

# CHAPTER ONE

## RESPONSE TO THE 1996 NCA RECOMMENDATIONS

### **HLC Concerns and Recommendations 1995 Self-Study Visit Report**

Immediately following receipt of the visitation team's insightful evaluation report, the University began efforts on a number of fronts to address the concerns and recommendations the report contained. The University has taken this work seriously and consequently made significant progress as a result. Below are listed the concerns and suggestions offered by the visitation team and the steps the University has taken in regard to each.

### **SECTION TWO CONCERNS**

**(a) The team believes that the availability of learning resources in the library must be firmly addressed if USI is to continue its growth**

On July 23, 2006 the new [Rice Library](#) held its formal opening. Over twice the size of the original library, the new building offers almost 116,000 square feet of assignable space. The new library incorporates the latest design trends including group study space for students, airy and light reading rooms, wireless technology throughout the building, and a Starbucks coffee shop. To anticipate future growth, the lower level of the building has a bank of 16 classrooms that will serve the current need for general classroom space, and can be converted to library space as enrollments increase.

Further progress has been made regarding implementation of modern technology in day-to-day library operations. In addition to wireless access throughout the building, the library has acquired and implemented the [Voyager](#) integrated system to facilitate the ordering and tracking of materials. Another benefit of the Voyager system is that it permits offering the catalog via Internet and has the possibility of connecting with other systems for future growth. Interlibrary loan services have been expanded and a Distance Education librarian has been added to the library staff. In response to input from the Student Government Association (SGA), library hours have been expanded and additional support has been provided for staff. Several University departments have now developed their own satellite libraries or reading rooms. Many of the improvements noted above were made possible by the University's increased allocation of funds for library materials and other needs. The library's acquisition budget was increased by \$60,000 during 2005-2006.

Additional information about the new library may be found in Criteria 2B.1, 3B.1 3C.1, and 4A.1.

**(b) The team believes that studio and laboratory space for fine arts and sciences must also be firmly established if USI is to continue its growth.**

The HLC visitation team accurately assessed the University's most pressing space needs, and the University's 10-year capital projects list at that time included plans for renovation and/or construction of space to address deficiencies in these areas. In the years following the site visit, the University has successfully sought and obtained funding for new or renovated space. Consequently, the University now has excellent physical facilities for teaching and learning in the fine arts and sciences.

In fall 1999, with the opening of the new [Liberal Arts Center](#) all disciplines in the College were provided outstanding classroom, meeting, and office spaces. Included in this facility are laboratories for psychology and sociology. The fine and performing arts gained studio space and a small performance theatre. To address additional space needs for the fine arts, the Technology Center, which houses the Department of Art, was renovated. Finally, a new [Art Studio](#) was constructed near the Technology Center and the Ceramics Laboratory and opened in 1999 when the new Liberal Arts Center opened.

To address laboratory space needs for the sciences, the [Science Center](#), home to all the University's science labs at the time of the site visit, was extensively remodeled in 1998-99. This renovation made the existing labs usable for 21<sup>st</sup> century science teaching, learning, and research. Also in 1999, the unfinished basement of the [Health Professions Center](#) was finished to include three new science laboratories plus space for several other areas. In 2003, the new Torrington Science wing and the Education Center opened and brought a new era for the sciences. At a cost of \$23.1 million, the complex includes state-of-the-art teaching laboratories and the latest technologies in the classrooms.

**(c) The organization of graduate education is highly decentralized at present. If USI intends for graduate education to be a significant part of academic programming, a greater centralization of program leadership and administering of University-wide standards and policies is recommended.**

The University considers that graduate programs and enrollments therein will continue to grow in the years ahead. Therefore, the University has made a number of changes to the organization and administration of Graduate Studies.

