of that entity or (b) the fund-raising activities of that entity are defined in a formal, written manner which assures that those activities further the mission of the institution. (Institution-related entities)

There are seven separately organized entities (listed below) that were formed primarily for the benefit of the university. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee
examined numerous documents for the related entities including Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, Constitutions, Guidelines for Operations, Affiliation Agreements and a Trust Agreement. In addition to the documents, the university provided a summary schedule for six of the seven entities indicating that the documented arrangements for five of the six entities were not in full compliance with the comprehensive standard. However, the documents provided by the university included recently executed agreements for the five entities that addressed all the non-compliance issues.

1. 1831 Foundation
2. Capstone Foundation
3. Capstone Health Services Foundation
4. Crimson Tide Foundation
5. Law School Foundation
6. National Alumni Association
7. University of Alabama Donor Advised Fund

3.2.14 The institution's policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property. These policies apply to students, faculty, and staff. (Intellectual property rights)

The institution maintains extensive policies concerning ownership of intellectual property. Specific policies address patents, copyrights, trademarks, licensing, and participation in startup companies. The policies are readily accessible through the Office of Technology Transfer's (OTT) website. The university proactively assists employees with commercialization of intellectual properties through the Office of Technology Commercialization (OTC) and the Office of Research Services. As a contractual obligation and a condition of employment, employees are required to read and sign an Intellectual Property Agreement form. The university reports that they have experienced no disputes with employees regarding intellectual property rights. However, they do have procedures and polices pertaining to resolution of such disputes should one arise.

University policies governing intellectual property rights for graduate students are available and publicized through the Graduate School website and its OTC. Examples of their student intellectual property policies were provided.

3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas (Institutional Effectiveness):

*3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

The institution noted that three approaches are used to demonstrate and monitor institutional effectiveness: annual outcomes assessment, professional accreditation, and program review. The institution provided a limited number of examples of the way that professional accreditation procedures (one example) and program review processes (three examples) inform the evaluation of institutional effectiveness. The institution's narrative focused on the Detailed
Assessment Reports (DARs) created and stored in the WEAVER system on an annual basis. Describe the changes, the general results that prompted the changes, and the impact on your unit's clients/customers that you might attribute to these changes.” Although the institution often provided a significant amount of information describing improved performance in various areas, there was a general lack of evidence that these improvements occurred as a result of a thoughtful analysis of data collected to measure progress towards achieving established expected outcomes.

The institution provided DARs for the vast majority of their educational programs. Every program reviewed by the committee had identified outcomes, including student learning outcomes and at least two measures for each outcome. Many student learning measures are embedded, direct measures of student learning. While all three programs within the School of Law presented only outcomes and measures, this was clearly the very small exception to an otherwise very complete portfolio of assessment activities across the university. In general, programs had identified targets for each measure and presented findings related to the measure. For the most part, the education programs responded to the non-achievement of targets with reasonable action plans for improvement. Sufficient history was provided that demonstrated 1) that a comprehensive assessment process was ongoing, and 2) that in previous annual assessment cycles, changes had been made to improve achievement of the outcome and that those changes had occurred as a result of the analysis of the various measurements associated with each outcome.

The institution addressed the assessment of online educational programs by providing a separate DARs report for the online program or by addressing the results of assessments conducted within online courses separately from those of site-based courses within a single report. As noted in the institutional summary report, the institution does not currently have off-campus instructional sites at which the institution offers 25-49 percent credit hours for a diploma, certificate, or degree, and the university has no branch campuses.

The University of Alabama has a systematic process for identifying and assessing learning outcomes for students. UA monitors the extent to which student achievement meets the learning goals for each program. They use three approaches to do this. Every year they have learning outcome assessment practices in place for program majors and they follow these practices to ensure compliance. They transitioned to WEAVER software to make this more efficient. The census of these assessment reports is readily accessible which reinforces transparency of the assessment program. A second approach to assessing learning is through discipline-specific accreditation where appropriate (e.g., professional programs). A list of these accreditors is provided. For programs that are not separately accredited a third approach for educational review is handled by major or program review every 8 years. An internal committee and external consultant are used for this process. Outcomes are reviewed to make sure that the outcomes are appropriate and well-identified, that students are meeting the outcomes, and that continuous improvement occurs. UA uses the outcome assessment results to improve student learning by sharing results with instructors, making indicated changes, and regularly reviewing ongoing assessment results to ensure continuous improvement.
The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents in support of the institution's case for compliance and conducted interviews with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, the Associate Director of Institutional Effectiveness and the Assistant Director of Institutional Effectiveness. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.3.1.2 - Administrative Support Services

The institution identified 20 units defined as administrative support services. The institution provided 19 Detailed Assessment Reports from the WEAVE system as evidence of an ongoing cycle of assessment of institutional effectiveness with respect to administrative support services. At the beginning of each WEAVE report for 2013-2014, the unit responded to the following question: "Informed by your assessment activities, what changes have you made in your unit in the last three to five years? Describe the changes, the general results that prompted the changes, and the impact on your unit's clients/customers that you might attribute to these changes." Although the institution often provided a significant amount of information describing improved performance in various areas, there was a general lack of evidence that these improvements occurred as a result of a thoughtful analysis of data collected to measure progress towards achieving established expected outcomes. In addition, the institution provided narrative describing efforts to improve administrative support services on campus. Efforts to assess institutional effectiveness ranged from a few well planned and well-articulated assessment efforts to an extensive checklist of tasks to complete.

When reviewing the DARs, the committee found several instances of outcomes that were really process steps. In addition, measures were often action items (e.g., "track," "utilize," or "complete") or did not provide meaningful information relative to the achievement of the outcome. In many instances, targets were not presented and thus, it was unclear how the units were measuring progress towards achieving the expected outcomes. As a result, the committee did not find compelling evidence that outcomes were identified nor that the administrative services units were consistently assessing the extent to which outcomes were achieved even when expected outcomes were clearly stated. While the examples in the narrative suggested that improvements were occurring, evidence that those improvement could be associated with changes made as a result of analyzing assessment data was shallow.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the additional documentation provided in the Focused Report and conducted interviews with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, the Associate Director of Institutional Effectiveness, and the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs. The institution provided additional information describing improved performance in various areas. However, the Focused Report did not contain additional evidence that quantifiable outcomes were identified, assessment of the outcomes occurred, and the results of the assessment were used for improvement. The reported improvements in Administrative Support Services could not be linked to systematic assessment within each unit.
Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends that the University of Alabama provide evidence that it identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results for its administrative support services.

3.3.1.3 - Academic and Student Support Services

The institution identified 31 units as academic and student support service units. As evidence of an assessment cycle, the institution provided Detailed Assessment Reports from the WEAVE system for each unit: “Describe the changes, the general results that prompted the changes, and the impact on your unit's clients/customers that you might attribute to these changes.” Although the institution often provided a significant amount of information describing improved performance in various areas, there was a general lack of evidence that these improvements occurred as a result of a thoughtful analysis of data collected to measure progress towards achieving established expected outcomes. In reviewing these reports, the committee found that each unit identified outcomes in the WEAVE system, but there was significant inconsistency regarding whether the outcomes were actual outcomes or if they were strategies or initiatives that the unit implemented to accomplish an outcome that was not articulated within the report. While some measures were meaningful and related to the specified outcomes, others were simply action items. As a result, meaningful targets were few and thus, it was difficult for the committee to determine how the institution was assessing the extent to which it was achieving the specified outcome. While the committee found evidence of changes being made with the intention of performance improvement, it was not clear that the changes resulted from an analysis of the data gathered in response to the outcomes and measures outlined in the report.

Student support services for students enrolled in distance programs were not addressed specifically within this narrative.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the additional documentation provided in the Focused Report and conducted interviews with the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, and the Director of Assessment and Planning for Student Affairs. The Focused Report included 14 academic units and 14 student affairs support service units. The sample of units shared in the Focused Report was of uneven quality. Some units shared longitudinal data, while others did not. In many cases, outcomes were not stated. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed additional documentation not included in the Focused Report for the student affairs support service units. The additional documentation demonstrated these units identify outcomes, assess the outcomes and utilized the assessment results for improvement.

The Focused Report did not include additional evidence that quantifiable outcomes were identified, assessment of the outcomes occurred, and the results of the assessment were utilized for improvement in academic support services. The reported improvements in Academic Support Services could not be linked to systematic assessment within each unit.
Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the University of Alabama provide evidence that it identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results for its academic support services.

3.3.1.4 - Research Within Its Mission, If Appropriate

Research is a key part of the institution’s mission. Within the Office of the Vice President for Research, the following offices report directly to the Vice President: the Office for Sponsored Programs, the Office for Research Compliance, the Alabama Innovation and Mentoring of Entrepreneurs Center (AIME), the Office for Technology Transfer and Research Core Facilities. Detailed Assessment Reports from the WEAVE system were presented for each of these areas except for Research Core Facilities. The four reports varied in the extent to which targets were identified and thus, the clarity regarding how the institution was assessing the extent to which the outcome was being achieved varied as well. While all four units provided information regarding the types of improvements that have occurred in the past three to five years, AIME and Research Compliance did not provide any plans for making changes that were expected to result in improvements for the 2011/12, 2012/13, or 2013/14 reporting cycles. However, the narrative provided by the institution in the Compliance Certification Report provided evidence that action plans based on the analysis of data were being developed and implemented across the four offices.

The institution provided information on recently developed strategic initiatives for the research endeavor. Expected outcomes of these initiatives included greater recognition of research and scholarship excellence and strengthening undergraduate research opportunities. The institution discussed six initiatives related to these outcomes, but it was not clear to the Committee if the impacts of these initiatives on the outcomes were being assessed. For example, the institution reported that the undergraduate research and creative activity conference had undergraduate attendance of nearly 600 students, but there were no comparative data from other years nor were there data on the number of research opportunities available through attendance at the conference. As a result, the committee was unable to determine how the institution was assessing the extent to which the institution was achieving the expected outcome.

In addition, the institution stated that additional plans for enhancing the recognition of the university as a top-tier research are based on “the continuous evaluation of UA’s research strengths, opportunities and strategic priorities.” The evidence presented for the continuous evaluation consisted of a list of research priorities for 2013, 2014, and 2015. It was unclear what type of evaluation was being done.

Finally, the institution discussed research institutes and centers as significant contributors to the research enterprise of the institution. The Board of Trustees requires that all formal centers and institutes submit annual reports to the appropriate deans. A report template and two annual reports were included in the documentation. The reports consist of lists of projects, center/institute participants, collaborations, grants, publications, workshops, outreach activities,
patents, honors and awards as well as budget and revenue information. The institution did not evidence that within those annual reports, or elsewhere, the research centers and institutes identify expected outcomes, assess the extent to which they achieve those outcomes and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results.

The University of Alabama’s ongoing evaluation and improvement processes for its research mission were described in its PRIME (Promote, Recognize, Increase, Modernize and Empower) report, a report developed by UA’s Research Advisory Committee in response to a charge provided by the Interim Provost. This report made an assessment of UA’s current resources and environment for research, and is currently being used as a roadmap for strengthening the university’s research programs; it is also being used to evaluate the success of new and ongoing initiatives. With its review process, several initiatives have been evaluated, including the Research Stimulation Program, Research Grants Committee, Emerging Scholars program and the UG Research mission. Evidence was provided that improvements have been made based on the analysis of the results. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the additional documentation provided in the Focused Report and interviewed the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and find the institution to be in compliance.

3.3.1.5 - Community/Public Service Within Its Mission, If Appropriate

The institution cites continuing education, outreach and service programs as advancing the institution’s mission. The Division of Community Affairs is comprised of The Center for Community-Based Partnerships and the Crossroads Community Center and serves as a link between the campus community and the external community. Detailed Assessment Reports (DARs) for the two centers were provided and reflected well stated expected outcomes, reasonable and related measures, clear targets, findings and in some cases, indications of changes that will be made in response to the review of the findings.

Additional information is provided for the assessment of outreach and public service activities within academic affairs and student affairs. Assessment efforts for 30 programs are summarized in Community-Public Service worksheets. Typically each worksheet presented an objective or outcome, measures, and findings. Findings often were snapshots of participation figures and did not reference if the current participation figure was higher or lower than figures for other years. However, improvement actions were included in the worksheet and seemed to be based on the program’s reflection of their findings.

Finally, the institution provided DARs for six outreach and public service centers. Each center appeared to have identified expected outcomes. Measures were a mix of actual measures and action items. However, nearly all outcomes had at least one or two measures that were valid and could provide meaningful data that could be analyzed. In those cases, the center typically did provide data and provided some reflective statement regarding the extent to which the center is achieving the outcome. Action plans that were expected to produce an improvement in outcome attainment were present.
3.3.2 The institution has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan that (1) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP; (2) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP; and (3) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement. (Quality Enhancement Plan)

The University of Alabama addressed all components of this standard in a satisfactory manner. See Part III for additional information.

3.4.1 The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration. (Academic program approval)

The program development process at the institution is governed by the rules of the UA System Board of Trustees, which place the primary responsibility for program planning, development and implementation with the university staff. The process provides for extensive review and approval through the institution, the system, and other senior institutions in the state that are under the auspices of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). The process involves faculty preparation of a notice to submit a program. This is reviewed by campus committees of faculty and by administrators before submission to the UA System office. Reviews are also conducted by the other UA System institutions and an UA System Academic Council. Following reviews by the System administrators and institution faculty, a program is sent to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. Following approval through the state level, faculty may prepare a full proposal for processing through the same channels for approval by the Board of Trustees for submission to ACHE. If approved at the state level, the Board of Trustees makes the final judgment to authorize the program. Documentation showing the various steps in the process was provided for two recently approved undergraduate programs and one graduate program.

