

# **ASSURANCE SECTION**

## **DRAFT REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT**

TO

KNOX COLLEGE  
Galesburg, Illinois

November 2-4, 2009

FOR

**The Higher Learning Commission**

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

### **EVALUATION TEAM**

Katharine B. Gregg, Professor of Biology, West Virginia Wesleyan College, Buckhannon, WV  
26201

David M. McFadden, Executive Vice President, Manchester College, North Manchester, IN  
46962

Richard L. Torgerson, President, Luther College, Decorah, Iowa 52101

Gar E. Kellom, Chair, Lilly Endowment Grant Director, Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN  
56321

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## **I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT**

### **A. Purpose of Visit**

The purpose of this visit was to conduct a comprehensive visit for continued accreditation.

### **B. Organizational Context**

From its founding by a group of Presbyterians and Congregationalists in 1837 through the historic debate that took place on campus between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas in 1858 up to its present day popularity, Knox College has a long history of excellence, carrying forward a founding mission of evangelism adapted to a more secular mission as a place where students have the freedom to flourish. Maintaining an academic excellence that was well beyond what would be expected for the resources that they had available, Knox began to experience deep financial difficulties that were most apparent since the last visit of the 1999 accreditation team.

Fortunately, a stable leadership team has been in place most of that period and has worked hard to address the financial issues identified in the last team report but the college still finds itself needing to also pay attention to other aspects of the operation that may have otherwise been given more attention during that period. This team arrives to look at not only what has been accomplished in that period and what yet needs attention but also to lend its expertise to the challenges facing Knox for the future.

### **C. Unique Aspects of Visit**

One unique aspect for the visit was that the team was requested to look at the organizational structure with the awareness that the leadership team has been together for a significant period of time and it is inevitable that the period between this visit and the next will no doubt see significant changes in that team. This provides the opportunity to look at alternative structures or better ways of organization that might serve the college better.

### **D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited**

None.

### **E. Distance Education Reviewed**

None

### **F. Interactions with Constituencies**

President  
Meeting with Board of Trustees  
Senior Staff  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Vice President for Student Development  
Meetings with students on two different occasions  
Director, Center for Teaching and Learning  
Director, TRIO Achievement Program  
Director, International Student Advisement

Director, Multicultural Student Advisement  
 Associate Dean of Students  
 Director, Counseling Services  
 Director, Computer Center  
 Office of Instructional Technology Support  
 Associate Dean of Students Campus Life/Director  
 Director, Public Relations  
 Coordinator of Self-Study  
 Director, Institutional Research  
 Associate Director for Assessment Support  
 Lab Coordinator, Chemistry  
 Lab Coordinator, Biology  
 Manager, Chemistry Lab  
 Science Technician, Biology  
 Technical Assistant, Biology  
 Science Chairs  
 Faculty Affairs Subcommittee of the Executive Committee (FASCom)  
 Executive Committee  
 Chair of Faculty Personnel Committee  
 Director, Library  
 Vice President for Enrollment and Dean of Admissions  
 Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services  
 Director, Human Resources  
 Director, George Washington Gale Scholars Program  
 Assistant Dean, Career Services  
 Coordinator, Internships  
 Assistant Professor of Dance, Coordinator, Center for Community Service  
 Director, Alumni Affairs  
 Associate Director of Alumni Programs, Students and Parents  
 Associate Professor of Spanish and Co-director, Center for Global Studies  
 Professor of Political Science and Co-director, Center for Global Studies  
 Athletic Director  
 Senior Women's Athletic Administrator  
 Professor of Chemistry and faculty athletic representative  
 Vice President for Advancement  
 Professor, Education Studies and Chair, FASCom  
 Director, Facilities Services

#### **G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed**

##### ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Policies and procedures related to curriculum adoption  
 Faculty roster, Fall Term 2009  
 Faculty Meeting minutes, 1848-2009:  
 Minutes of major committees  
 1989 institutional self study  
 1999 institutional self study  
 Self-studies: academic departments and programs  
 Honors Program  
     Honors Program Assessment 2009  
     Honors-letters from outside examiners, 2008

sample honors projects from the last few years  
*Undergraduate Research and Creative Projects, 2007-2008* (brochure)  
Search procedures for faculty searches (letter to search committee chair, including Affirmative Action report)  
Policy on Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources  
*Academic Knox: A Guide for the First Two Years*  
Faculty Handbook  
Faculty by-laws (Faculty Regulations)  
*Success Guide for Knox Faculty* (2004)  
Encyclopedia Knoxensis (collection of data maintained by the Registrar)  
Faculty Personnel Policies  
Guide for Department Chairs  
Academic Advising: Analysis of Student and Faculty Surveys

