“Know Thyself”

Self-Study Report
Marietta College
Marietta, Ohio
August 2005

Executive Summary

The self-study is conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (the Commission) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

This executive summary provides an overview of the major findings recorded in the self-study report. The report in its entirety may be viewed at http://www.marietta.edu/selfstudy. The report is one piece of the College’s application for continued accreditation. Preparation is now underway for a November 7-9, 2005 campus visit by a team of external consultant evaluators appointed by the Commission.

Value of Accreditation

As stated in Institutional Accreditation: An Overview, “Accreditation provides both public certification of acceptable institutional quality and an opportunity and incentive for self-improvement in the accredited organization. The Commission reaches the conclusion that a college or university meets the Criteria for Accreditation only after the organization opens itself to outside examination by experienced evaluators familiar with accrediting requirements and with higher education. The process of accreditation provides the accredited organization with an opportunity for critical self-analysis leading to improvement in quality and for consultation and advice from persons from other organizations.”

More pragmatically, under authority of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act, accreditation is required for institutions to gain access to federal financial aid funds.

Self-Study Purposes

Marietta College identified the following five purposes for self-study:

1. Establish and maintain a dynamic relationship between the Self-Study Steering Committee and the Planning Committee so that the self-study and strategic planning
processes inform each other, resulting in positioning the College for strategic change as well as reaffirming what it is doing well.

2. Complement the efforts surrounding the updating and extension of the College’s Strategic Plan by, in part, providing comprehensive planning material.

3. Elevate the collective awareness of the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and constituencies as to the College’s strengths and challenges. Where appropriate, make recommendations to take further advantage of its strengths and to help meet its challenges.

4. Review institutional changes that have taken place since the 1995 self-study, particularly those made in response to the concerns of the 1995 Visiting Team.

5. Secure continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools by producing a self-study report that clearly demonstrates the Criteria for Accreditation are being fulfilled and positioning the campus for a successful site visit.

The Criteria for Accreditation
The self-study report presents extensive and comprehensive evidence that Marietta College meets all Commission Criteria for Accreditation. At the same time, current challenges were recognized, resulting in internal recommendations for continuous improvement.

Criterion One: Mission and Integrity. The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

The self-study report makes evident that Marietta College fulfills the requirements of Criterion One by providing evidence demonstrating that:

- Marietta College’s Mission (including the Core Values) is clearly and publicly stated and has been visibly implemented through specific initiatives, programs, and policies established throughout the campus.
- A Strategic Plan provides a framework for defining the College, lays the foundation for evaluating ideas for consistency with mission, and along with the goals, objectives, and strategies of the Plan, presents a comprehensive vision for Marietta College.
- The College is living its vision as evidenced by the fact that when work commenced on the extension to the Strategic Plan, 142 of the 158 recommended actions had been implemented or were in the process of being implemented.
- Core mission documents explicitly state the College’s educational commitment to diversity.
- Secondary mission documents explicitly state expected standards of behavior among the College community members and contain a College-wide discriminatory harassment policy.
• The Strategic Plan and its extension provide a basis for the College’s basic strategies to address diversity.
• Through specific initiatives, programs, and policies, the College offers a celebration of diversity with respect to its local cultures.
• At a minimum, the College seeks to develop in the students a recognition and understanding of the impact of diversity.
• As a consequence of a living, dynamic Strategic Plan, the College’s strategic decisions are mission-driven.
• Support for the College’s Mission by the Board, administration, and faculty is clear.
• The Board of Trustees leaves the running of the College to the administration, faculty, and staff.
• The College operates with integrity at all levels of the organization.