At the time of the last accreditation visit, the University had an acting director of Graduate Studies who served as chief administrator for graduate programs. That appointment has now been made permanent. The University policies and procedures relative to graduate education have been reviewed and graduate

programs are included as part of the University's long-term academic master plan. Graduate Program directors have been appointed for each of the University's graduate programs and the University Graduate Council has been reorganized. The appointment process for graduate faculty has been revised and a Graduate Student Organization has been developed to ensure student representation. Additional support to graduate students for professional development travel has been made possible by an initiative in the "Excellence through Engagement" grant, funded by the Lilly Endowment.

Specific information about graduate programs may be found in Criterion 4B.2.

- (d) The team senses that consensus has not been reached on the target optimum size of USI or on the kind of campus culture and audience desired in USI's 'mature years'. A conversation on the kind of future USI is seeking needs to be ongoing.**

Because the creation of USI was in response to a profound need for access to higher education in the region, the University has not established an absolute enrollment limit. At the time of the last accreditation visit, the University was experiencing annual enrollment percentage increases in the double digits. That rate of growth has slowed considerably in the past few years. This slower growth offers the University a stable period with time to seek resources to address the more than 30 percent increase in enrollment over the past decade. State funding usually addresses enrollment increases, however an economic downturn with a concomitant decrease in state revenues led state legislators to withhold a portion of enrollment increase monies during the past two budget biennia. The Vice President for Student Affairs has undertaken strategic planning processes necessary to develop a Strategic Enrollment Management plan. As part of this effort the Vice President for Student Affairs has convened the Enrollment Management Team to coordinate efforts necessary to maintain relatively stable enrollments or with slight increases for the next few years. More restrictive admission requirements, including deferred admission, have been implemented, and the [Options Program](#) for at-risk students has been developed. The University's commitment to the development of a residential campus has resulted in the construction of four new residence halls.

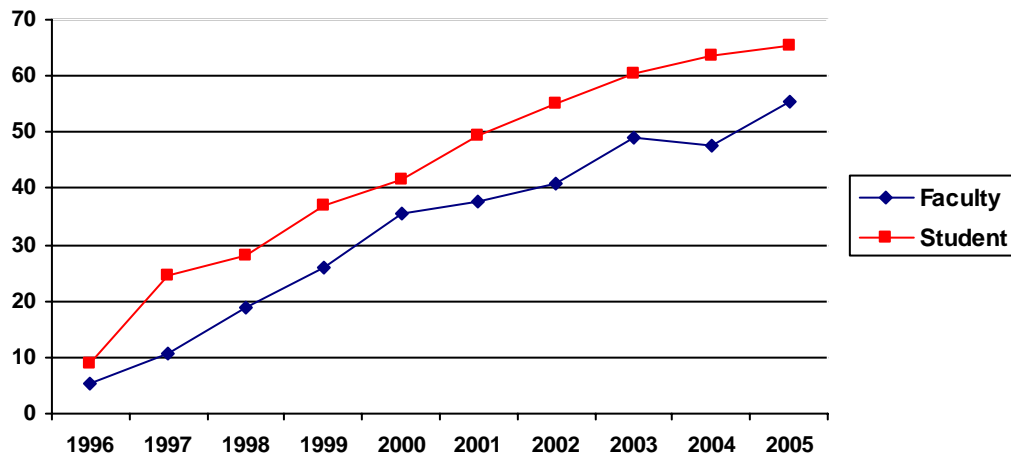
Enrollment issues are addressed in Criteria 2A.4, 2B.1, 2D.2, and 5A. The most in-depth treatment may be found in Criterion 3D.2.

- (e) The ratio of part-time temporary to full-time regular faculty, particularly in the School of Liberal Arts and the School of Science and Engineering Technology, needs careful evaluation. It is not that USI's ratio is unusually high in contemporary American higher education; it is not. It is that the students, faculty, and staff report that key roles normally filled only by regular faculty (advising, academic governance, and administration) are**