**Library**

Policy summary, with multiple links  
Circulation policies  
Guest borrower application  
Athletic Director's presentation to the Board of Trustees February 2008  
Reports from other accrediting bodies  
Chemistry--American Chemical Society Letter 2009  
Education--Accreditation Decision Letter 2003  
Agreements with other academic organizations and programs (list of organizations/programs at end of this document)

ADVANCEMENT

Various Advancement publications (*Knox Magazine*, the Gizmogram, etc.)

ENROLLMENT

Admission brochures  
Knox College catalog, 2009-10  
Admission policies  
Policies on good standing and completion policies  
Documents concerning Title III compliance and recertification

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Budgets and expenditure reports for units, programs, and the organization as a whole, FY 2009  
Audited financial statements for FY99-09  
Employee handbook  
Capital Projects 2009-10  
Compensation Initiative Update, Board of Trustees, June 5-6, 2008  
Landscape Master Plan  
Land Use Plan (1996)

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT

CIRP

- Senior Survey, 2003 & 2008
- First-Year Survey, 2003 & 2008
- FS-CSS comparison 2004-2008

NSSE

- Mean and Frequency Reports 2008
- Means comparison 2003 & 2008
- Multi-Year Benchmark Report

Academic Assessment Report (departments/programs) 2008-2009

Internal surveys, 2009

- survey instruments
- survey results (quantitative)
- comments from open-ended questions

Title III grant proposal

Teagle assessment grant

- Teagle reports (Econ, EdStud, English, Math)
- Teagle mapping reports (Educational Studies, English, History, Mathematics, Music, and Political Science/International Relations)

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), reports on 2006-07 assessment

FYILLLAA-Information Literacy assessment

PRESIDENT

By-laws of Knox College

Charter

*Knox College Strategic Planning Notebook*

Knox Strategic Plan

past strategic plans (1992 and 1995)

Priorities and Initiatives, 2009-2010

Progress on Priorities and Initiatives, 2008-2009

Self-studies: senior staff ("Explanation of documents" included in folder)

Organization charts for 1999 and 2008

Board of Trustees

- Assessment of Board of Trustees

- Minutes of the Board of Trustees (paper copies are available in bound books: 2005-2009 in Resource Room, past volumes back to 1835 in the Office of the President, OM 109)

- Board of Trustees roster

- Board policies

- Board resolutions (3-ring binder with resolutions, 1998-2009)

- Board self-study, 2009

- Reports to the Board, 2001-present

Sample report to the Board from senior staff, June 2009 (also distributed to campus constituencies)

Sample presidential mini-update to the Board, 3-24-09 (also distributed to campus constituencies)

Associations to which the College belongs

## STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

### Student service policies

- Housing

- Fire safety code

- Health care & services

- Health Services brochure

- Supplemental Insurance brochure

- FERPA

- Financial aid:

- Refund policy

### Student Senate

- Student Senate constitution

- Student Senate by-laws

### Student Handbook

Student group self-studies (only three completed): IVCF, Student Senate, Terpsichore

SLC (Student Life Committee) Report on Greek Life at Knox College (Feb. 2008)

Greek Task Force Report (Jan. 2009)

TKS from spring 2009 through fall 2009

## SELF-STUDY PROCESS

Institutional Self-Study Report, 2009

Minutes of self-study steering committee & e-mail updates, April 2009-Sept. 2009

Third party comment notices and results

Institutional Self Study Report 2009

map of Galesburg

map of Knox College campus

Knox mission statement bookmark

## LIST OF AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS

### Consortial Agreement

- Associated Colleges of the Midwest

- Agreements with other Institutions—United States

- William E. Simon Graduate School of Business Administration (University of Rochester)