Internal recommendations for continuous improvement related to this Criterion include:
1. Beginning with the 2004 Fall Convocation, the President should annually review the College’s Mission and Core Values to, in part, ensure they continue to reflect the changing nature of higher education. The first fall meeting of the Planning Committee provides another venue for such assessment. (Accomplished) Should the need for a more careful review and possible revisions arise, the President should appoint an ad hoc committee of faculty to make preliminary recommendations in this regard.
2. Beginning with the 2005-06 Catalog, program and general education learning goals should appear in print, as well as on the College web site. (In Progress)
3. Provide a careful explanation to the students (and their parents) of the rationale for tuition increases to better convey the nature of the thoughtful deliberations and careful planning resulting in such decisions.
4. Set goals for the racial minority components of the full-time enrollment and full-time faculty.
5. Seek advice from the 2005 Visiting Team, in its capacity as consultants, as to how to further diversify the campus.
6. Investigate means of identifying the level of support for the College’s Mission by the staff and students. The Support Council (staff) and Student Senate (students) may be vehicles to facilitate this activity. Recommendations to overcome any identified challenges should be made.
7. Continue to carefully monitor the new graduate programs to ensure they remain of high quality, exhibit good enrollment, and are successful financially. At the same time, as set forth in the extension to the Strategic Plan, continue to move toward the goal of no more than a total of 250 graduate students within the next 10 years. Continue to discuss how graduate programs fit into the College’s Mission with the Curriculum Committee and ultimately with the faculty when new programs are considered for approval.
8. Institute periodic review of the College’s organizational structure to ensure effective leadership is promoted and collaborative processes are supported that enable fulfillment of its Mission.
9. Develop a formal statement of philosophy for handling student complaints.  
(Accomplished)

**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.

The self-study report makes evident that Marietta College fulfills the requirements of Criterion Two by providing evidence demonstrating that:

- Resource assessment is wide-ranging and comprehensive; all of the processes and documents in place are in consonance with the Strategic Plan and its extension.
- The College benchmarks its academic and administrative organization and activities and monitors the marketplace to ascertain the College market position and its appropriateness.
- The Strategic Plan and supporting program and departmental plans continually evolve to promote their applicability and feasibility.
- Flexibility in planning and resource allocation permits the College to address unexpected challenges and opportunities.
- The resources committed by the College to educational programs appear to be adequate as evidenced by comparative data and the assessment of academic programs’ student learning outcomes.
- Resource development and investment by the College evidences a forward-looking concern for ensuring educational quality.
- The College carefully allocates instructional resources through program enhancements, program maintenance, and program reductions and reorganizations.
- The administration of the College demands planning is followed by implementation.
- Each academic and administrative unit undergoes formal review on a four-year cycle, as outlined in the Strategic Plan, contributing to continuous improvement of the College.
- The College has a clearly defined and effective process for the evaluation of faculty.
- The College has a number of ongoing planning processes that are coordinated through the Strategic Plan, and, consequently, are grounded in the *Mission* and *Core Values* of the College.
- The College links its planning and budgeting processes.

Internal recommendations for continuous improvement related to this Criterion include:

1. Continue to address, in the annual budgeting process, the needs of deferred maintenance and facilities upgrades.
2. Continue the practice of monitoring the College’s student-to-faculty ratio while evaluating to what level this ratio could increase without adversely impacting the Marietta College experience.
3. Continue the budgeting practice of setting aside funds for the Provost and academic division coordinators to use in meeting specific, one-time needs of academic departments.

4. Each administrative unit should develop an explicitly-stated mission and goals that will become a part of the administrative unit review process.