3.4.2 The institution’s continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with the institution’s mission. (Continuing education/service programs)

Continuing education, outreach and service programs directly advance the institution’s mission and result in partnerships with businesses, and nonprofit organizations. In 2007 the institution joined the Engagement Scholarship Consortium of five other universities (Pennsylvania State University, Ohio State University, University of Georgia, Michigan State University and the University of Wisconsin) in building strong university/community partnerships. As of 2014 this Consortium has grown to 28 universities. This institution hosted the 2012 meeting of this Consortium; 613 individuals attended. In 2008 the institution achieved the Carnegie Elective Community Engagement Classification and applied for a renewal of this classification in 2014.

The Division of Community Affairs was created in 2004 as a bridge between the campus community and the external community, making them both stakeholders. This Division has coordinated over 250 seed grants yielding over 50 funded proposals.
Several centers and initiatives have been established: (1) A Parent-Teacher Leadership Academy with over 1000 hours of parent engagement work to their school communities with over 250 parents graduating from the Academy; (2) Saving Lives, a faith-based health literacy and wellness partnership to understand physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing; (3) Students for Community Outreach, Partnership and Engagement, to bolster the production of community-based student research; and (4) Swim to the Top, a fitness and enrichment program offered in collaboration with the YMCA and the Recreation authority.

The College of Continuing Studies offers learning opportunities for individuals to pursue educational and career growth both personal or for the workplace. More than 11,500 people per year are served in diverse offerings in one of the programs. There are also K-12 programs and disability programs.

These various community and public service efforts are consistent with the mission of the institution.

*3.4.3 The institution publishes admissions policies that are consistent with its mission. (Admissions policies)

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee’s review of the University of Alabama’s mission, undergraduate admissions requirements for freshmen, transfer international and graduate admissions, as well as Law School admission requirements confirms that the institution has admissions policies in harmony with the university’s mission. The admissions policies are published on various university websites and catalogs.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with the University Registrar, Senior Associate Dean of the College of Continuing Studies, Assistant to the Provost, Director of the Faculty Resource Center, and Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed pertinent documentation including the University of Alabama Catalog and examples of student applications that had been redacted.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee found ample evidence in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee’s findings.

3.4.4 The institution publishes policies that include criteria for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, credit by examination, advanced placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution’s own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution’s transcript. (See Commission policy “Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures.”) (Acceptance of academic credit)

The University of Alabama evaluates credit from external sources and ensures that the academic quality and learning outcomes of such external credit is
comparable to that of UA academic programs. The university publishes the policies and guidelines related to the evaluation, acceptance, and awarding of credit at all levels, including undergraduate, graduate, and professional. The university also assumes responsibility for the academic quality of all coursework or credit appearing on the official UA transcript. These policies are published in the Undergraduate Catalog and the Graduate Catalog, as well as on the Undergraduate Admission and the Office of the University Registrar website. The Office of the University Registrar’s Transfer Credit Center evaluates the coursework for an existing UA equivalency. If a UA equivalency has not been established, the Transfer Credit Center researches and establishes an equivalency for 100- and 200-level coursework based on course content, credit hours, prerequisite requirements, applicability, and evaluator professional judgment after collaborating with the discipline owning the course. The Transfer Credit Center documents credit determinations in the UA Transfer Credit Evaluator Guide. For 300- and 400-level coursework, a designated faculty and/or staff member in the undergraduate college where the discipline is housed evaluates and establishes a UA equivalency using the same criteria. Credit by examination and credit for several types of out-of-class experiences are recognized by the University of Alabama. Credits can be earned through satisfactory completion of one of the standardized national exams including, but not limited to, the Advanced Placement (AP) program, the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, and the Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE). Students doing research, internships or academic credit programs abroad will work through the Capstone International Academic Programs office. Each college will evaluate the course(s) (appropriate to the division) taken through study abroad. International programs must equate to accredited college or university level work and not simply a travel experience. The college that is responsible for the discipline will evaluate the course(s) taken overseas.

It is stated that “students enrolled in the External Degree Program of New College in the College of Arts and Sciences may be eligible for a limited amount of credit for prior learning,” but criteria for awarding credit are not included in the policy. In the absence of specific details on this practice, the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee concluded that compliance could not be affirmed. While documentation on arrangements with institutions which involve transcription or transferring credits for coursework leading to a degree are provided, evidence relating to the process of awarding experiential credit, including how the institution ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and are comparable to the institution’s own degree programs, was not provided.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee confirms that the University of Alabama provides evidence in the Focused Report of published policies that include criteria for evaluating, awarding and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, and credit by examination that is consistent with its mission. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with University of Alabama staff and faculty from College of Continuing Studies, University Registrar, Undergraduate Admissions, and Graduate School. Processes are in place that describes the role that Colleges play in the evaluation and awarding of noncredit work for academic course work. For example, The External Degree Program of
New College in the College of Arts and Sciences provided a sample portfolio and portfolio checklist that described their method for evaluating and awarding credit for prior learning.

3.4.5 The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These policies are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. (Academic policies)

The university follows good educational practice when considering Academic policies. A policy on Policy Development and Management governs the process of policy development and adoption. The Board of Trustees has delegated to the President of the university the authority to administer the campus and formulate regulations consistent with the Bylaws and policies of the board. The President has further delegated to the Vice Presidents the authority to initiate, develop, and revise policies relevant to their administrative divisions. The process for doing so is clearly articulated. Within the university, policies are first discussed at the Department level, followed by various college councils, and then reviewed by the Academic Program Committee or the Graduate Council. Both undergraduate and graduate educational policies are reviewed by the Academic Council at the Provost level.

The primary locations of published policies relating to academic programs of study are the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. The Faculty Handbook provides detail on faculty participation in shared governance and the Student Handbook also contains information on topics such as academic integrity. The academic policies are made available both electronically and in print form and readily accessible from the university’s website, with an archival electronic form available from the website of the Office of Official Publications. College handbooks and websites also include policy material relevant to the specific programs of study. Documentation is provided from Graduate Council and Faculty Senate meeting minutes to show the role of the faculty in policy development. Any academic policy issues that the university administration deemed to be especially important, and not specific to individual academic divisions, are referred to the faculty for a campus-wide referendum. In 2005 such an event occurred when the faculty voted by over a 67 percent margin to maintain the plus/minus grading system.

3.4.6 The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. (Practices for awarding credit)

The university defines credit hours in accordance with the Federal Definition of a Credit Hour as stated in the university’s Credit Hours Policy, which was approved by the Faculty Senate and is published on the website. Based upon its Credit Hour Definition and Policy, the university normally grants one semester hour of credit for the learning outcomes expected upon the satisfactory completion of approximately 15 50-minute sessions of direct faculty instruction and examination or equivalent form of assessment in the typical fall and spring semesters. Variations to this typical schedule are addressed effectively, including the awarding of credit for electronic learning. The primary responsibility for ensuring
compliance with the UA Credit Hour Policy lies with the faculty, Academic Department Chairs, and designated Assistant/Associate Deans within each college or school under the supervision of the respective academic dean.

3.4.7 The institution ensures the quality of educational programs and courses offered through consortia relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing compliance with the Principles and periodically evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the mission of the institution. (See the Commission policy “Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures.”) (Consortia relationships/contractual agreements)

The university is a participant in several consortial relationships, both within its system and with other institutions throughout Alabama and in China (a Cooperative International Undergraduate Degree program with Ocean University of China (OUC) at Qingdao). While the institution appears to have an adequate rationale and justification of need for these relationships, and a robust process for ensuring the quality of programs and courses offered through contract or consortial agreements, copies of signed contracts and consortial agreements were not made available. Instead, promotional and informational literature was made available, which fails to clearly delineate the responsibilities of each party.

The University of Alabama participates in several consortial relationships within its system, with other institutions throughout Alabama, and in China (a Cooperative International Undergraduate Degree program with Ocean University of China (OUC) at Qingdao). The Off-Site Review Committee found that the institution offered adequate justification of the need for the relationship in relation to the institution’s mission as well as it demonstrated a robust process for ensuring the quality of programs and courses offered through contract or consortial agreements. However, the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee sought copies of signed contracts and consortial agreements that clearly delineate the responsibilities of each party.

In response, the University of Alabama provided several signed proposals (e.g. Anthropology, 1982; Art History, 1987; Applied Mathematics, 1988; Health Education, 1991; Nursing, 2008: African American Studies, 2009) and signed agreements including the Commerce and Business Memorandum of Understanding, 2012; Engineering Memorandum of Understanding, 2014; and the Aerospace Consortium Agreement, 2013. A review of these documents demonstrates that the institution’s consortial agreements delineate institutional responsibilities, promote alignment with the institutional mission, uphold the Principles of Accreditation, and ensure processes of program quality and review.

3.4.8 The institution awards academic credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis only when there is documentation that the noncredit course work is equivalent to a designated credit experience. (Noncredit to credit)

Students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences’ New College LifeTrack Program may apply for prior learning assessment to constitute up to 30 hours of credit if the student participated in corporate or organized non-credit instruction or training (e.g., Dale Carnegie workshops, institutes, certification training). Students submit an Application to Submit Knowledge of Prior Learning for review
by a single trained faculty for a subject area field of study portfolio. Academic
department chairs approve faculty to evaluate a student’s experiences. The
institution’s policies allow for a portfolio approach which is not evaluated based
on an established rubric or on demonstration of accomplishment of student
learning outcomes. One example portfolio presented for which the student was
awarded credit did not appear to be appropriately parallel to content mastered by
students successfully taking the course for which credit was awarded. Policies
are published, implemented, and enforced, but evidence is lacking, for New
College as well as for the College of Environmental Sciences, to demonstrate
that noncredit course work is equivalent to a designated credit experience under
the existing system.

The University of Alabama describes its process for awarding academic credit for
course work taken on a noncredit basis as one that can be granted only when
there is evidence (documentation) to support that the noncredit course work is
equivalent to a designated course credit. The institution cites two Colleges as
examples where academic course credit is given for noncredit experiences: New
College Life Track Program and the College of Human Environmental Sciences.
The Focused Report reveals a process for granting academic course credit for
noncredit experiences, and evidence was provided in the form of an unofficial
worksheet where New College Track Program provided course credit for prior
learning. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee met with several faculty
members, including the Learning Coordinator from the New College Life Track
Program, who provided additional evidence of the process used by the institution
for awarding academic credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis.

3.4.9 The institution provides appropriate academic support services. (Academic
support services)

The University of Alabama offers suitable academic support services to students
and faculty by providing quality programs that address their teaching, research
and service mission. These services are provided to enhance the overall success
of students as well as the effectiveness of faculty in their teaching and research.
The institution provides orientation, academic advising, registration services,
resources that promote student success through the Center for Academic
Success. The Center has a Learning Resource Center, study skills courses and
workshops, a special course to assist freshman students, tutorial services and
supplemental instruction. The Resource lab had 2,598 student visits in 2010-11
and the number increased to 4,595 in 2012-13. A federally funded TRIO program
also offers academic assistance to first generation college students.

Five separate libraries provide traditional library services to students. The
Mathematics Technology Learning Center helps students in learning math
through a computer lab and tutoring that is open 60 hours a week. The Writing
Center assists students with different facets of writing. The Office of Disability
Services provides academic accommodations. The Graduate School and the
Honors College enhance student learning through their services. The Center for
Instructional technology has a wide array of services that support both students
and faculty ranging from audio visual support to assisting with emerging
technology and accessibility issues. The Faculty Resource Center provides
faculty development and instructional technology support to improve teaching and learning.

The University of Alabama also provides testing services, academic support services for student athletes, in addition to academic support for law students. Distance education students receive academic support from the College of Continuing Studies.

3.4.10 The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty. (Responsibility for curriculum)

Faculty holds primary responsibility for the content of courses and the configuration of tracks, concentrations, minors, and majors through appropriate standing committees. The university delegates much of this responsibility to faculty at the department level. Departmental faculty are responsible for the evaluation of existing curricula and the development of new courses, tracks, concentrations, minors, and majors. The institution provided examples of curricular development and assessment.

*3.4.11 For each major in a degree program, the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, this requirement applies to a curricular area or concentration. (Academic program coordination)

The institution requires an academically qualified faculty member to serve as the academic program coordinator for each degree/major. There are over 140 program coordinators at the institution and the review finds that all are academically qualified. All but four have a terminal degree, which is usually in the program discipline. Three of the latter have MA/MS degrees and are coordinators of BA/BS level programs in the corresponding field. A fourth has a master's degree and possesses relevant experiences to qualify him for the coordinator position. Some coordinators have a terminal degree, but that degree is not exactly in the program field; e.g., African American Studies, Environmental Science, Speech and Language Pathology, Studio Art, Book Arts, and Engineering Science & Mechanics. However, their degrees are in related fields and research or professional experience qualifies these individuals to be academic coordinators. For the online bachelor’s program in Human Environmental Science there are four with MS degrees as their highest degree. However, their degree qualifications are in fields that are sufficiently close.

The University of Alabama reports that for each major, the institution assigns program coordination to faculty who demonstrate qualifications via academic preparation and credentials. The general expectation is that program coordinators will hold the terminal degree in the field of the degree program, and where appropriate, such as in the applied fields, professional experience may be used to strengthen the qualifications for the position. Program coordinators are generally responsible for leading faculty through the processes of developing and reviewing program requirements that include such activities as scheduling of courses, coordinating admissions and orientation activities, coordinating advising and supervising graduate assistants. Though only one job description was
provided as an example of the specific responsibilities of a program coordinator, the job description included evidence of the program coordinator's role in recruitment of students, admission of students, and scheduling rotations.

Summary tables organized by college were provided, and included the degree program title linked to the name of each program coordinator and their CV for on-campus and online programs. The institution provided sufficient evidence that program coordinators had credentials and/or professional experience to match their assigned responsibility for coordinating and serving in the role of program coordinator. Thus, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee finds compliance with this standard.

3.4.12 The institution's use of technology enhances student learning and is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs. Students have access to and training in the use of technology. (Technology use)

As part of the core curriculum, all UA students are required to complete six semester credit hours in courses with a computer (C) designation. These courses integrate appropriate software or require the student to write a program.