- Agreements with other Institutions—International

- Anhui Normal University—China

- Flensburg University—Germany

- Knox Program in Barcelona, Spain

- Knox Program in Besançon, France

- Knox Program, Buenos Aires

### Combined Programs

- Architecture

- Engineering

- Forestry

Pre-Law  
Pre-Med  
Rush University  
George Washington University  
Pre-Health  
Optometry

## II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

### A. **Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process**

The college worked closely with the HLC in designing the self-study process which was guided by a central coordinating committee and chaired by the self-study coordinator. The steering committee was composed of a broad representation of faculty, staff, students and trustees. A broad and comprehensive approach was taken involving all constituents from across the campus in a series of smaller self-studies, internal and external surveys and three workshops for faculty. The resulting document was shared with the team electronically and in hard copy with additional documentation available to the team on line and in a combination of electronic and hard-copy formats, greatly assisting the work.

### B. **Integrity of the Self-Study Report**

The self-study report was found to be accurate and filled with data and detail providing evidence that many of the criteria for accreditation were met. It also included a great deal of analysis which assisted the team greatly in its own process. Interviews with constituents across the campus showed the self-study to be both valid and credible in its claims and helpful in determining areas that needed additional attention from the institution and the commission.

The approach that Knox has taken by creating its own lists of strengths and challenges shows that it has taken the process seriously and seeks to learn from its own analysis. Both board members and administrators echoed the commitment to use this document as well as the team reports in the next round of strategic planning to support future continued improvement.

### C. **Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges**

The team considers the response of the institution to challenges previously identified to be adequate in all cases except for assessment of student learning, some aspects of the financial situation related to ratios and the establishment of an evaluation or performance review process for administrators.

### D. **Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment**

Requirements were fulfilled.

### III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

See appendix.

### IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

**CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY.** The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

#### 1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- The essence and spirit of Knox’s mission statement is understood across campus, despite its acknowledged length and complexity. (1a)
- The Knox mission statement is unequivocal in its commitment to a diverse student body and campus community. The college’s success in pursuing this goal is evidenced in the demographic makeup of its student body, faculty and staff. This commitment is embedded in the curriculum through its “understanding diversity” key competency and emphasis on experiential learning, and a myriad of programs and centers supporting student opportunities to engage on campus, in the community, and throughout the world (examples include centers for community service, global studies, intercultural life, career and pre-professional development.) Finally, students report experiencing a diverse learning community at higher rates than those at peer institutions (2008 CIRP and NSSE survey results). (1b)
- The spirit of Knox’s mission pervades campus. Campus community members rank key values from the mission statement as highly important. Faculty, staff and students cite service to others, diversity and respect for others, broad education as preparation for a lifetime of learning and contribution and wide access to the opportunities of a Knox education as key values emanating from the mission. These values are reflected in their interactions with each other, their engagement of challenging and vexing campus issues and their eagerness to “get out into the world.” (1c)
- Knox administrators and faculty are accessible to students and one another. They are described as open and available. The administration gets high marks for communicating with the campus community. (1d)
- Broad sharing of information has been a core operating value of the institution following the financial crisis of 2001. Faculty have full information—even to the point of information overload, according to some—regarding the college’s financial circumstances. Leaders of the student senate feel empowered as a consultative body for the administration and faculty. This transparency served the institution well until very recently. (1d)
- Materials prepared for external audiences accurately describe the mission, academic experience and ethos of the college. Knox has and follows appropriate written policies and procedures guiding the actions of its employees and its interactions with outside agencies. Externally-mandated reports are appropriately maintained and made available to various constituents as required by law.