5. Make a concerted effort to better inform the campus community of planning taking place at the College.

**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.

The self-study report makes evident that Marietta College fulfills the requirements of Criterion Three by providing evidence demonstrating that:

- Assessment is viewed as part of the College’s culture and as a resource to be used in improving student learning.
- Assessment and ongoing planning are mandated by the extension to the Strategic Plan, thus finding support in the College’s primary Mission documents.
- Every academic program has a published statement of its purpose and educational goals which reflect the College’s Mission.
- Faculty regularly engage in effective assessment.
- The administration, by their actions and allocation of resources, fully support the College’s assessment program. The Provost, in particular, champions the program.
- The establishment of a $10,000 Provost’s fund to support needed programmatic changes to improve student learning based on assessment findings both rewards programs and facilitates the integration of planning and budgeting with the results of assessment.
- The comprehensive assessment program is evaluated regularly and modified as necessary; departmental assessment programs are annually reviewed and updated.
- A scheme for regular communication to the campus community about assessment activities and their results is in place.
- The College views faculty development as a priority and funds it accordingly.
- The College has developed a number of methods for evaluating and recognizing faculty for effective teaching, research, and leadership.
- The College’s learning resources (e.g., Academic Resource Center, Campus Writing Center, Dawes Memorial Library) support student learning and effective teaching.
- Title III funding has enabled the College to infuse the teaching/learning process with instructional technology methodologies.

Internal recommendations for continuous improvement related to this Criterion include:

1. Move the due date for academic programs’ annual assessment reports to the start of the fall semester.

2. Instruct academic programs to include in their annual assessment reports evidence that their assessment results are being shared. (Accomplished)
3. Provide an educational session on the College’s assessment practices as a part of the new employees’ orientation program. (Accomplished)

4. Hold an educational session on the College’s current assessment practices for the Academic and Enrollment Standing Committee of the Board of Trustees; a brief report on assessment activities should become a regular agenda item for this committee.

5. Better communicate with the students regarding the purposes of assessment and their role in the process, perhaps beginning with an introduction to the process in the First Year Seminar. Moreover, a student should be appointed to the Assessment Committee.

6. Faculty Council should add language to the Faculty Handbook (Appendix 4, Administrative Organization, Duties of the Department Chair) formally charging academic department chairs with maintaining successful assessment programs, including timely submittal of an annual assessment report, as a part of their position descriptions.

7. The leadership of the College’s assessment program needs to continue to champion using assessment data to guide effective change.

8. Faculty should hold a conversation(s) aimed at defining course types and the kind of pedagogy they involve.

9. A significant workshop(s) focused on teaching should be held, warranted by the introduction of a writing proficiency component to the general education curriculum and test results indicating a focus on critical thinking would be useful to the students. Ongoing workshops on the teaching and evaluation of writing would serve to uphold the standards of the writing proficiency component.

10. Equip, to the extent practicable, all teaching classrooms with a state-of-the-art computer with a DVD drive, a visual presenter, a VCR, and a document camera.

11. Implement the program developed under the auspices of the Assistant Dean for First Year Seminar and Advising to assess the effectiveness of academic advising.

12. Appoint a committee to assess the campus’s performance and gallery space issues and make recommendations aimed at making better use of current facilities.

13. The College must follow through on its commitment to technology in the areas of hardware, software, on-line databases, and support staff once the Title III grant cycle ends.

**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.

The self-study report makes evident that Marietta College fulfills the requirements of Criterion Four by providing evidence demonstrating that:

- The College values a life of learning for its faculty and students and demonstrates such by providing resources and opportunities for professional development.
- The Marietta College Board of Trustees endorses the American Association of University Professors’ (AAUP) 1940 Academic Freedom Statement of Principles with the 1970 Interpretative Comments.
• The College’s general education curriculum stresses the acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills.
• The College supports a variety of co-curricular programs that provide opportunities for students to learn, practice, and create using knowledge and skills taught in the classroom and learn social responsibility.
• The College employs an effective, multifaceted approach to curricular evaluation for currency and relevancy.
• Recognition of the importance of acquiring skills to function in a global, diverse, technological society is evidenced by the related student learning outcomes.
• The College insists on the responsible acquisition and application of knowledge.