Students have access to nearly 2800 workstations across campus, with over 500 of these located in the Libraries. A Website informs students of the location of computer labs across campus. The Alabama Digital Humanities Center and the Sanford Media Center (both located in the main library branch) support the use of sophisticated technologies, and in 2014 the Libraries will be expanding its 3-D training and production services.

Each student receives a BamaID and email address. MyBama, the central authentication portal, provides access to numerous administrative and learning functions, including the learning management system (Blackboard Learn). The university has developed a robust mobile application that is heavily used. A secure wireless network covers all locations on campus, including some outdoor spaces. Authorized network users who are off campus are assured access through VPN services.

Use of Blackboard Learn has grown from 5,587 sections in 2008 to 11,741 sections in 2013. Instructional applications that support lecture capture, an audience response system, Web conferencing, grading and peer review, secure testing, etc., are integrated with Blackboard Learn. The number of multimedia classrooms has grown from 104 in 2006 to 407 in 2014. Audio/Visual Solutions, a unit of the Center of Instructional Technology, devotes nine full-time staff to the maintenance of these classrooms. Some colleges support their own classrooms, and the College of Continuing Studies supports nine rooms for distance education classes.

In addition to learning that occurs in C-designated and other courses, the university offers technology training through a number of venues. The Faculty Resource Center (FRC) offers workshops for faculty; in 2013 FRC offered 75 sessions to 252 participants. FRC provides student technical support and its Student Resources page has student-specific tutorials for Blackboard and related applications. The College of Continuing Studies offers support for students and
faculty for online courses, including a support link embedded in each online course.

The Libraries offers a strong instructional program (see also Comprehensive Standard 3.8.2) through workshops, one-on-one assistance, and instruction in classes. Statistics indicate that students and faculty are utilizing these resources. To meet the demand for software training, the Libraries is recruiting two Academic Technologies Instruction Librarians to provide instruction for advanced software applications across a range of disciplines.

The university's Office of Information Technology (OIT) ensures network connectivity. Its 44-node cluster (RC2) maximizes processing and storage. The OIT maintains a membership with Internet2 and the InCommon federation; the UA Box for "cloud" storage; and license agreements for commonly used software programs and applications. It is responsible for disaster recovery of mission critical operations and continuity of operations. The OIT service desk, supplemented by Perceptis, provides technical assistance 24/7.

The evidence indicates that UA students' access to and training in technologies are appropriate for the mission of the university.

3.5.1 The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them. (General education competencies)

The general education program has been in place since 1982, with a revision in 1998 to address the state mandated articulation and general education requirements. It is a distribution-based curriculum. The institution identifies five areas for general education: written communication, ability to use or write computer programs or competency in a foreign language, appreciation of the humanities and fine arts, appreciation of history and the social and behavioral sciences, and appreciation for natural science and mathematics. The requirements are stated in terms of course credits in the areas. The Core Curriculum Oversight Committee (COC) is the faculty body responsible for reviewing the courses that fulfill the general education requirements. The general education program is required of all baccalaureate students. The College of Engineering students are not required to complete the same number of credits in each area. In 2013, the institution changed its statement of the core to define competencies within the areas for purposes of assessment. The institution is still in the process of converting to this new system.

Assessment of general education is based in departments and, more recently, the CCOCC has also assumed some responsibility. The departmental assessment reports presented as examples did not adequately address the core areas of the general education curriculum. It is not clear how the targets for performance are set. Nor is it clear how the student work is evaluated in all cases. In 2013, the institution commissioned a committee to define the competencies for general education. A variety of direct (e.g., exam embedded questions) and indirect methods (NSSE, alumni surveys) were used to assess student learning outcomes across different courses that are accepted as meeting the general education requirements. In some cases, the assessment consisted of an end of
class survey in which students expressed their perception of their level of understanding.

The general education areas are appropriate for a baccalaureate degree; however, the institution has failed to discuss how it assures that the expectations set are at the college level and that students are achieving college level performance. This is particularly challenging to discern in the case of the engineering students who do not necessarily complete the course credits defined for the core.

The institution's general education program identifies five areas of required learning for undergraduates: written communication; ability to use or write computer programs or competency in a foreign language appreciation of the humanities and fine arts; appreciation of history and the social and behavioral sciences, and appreciate for natural science and mathematics. Established in 1982 and revised in 1998 to address state mandated articulation and general education requirements, the general education program is distributed among courses, enforced through credit hour accumulation in the five areas, and overseen by the Core Curriculum Oversight Committee (CCOC). In 2013, the institution further revised the program to align the five areas of learning to core competencies for purposes of assessment. While the Off-Site Committee recognized the general education areas as appropriate for college degrees, the Committee sought clarity on two issues 1) the difference in expectation for general education program course credits for Engineering students than their peers (so as to have fewer general education credit hours than other majors) and 2) needing more information about how the institution sets college level expectations in the colleges and departments and ensures that students are achieving college level performance.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee's interviews with academic administrators and review of documents including the Undergraduate Program Review Form, the General Education Map from WEAVE, and an Accreditation Summary as well as tables, including a Table of Writing Outcomes Reviewed in the Disciplines, a Table of Critical Thinking Outcomes Reviewed in the Disciplines, and a Table of Cultural Awareness Outcomes Reviewed in the Disciplines demonstrate that the institution identifies college level competencies and that departments and programs assess student attainment of general education competencies through a variety of course-embedded assessments and other program measures. Furthermore, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirmed that the learning outcomes of Engineering students are assessed in the same way as their peers in other degree programs and the differential in core curriculum requirements from engineering students is dictated by legislative mandate.

3.5.2 At least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. (See the Commission policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures.") (Institutional credits for a degree).

The University of Alabama publicizes and enforces a residency rule requirement which exceeds the 25 percent minimum requirement for undergraduate degrees. This requirement is enforced through the academic advising process, electronic
monitoring via DegreeWorks, and degree audits conducting by the registrar’s office when a student applies for graduation. As evidence of enforcement of this policy, the institution presented policy documents, sample DegreeWorks audits, and sample transcripts.

3.5.3 The institution publishes requirements for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. (See the Commission policy “The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees.”) (Undergraduate program requirements)

The institution has its catalog online, giving the requirements for all undergraduate degree programs, including general education components. The catalog is promptly updated when approved changes are made to program policies.

The state mandates a basic core curriculum of 41 credit hours in writing, critical reading, mathematics, cultural awareness of one’s own and others, and physical, biological, social, and behavioral sciences.

The core curriculum typically must cover:

a) 6 hours in written composition
b) 6 hours of higher level courses with a writing designation
c) 6 hours of foreign language, or courses requiring “writing computer programs”
d) 12 hours in humanities/fine arts [Engineers must complete 9 hours]
e) 12 hours in history/social/behavioral sciences [Engineers – 9 hours]
f) 11 hours in natural sciences and mathematics [Engineers – 12 hours]

The Core Curriculum Oversight Committee consists of twelve faculty members, a member of the Faculty Senate and two students. Each faculty member serves for three years so that each year one-third of the faculty are replaced (so as to preserve some continuity.)

The undergraduate program requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices.

3.5.4 At least 25 percent of the course hours in each major at the baccalaureate level are taught by faculty members holding an appropriate terminal degree—usually the earned doctorate or the equivalent of the terminal degree. (Terminal degrees of faculty)

Every program at the University of Alabama had at least 25 percent of the course hours taught by faculty with the terminal degree.

3.6.1 The institution’s post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, and its master’s and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than its undergraduate programs. (Post-baccalaureate program rigor)
The processes used by the University of Alabama to clearly define the content and rigor of post-baccalaureate degree programs are well documented, and several robust examples are provided at all degree levels. Numerous differentiating criteria are thoughtfully provided demonstrating that the institution's post-baccalaureate programs that are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs. Rationale and philosophical explanations, as well as differentiating criteria, are provided. Also publications that show the distinctions between undergraduate and post-baccalaureate programs are provided. Several course syllabi progressions describing the advanced body of learning to be accomplished through completion of the post-baccalaureate course work are available for review.

3.6.2 The institution structures its graduate curricula (1) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (2) to ensure ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experiences. (Graduate curriculum)

There are two types of master's degrees: (1) thesis requiring: at least 24 hours course credit, plus 6 hours of thesis research; or (2) non-thesis requiring: at least 30 credit hours. There is to be an emphasis on subject matter and literature in the major subject.

The Ed.S. degree requires at least 30 hours past the master's degree. Doctoral degrees put a strong emphasis on originality rather than an accumulation of credit hours. The institution also offers graduate programs that emphasize professional practice (e.g., speech-language pathology, psychology and nursing, among others). The Graduate School provides ample support for the travel of students to present their research at national meetings.

In general, the institution provides adequate types of evidence for compliance with the requirement to structure graduate curricula to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and, as appropriate, engagement in research and/or professional practice and training.

3.6.3 At least one-third of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. (See the Commission policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures.") (Institutional credits for a degree)

The University of Alabama publicizes and enforces a policy that limits the amount of transfer credits applicable to graduate degrees. Their policy is more stringent than the SACSCOC requirement that at least one-third of credits towards a post-baccalaureate professional degree must be earned through the institution. The institution's requirements are enforced through the academic advising process, departmental and graduate school credit evaluations, and ultimately through an evaluation audit conducted during the semester of commencement. Sample transcripts were provided to illustrate compliance.

3.6.4 The institution defines and publishes requirements for its graduate and post-graduate professional programs. These requirements conform to commonly
accepted standards and practices for degree programs. (Post-baccalaureate program requirements)

The University of Alabama defines and publishes requirements for each graduate and post-baccalaureate professional program of study in print and electronic forms. The process for determining what coursework is included and for establishing how coursework conforms to commonly accepted standards and practices in the program requirements is comprehensive and involves faculty and administrators. A significant number of programs undergo external reviews through the professional accreditation processes, and the Office for Academic Affairs (OAA) coordinates program reviews in cooperation with the academic unit under review, the respective college or school, and the Graduate School whenever graduate programs are involved. OAA provides data forms and objective data (along with data from the Graduate School) to assist departments in completing their self-studies online. Detailed information for “full” academic program review procedures for programs without external accreditation and “modified” reviews of programs with external accreditation are online at the UA Graduate School website. These reviews require identification and examination of peer programs.

3.7.1 The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty. (See Commission guidelines “Faculty Credentials.”) (Faculty competence)

For faculty appointments at the professorial ranks, whether tenured, tenure track, or non-tenure earning, the institution requires that candidates have a terminal degree. For appointments at the rank of lecturer or instructor, candidates must have a master’s degree or a minimum of 18 credit hours in the teaching discipline. In addition to the Ph.D. degree and J.D. degree, the institution identifies nine master’s degrees as terminal degrees. While the M.F.A and the M.L.S are generally considered terminal degrees in the studio arts and library science, others such as the M.P.H are not. The Dr.P.H and the Ph.D. in Public Health are widely available and generally considered terminal degrees.

Policies state that faculty appointments are made through a process that involves a review by the Office of Academic Affairs for compliance with the requirements for the rank of appointment. Credentials are reviewed before an offer is made. Transcripts are required to verify credentials. Alternative credentials are also reviewed by the Office of Academic Affairs to determine whether a candidate for a position has appropriate credentials for the rank recommended by the hiring department. Teaching assignments are the responsibility of the hiring department. For graduate courses, instructors are generally members of the graduate faculty. The appointment process outlined in the graduate catalog
requires a terminal degree, appointment at a professorial rank, and active engagement in research or scholarly activity in the discipline. For graduate assistants who are instructors of record, the "18 hour" rule is applied and review and mentoring is provided.

The faculty roster contained a number of unreadable or blank files. In addition, the roster lists a number of faculty who do not appear to meet the standards described in the institutional policy. (See 'Request for Justifying and Documenting Qualifications of Faculty')

The University of Alabama employs faculty members qualified to teach undergraduate and graduate courses. UA requires tenured, tenure track, or non-tenure earning faculty to have a terminal degree. Lecturers or instructors must have a master's degree plus a minimum of 18 credit hours in the teaching discipline. Terminal degrees include the PhD, MD, and JD, as well as the MFA and MLS.

Policies on faculty credentialing are posted and widely accessible. Transcripts are required to verify credentials and the Office of Academic Affairs monitors compliance before an offer is made. Teaching assignments are made by the departments so that faculty members teach classes for which they are qualified. Graduate assistants who are instructors fall under the "18 hour rule" and mentoring is provided. The faculty roster indicates that they meet the standards stated in the UA policy.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found that the faculty roster had files that could not be opened or were unreadable. This has been corrected. Additional information was provided ("Faculty Qualifications" information) to the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee for faculty and instructors for whom qualifications were questioned by the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

In UA's Focused Report, supporting documents were provided as evidence that the faculty do have appropriate/relevant degree completion course work and/or professional experiences that justified their teaching assignments for the courses being taught.

**3.7.2** The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status.

**(Faculty evaluation)**

The University of Alabama follows a fairly standard procedure for faculty evaluations. All tenured and tenure track faculty members complete an annual Faculty Activity Report, which is evaluated by the departmental chair. Individual colleges and departments may have additional/alternate procedures. The evaluation and any responses will become part of the faculty member's record. Evaluation is based on teaching, research and service – with a six layer evaluation key from "unsatisfactory" – requiring immediate corrective action – to "preeminent" – top 3 percent of faculty. The road to tenure is standard and very well outlined. Redacted examples are provided.
3.7.3 The institution provides evidence of ongoing professional development of faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners. (Faculty development)

The University of Alabama offers a comprehensive set of faculty development opportunities, beginning with new faculty orientations, faculty mentoring, a First Year Experiences program, and a University Leadership program. Specific opportunities for teaching improvement are offered through the Faculty Resource Center in the Center for Instructional Technology. The Office of Sponsored Programs offers programs to support the research community on campus. Internal funding opportunities are also supported. These programs are open to all faculty, although in the case of research grants, tenure track faculty are given preference. The professional development opportunities are described on the institution’s website.