Contracts and agreements with external organizations are appropriate and comprehensive. (1e)

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**

- Goals that the college's own processes determine to be central to its mission need additional resources such as time, funding and attention. There is a recurring pattern of good institutional intentions unfulfilled. Significant examples include *undertaking assessment of student learning outcomes* (named as a top concern by the 1999 visit team, advancing in fits and starts though the past decade, and delayed until the hiring of a new staff person in fall 2009) and *strengthening academic advising "to position Knox uniquely among its peers"* (electronic portfolios developed in 2001 but not used, and longstanding plans to implement fully educational plans). The current self-study document identifies several initiatives the college intends to pursue: building on the self study as a roadmap for future planning, reviving the Institutional Planning Group as a central working group for strategic planning, and undertaking assessment of student learning outcomes (again). The same discipline and attention used to accomplishing the financial goals of the last decade need to be applied to meeting these goals. (1d)
- The self study report and team campus conversations revealed a multiplicity of key committees with overlapping roles that consume inordinate faculty and senior staff time. Team conversations also revealed a lack of clarity in differentiating appropriate governance roles from management tasks. This is having a debilitating effect that usurps energy and time that could be given to other mission related tasks. The team believes there is a need to assess the relationship of the Executive Committee, FASCom, IPG, and the Financial Development and Budget Committee with the goal of consolidation of committee functions. (1d)

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

None.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None.

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion is met; no commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE.** The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met**

- The team finds Knox College emerging from a financial crisis of major proportions in the early years of the present decade. Following his election in 2002 and throughout his tenure, the president has engaged the community in planning processes with three foci: nurture academic excellence, strengthen institutional self-confidence, and chart a course toward financial impregnability. These three planning foci have Knox well positioned to engage an increasingly diverse, global, multicultural, and economically challenged period of time. The results of this financial turn-around are inspiring. From 2004 to 2008 enrollment grew by 253 students. Knox students come from 47 states and 48 countries. Eighteen percent are US students of color; 7% are international, and 24% first generation. Of full-time faculty lines, 13% are persons of color and 8% are of international origin. The financial aid discount rate has declined from 48.4% (FY00) to 42.1% (FY08) and net tuition revenue has increased by 100% since FY00. The endowment spending rate has decrease from a high of 16% (FY00) to a projected draw of 5.8% in FY10 with a goal of reaching and stabilizing at 5% by 2012. The dependency for unrestricted estate gifts to support operations will be eliminated in the FY10 budget. (2a and 2b)
- A strategic focus on building a culture of giving back (philanthropy) across all major constituencies of the college is evidenced by enhanced staffing and new programs in Advancement that have resulted in steady growth in alumni giving percentages (36% in FY09), greater contributions to the Knox Fund, and increased support for the Senior Class Challenge and Fifty Year Club. The leadership, coaching, and encouragement of the president have been instrumentally important in this success. The support and financial commitment of the Trustees over the past decade is to be commended. (2a)
- The largest bequest (\$10.5 million) in the college's history in 2006 created the Hobbs Endowment which is being wisely used to collateralize debt, provide bridge financing for capital projects, and offset some operational costs, all of which enable the completion of important projects in lean times. Also in 2006 the college mitigated interest rate risk by entering into two swap agreements that effectively converted \$25 million of long term variable debt to fixed rate debt at ~3.5%. The Hobbs endowment is also providing a mechanism (investment earnings growth and operating budget allocations) to accrue resources to repay the 1996 and 1999 bonds when they mature in 2024 and 2031. (2d)
- Through wise and prudent financial management Knox senior staff have positioned the college for continuing financial success. In recent years annual budget preparation begins with a projected deficit, but the campus community and Trustee leadership knows that at year-end the budget will "go to balance." Some on campus are seeking greater opportunity to participate in the planning assumptions that shape and inform the development of the annual budget. (2b and 2c)
- Accompanying the three presidential foci are associated goals initiatives, assigned responsibility, and status updates. These foci are well known and embraced on the campus as Knox's strategic plan. Accompanying this plan are specific institutional fund raising priorities which are widely communicated in places such as the Gift Catalog on the college's web site. (2b and 2d)

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**

- The team believes there is a need for greater understanding of annual performance measures and assessment strategies that relate to institutional success outcomes and fulfillment of mission related goals. The recent (2008) addition of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, staffed with a director and an associate director (2009) bodes well for the future. However these nascent initiatives have provided insufficient time to provide the team with a body of evidence that evaluative strategies are being used to improve the quality of learning experiences and institutional effectiveness. (2b and c)

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

- An institution's fiscal soundness and its capability to provide the education advertised is summarized in a composite financial ratio derived from a combination of the primary reserve, capitalization, and net income ratios. To be financially sound, an institution must achieve a composite score of at least 1.5. Fiscal health is reflected by a composite score of 3.0. For the fiscal years ending June 2007, 2008, and 2009 Knox achieved a three year average score of 1.53. The team concludes it is critical for Knox to improve these three key ratios to sustain a composite Index Score of at least 1.5 to be financially sound in the eyes of the U.S. Department of Education. (2b)
- Recommendation of the team:  
A contingency report be required from Knox College on December 31 of any year in which the three year average CFI falls below 1.5 for the second year in a row.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None.