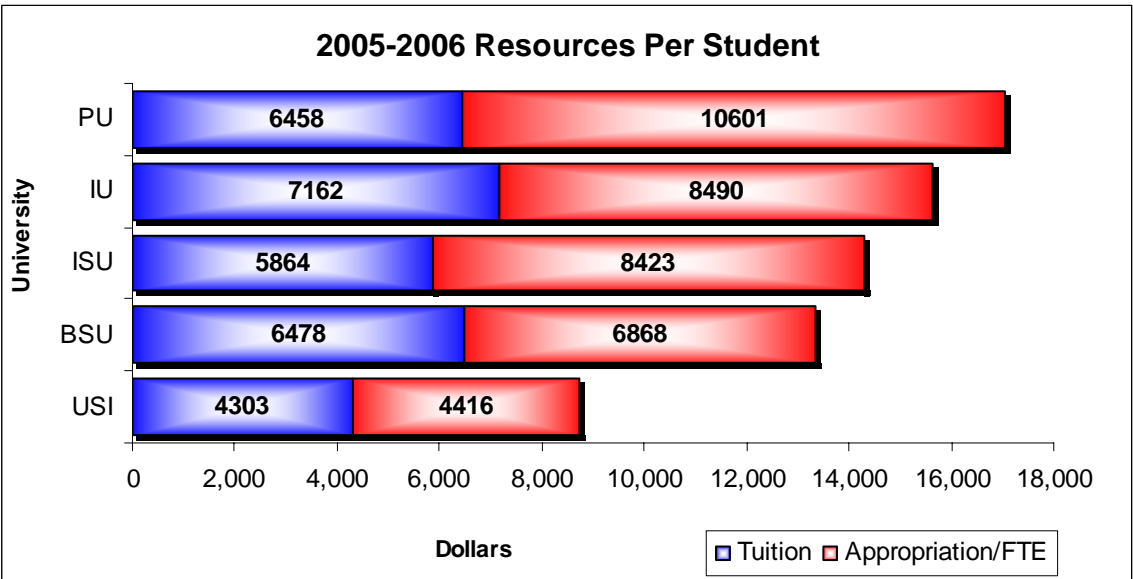
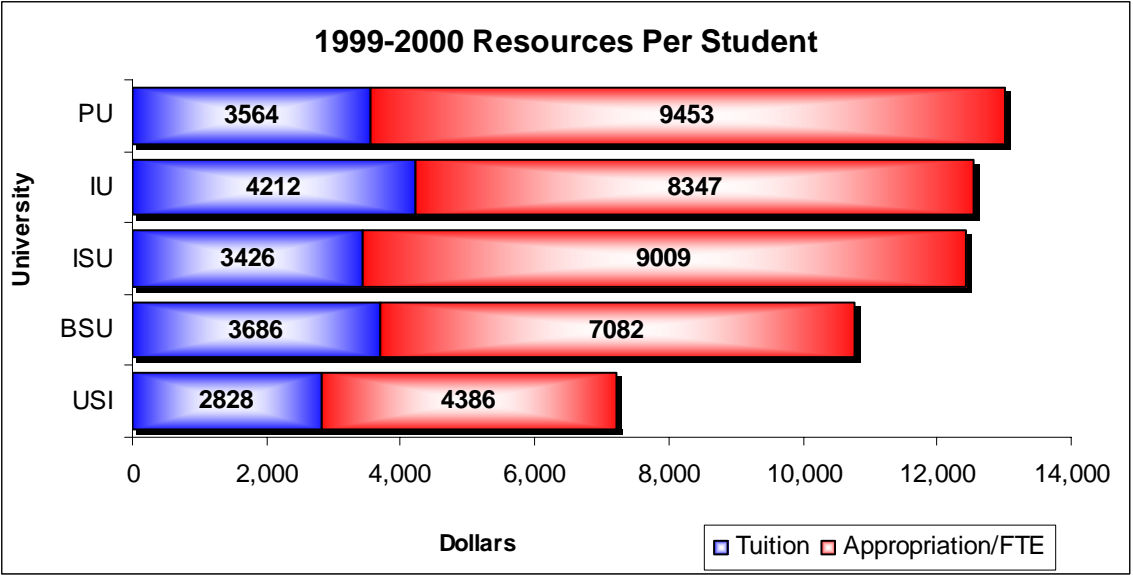
**thinly stretched, and the quality of service to students consequently is irritatingly erratic at times.**

Each year since the last accreditation visit, the University has added new full-time faculty positions. In conjunction with this effort, a number of instructional positions historically filled with part-time and special adjunct faculty have been converted to full-time positions, primarily in the departments of English and mathematics. Although these increases in the number of full-time faculty have helped relieve the advising, governance, and administration loads on the full-time faculty, the University's growth has generated increased need for these services.