3.7.4 The institution ensures adequate procedures for safeguarding and protecting academic freedom. (Academic freedom)

The University of Alabama defines academic freedom in teaching and research in its Faculty Handbook, indicating the faculty’s full freedom in research and publication, unless constrained by contract, patent or copyright. Faculty members are also free to present relevant material in the classroom without prior censorship. The statement on academic freedom makes no distinction between tenure track and non-tenure earning faculty. There is a system for mediation and grievances that is documented in an appendix to the faculty handbook. The institution describes a case in 2013 in which a faculty member was allegedly denied academic freedom. The mediation process was carried out as described in the handbook and it was concluded that there was not a legitimate grievance. The documents were unavailable due to ongoing litigation.

3.7.5 The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. (Faculty role in governance)

The University of Alabama developed and maintains policies that define the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. The documents are readily available in the faculty handbook which operationalizes policies established by the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama. The institution maintains several standing committees that include faculty representatives and appoints task forces that include faculty representatives to address more issues outside the purview of standing committees. The University Faculty Senate is a standing committee that serves a significant role in their faculty governance. Among other documents, policy statements and sample meeting minutes were provided as evidence of compliance.

3.8.1 The institution provides facilities and learning/information resources that are appropriate to support its teaching, research, and service mission. (Learning/information resources)

The University of Alabama Libraries has articulated a mission statement that builds upon that of the university. The UA Libraries includes five locations that cover humanities, social sciences, and the arts; business; special collections; education; and science and engineering. Two separately administered libraries
cover law and health sciences. Four separately administered discipline-specific reading rooms cover communication, maps/geography, social work, and women's issues.

The Libraries provides physical access a total of 159 hours a week, with the library for science and engineering open 24/5. The largest library, Gorgas, is open 24/7 during exam periods. In recent years several libraries and reading rooms have undergone renovations (Gorgas in 2007 and 2010; business in 2011; education in 2007/08 and 2013/14; science and engineering in 2012; and communication in 2012). Renovations have focused on creating more seating (individual and group), incorporating new technologies, and enhancing functionality. Lesser-used materials have been transferred to the annex (constructed in 2003) to provide more space for user activities.

The UA Libraries provides seating for 2900 students and access to over 500 computers. Nearly 1.8 million people entered library facilities during FY 2013, indicating that students and faculty are utilizing these spaces. Library facilities contain individual and group study spaces, learning commons/computing areas, and classrooms for instruction.

Gorgas Library houses several noteworthy resources. The Alabama Digital Humanities Center (completed in 2010) focuses on digital resources, and experts are available to assist with research and projects. The Sanford Media Center serves as a multimedia production center for students in all disciplines and also loans out equipment. On-campus partnerships ensure that students have convenient access to tutoring services provided by the Writing Center and the Center for Academic Success (also in the science and engineering library).

Students and faculty members can utilize electronic resources 24/7, and the Libraries have emphasized the acquisition of materials in electronic format in recent years. Collections now include over 1.2 million e-books, 400 databases, and 120,000 e-journals. Many services can be conducted online (searching, placing holds and recalls, requesting interlibrary loans, consulting subject guides, receiving reference/research assistance, etc.). Librarians have created and posted approximately 500 subject guides online. The Libraries' website also provides a list of all available software applications (by title or by discipline) and where they can be found. The UA Libraries has developed a strong social media presence and has recently improved its mobile website to accommodate a large increase in user demand.

Distance education students have a liaison librarian and are also served by subject specialists, who can be reached online or via phone. Online services and resources are readily accessible, and physical materials can be delivered directly to distance education students via the U.S. Mail or UPS.

The evidence presented, including statistics related to use of the Libraries, indicates that the physical/online environments and learning/information resources are sufficient to support the university's mission.
For further comments about the Libraries' collections, see Core Requirement 2.9; for instructional services, see Comprehensive Standard 3.8.2; and for staffing, see Comprehensive Standard 3.8.3.

3.8.2 The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources. (Instruction of library use)

All libraries at the University of Alabama provide instruction in the use of library and learning/information resources. Students have access to one-on-one assistance, online self-paced tools, and instruction in group or classroom settings. The instructional program has been designed to support the core educational goals of the university.

Each of the libraries maintains at least one staffed service point. Students can request assistance in person, online, or via email. More extensive consultations can be arranged via a Webform, through referral, or through contacting a subject liaison. The list of liaisons is readily accessible on the Libraries' website.

The Libraries has embraced new modes of delivering information to students, including social media, instant messaging, and blogs. Tutorials, frequently asked questions, subject and course LibGuides, and podcasts are all available online for students to explore at their own pace.

Faculty may use an online form or contact a subject liaison to schedule an instruction session (the form includes a list of possible desired learning outcomes). Several interactive classrooms are available in the main, education, business, and science libraries; librarians also conduct sessions in campus classrooms or computer labs. Between 2009 and 2013, the number of instructional sessions offered by all libraries nearly doubled, and the number of students in these sessions rose from 11,917 to 19,506.

Librarians collaborate closely with faculty in developing instructional sessions, and materials such as podcasts, video tutorials, and online quizzes supplement classroom sessions. Many of these have been embedded in Blackboard Learn Shells. In the spring 2013 term, 81 percent of all Freshman Writing sections participated in a two-session sequence focused on information literacy skills.

The UA Libraries also engages students through a wide variety of activities: orientations, workshops, contests, an undergraduate research prize, traveling librarians in academic departments and residence halls, peer-to-peer technology training, etc. Outreach activities have targeted undergraduates, graduate students, and international students, and the Libraries has partnered with several units on campus to present sessions to summer programs and community groups.

Distance education students have access to the range of online services and resources provided by the Libraries. The Libraries' webpage for distance education students covers general information, services, tools, and technical help. Distance education students have a designated library liaison in addition to the subject experts. Staff members are currently developing a new series of
podcasts specifically for distance education students as part of the Keys to the Capstone project.

Evaluations of the instruction program are conducted in a number of ways: peer observation of instructional services, consultations with faculty, surveys, and analyses of written worksheets and assignments. The program has made adjustments to address areas of confusion, to cover new topics, and to define target groups.

The evidence suggests that instruction is an important component of the Libraries’ services and the UA Libraries is utilizing a range of delivery modes to reach students at their point of need.

For further comments about the Libraries’ collections, see Core Requirement 2.9; for facilities and information resources, see Comprehensive Standard 3.8.1; and for staffing, see Comprehensive Standard 3.8.3.

3.8.3 The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experiences in library and/or other learning/information resources—to accomplish the mission of the institution. (Qualified staff)

The five branches and the separately administered libraries and reading rooms employ 91 FTE professional staff and faculty, 72 FTE support staff, and 45 FTE student assistants. An examination of the roster of librarians (which included access to position descriptions and resumes) shows that all hold appropriate educational qualifications. Many librarians have advanced degrees in subject disciplines, and UA librarians have an average of 15.1 years’ experience in the field.

Librarians across campus fall into different categories depending on where they are employed. These categories include tenure-track faculty, clinical faculty, and professional staff. Support staff position descriptions are reviewed by the UA Department of Human Resources, and all employees in that category meet or exceed the required qualifications. All employees receive annual performance reviews, either through the Faculty Activity Reporting (FAR) system for faculty or the UA Performance Evaluation system for staff. Criteria for evaluations are clearly outlined at the university level, and promotion and tenure criteria specific to the UA Libraries were approved in 2011.

In recent years the UA Libraries has realigned and hired staff to emphasize research and instruction services, technology planning, digital student services, and special collections. The UA Libraries now has four postdoctoral fellows: two in Special Collections (funded by a Council on Library and Information Resources grant) and two in digital humanities (jointly funded with the College of Arts and Sciences). The UA Libraries uses data from the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) to benchmark staffing levels, and the system has achieved respectable rankings in comparisons with all ARL libraries, ARL public institutions, and ARL public institutions in the Southeast.

Funding is available to support the development of both library faculty and staff. The Libraries supports in-house and on-campus training, as well as training
provided by national and professional organizations. The Library Support Staff Association (LSSA) conducts activities, and staff members can progress through a Job Family program with training and experience.

Evidence presented indicates that faculty members are actively involved in professional organizations and in publishing. The Library Leadership Board, a lay board that helps advance the Libraries’ efforts, recognizes outstanding employees through its Faculty and Staff Excellence Awards. Employees have received recognition from university and national awards as well.

The University of Alabama Libraries has defined its mission and core functions within the context of the university’s mission, and the evidence presented indicates that the number and quality of its staff are sufficient to meet that mission.

For further comments about the Libraries’ collections, see Core Requirement 2.9; for facilities and information resources, see Comprehensive Standard 3.8.1; and instructional services, see Comprehensive Standard 3.8.2.

3.9.1 The institution publishes a clear and appropriate statement of student rights and responsibilities and disseminates the statement to the campus community. (Student rights)

The Committee’s review of the University of Alabama’s Student Code of Conduct, The Code of Academic Conduct, the Undergraduate Catalog, the Student Handbook, and the Bama by Distance website, indicate the institution has developed comprehensive policies addressing student rights and responsibilities. The policies are published online and processes and procedures are clearly defined.

3.9.2 The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records and maintains security measures to protect and back up data. (Student records).

The University of Alabama has established safeguards and policies that protect student records and institutional data. These policies also allow for confidentiality and security measures of student data. The Office of the University Registrar uses the Ellucian Banner student information system. Banner has established specific policies to manage student data and information including a Disaster Recovery and Notification Plan. The Registrar also guarantees that student records are protected by assuring the university community adheres to the Family Education Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA). The Student Health Center and the Counseling Center follow HIPPA guidelines to protect the privacy of patient records. The Office of Institutional Technology has designed a system to protect student data by requiring daily file backups and also having a backup system in a different city.

3.9.3 The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experience in the student affairs area—to accomplish the mission of the institution. (Qualified staff)
The Committee’s review of the University of Alabama’s mission, the Division of Student Affairs Organizational Chart, as well as examining resumes for the Student Affairs leadership positions suggests the institution has an appropriate number of competent staff with suitable credentials and experiences in student life to accomplish the mission of the institution. The University of Alabama’s Division of Student Affairs conducts annual staff evaluations and provides a number of professional development and continuing education opportunities for staff.

3.10.1 The institution’s recent financial history demonstrates financial stability. (Financial stability)

Major financial strengths of the University of Alabama include a diverse source of revenues such as state appropriations, tuition and fees, auxiliary units’ revenue, private support and federally sponsored grants and contracts. The university has seen significant and consistent annual growth in student enrollment for at least ten years. Total fall enrollment has increased from 20,333 in fall 2003 to 33,602 in fall 2012 or 65.3 percent.

As of September 30, 2013, the university’s assets exceeded $3.2 billion and liabilities totaled $1.2 billion, resulting in a net position of $2.0 billion, an overall increase in net position of $133.2 million from September 30, 2012. The Committee reviewed the financial metrics and measures provided and particularly noted the university’s very strong financial performance indicated through various key ratios including Annual Debt Service Coverage, Annual Operating Margin, and Annual Days Cash on Hand.

*3.10.2 The institution audits financial aid programs as required by federal and state regulations. (Financial aid audits)

The University of Alabama’s financial aid programs are audited in accordance with Governmental Auditing Standards and the Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations. PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, (PwC) performs the annual audits. The A-133 Audit for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2013 included the university’s Student Financial Assistance Cluster. Per the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards, the cluster totaled $199.3 million with the vast majority, $171.0 million, issued under the Federal Direct Student Loan program.

As stated in PwC’s audit report, no material weaknesses, significant deficiencies, or instances of noncompliance material to the financial statements were identified for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2013. The prior year report did include three findings related to cost of attendance, student verification and the Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP). None of the three instances had questioned costs. The university subsequently implemented stronger review controls that were designed to identify inaccurate student financial aid data. No such findings were disclosed in the audit for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2013.

State regulations do not require specific annual audits of state financial aid programs.
The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee interviewed the Directors of Student Financial Aid and the Office of Sponsored Programs, and the assistant director of Student Financial Aid, as well as reviewing the A-133 audit and the letters from the U.S. Department of Education.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirms the findings of compliance made by the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.10.3 The institution exercises appropriate control over all its financial resources.

(Control of finances)

The university has a comprehensive array of internal controls over financial resources ranging from published policies to a formal Internal Audit function to adoption of ethical and financial management practices mandated for for-profit entities by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. The Off-Site Review Committee examined the various documents and evidence provided and found the following to be particularly noteworthy.

- The university has a structured process to create, revise and adopt policies. The Policy on Policy Development and Management delineates University Policy and Divisional Policy. As set forth in the Policy on Policy Development and Management, the President delegates authority to the appropriate and responsible vice presidents to initiate, develop and revise discrete categories of University Policies. The Universities' policies address a wide-range of issues related to good stewardship of institutional resources including the Energy Policy to promote the conservation of energy to the World Wide Web Policy that governs Web pages hosted on University of Alabama Web servers. The policy defines official and unofficial university Web Sites and establishes compliance requirements for both.

- The responsibility for redundancy of the integrated enterprise resource planning system is assigned to the Office of Technology Services (OIT). OIT tests (also known as failover) the system by switching the primary network, servers, and critical applications located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama to replicated facilities in Atlanta, Georgia. The most recent failover was conducted in May 2014 for one week and was deemed successful in performing all functions and processes. Such testing is performed on an annual basis.

- As a convenience to university departments, an arrangement with Sam's Club has been established to enable departments to purchase food items. The Sam's Club Purchases Policy is part of the university Purchasing and Spending Policies. Per the Policy, departments can pick up a Sam's Club membership and a credit card from the Accounts Payable Department for same day use. The cards and a cash register receipt must be returned to the Accounts Payable Department during the same business day. The Accounts Payable Department audits each transaction by comparing the cash register receipt to a pre-approved Miscellaneous Disbursement Voucher.
• Pursuant to board Rule 408 Internal Audit Policies and Standards, and in alignment with the industry's best practices, the General Auditor reports administratively to the Chancellor and functionally to the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees. The President of each campus is to participate with Internal Audit to formulate the annual campus audit plan and meet routinely with Internal Audit to review the status of audit work.