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion is met; no commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING.** The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met**

- Successful funding of a Title III grant for \$1.5 million to establish an Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) is a significant achievement that should provide much needed support and encouragement for assessment at Knox, assessment that should enable improvement of teaching and learning, as well as

increasing institutional effectiveness and efficiency throughout the College. (3b and c)

- Conversations with faculty indicate that course syllabi routinely contain learning outcomes, which help both students and faculty focus on learning objectives that have been prioritized by the faculty. This guidance helps ensure that students are learning the salient facts and skills in each discipline. (3a)
- A diverse and highly qualified faculty, of which 95% of full time faculty have the appropriate terminal degrees, illustrates that Knox values and ensures a high quality education for its students. (3b)
- Very recent funding of a \$400K grant from the Mellon Foundation in support of faculty career enhancement is an important achievement. Applying for such grants is good evidence that Knox values a well-prepared and academically active faculty. This grant in particular will offer seed money for faculty research projects as a means toward developing expertise and experience that could lead to obtaining national research monies. An active faculty engages students, and engaged students more actively participate in their own learning. (3b)
- As evidenced by a listing of faculty achievements over 2008-2009 (Self-study p. 192), by conversations with faculty, and by tour of the science laboratories, it is obvious that the Knox faculty is indeed active in research that enhances teaching and thus learning. Because one of the team members spent time with the science department chairs and support staff it can further be said that Knox science faculty are fortunate to have not only a broad array of sophisticated instruments that are not often found in small, liberal arts institutions (for instance both SEM and TEM, NMR, GC/Mass Spec, a SQUID magnetometer, and a Mossbaur spectrometer) but also a greenhouse and an herbarium plus well-qualified laboratory staff that frees the faculty to concentrate on teaching and research. All of these assets promote a very high level of science education at Knox and thus make a Knox education highly valuable for students who want to pursue graduate and professional education. One example piece of evidence that Knox's science program is highly successful is the 80% acceptance rate into medical school. Such success makes it easy to market a Knox science education, thus helping to bring in new science majors. In a tuition-driven institution, matriculation of new students ensures continued support of a strong academic program. (3b)
- The spacious, well-appointed library has continually adapted to needs of students, with renovations that have added numerous cubbyholes for quiet individual and group study while culling less functional print indices. Bright and airy spaces with beautiful campus views alternate with warm and cozy rooms conducive to thoughtful reflection and creativity, thus creating spaces where students take advantage of a well-designed learning environment. Nine small offices for Honors students are located on the third floor and serve to support and reward student achievement. (3d)
- A professionally-trained library staff of five, unusual for a small, liberal arts faculty, offers excellent support to faculty and students in the areas of technology and library resources. (3d)

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**

- Conversations with the Dean of the College revealed that Knox currently does not have official transcripts in a centralized file for its faculty. Official transcripts are obtained during search processes and remain with Search Chairs scattered across campus. Further, when hiring “ABD” candidates, the only evidence that degree completion has taken place is a Xeroxed copy of an official letter from the degree-granting institution. As letters can be forged and only official transcripts give concrete evidence of degree completion, Knox College may not be in compliance with best practice in academe for assuring the public that it has a qualified faculty. (3b)

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

- Assessment at Knox College is in its infancy. The Knox curriculum, which consists of five components, has been in place since 2002. Yet, as reported in the Self-study (pp.47-67), virtually no assessment of any of these components has taken place while the College has awaited help from the newly established Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Currently, there is essentially no multiple-level assessment, and no indication of multiple direct and indirect measures of student learning for particular learning outcomes. Lack of learning outcomes assessment for the past six years means that there have been many missed opportunities to make informed curriculum improvements that might have enhanced learning for the students. (3a)
- Recommendation: A Monitoring Report on Program Review and Assessment due April 30<sup>th</sup> 2013:

