

**University of Illinois at Springfield**  
**Institutional Response to the Final Report**  
**of the Comprehensive Visit**  
**November 3-5, 1997**

The University of Illinois at Springfield wishes to express its appreciation to its Evaluation Team for the thorough and professional conduct of the site visit and for its accurate, fair, and insightful report. The guidance provided by the chair and the team members will serve us well as we move forward into the next phase of our development. In keeping with the Commission's process, the University of Illinois at Springfield offers the following response.

The campus concurs with the team recommendation and with the analysis upon which it was based. The Team recommendation calls for a Focused Visit during AY 2000-01 to address four topics: planning, graduate education, the implementation of the doctorate of public administration, and the status of the proposed lower-division undergraduate program. We believe that two of these topics, planning and graduate education, warrant comment.

## **Planning**

Since the beginning of this decade the campus has engaged in extensive planning activities. These include a major strategic planning effort in 1991-92; a series of planning reports to the Illinois Board of Higher Education as part of that board's Priorities, Quality, Productivity (P•Q•P) Initiative; and a two-year development planning effort associated with the merger with the University of Illinois. The Team notes that the campus has made "significant progress in developing a planning process" (p. 65), but challenges the campus "to integrate assessment, planning, and funding into that planning process and to give evidence of the review of planning to keep it current with university initiatives" and to develop a new strategic plan (p. 79-80). Conversation with the Team Chair after the site visit helped clarify the scope of the strategic planning activities envisioned by the Team. The campus understands that the Team is encouraging UIS to use its newly developed planning body, the Planning and Budget Committee, as the locus of efforts to "integrate assessment, planning, and funding" into a new strategic plan, rather than to engage in a new strategic planning exercise similar to those conducted in 1991-92 and in 1995-97. The campus views this as a sound recommendation.

Linked to the recommendation on planning is a concern about the campus' institutional research program (p. 81). In hindsight, the campus recognizes a failure to convey to the Team some of the routine ways in which institutional research is used in planning and decision making. For example, the self-study report did not clearly address the regular benchmarking of UIS against other Illinois public universities. This benchmarking occurs for every academic discipline in terms of enrollments



and instructional costs, as well as for tuition, staffing levels, programming for underrepresented groups, etc. Decisions related to these areas are heavily influenced by these comparative data. In effect, the campus may have inadvertently understated the existing use of institutional research data in planning and decision making. Nonetheless, the campus concurs that institutional research is an area needing substantial improvement and recognizes the importance of making "standard quantitative data [become] part of the institutional consciousness" (p. 81).

## **Graduate Education**

Since the 1986-87 comprehensive review, the campus has made certain strides in responding to concerns about the management of graduate education. Among the steps taken, as documented in the self-study, have been:

- institution of standards for graduate admission by all graduate programs;
- improvements in the management of the graduate assistantship program;
- establishment of the Graduate Council, a governance body with responsibility for graduate education policy and for review of graduate programs; and
- specialized accreditation of selected graduate programs.

The Team recognized these steps but judged that, on balance, the campus still had not addressed adequately its role and responsibilities in the area of graduate education. Moreover, the initiation of the campus' first doctoral program makes it all the more imperative to do so. The campus agrees with this judgment.

The Team points to several areas of deficiency, including the need for an administrative officer to serve as an advocate for graduate education and the need for clearer definition of the graduate faculty, who as a group would assume responsibilities held by the present Graduate Council.

The Team also expresses concern about the resources devoted to graduate programs and the need to make some "very hard choices to either abandon some graduate programs so those resources may be reallocated to other priority needs or identify substantial new financial resources to conduct existing programs in a more acceptable manner" ( p. 79). The campus recognizes the need to provide resources commensurate with the requirements of high quality graduate programs and, over the past five years, has made several actions to bring more focus to its graduate offerings. These actions have included the elimination of a master's degree program in psychology, the elimination of a degree concentration in applied statistics and renaming the remaining concentration as a master's degree in computer science, and the elimination of graduate course offerings in business at an off-campus site to provide greater depth to on-campus offerings.

The assessment of the adequacy of resources for graduate education at UIS must be made in light

of the campus' continuing upper-division status. Unlike full four-year institutions, faculty in UIS baccalaureate programs are not currently required to deliver lower-division general education course work. Although the campus recognizes that we continue to be "stretched too thin," we believe this overextension is mitigated by the current absence of responsibilities at the lower-division level. Any estimation of the resources needed to deliver UIS undergraduate and graduate degree programs needs to take this circumstance into account. Nonetheless, the campus does acknowledge the need either to increase the resources devoted to graduate education or to continue its recent series of actions to reduce curricular commitments at the graduate level.

The campus hopes that in the future we will offer lower-division programming. The plan for a small lower division does raise a concern about diversion of resources from graduate education. The campus and the Board of Trustees have carefully reviewed budget projections for the proposed lower-division program. Should the campus' request to the Illinois Board of Higher Education to offer this program be approved, the program will only be initiated if adequate resources are available.

The campus looks forward to receipt of the Readers' Panel recommendation and to Commission action.