**Percentage Growth in Full-Time Faculty and FTE  
Student Enrollment: 1996-2005**  
1995 baseline



The combination of the lowest state funding per FTE student and the lowest tuition among four-year institutions in the state presents the University with a resource challenge in creating new full-time faculty lines. Increasing the number of full-time faculty is a high priority and has been included in the University's operating budget requests to the state for the past three budget biennia.



As shown in the Figures above, USI consistently has the lowest tuition as well as the lowest state appropriation per full time student. This makes it very difficult to have enough full time faculty to provide the quality educational experience that we could attain if we were closer to parity with the other state institutions. With the 30 percent increase in enrollment over the past decade, and the lag in state funding because of cuts in enrollment increase monies, the University has increased the number of part-time faculty. Many of these faculty bring their professional expertise to USI's classrooms and deepen the educational experience of students. To better integrate these faculty into their roles at the University, professional development programs have been implemented to assist part-time

faculty in meeting the many and varied needs of students. These efforts include development of a part-time faculty handbook and offering, through the University's [Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence](#), programs and workshops directed toward part-time faculty needs. These workshops include topics such as student learning styles, identifying at-risk student behaviors and making appropriate and timely referrals. Part-time faculty are now invited to major University-wide faculty meetings (fall and spring semester faculty convocations) and departmental and school meetings.

Further information may be found in Criteria 2B.1, 2D.2, and 3B.2g.

- (f) Diversification of employees and the student body needs continuous attention. USI is becoming recognized as much more than a city college; it needs to aspire to a campus society more representative of a broad region of mid-America.**

The ethnic and racial composition of the faculty, staff, and students at the University of Southern Indiana are reflective of the demographics of Southwest Indiana. However, the University of Southern Indiana has endeavored to attract and retain a diverse student body, faculty, and staff. Since the last accreditation visit, the institution has established a [Multicultural Center](#) to encourage, promote, and assist the academic and social integration of underrepresented students into the University through programs and services offered by the center and through partnerships with other campus entities. Also, the University has added a major and minor in [International Studies](#) and a minor in [Gender Studies](#). Diversity programming has been provided for faculty, staff, and students. Much of this programming is offered through the [THREADS program](#). THREADS (an acronym for **T**eaching **H**uman **R**espect & **E**ncouraging **A**ction **D**iversity **S**eries) is an initiative to deliver diversity programming to the campus and tri-state communities through a coordinated calendar. Finally, the statement that USI is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer is included in all position announcements and included in all major University publications.

Additional discussion of these issues is found in all five criteria chapters, but especially in Criterion 3D.

- (g) USI's Assessment Plan was approved by NCA not long ago. The team has been unable to gain a clear sense of how assessment will develop on this campus, particularly in the disciplines of the liberal arts and sciences and in the core curriculum. The team believes that USI's commitment to program improvement through assessment of student learning is sincere. However, a monitoring report will be requested so that NCA can be assured that the assessment program is fully implemented.**

The University of Southern Indiana completed and submitted to the Higher Learning Commission its Monitoring Report on the [Assessment of Student](#)

[Learning Outcomes](#) in June 1998. Also, since 1996, the University has made a number of improvements in its assessment activities and programs. In 1997, the University Faculty Senate appointed a University Assessment Committee as a standing committee of Senate. The University has completed a seven-year program assessment plan for the University Core Curriculum's four major categories: The Mind, The Self, The World, and the Synthesis. It also has begun a seven-year plan to re-evaluate the relevance of each University core course to establish core goals and objectives. Student learning outcomes assessment is also a vital component of the University's requirements for its internal Academic Program Review cycle. Details on all the above and more are included in the document entitled [Assessment of Student Learning at the University of Southern Indiana](#). This document was prepared by the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and submitted to the Indiana Commission for Higher Education in November 2004.