3.10.4 The institution maintains financial control over externally funded or sponsored research and programs. (Control of sponsored research/external funds)

The University of Alabama receives grant and contract revenue from federal, state and local governments and private agencies. Federal grants and contracts experienced a decrease of $5.8 million in 2013, following a minor decrease of $8 million in 2012 and an increase of $6.5 million in 2011. During 2013, the university continued expending federal funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), primarily in the form of sponsored research grants. Approximately $1.9 million and $6.0 million were expended in the 2013 and 2012 fiscal years, respectively. As many ARRA projects have been or will soon be completed, ARRA expenditures are expected to be lower in fiscal year 2014.

The Committee reviewed the Reports on Federal Awards in Accordance with OMB Circular A-133 audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLC for the past five fiscal years. Expenditures of Federal Awards exceeded $253 million for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2013 and included $72.7 million of Grants and Contracts revenues and facilities and administrative cost recovery. The Report reflected no findings or questioned costs for the fiscal year. There was a finding in the previous year regarding sub-recipient monitoring. The university implemented the prior year corrective action plan and no repeat exceptions were noted during PwC's testing performed for the September 30, 2013 fiscal year.

The university's sponsored projects are subject to the same university and divisional policies and procedures as other university funds. The Office for Sponsored Programs, within the Division of Research, is the primary office responsible for pre-award and award acceptance and negotiation. The Office of Contract and Grant Accounting, also within the Division of Research, primarily manages post-award financial administration.

The University of Alabama has a well-conceived, easy to navigate web site for faculty and staff involved with grants and contracts. Under the heading of "Office for Research." links are provided to applicable policies and procedures, staff listings, forms, OMB Circulars, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Division of Cost Allocations Best Practices Manual, and Office for Research Calendar of Events. The calendar includes numerous training sessions and funding opportunities with links to internal deadlines and procedures.

3.11.1 The institution exercises appropriate control over all its physical resources. (Control of physical resources)

Pursuant to the Board of Trustees' Manual Bylaws, Article I, Section 6, the board must approve all purchases and sales of real property and insure that all
properties of the campuses are preserved and maintained. In addition, the University of Alabama’s Division of Financial Affairs is responsible for compliance with state laws applicable to competitive bids.

Property and Inventory Management conducts annual property inventories by providing each department’s property manager with a copy of their department’s inventory listing for confirmation. The university has different procedures applicable to collections such as works of art based upon an annual verification of the assets. The Off-Site Review Committee reviewed documentation for both processes.

The University of Alabama has also established the use of space, facilities and grounds in a general policy and operating procedures. University buildings or grounds, with the exception of the Ferguson Center and certain other facilities, may not be scheduled for use by individuals or organizations that are not part of or affiliated with a university academic or administrative department. The policy addresses insurance and training requirements as well.

3.11.2 The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all members of the campus community. (Institutional environment)

The University of Alabama takes its responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment seriously as evidenced by its many efforts. The university provided evidence of an impressive complement of support services including a uniformed patrol presence with the University Police and community oriented policing which includes delivering hundreds of educational programs each year on various topics such as alcohol awareness, drug awareness and sexual assault awareness. The university has an Emergency Operations Plan based upon the U.S. Homeland Security’s National Incident Management System protocols. The university also supports numerous other services and programs to provide a healthy, safe and secure environment such as risk management safety, access control, behavior intervention, counseling center, women’s resource center, crisis communication plans, fire safety, environmental health and safety, and institutional committees that govern research safety activities.

*3.11.3 The institution operates and maintains physical facilities, both on and off campus, that appropriately serve the needs of the institution’s educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities. (Physical facilities)

The University of Alabama has provided strong and compelling evidence to confirm that the institution operates and maintains adequate physical resources to support its mission and current programs as well as comprehensive plans to continue to do so in the future. The university’s main campus includes 249 buildings with over 14 million square feet of dedicated classroom, research, administrative, residential, library, clinical, athletics, recreational and other functional space.

In accordance with board Rule 415, Section III.C., the university presents an annual report to the Board of Trustees on deferred maintenance, facilities renewal liabilities and building operations and maintenance projects and costs.
The university’s annual deferred maintenance plan prioritizes projects with particular focus on upgrading buildings to current life safety standards and providing environmentally stable exterior and interior conditions. The System’s Office of the Chancellor establishes annual thresholds for funding commitments to reduce the level of deferred maintenance and facilities renewal liabilities. For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2014, the university allocated $34.7 million for such projects including:

- $5 million for repair and renewal of education and general facilities to be funded with current funds;
- $23.1 million to be funded by the 2014 Bond Issue for three major education and general deferred maintenance projects including Bryce Campus Infrastructure, Information Technology Infrastructure Replacement; and North Campus MV Distribution Upgrade;
- $1.8 million to be funded by auxiliary services for parking and food service facilities repair and renewal projects;
- $1.1 million to be funded by Athletics for repair and renewal projects associated with the Bryant-Denny Stadium, Coleman Coliseum, and Tennis facilities;
- $3.0 million to be funded by the Housing and Residential Community for pedestrian and hardscape enhancements, shower pans and corridors, and other minor projects; and,
- $575,000 for the Bryant Conference Center Roof Replacement funded by renewal and replacement reserves.

The university’s Facilities and Grounds Operation is responsible for overseeing routine and preventative facilities maintenance on the main campus. The department uses an administrative system to schedule and track work orders and associated costs. Surveys are sent to departments at the conclusion of work order requests. The Maintenance Department establishes and implements preventative maintenance programs for each shop (electrical, plumbing, HVAC, building maintenance and grounds). The Maintenance Department completed 6,359 preventive maintenance procedures during the fiscal year ended September 30, 2013 at a total cost of $1.3 million.

In addition to the university’s main campus, the institution offers courses at three other locations in Alabama as well as one course delivered annually at the Moundville Archaeological Park and the Kentuck Art Center. Two of the three locations are on other university campuses (Samford University and University of North Alabama). The third location is the Gadsden Center in Gadsden, Alabama. The university leases the premises from the City of Gadsden. Maintenance of facilities is included in the lease contracts.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee toured the Tuscaloosa Campus, specifically including the newest residence halls and recreational facility (Presidential Village), an older residential village (Riverside), the newly renovated and expanded Student Union (Ferguson Student Center), the Rogers Library for Science and Engineering, Gorgas Library for Humanities, and received an overview of the recently acquired Bryce Hospital Complex and initial plans for the development of the over 160 acres of immediately adjacent land. As noted
above, the institution has been pursuing an aggressive expansion agenda to supplement existing academic and student services space to accommodate the expanding enrollment of the past five years and growth still projected. The institution’s current Master Plan, updated every five years appears to more than adequately analyze future needs to ensure that facilities will be adequate as enrollment grows in the future.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee toured the campus, reviewed documents, and conducted interviews in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.12.1 The institution notifies the Commission of changes in accordance with the Commission’s substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes. (See the Commission policy “Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions.”) (Substantive change)

The University of Alabama provides its evidence of reporting substantive changes to the SACSCOC. In addition, the institution describes policy and procedures for identifying substantive changes. The evidence includes a copy of an example program approval form.

3.13.1 The institution complies with the policies of the Commission on Colleges. (Policy compliance)

*3.13.1. - “Accrediting Decisions of Other Agencies”

**Applicable Policy Statement.** Any institution seeking or holding accreditation from more than one U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting body must describe itself in identical terms to each recognized accrediting body with regard to purpose, governance, programs, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituencies, and must keep each institutional accrediting body apprised of any change in its status with one or another accrediting body.

**Documentation:** The institution should (1) list federally recognized agencies that currently accredit the institution or any of its programs, (2) provide the date of the most recent review by each agency and indicate if negative action was taken by the agency and the reason for such action, (3) provide copies of statements used to describe itself for each of the accrediting bodies, (4) indicate any agency that has terminated accreditation, the date, and the reason for termination, and (5) indicate the date and reason for the institution voluntarily withdrawing accreditation with any of the agencies.

The University of Alabama is accredited by eleven different professional accrediting agencies that are recognized by the US Department of Education. Copies of the most recent letters of approval are provided for each accrediting agency. As evidence that the institution describes itself in identical terms to each of these agencies, copies of letters from the institution’s president, to each accrediting agency, are provided.
The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents listed above and conducted interviews with the Provost and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness/SACSCOC Liaison in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.13.2 “Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures”

Applicable Policy Statement. Member institutions are responsible for notifying and providing SACSCOC with signed final copies of agreements governing their collaborative academic arrangements (as defined in this policy). These arrangements must address the requirements set forth in the collaborative academic arrangements policy and procedures. For all such arrangements, SACSCOC-accredited institutions assume responsibility for (1) the integrity of the collaborative academic arrangements, (2) the quality of credits recorded on their transcripts, and (3) compliance with accreditation requirements.

Documentation: The institution should provide evidence that it has reported to the Commission all collaborative academic arrangements (as defined in this policy) that included signed final copies of the agreements. In addition, the institution should integrate into the Compliance Certification a discussion and determination of compliance with all standards applicable to the provisions of the agreements.

The University of Alabama has provided evidence of notifications to SACSCOC for collaborative academic arrangements. Since its last 2005 reaffirmation, the institution states that it has entered into four collaborative arrangements: a joint doctor of nursing practice with the University of Alabama-Birmingham and the University of Alabama-Huntsville; a dual bachelor of science program in commerce and business administration with the Ocean University-Qingdao of China; an aerospace consortium with Auburn University and the University of Alabama-Huntsville; and a dual degree arrangement with the University of North Alabama involving the institution’s BS programs in engineering.

Copies of memoranda of agreement are provided, along with copies of notifications to SACSCOC and the approval letters (with the exception of one pending notification).

*3.13.3 “Complaint Procedures Against the Commission or Its Accredited Institutions”

Applicable Policy Statement. Each institution is required to have in place student complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well-publicized. (See FR 4.5). The Commission also requires, in accord with federal regulations, that each institution maintains a record of complaints received by the institution. This record is made available to the Commission upon request. This record will be reviewed and evaluated by the Commission as part of the institution’s decennial evaluation.

Documentation: When addressing this policy statement, the institution should provide information to the Commission describing how the institution maintains
its record and also include the following: (1) individuals/offices responsible for the maintenance of the record(s), (2) elements of a complaint review that are included in the record, and (3) where the record(s) is located (centralized or decentralized). The record itself will be reviewed during the on-site evaluation of the institution.

The University of Alabama has policies and procedures in place to address student complaints. The policies focus on guidelines to address complaints both inside and outside the classroom and are distributed widely on university websites. Students are directed to file grievances with the responsible department. Further appeals processes have been put in place as well. The institution has developed a Student Complaints and Appeals website that is maintained by the Division of Student Affairs. This website assists students with complaints and directs them to the appropriate avenue for filing their concern. The academic appeals process is also included on this website. The school has a Compliance and Fraud Hotline that allows students as well as staff to report unethical behavior or activities that violate university policy. Records of complaints and grievance resolutions are maintained in the department or college where the complaint originated. A review of sample complaints indicates the institution addresses student complaints and maintains records of how the concern was resolved.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with the Vice President for Student Affairs, Associate Dean of Students, Interim Provost, Title IX Coordinator and the Chief University Counsel. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee toured the campus offices to verify the locations of the student complaint logs. In addition, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed pertinent documentation including the detailed logs of student complaints supporting the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the Off-Site Review Committee’s findings.

3.13.4 “Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports”

*3.13.4.a. - Applicable Policy Statement. An institution includes a review of its distance learning programs in the Compliance Certification.

Documentation: In order to be in compliance with this policy, the institution must have incorporated an assessment of its compliance with standards that apply to its distance and correspondence education programs and courses.

The institution has included adequate reviews of its distance and correspondence education programs and courses in this compliance report.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with the Director of the Gadsden Center, Senior Associate Dean of the College of Continuing Studies, Assistant Dean of the College of Continuing Studies, and faculty from the College of Continuing Studies. In addition, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed pertinent documentation including the detailed table included in the Compliance Certification Report in support of the institution’s case for compliance. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirms the Off-Site Review Committee’s findings.
3.13.4.b. - Applicable Policy Statement. If an institution is part of a system or corporate structure, a description of the system operation (or corporate structure) is submitted as part of the Compliance Certification for the decennial review. The description should be designed to help members of the peer review committees understand the mission, governance, and operating procedures of the system and the individual institution's role within that system.

Documentation: The institution should provide a description of the system operation and structure or the corporate structure if this applies.

The institution is part of the University of Alabama system, which also includes the University of Alabama-Huntsville and the University of Alabama-Birmingham. The structure, organization, and management of this system are described in the compliance report, with appropriate documentary evidence being provided. The mission of this institution is also provided, though it is noted that the evidence reported in this report is different from that reported in 3.1.1. The latter is, presumably, the more up to date version of the mission statement.

3.13.5 “Separate Accreditation for Units of a Member Institution”

*3.13.5.a. - Applicable Policy Statement. All branch campuses related to the parent campus through corporate or administrative control (1) include the name of the parent campus and make it clear that its accreditation is dependent on the continued accreditation of the parent campus and (2) are evaluated during reviews for institutions seeking candidacy, initial membership, or reaffirmation of accreditation. All other extended units under the accreditation of the parent campus are also evaluated during such reviews.

Documentation: For institutions with branch campuses: (1) The name of each branch campus must include the name of the parent campus—the SACSCOC accredited entity. The institution should provide evidence of this for each of its branch campuses. (2) The institution should incorporate the review of its branch campuses, as well as other extended units under the parent campus, into its comprehensive self-assessment and its determination of compliance with the standards, and indicate the procedure for doing so.

Not applicable

The institution does not operate branch campuses.