As reported by the HLC Team in 1999 and now ten years later, as described in the recently completed 2008-2009 Academic Assessment Report, “in summary, academic assessment at Knox is still in the early stages.” The financial crises that developed soon after the 1999 visit may have displaced for a number of years an emphasis that otherwise would have been placed on the development of assessment following the 1999 visit, and Knox has only recently returned to its consideration as a priority. As a result of a Title III grant, Knox has established an Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA), with a Director hired in July 2008 and an Associate Director for Assessment Support, in August 2009. As part of the self-study process, the Steering Committee designed a self-study guide and requested “many areas of the College to put together small self-studies,” from which the Committee could “draw heavily” in writing the self-study. Consequently, in early 2009, departments and programs submitted reports, most of which

contained an overview of the past 10 years, a listing of fundamental goals, a consideration of how their mission meshed with the College mission, assessment activities, and a modified SWOT analysis. In October, Knox completed the 2008-2009 Academic Assessment Report that contained an overview of the 2008-2009 data-gathering process and a number of departmental updates.

In general, the departmental self-studies submitted in 2009 can best be characterized as having more in common with a typical program analysis than with assessment, which usually refers to assessment of learning outcomes. Most departments (or programs like the First-Year Preceptorial) presented a listing of departmental goals, although some of these goals are more readily assessable than others. A number of departments had barely moved beyond identifying goals and had not yet identified how the goals would be assessed, while a few had selected instruments for assessing learning outcomes and had produced some limited results. Carrying out these assessment activities, however, were so recent that in most cases meaningful analysis had not yet taken place, and it is too soon to have any feedback on any changes that have been made as a result of assessment. Further, there was no evidence that any of the departments had set criteria for success. The conclusion is therefore that assessment at Knox is indeed still in its infancy.

4. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

#### **Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion is met: Commission follow-up is recommended.

#### **CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE.**

The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

1. **Evidence that Core Components are met**
  - Successful funding of a recent Mellon grant to fund the Center for Research and Advanced Study will centralize undergraduate research efforts, stimulate collaborative efforts, and provide more support for faculty and student research areas, thus enhancing acquisition of knowledge and student learning at Knox. (4a)
  - As evidenced by material in the Self-study and by conversations with faculty, Knox makes available adequate funding for faculty development, resulting in a well supported emphasis on faculty-student research collaboration that exceeds peer institutions. As evidenced by conversations with faculty and administrators and by material in the Self-study, Knox College supports faculty and student travel to meetings and professional conferences where both faculty and students

give presentations and participate in the academy of learning. These experiences are highly beneficial to students, helping to launch their journey into the world of their chosen field. (4d)

- As evidenced by the summary of faculty scholarly achievements in the Self-study and by a complete listing of “Books, Articles, Exhibits and Performances by Knox College Faculty,” the Knox faculty consists of a cadre of highly successful, active scholars. These faculty-scholars are excellent role models for students, exhibiting the excitement of life-long learning which encourages and excites students to do the same. (4d)
- The improvements made to the Office of Student Development over the last ten years adding four staff, reorganizing reporting lines, investing in improved student housing and athletic facilities have contributed significantly to the high satisfaction rates and high retention rates also evidenced in the CIRP and NSSE survey data. The high levels of student engagement and participation in clubs and organizations also contribute to a campus culture that supports the liberal arts mission and creation of a healthy learning environment. (4d)

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**

- Although success of graduates in admission to graduate and professional schools is one type of evidence that Knox graduates have achieved necessary breadth of knowledge and skills, as is participation by Knox students in scholarly activities, lack of more direct knowledge and skills assessment data may diminish opportunities to demonstrate effective preparation for continued learning. (4d)
- Lack of adequate program review and confusion concerning the differences between program review and learning outcomes assessment (as evidenced by the 2008-2009 Academic Assessment Report) may prevent Knox from curricular improvements that will maintain course and program relevance in the world beyond Knox. (4c)

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

None.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None.