Assessment issues are addressed in Criteria 2C.2 and 3A.

### SECTION III SUGGESTIONS

- (a) **Traffic flow to the campus will need continued attention to accommodate growth. A secondary freeway exit nearby and/or a second access highway, as examples, would be highly desirable in the near future.**

The University has engaged the services of professional consultants to provide advice relative to this issue. As part of the University's [Campus Master Plan](#), updated most recently in 2005, [major modifications](#) to traffic patterns and flow are suggested. As the University continues to respond to growth and the expansion of its physical plant, changes to University traffic infrastructure patterns will be made. Examples of progress to date include roadway infrastructure modifications made as a result of the Science and Education Center project, the Liberal Arts Center project, and the new library building project.

- (b) **The team suggests that USI gain a thorough understanding of students' attitudes and concerns about advising and personal/career counseling.**

The University has addressed this suggestion in a number of ways. The provost appointed the University Advising Council, chaired by the director of the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, to examine issues related to academic advising. The University has also conducted two campus-wide surveys to examine student satisfaction and opinion on matters relative to academic advising and course registration. Further, the University Division has implemented the University Advising Fellows program to train academic advisors and a new Career Counseling office has been created. Finally, a number of academic departments (e.g., communications, nursing, teacher education) conduct internal evaluations and assessments of student attitudes concerning academic advising.

Advising issues are addressed in Criterion 3, in section 3D.2b and in “Areas for Improvement.”

- (c) The team suggests that USI consider establishing a student activity fee to provide student governance the means to fund student organizations and activity they value.**

Beginning fall 2001 the University implemented a student activity fee. The fee has been used to support a wide variety of student programming, including, but not limited to, Student Government Association travel grants, New Traditions Grant Program, and funding the construction of the Recreation and Fitness Center.

- (d) The team suggests that the classification system, compensation, and recognition/reward process for general staff be carefully evaluated.**

During 1998-2000, the Human Resources Office conducted a thorough study of the University’s employee classification and compensation practices. A number of significant changes were made, including classified staff position reclassification, salary equity adjustments, and health insurance premium adjustments.

- (e) The team suggests that USI assert on its official publications and stationary that is an affirmative action/equal employment opportunity organization.**

During the 2000-2001 academic year, the Faculty Senate reviewed and updated the University’s EEO/AA statements. The [revised statements](#) now appear on the University’s Web site, in all employment announcements, and in all major University publications.

- (f) The team suggests that the expectations of increasing numbers of residential students to access to wellness and fitness facilities, student center facilities, etc. be carefully assessed and addressed in campus planning activities.**

Since 1995, the number of students living on the University campus has increased by 69 percent (from 1,609 in 1995 to 2,721 in 2005). With the construction of additional residence halls to accommodate this increase, the institution has built a free-standing [Recreation and Fitness Center](#). The University was granted permission to expand that facility during the 2005-2006 year and that project will begin in the next year. In addition, [food service](#) for students living on-campus has expanded. Also all new academic buildings (Liberal Arts, Science and Education, “Link”, Rice Library) have added student “friendly” space for studying, relaxing, congregating, and networking. The vice president for Business Affairs has also initiated a series of improvements to gathering spots on the campus grounds. Students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors can enjoy a bag lunch outside

surrounded by beautiful greenery and flowers, or beside a lovely lake. During warm weather months, Physical Plant staff are working constantly to beautify campus grounds. With the completion of the new library, planning will begin to renovate the original library and additional gathering space will be created for all members of the campus community, as well as community members visiting campus for a special event.

Information about these environmental changes may be found in Criterion 2 and 3, particularly in 3C which addresses learning environments.