3.13.5.b. - Applicable Policy Statement. If the Commission on Colleges determines that an extended unit is autonomous to the extent that the control over that unit by the parent or its board is significantly impaired, the Commission may direct that the extended unit seek to become a separately accredited institution. A unit which seeks separate accreditation should bear a different name from that of the parent. A unit which is located in a state or country outside the geographic jurisdiction of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and which the Commission determines should be separately accredited or the institution requests to be separately accredited, applies for separate accreditation
from the regional accrediting association that accredits colleges in that state or
country

**Implementation:** If, during its review of the institution, the Commission
determines that an extended unit is sufficiently autonomous to the extent that the
parent campus has little or no control, the Commission will use this policy to
recommend separate accreditation of the extended unit. **No response required
by the institution.**

Not applicable

3.14.1 A member or candidate institution represents its accredited status accurately and
publishes the name, address, and telephone number of the Commission in
accordance with Commission requirements and federal policy. **(Publication of
accreditation status)**

The University of Alabama publishes and accurately describes its accreditation
status with SACSCOC. This is done through its catalogs, handbooks, and
Factbook.

**D. Assessment of Compliance with Section 4: Federal Requirements**

*4.1* The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement consistent
with its mission. Criteria may include: enrollment data; retention, graduation,
course completion, and job placement rates; state licensing examinations,
student portfolios; or other means of demonstrating achievement of goals.
**(Student achievement)**

The University of Alabama provided data on enrollment, retention rates,
graduation rates, time to degree, licensure and certification exam pass rates, and
job placement rates as evidence that the institution evaluates success with
respect to student achievement. In general, the institution demonstrated
improvement or high performance on most of the measures discussed, but
overall, there was a general lack of thresholds of acceptable
performance. Targets were provided only for enrollment and most
licensure/certification exam pass rates (100 percent). The institution’s 2004-
2014 strategic plan established a goal to grow enrollment “of students to over
28,000” by 2014. The institution provided enrollment data as evidence that the
institution has achieved that goal by fall 2009. The university provided evidence
of a reduction in the percentage of students earning a grade of D or F or
withdrawing from courses over the same ten year period, but no a priori target
was given. Similarly, the institution provided evidence that retention and
graduation rates have improved and time-to-degree has decreased for
undergraduate students. Comparative data with the Southern University Group
members were provided but the committee did not find targets or thresholds of
acceptable performance for any of these measures.

The Committee reviewed information provided for pass rates for the Bar Exam,
the Praxis Exam, the Nursing National Council Licensure Exam, the Athlete
Training Certification Exam, and the CPA Exam. Targets or thresholds of
acceptable performance were provided for each exam except the CPA
exam. Job placement data, law school acceptance data, and medical acceptance data were provided without targets or thresholds of acceptable performance. While participation figures were provided for the Undergraduate Research and Activity Conference, the graduate school's research and travel grant program, service learning and community service, the committee did not find evidence of targets or thresholds of acceptable performance related to these activities.

With the exceptions of pass rates on licensing or standardized examinations and student enrollment, the committee found a general lack of targets or thresholds of acceptability established prior to data collection for the purposes of determining successful student achievement.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the additional documentation provided in the Focused Report and conducted interviews with the Executive Director of Institutional Research & Assessment and the Executive Director of the Career Center. The University of Alabama provided targets or thresholds of acceptable performance for retention, graduation rates, D-F-W rates, job placement, law school acceptance, and medical school acceptance. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution's case for compliance.

*4.2* The institution's curriculum is directly related and appropriate to the mission and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates, or degrees awarded. *(Program curriculum)*

The University of Alabama offers 193 programs that lead to the bachelor's, master's, specialist, and doctoral degrees in arts and sciences, business, communications, community health, education, engineering, human environmental science, law, nursing and social work. These majors support the university's mission.

The core curriculum consists of 53 credit hours (48 hours for engineers) in six different areas. Each program's degree program requirements is available on the university's web sites.

Many of these programs are accredited by professional organizations with academic standards appropriate to levels of knowledge expected of graduates. Other programs, which do not have external disciplinary accreditation, undergo regular program review by both the institution's Academic Program Review as well as by peers from similar programs in comparable institutions of higher education.

The Graduate Council and the Graduate Dean evaluate proposals for new graduate degree programs to ensure they are appropriate to the university's mission and goals.

UA's curricular offerings are appropriate for a research university. With more than 193 programs of study, students may earn degrees ranging from the baccalaureate, post-baccalaureate, masters, educational specialist, to the doctorate. The general education program is a significant component of study for
The student, and is broadly-based, foundational, and coherent across a range of degrees. UA provides accessible and complete information for students to use to find what they are interested in. Faculty members take responsibility for the design and delivery of each program. Some programs with outside accrediting agencies are reviewed and accredited by these agencies as is appropriate. The Graduate Council and Graduate Dean evaluate new degree proposals and oversee graduate programs. UA program curricula are appropriate to the institution’s mission and goals and to the credentials awarded to graduate.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

*4.3* The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies. *(Publication of policies)*

The Committee’s review of the institution’s academic calendars published on the Registrar’s website, the Quick Links website, the Undergraduate Catalog, the Graduate Catalog, the School of Law Handbook, and the Bama by Distance website, confirms the institution informs students and the public about their grading policies, academic calendars and refund policies. The information is made available online for all students in addition to students attending the School of Law and distance education programs.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews with the Registrar, Senior Associate Dean and Associate Provost and Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, Associate Dean for Academic Services and Vice Dean and James M. Kidd Senior Professor of Law, College of Law, and Assistant to the Provost for Special Projects and Academic Technology in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

*4.4* Program length is appropriate for each of the institution’s educational programs. *(Program length)*

The University of Alabama uses standard definitions of a credit hour to determine program length. One credit hour is awarded for 15 50-minute sessions of faculty led instruction or the equivalent. The Credit Hour Policy defines the equivalents for different modes of instruction. The minimum for a baccalaureate degree is 120 credit hours and for all postgraduate degrees, the minimum is 30 credit hours. The sole exception is the International LLM degree (Refer to discussion in 2.7.1). Though the institution cites examples of LLM programs with requirements of 24 hours or less, it is common practice for LLM programs to be more than 24 credit hours in length. Sufficient justification is not provided that an LLM program of this length provides adequate academic preparation for this degree.

The policy on program length is implemented through the review process which is faculty-initiated and subject to a series of administrative and faculty committee reviews. All new programs follow the format of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE), which must approve new programs. The Board of
Trustees of the university has the final authority to implement new programs. Once established, programs are subject to periodic review through outside accreditors or through the university-defined process for those programs not subject to specialized accreditation.

The University of Alabama offers baccalaureate, post-baccalaureate, graduate, and professional level degrees. The baccalaureate degree requires 120 hours and post-baccalaureate, graduate, and professional degrees usually require 30 hours. The Off-Site Committee Report finds program length in compliance with the exception of the LL.M. (Master of Laws) degree which is a post-graduate degree requiring only 24 hours.

The Focus Report addresses the concerns of the Off-Site Committee Report. LL.M. programs provide practicing lawyers with graduate study in areas such as international law, taxation, etc. Students admitted to the LL.M. program already have completed a J.D. or (in the case of international students) the J.D. equivalent in other countries. Unlike the master's degree in other disciplines, the LL.M. follows the Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree which requires several years of study. The J.D. is seen as the first doctoral degree and the LL.M. is a post-doctoral program. As such the LL.M. is a highly advanced and specialized degree extending beyond the doctorate. Most other disciplines do not have a degree equivalent to the LL.M.

The American Bar Association (ABA) accredits the UA School of Law but they do not approve degree programs other than the J.D. The ABA's standard practice is to grant acquiescence for a non-J.D. degree programs. UA's LL.M. program was granted acquiescence most recently in 2014. The ABA did not indicate concern over the 24-credit hour length of the LL.M. program. Data from 150 other schools with LL.M. programs indicate that about three-fourths of the institutions require 24 or fewer hours for degree completion. Data from schools that enroll only international students indicate that 87 percent require 24 or fewer hours. UA is following commonly accepted practice for the length of the LL.M. program. The accrediting agency (i.e., the ABA) accepts this practice.

*4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. (See the Commission policy "Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions.") (Student complaints)

The Committee's review of the University of Alabama's complaint procedures and policies indicate there are satisfactory processes in place to address written student complaints. The Student Complaints and Appeals website coordinated by the Division of Student Affairs guides students through the options available to them to file a grievance across many areas within the university. The university's website has a University-Wide Academic Grievance Procedures webpage that outlines specific steps for students to follow when addressing academic concerns. The Division of Financial Affairs has a webpage that highlights the Compliance and Fraud Hotline procedures developed to report unethical or illegal behavior. Further review of sample student complaints and resolutions suggests the University of Alabama retains records of student complaints.
The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with the Vice President for Student Affairs, Associate Dean of Students, Interim Provost, Title IX Coordinator and the Chief University Counsel. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee toured the campus offices to verify the locations of the student complaint logs. In addition, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed pertinent documentation including the detailed logs of student complaints supporting the institution's case for compliance and affirms the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's findings.

**4.6** Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices and policies. *(Recruitment materials)*

The Committee's review of the University of Alabama's Undergraduate Admissions Facebook page, Twitter Account entries, Future Student webpage, Undergraduate Admissions campus tour and recruitment information, the Graduate Schools Viewbook along with other Graduate School recruitment materials, the Bama by Distance Degree Programs webpage and the School of Law Viewbook indicate the institution has recruitment information that represents the institution's policies, as well as programs and services accurately.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with University Registrar, Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School. The Committee reviewed pertinent documentation including International recruitment, Transfer student, Undergraduate Admissions and Scholarships Student Guide, The Graduate School Catalog and general information materials used for recruitment. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee found ample evidence in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's findings.

**4.7** The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the most recent Higher Education Act as amended. (In reviewing the institution's compliance with these program responsibilities, the Commission relies on documentation forwarded to it by the U.S. Department of Education.) *(Title IV program responsibilities)*

The university participates in Title IV Federal Student Aid programs and the Off-Site Review Committee reviewed the current authorizations including the *U.S. Department of Education Program Participation Agreement*, the *U.S. Department of Education Approval Notice*, and the *U.S. Department of Education Eligibility and Certification Approval Report*. The institution affirmed that no issues exist with regard to the Title IV financial aid programs.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee interviewed the Directors of Student Financial Aid and the Office of Sponsored Programs, and the assistant director of Student Financial Aid, as well as reviewing the A-133 audit and the letters from the U.S. Department of Education. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.
*4.8* An institution that offers distance or correspondence education documents each of the following: *(Distance and correspondence education)*

4.8.1 demonstrates that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (a) a secure login and pass code, (b) proctored examinations, or (c) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

The institution ensures that students who register in distance courses are the same students who complete the courses and receive credit by giving each student a unique and secure ID needed to log onto the university portal and access the learning management system. Students completing proctored examinations are required to provide two types of identification and some programs require face-to-face components. The university uses ProctorU, a third party provider, to proctor online exams.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews with the Registrar, Senior Associate Dean and Assistant Dean of the College of Continuing Studies, Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, and Assistant to the Provost for Special Projects and Academic Technology in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

4.8.2 has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs.

The university has a privacy policy designed to protect the privacy of all students, including those in online or distance programs. Students are notified of their privacy rights through an email from the Office of the Registrar, which also publishes the privacy policy on the website. Employees with access to student records are required to complete a review of the privacy policy and acknowledge their review and understanding of the policy before accessing student records. The compliance certificate does not address how the institution insures that third party vendors like ProctorU also comply with the privacy policy.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee’s review of the university’s FERPA Addendum and examples of the use of the Addendum in ProctorU contracts demonstrates that the institution has taken measures to ensure that third party vendors also comply with the university’s privacy policies. Furthermore, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee’s review of documents and onsite interviews with multiple university administrators including the Registrar, Senior Associate Dean and Assistant Dean of the College of Continuing Studies, Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, and Assistant to the Provost for Special Projects and
Academic Technology support the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

4.8.3 has a written procedure distributed at the time of registration or enrollment that notifies students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.

The University of Alabama does not have any additional charges associated with verification of student identity. The website that describes proctored testing explains the costs that may be incurred if examinations are proctored by ProctorU. All tuition and fees are available on the institution's website.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews with the Registrar, Senior Associate Dean and Assistant Dean of the College of Continuing Studies, Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, and Assistant to the Provost for Special Projects and Academic Technology in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

*4.9* The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy. (*See the Commission policy “Credit Hours.”*) (Definition of credit hours)

The University of Alabama uses the semester system and uses the semester credit hour as its basic unit of credit. Based upon its comprehensive Credit Hour Definition and Policy, the university normally grants one semester hour of credit for the learning outcomes expected upon the satisfactory completion of approximately 15 50-minute sessions of direct faculty instruction and examination or equivalent form of assessment in the typical fall and spring semesters. Underlying this statement is the assumption that each 50-minute session requires the average student to spend twice as much time outside of class reviewing the material presented in class, preparing for upcoming classes, completing homework assignments, studying for quizzes and exams, and other tasks which verify evidence of student achievement and mastery of the course materials. The primary responsibility for ensuring compliance with the institution's Credit Hour Policy lies with the faculty, academic department chairs, and designated assistant/associate deans within each college or school under the supervision of the respective academic dean. When a course is first proposed or a change to an existing course is submitted, via the Course Inventory Management Process, the department chair reviews the course syllabus and affirms that the appropriate credit hours have been assigned for the work to be completed both in class and outside of class. The syllabus is subsequently submitted to the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs for undergraduate courses and the Graduate School for graduate courses for final approval. Descriptions of processes and criteria used to award credit for numerous courses and programs outside the commonly accepted practices in higher education are included in the policy. Hence, the institution permits the awarding of the 1 credit hour if the equivalent amount of work is performed over a
different time period, or that there is demonstration of achievement by of learning objectives.