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion is met; no commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE.** As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

- 1. Evidence that Core Components are met**
  - Knox is connected to diverse constituents in what one staff person aptly described as “reciprocal relationships.” Many of these relationships are built on strong and effective communication between the college and external groups. Student needs for learning and experiential opportunities are balanced with the needs of the organizations and constituents with whom they interact. Faculty and staff are intentional and effective in asking students and partner organizations about their goals for the relationship experience. For example, the Center for Community Service seeks to develop long term relationships with community organizations and between students and those organizations so that each can see and experience the change that comes from giving to another. (5a)
  - The college’s many centers and outreach programs benefit from the passion of their staff, their commitment to students and the larger community, and productive collaboration among staff, particularly when serving a specific set of students or constituents. Although the institution could invest additional resources in these endeavors, particularly those which rely on part time personnel and thin budgets, the spirit of common purpose and commitment to Knox students produce remarkable outcomes. (5b)
  - The college adapts its outreach and service programs in response to changing internal and external circumstances. Programs report regularly evaluating the effectiveness of their outreach strategies. For example, the initial incentive for middle school students participating in the George Washington Gale Scholars program was the promise of a tuition-free college degree ... in eight years. New, shorter term incentives were created to keep participating students with shorter time horizons engaged and enthused. (5c)
  - Although direct evaluations of satisfaction have not been done, College programs which depend on cooperation with external constituents and organizations—internships, volunteer community service programs, student teaching placements, international exchange programs and the like—are all healthy and fully supported by those organizations. Faculty and staff regularly assure that the needs of both students and external constituents are being met through these learning and service programs. (5d)
  
- 2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**

None.
  
- 3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

None.
  
- 4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and**

**require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None.

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS**

**A. Affiliation Status**

No change

**B. Nature of Organization**

1. **Legal status:** No change.
2. **Degrees awarded:** No change

**C. Conditions of Affiliation**

**1. Stipulation on affiliation status**

No change.

**2. Approval of degree sites**

No change.

**3. Approval of distance education degree**

No change.

**4. Reports required**

Contingency Report on Institutional Finances: Due date, December 31 for any year that the second consecutive annual composite financial ratio falls below 1.5

For the fiscal years ending June 2007, 2008, and 2009 Knox achieved a three year average score of 1.53 on the composite financial ratio which is derived from a combination of the primary reserve, capitalization and net income ratios. In that fiscal health is reflected in a composite score of 3.0, the team concludes it is critical for Knox to improve these three key ratios to sustain a composite Index Score of at least 1.5 to be financially sound in the eyes of the U.S. Department of Education. In any year which is the second consecutive year where the composite score for Knox falls below 1.5 a contingency report is recommended by December 31. (2b)

Monitoring Report on Program Review and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes. Due Date: April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013  
Rationale and Expectations

A regular cycle (5-7 years) of academic department and college-wide program reviews should have as a central focus student learning and achievement of institutionally stated student learning outcomes. Continuous improvement requires gathering of longitudinal data and evidence over time.

By April 30, 2013 the following expectations should be met:

1. That all academic departments and college-wide programs have 3-5 assessable learning outcomes clearly stated, with “criteria for success” for each outcome.
2. That all academic departments and college-wide programs have identified tools to be used and/or evidence to be gathered for both direct and indirect measures of learning outcomes.
3. That Knox have in place a plan for assessing the new curriculum by providing evidence that each of the five components is achieving stated goals.
4. That a majority of academic departments and college-wide programs have at least one year of data collected and analyzed, using a mix of both direct and indirect measures, including a written plan for using lessons learned for continuous improvement of student learning.

If the conditions outlined for the Monitoring Report are not met a Focused Visit is recommended.

**E. Summary of Commission Review**

Timing for next comprehensive visit (academic year – 2019-2020)

Rationale for recommendation: Although Knox College has experienced a turbulent decade since the last comprehensive visit and some of the challenges that were identified at that time have yet to be fully met, there has been significant progress in dealing with most challenges by a concerted effort of all faculty and staff. The stability of the leadership team, the quality of the self-study and the plans widely supported to use the plan as the basis for the next strategic plan support the recommendation for an additional ten years. Providing that there is significant progress in program review and assessment of student learning outcomes as displayed in the monitoring report due in 2013, Knox appears to be on course for a more successful decade in the years to come.

**VI. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS**

None