The University of Alabama is on a semester system and uses the credit hour as the metric for courses and programs. Generally a credit hour is comprised of 50 minutes of class per week for 15 weeks. Students are expected to study two hours for every hour spent in class. There is, however, some flexibility in defining credit hour, e.g., for performance of work over a different period of time or demonstrating achievement of learning outcomes equivalent to the standard credit hour measure. UA specifies adjustments for non-traditional classroom work, e.g., laboratory work, independent study, experiential learning, credit by examination, etc. UA’s credit hour practice is not unusual: UA follows the federal definition of the credit hour, Faculty Senate approved the policy on this, and the credit hour policy is accessible to faculty on the website. Faculty members are responsible for assigning course credit with new courses and curricula and for ensuring compliance with the UA Credit Hour Policy. Final program approval (including credit hour specification) comes from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education and the UA System Board of Trustees.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the finding of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.
E. Additional observations regarding strengths and weaknesses of the institution. (optional)

- UA is encouraged to consider centralizing the assessment process into the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, with all reporting units utilizing the WEAVE system. Additionally, the institution is encouraged to consider setting targets in the Weave system for outcomes and to assess the extent to which the outcomes are achieved.

- UA is encouraged to consider centralizing university and student policies in one website. Currently, students have to go to multiple sites to access information. This will also allow for one area to own the information and ensure it is appropriately updated.

- Empowering the Core Curriculum Oversight Committee (CCOC) to explore institutional-level assessment of general education outcomes can further strengthen the general education experience for students.

- UA is encouraged to consider centralizing student complaints processes through the website: http://sa.ua.edu/complaints. For example, providing information on Hazing and Title IX complaints would allow the website to support the larger university.

Off-Campus Program Observations:

- Potential students who completed their undergraduate degree at an international institution must provide a certified transcript, which has been translated to English, for admission to the Graduate School at the University of Alabama. This process delays and sometimes blocks/stalls the admissions process for these potential students. It is suggested that the institution explore utilizing reputable third-party vendors to provide the translated transcript to the Graduate School.

- The Mexico City Education programs are under-enrolled and could be more fully enrolled if additional efforts were made to expand the marketing of the programs. It is suggested the Curriculum and Instruction department consider making an annual visit to each of these locations (and perhaps others) during one of the two-week periods of on-site, face-to-face instruction. This would allow the department head to make classroom visits, interact with the students enrolled in the master's degree program, and perhaps host open houses to further market the degree opportunities.

- Currently, Gadsden Center staff sends out individual emails and makes phone calls to students about emergency alerts specific to the Gadsden site. In lieu of staff's ability to make these individual contacts, it is suggested the UA Alerts system be enhanced to provide automated messages that could be customized by Gadsden Center staff through the emergency preparedness group.

- In the spirit of improving security as well in preparation for the transition to the swipe card system entry system at the Gadsden Center, it is suggested all students and staff be provided UA IDs. Additionally, it is suggested the Center consider having a continuous staff presence at the front counter to assist with security.
A. Brief description of the institution’s Quality Enhancement Plan
For its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) submitted in 2015, the University of Alabama has chosen to focus on “Developing Real-World Problem Solvers Through High Quality Experiential Learning”. The plan proposed a set of activities that can be illustrated in the following diagram:

![Diagram showing the process of training faculty/staff in ELO's, followed by faculty/staff using ELO's to teach students how to solve real-life problems, leading to graduates valuing their UA education.]

To increase the number of ELO's offered on campus, faculty workshops on creating them will be offered and course-specific ELO's will be certified as incorporating the six best practices identified in the proposal.

The University of Alabama plan involves multiple offices and resources within the university to help accomplish its goals, and has allocated ~$2.5 million for the support of this project.

B. Analysis of the Acceptability of the Quality Enhancement Plan

1. **An Institutional Process.** The institution uses an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment.

   The selection of the QEP topic began with a broad-based process in which input was gathered from faculty, staff, administrators, and undergraduate students. Deans worked with faculty to generate ideas for facilitating student learning across the disciplines. From the many ideas put forward, the QEP Development Committee found common themes and selected those that best fit the institution’s mission and strategic plan. They looked at national and institutional data to make sure that the themes were appropriate for the university. Faculty then developed proposals around these themes, using national data and best practices. The proposals were reviewed by top administration and faculty leaders. The QEP project which emerged from this inclusive and institutional-wide process was for the institution to cultivate more on- and off-campus experiential learning opportunities for students. The QEP is well-rooted in institutional process and addresses important issues from institutional assessment.

2. **Focus of the Plan.** The institution identifies a significant issue that (1) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and (2) accomplishes the mission of the institution.
The University of Alabama has identified experiential learning opportunities as the topic for its QEP and has branded the plan Learning in Action: Developing Real-World Problem Solvers Through High Quality Experiential Learning. The institution is the state's flagship university enrolling over 36,000 students.

The general purpose of the QEP:

To improve students' real-world problem solving skills and their ability to connect academic knowledge to real-world contexts and situations through high quality Experiential Learning Opportunities (ELOs) in every college.

The university identified three overarching goals to guide the QEP:

Goal 1 Increase the number of ELOs offered in each college that are certified as incorporating all six ELO best practices
Goal 2 Improve students' ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world problem solving through best-practice ELOs.
Goal 3 Increase the proportion of graduating seniors who report their educational preparation at UA to be excellent/optimal.

The institution identified a significant issue for their QEP. The institution listed the following direct and indirect methods for assessing the intended student learning outcomes: faculty/staff and second-party assessment of student learning, scoring team assessments of student reflections, Student Experience in the Research University (SERU), Graduating Senior Survey and Graduating Senior Focus Groups. The selection of experiential learning opportunities as the QEP topic is aligned with the university mission and the university strategic plan.

3.

Institutional Capability for the Initiation, Implementation, and Completion of the Plan. The institution provides evidence that it has sufficient resources to initiate, implement, sustain, and complete the QEP.

The University of Alabama has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan that demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation and completion of the QEP.

The institution has provided a detailed timeline for implementing and completing the QEP. The timeline accounts for monthly activities from Year 0 (2014) to Year 6 (2021) and includes the key categories of hiring and appointment of the QEP director and the Experiential Learning Advisory Board; establishing the implementation and planning committee; generating marketing and community awareness; working with faculty through workshops, webinars, seminars, professional learning communities, and mini-grants; conducting assessment; providing institutional oversight. Within the broad categories of QEP activity, the timeline clearly delineates specific action items, demonstrating the institution's recognition of the activities needed to fully operationalize the plan. In addition, the institution has assigned qualified individuals to administer and oversee the implementation of the QEP including a hiring a QEP director, an associate director, an administrative assistant and graduate assistant. The institution has also identified a faculty member who will serve as an Experiential Learning Expert for the conducting of workshops and other learning activities.
Through the budget summary, the institution demonstrates a commitment of nearly $2.5 million, with over $400,000 to be spent for each year, years 1-5, and an expenditure of nearly $275,000 for this academic year. This budget summary, showing a total commitment of nearly $1.5 million to personnel (57 percent of the budget), nearly $725,000 to programming (29 percent of the budget), and nearly $275,000 to assessment activities (11 percent of the budget), along with the provision of physical resources and other items such as professional development for personnel indicates that the institution has provided evidence of sufficient financial and physical resources to implement, sustain, and complete the QEP.

While the institution has allocated sufficient financial and physical resources to implement and carry out the plan, less evidence has been provided to show how the QEP objectives and outcomes related to Experiential Learning will be integrated into the academic infrastructure and the systems and processes of the colleges beyond the initial implementation of the plan.

In this way, the institution has established that it has made a strong commitment to executive administrative support, but less is provided to explain how the colleges and faculty will maintain the progress of the QEP quality improvements.

4. **Broad-based Involvement of Institutional Constituencies.** The institution demonstrates the involvement of its constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the Plan.

The University of Alabama indicates that the institution selected the QEP topic through an intentional broad-based institutional process that will include involvement by faculty, staff, students, administrators and employers. A Development Planning committee, (composed of faculty, staff and administrators) was appointed early on to conceptualize the plan for the QEP, followed by the appointment of an implementation committee. UA plans to use a QEP Director who will coordinate the various groups involved in the QEP process. Faculty/staff will be involved through a variety of activities, including requiring faculty to attend development workshops for recognition of certified best-practices experiential learning opportunities, workshops and online webinars that focus on best practices, seminars on excellence in experiential learning (SEELs), and PLCs. Students will be involved by completing reflection papers, graded by Scoring Teams. Students also will complete student surveys related to the educational experience at UA. Faculty/staff also will have the opportunity to develop new ELOs through a mini-grant process. Other involvements of the QEP are plans to include an ELO Advisory Board (composed of representatives from each academic college/school that offers UG degrees), and plans to include the support units of the university: Institutional Effectiveness, Institutional Research and Institute for Social Science Research. Overall, the institution has adopted a comprehensive plan to involve faculty/staff, students, administrators, and employees in the development and implementation process of the QEP.

5. **Assessment of the Plan.** The institution identifies goals and a plan to assess the achievement of those goals.
The assessment plan for the Learning in Action enhancement initiative uses a mixed methods approach. The plan outlines the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods for assessing initiative outcomes. The measures outlined align with the stated Learning in Action outcomes. The institution has identified appropriate measures to evaluate student learning and a system of tracking the progress of Learning in Action.

C. Analysis and Comments for Strengthening the QEP

While the initial plan presented to the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee has done a good job of identifying the main actions needed for this project, there are some actions that the Committee suggests for consideration, as ways to make the project even stronger. These are summarized in the following comments.

I. Focus of the Plan

1. Broaden the definition of what constitutes an "ELO"
   - Length: Initially, the QEP project viewed ELO's as semester long projects, i.e., 15 weeks. The committee thinks it would be good to also consider substantive but shorter ELO's, e.g., 2 to 15 weeks in length.
   - Realms of ELO's: Much of the initial discussion was about ELO's that prepared students for future employment. This is certainly appropriate. But it would also be good to consider ELO's focused learning that has value in other realms of life, e.g., enhancing a student's individual life [PERSONAL], helping them interact more productively with a wider-range of "others" [SOCIAL], finding ways to engage in community actions [CIVIC], and then their work life [PROFESSIONAL].

2. Set target goals for the project
   - Instead of saying "we want to increase student engagement" the Committee encourages the QEP project staff to set specific, quantitative targets for their work.

II. Implementation

A. General Project-Wide Actions

3. Search for ways to involve Student Affairs Staff
   - Personnel in Student Affairs currently offer numerous activities that have the potential to include structured ELO's. Students would find value in participating in these activities if they recognized the opportunity to gain important kinds of learning there and perhaps received some kind of recognition and credit for doing so.

4. What level courses to target initially?
   - The QEP project staff have already started this discussion; we only suggest continuing that discussion.
   - There are advantages to initially targeting upper division courses as places to place ELO's. These are the courses that departments care about and they will be more motivated to do the work necessary to enhance those courses by adding ELO's.
   - On the other hand, students who have been alerted to the existence of ELO's in the UA curriculum will be looking for such courses early on. It would be good for them to experience these as soon as possible.

B. Support for Students

5. Create a centralized support systems
In our conversations with students, the Committee heard many good aspects of the program at Alabama, especially when students were willing to seek out existing resources. However, when asked what they thought would improve the educational program, several mentioned the need for easier ways of finding out about those resources.

- This suggests it would be good to have a centralized support system related to the ELO’s, e.g.:
  - A website that contained important information about what ELO’s are, their value.
  - Ways of helping students identify courses with ELO’s.
  - Ways of helping students learn how to create a learning-portfolio.

6. Start the use of learning portfolios
- One good way to help students document what ELO’s they have had over a period of time and what they have learned from these is to have them create learning portfolios.

C. Support for Faculty & Staff

7. Create/Strengthen a center for teaching & learning focused on “pedagogy”
- The QEP personnel have done a good job of identifying activities needed to help faculty learn specifically how to create and use an ELO.
- However, to do a good job of putting these ELO’s in the context of a good set of teaching/learning activities, faculty and staff also need to learn about college-level teaching in general.
- The university currently has a number of different places where this is happening, e.g., the FRC, the College of Arts & Sciences. But when we talked to faculty, they suggested it would be better to have a strong, “one-stop” place to go to ask questions about teaching, get help in solving identified problems, and just learn some of the many powerful, new ideas that exist in the literature on college teaching now.

8. Find ways to provide faculty and staff with the incentives to use ELO’s in their teaching.
- While many administrators, faculty and staff already fully support the goals of the QEP, our conversations with faculty and administrators indicated there are also substantial groups of faculty who do not yet see the value of these activities. Hence, it is likely to be necessary for administrators to discuss and identify ways to send a message to all faculty.

III. Assessment
The basic assessment plan is sound. But the Committee here offers a few suggestions for making this even stronger.

D. General

9. Establish Baseline Data
- The institution should establish baseline data for each outcome and state the level of improvement desired for each outcome.
- For example:
  - How many ELO’s currently exist?
  - How many ELO’s students encounter in their courses?
  - And especially: How well do graduating seniors currently perform on tests of applied problem solving?
10. The institution should assess the level to which graduates can solve problems utilizing the knowledge gained in CBP-ELO courses.
   - The central purpose of the QEP is to improve the ability of graduating seniors to solve real-life problems with all the complexities of authentic contexts.
   - Therefore it is imperative that plans be made for the kinds of assessment tasks and data that can be gathered that tells the university: How well are our graduating seniors able to do this? And has their ability improved with the increase in ELO’s that they encounter in their courses and co-curricular experiences?

E. Formative Assessment
11. Regarding faculty/staff activities:
   - How many faculty are being trained in ELO’s each year? How does this compare with the target levels?
   - How many courses are being certified each year? How does this compare with the target levels?

12. Regarding student activities:
   - How many students are being oriented each year to the ELO’s? How does this compare to our target levels?
   - How many ELO’s are they experiencing in their courses each year? How does this compare to our target levels?
   - How well are students improving, from year-to-year, in their ability to engage in high quality applied problem solving?
Part IV. Third-Party Comments

To be completed by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

If an institution receives Third-Party Comments, the institution has an opportunity to respond to those comments and the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviews the response as part of its comprehensive evaluation of the institution.

The Committee should check one of the following:

X No Third-Party Comments submitted.

Third-Party Comments submitted. (Address the items below.)

1. Describe the nature of the Comments and any allegations of non-compliance that may have been part of the formal Third-Party Comments;

2. Indicate whether the Committee found evidence in support of any allegations of non-compliance.

If found to be out of compliance, the Committee should write a recommendation and include it in Part II under the standard cited with a full narrative that describes why the institution was found to be out of compliance and the documentation that supports that determination. In this space, reference the number of the Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, or Federal Requirement and the recommendation number cited in Part II.

If determined to be in compliance, explain in this space the reasons and refer to the documentation in support of this finding.
<table>
<thead>
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<th><strong>APPENDIX A</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Roster of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Maurice R. Eftink – CHAIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Provost</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Roger G. Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chancellor (Retired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Kathleen R. Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director, Planning and Research for the NCSU Libraries (Retired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Kristen H. Bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Provost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Research and Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Paula P. Carson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor of Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Louisiana Lafayette</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Maxine T. Davis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Tennessee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. David H. Huddleston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennessee Technological University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Joan F. Lorden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Carolina - Charlotte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Angela S. Martin *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President for Financial Planning and Chief Budget Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Kentucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Linda L. Vahala (Absent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Engineering and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Dominion University</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SACSCOC Staff Coordinator</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Cheryl D. Cardell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACSCOC Commission on Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Finance Evaluator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Roster of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee** |
| Dr. Denise M Trauth - CHAIR |
| President |
| Texas State University |
| San Marcos, TX |
| Dr. Defloris M. Baldwin |
| Associate Dean and |
| Director, School of Nursing/Professor |
| University of North Carolina - Charlotte |
| Charlotte, NC |
| Dr. Timothy N. Chamblee |
| Assistant Vice President and Director |
| Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness |
| Mississippi State University |
| Mississippi State, MS |
| Dr. Allison H. Crume |
| Associate Vice President for Student Affairs |
| Florida State University |
| Tallahassee, FL |
| Dr. Helen Doerpinghaus |
| Professor of Finance, Darla Moore School of Business |
| Senior Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies |
| University of South Carolina |
| Columbia, SC |
| Dr. Amy Wells Dolan |
| Associate Dean, School of Education |
| University of Mississippi |
| University, MS |
| Mr. Dixon B. Hanna |
| Associate Provost, Emeritus |
| Virginia Tech |
| Hilton Head Island, SC |
| Dr. Krisellen Maloney |
| Dean of Libraries |
| University of Texas at San Antonio |
| San Antonio, TX |
| **QEP LEAD EVALUATOR** |
| Dr. L. Dee Fink |
| Consultant |
| Norman, OK |
| **COC STAFF REPRESENTATIVE** |
| Dr. Robin W. Hoffman |
| Vice President |
| Commission on Colleges |
| Decatur, GA |
APPENDIX B

Off-Campus Sites or Distance Learning Programs Reviewed

The University of Alabama currently offers educational opportunities at eight off campus instructional sites where 50 percent or more credit hours toward a degree can be obtained primarily through traditional classroom instruction.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee visited the College of Education's international degree programs offered through host sponsored overseas schools at two sites: Mexico City, Mexico, and (by Skype) Bogota, Columbia. At both sites, Master of Arts in elementary and secondary education degree programs are offered to allow qualified students an affordable opportunity to complete the full 30 hour master's degree. The programs offered at international sites are led and coordinated through the Office of International Programs in the College of Education.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee also visited the Gadsden Center in Gadsden, Alabama, and toured its facilities, met the faculty and staff housed there, and interviewed representatives of the colleges offering programs at the Center. The graduate programs offered through the Center number approximately 13 and representing programs from the University of Alabama's College of Education (master's and doctoral degrees in Educational Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Administration, Higher Education Administration, Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Instructional Leadership, and Special Education) and the College of Communication and Information Sciences (master's in Library Science and Information Science).

The graduate programs visited are all directed from the main campus in Tuscaloosa and most of the services—admissions, financial aid, registrar, bursar, and student services—are all coordinated through and/or delivered from the main campus. Most services are available online (for both on-campus and off-campus students) with infrequent visitations and student information sessions provided by campus staff throughout the academic year.

Westhill Institute
Domingo Garcia Ramos 56
Sona Escolar Prados de la Montana 05610
Mexico City, D.F. Mexico

The College of Education delivers its Master of Arts in Education degree, both elementary and secondary, in conjunction with the Westhill Institute, a private educational institution in Mexico City. The program is housed on the Westhill Institute campus at Domingo Garcia Ramos 56, Zona Escolar Prados de la Montana, 9510 Mexico, D.F., Mexico City, Mexico. The off-campus site was approved by SACSCOC in 2005. The Master's of Arts in Education in Elementary or Secondary both require 30 credit hours for completion. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee understood and had a chance to interview the three master's students were currently enrolled at the site at its visit on February 23, 2015.

**Personnel:**
The University of Alabama education degree programs at the Westhill Institute are supervised by a Westhill Institution the graduate programs director and a site ambassador. All faculty delivering courses are University of Alabama faculty.

**Physical Facilities:**
The staff of the Education programs are housed and courses delivered in the “university building” on the Westhill Institute campus. The Westhill Institute has been in operation for over 22 years and delivers pre-K through the high school programs as well as several graduate programs including medicine, architecture, dentistry, business, and law. The physical facilities are impressive in their size, quality of interior finishes and amenities. The faculty report the facilities and support services are excellent. The institution provides a safe and secure environment for the students. Security guards are stationed at each entrance/exit to campus. In addition, security guards are stationed at the entry/exit points of each building.

Library Resources and Technology:
Students have electronic access to the institutional library system, which includes more than 300 databases available for use. The library is a partner with the HathTrust, which allows access to millions of public-domain texts. The library provides online tutorials for use of the library resources. In addition, the library provides “Ask a Librarian” as a helpdesk feature. This allows the student to contact library staff with specific questions about library resources and the use of library resources. Computer laboratories are available for student use and include wireless capability. All classrooms have internet access.

Financial Resources:
The University of Alabama provides these degree programs under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Westhill Institute that reimburses the College of Education for direct instructional costs or provides accommodations for visiting faculty providing course instruction. The resources seem more than adequate to support the programs.

Student Support Programs:
Admissions, registration, academic calendars and access to course materials are provided to the students online. Students receive a 100 percent scholarship from Westhill Institute to complete their master’s degree. Grading policies, a guide to submit complaints and to submit grade appeals are stated in each course syllabus. All institutional academic policies are included in the online Graduate Catalog.

Institutional Effectiveness:
All courses are taught by University of Alabama faculty. Courses are taught in four-week blocks. The first and fourth week of the courses are delivered through online instruction. The second and third weeks of instruction are delivered face-to-face at Westhill Institute. Learning outcomes are similar to those for the on-campus degree programs.

Colegio Nueva Granada
Bogota, Colombia
Cra.2 E No. 70-20

The College of Education delivers its Master's of Art in Education, both elementary and secondary, in conjunction with the Colegio Nueva Granada (CNG), the third largest private education institution in Central America, located on a 20-acre campus in Bogota, Columbia. The Education programs are housed on the CNG campus located at Colegio Nueva Granada (CNG), Cra 2 E No. 70-20, Bogota, Columbia. The off-campus site was approved by SACSCOC in 2005. The Master's of Education in either elementary or secondary requires 30 credit hours for completion. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee understood that over 30 students (the maximum allowed by CNG policy) were enrolled at the site in course being delivered on the date of the visit 23 February 2015.
Personnel:
The University of Alabama education degree programs at the CNG are supervised by a site ambassador. All faculty delivering courses are University of Alabama faculty.

Physical Facilities:
The institution provides a safe and secure environment for the students. The facility is enclosed behind a security fence, with a single well-guarded entrance. Security guards are stationed throughout the campus. A gun-free policy is in place for the campus.

Library Resources and Technology:
Students have electronic access to the institutional library system, which includes more than 300 databases available for use. The library is a partner with the HathTrust, which allows access to millions of public-domain texts. The library provides online tutorials for use of the library resources. In addition, the library provides "Ask a Librarian" as a helpdesk feature. This allows the student to contact library staff with specific questions about library resources and the use of library resources. Computer laboratories are available for student use and include wireless capability. All classrooms have internet access.

Financial Resources:
The University of Alabama provides these degree programs under a Memorandum of Understanding with the CNG that reimburses the College of Education for direct instructional costs or provides accommodations for visiting faculty providing course instruction. The resources seem more than adequate to support the programs. CNG collects a fee from each student for enrollment and provide a 50 percent scholarship for Columbian nationals.

Student Services:
Admissions, registration, academic calendars and access to course materials are provided to the students online. Grading policies, a guide to submit complaints and to submit grade appeals are stated in each course syllabus. All institutional academic policies are included in the online Graduate Catalog.

Institutional Effectiveness:
All courses are taught by University of Alabama faculty. Courses are taught in four-week blocks. The first and fourth week of the courses are deliver through online instruction. The second and third weeks of instruction are delivered face-to-face at Colegio Nueva Granada. Learning outcomes are similar to those for the on-campus degree programs.

UA Gadsden Center
121 North 1st Street
Gadsden, Alabama 35901

Established in 1946, the Gadsden Center is located in Gadsden, Alabama, at 121 North First Street, Gadsden, AL 35901. The Center serves North Alabama, northwest Georgia, and southeast Tennessee offerings graduate coursework for credit, noncredit programs for professional development, community development programs, and test services and serves as a liaison to the university’s main campus. Currently, the Center offers 13 complete degrees in education with classes offered nights, weekends, and web-assisted formats to accommodate working professionals. The Gadsden Center is administratively housed within the university’s College of Continuing Studies. The university leases the space for the facility from the City of Gadsden. The City of
Gadsden is responsible for all major maintenance and repairs related to the leased premises including the parking lot. The university is responsible for minor maintenance and repairs and those are contracted out to a third-party.

The degree programs offered at the Center include the Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Administration, Instructional Leadership, and Higher Education Administration; Educational Specialist degrees in Teacher Leadership, Educational Leadership, Secondary Education, and Elementary Education; the Master of Arts degree in Educational Leadership, Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Special Education, and Higher Education Administration. In spring 2015, the Center began offering the Master’s Degree in Library and Information Sciences through the College of Information Sciences.

**Personnel:**
The Gadsden Education Center is administered by a full-time director. The director is assisted by a full-time program manager and a full-time technology manager. Additional support is provided by full-time individuals in student services, finance, student/faculty support and teacher certification. All course instruction is provided by 48 full-time and 15 part-time Tuscaloosa campus faculty.

**Physical Facilities:**
Gadsden Center is handicap accessible, with a total of 25,980 gross square feet and 14,996 of net assignable square footage. The average seating capacity for classes is 26 with the largest accommodating 46 and the smallest seating 10. Currently the Gadsden Center staff use physical keys to enter the facility. All students are not required to have official University of Alabama “ACT” identification cards. For the past year, the staff have been researching a swipe card security system. In discussion with staff, mandating all students and staff to have UA IDs will strengthen the security of the facility as well as prepare for the transition to the swipe card system. Additionally, the On-Site Committee suggests the Center have a continuous staff presence at the front counter to assist with security. At this time, staff members in the front are in their offices.

**Library Resources and Technology:**
Gadsden Center students have access the UA virtual and main campus library. Gadsden is a member of the University of Alabama System’s Intercampus Interactive Telepresence System (IITS), which is a statewide videoconferencing network. IITS connects users to in-state, national and international conferencing, course instruction, research endeavors and meeting participation. The Center has two video conferencing classrooms, one mobile unit for video conferences, one mobile science lab, three computer labs, one mobile laptop lab, wireless capability, and uses the latest Windows operating system and Microsoft Office software.

**Financial Resources:**
The Gadsden Center’s annual operating budget for FY 2015 is $1,387,627.75. This budget includes expenditures for personnel, technology, services, supplies and equipment. In addition, the Center has a marketing plan and active student recruitment plan to attract new students. The College of Continuing Studies shares revenue from tuition and fees with the College/departments offering degree programs. In the case of the College of Education, the faculty and departments support students and degree programs at the Center with the work of full-time faculty within their regular teaching loads; most often by those who are tenured and promoted. Though the Center is currently working to strategically diversify academic degree programs and academic support offerings beyond the College of Education, the existing doctoral programs exhibit robust enrollment. In sum, the Gadsden Center’s financial resources,
including human resources and facilities, adequately support the quality and integrity of academic programs as well as enhance the development of students and the community the Center serves consistent with the university’s academic mission.

**Student Services:**
All processes are aligned with the University of Alabama main campus. Admissions, course registration and graduation processes are all online. Student complaints including academic integrity processes mirror the main campus process. The individual attention provided to students (and faculty) through the Gadsden Center makes it a destination for many graduate students studying Education. In some programs, the enrollment is higher at the Gadsden Center in comparison to main campus. The Gadsden Center is connected to the “UA Alerts” system for Emergency Preparedness. It was unclear if Gadsden Center has the ability to customize the UA Alerts for Gadsden Center specific events warranting alert. Currently, Gadsden Center staff sends out individual emails and make phone calls to students about alert events specific to the site. In lieu of staff’s ability to make these individual contacts, it is suggested consideration be given to enhancing the UA Alerts system to provide automated messages that could be customized by Gadsden Center staff through the emergency preparedness group.

**Institutional Effectiveness:**
Learning outcomes for all degree programs are the same as those for the on-campus degree programs. All faculty delivering courses are University of Alabama faculty.
APPENDIX C

List of Recommendations
Cited in the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee

Recommendation 1: CS 3.3.12 (Administrative Support Services)
The Committee recommends that the University of Alabama provide evidence that it identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results for its administrative support services.

Recommendation 2: CS 3.3.13 (Academic and Student Support Services)
The Committee recommends that the University of Alabama provide evidence that it identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results for its academic services.