Internal recommendations for continuous improvement related to this Criterion include:
1. Earmark funds for the professional development of administrators by adding a professional development expense line back into administrative units’ budgets.
2. Appropriate funds so that support staff can apply for minigrants to further their professional growth and development.
3. Identify funds for continuing support of speakers and entertainment series.
4. Identify a platform to celebrate successes of staff, both administrative and clerical/technical.
5. Develop and implement a plan for more comprehensive assessment of co-curricular programming.
6. The Curriculum Committee should conduct a review of designated advanced studies courses to ensure that these courses meet the criteria of a capstone course.
7. Make data from the Career Center’s annual and the Alumni Association’s periodic surveys a part of academic program review to aid in assessing the relevancy of programs.

Criterion Five: Engagement and Service. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

The self-study report makes evident that Marietta College fulfills the requirements of Criterion Five by providing evidence demonstrating that:
• Three of the nine Core Values of Marietta College address the College’s sense of community and its commitment to engagement and service to its constituencies.
• The College listens to its constituencies and their communities’ educational needs and responds as its capacity permits.
• The College’s physical, financial, and human resources support effective programs of engagement and service.
• The College demonstrates its commitment to engagement and service through ongoing planning, actions, and statements.
• The College’s constituents participate in the College’s activities and co-curricular programs that are open to the public.
• The College’s facilities are available to and regularly used by the community.

Internal recommendations for continuous improvement related to this Criterion include:
1. Establish a mechanism to evaluate community satisfaction with on-campus events (e.g., surveys, evaluation forms after specific events, regular focus groups). This mechanism should be used on a regular basis to track levels of satisfaction.

2. Move aggressively to endow a speaker series that provides the community with prominent and timely speakers. This goal is already part of the College’s extended Strategic Plan.

3. Expand the number of summer activities that address specific community needs, e.g., summer camps, secondary-education enrichment activities, etc., to further bring campus and off-campus communities together.

4. Hold a conversation with the faculty to clarify how engagement and service influence tenure and promotion.

5. Investigate the extent of the perception among off-campus community members that there is an “invisible wall” between the College and the community and respond accordingly.

The Self-Study Process
The self-study began in the fall of 2002 with the appointment of a Self-Study Coordinator. Working with the Provost, a timeline and framework for the self-study process was established. A Self-Study Steering Committee was formed in the spring of 2003; five subcommittees were created, one for each of the new Criteria for Accreditation.

That fall, following a kick-off meeting, the subcommittees began to explore the new criteria. Data were gathered and analyzed resulting in needed evidence. First drafts were prepared and initial editing for content and consistency of style were completed over the course of the academic year and following summer.

The self-study report draft was rolled out to the campus community during the fall 2004 semester; chapters were distributed biweekly and campus-wide feedback meetings were held every other Friday during the noon hour (with food provided). Using input from the forums, the committees gathered and analyzed additional information and revised the first drafts.

The revised drafts were again edited for content and consistency of style and then posted to the web (http://www.marietta.edu/selfstudy) for further review and comment by the campus community. The self-study report, largely in final form, was presented to the Board of Trustees at their May 2005 on-campus meeting. Final comments, including those of Marietta College’s Commission liaison, were incorporated into the report, readying it for presentation to the Commission.

Conclusion
As a result of self-study, nearly 40 recommendations for continuous improvement emerged, some of which have already been acted upon. The College is satisfied the purposes for self-study were accomplished. Specifically:

- The first and second purposes were accomplished over the more than two years of self-study. The Strategic Plan was successfully extended to 2010 with the 2004
release of “Higher Ground.” As an example of the synergy between the strategic planning and self-study processes, a specific goal “To demonstrate through assessment and ongoing planning the quality of the Marietta College education and the responsiveness of the College to its constituencies” appears in the extended plan.

- The third purpose for self-study was accomplished by engaging the College’s Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and constituencies in the self-study process. The College’s identified strengths, challenges, and recommendations for continuous improvement were widely shared and discussed.

- Institutional changes that have taken place since the 1995 self-study, especially those made in response to the concerns of the 1995 Visiting Team, were documented in detail, satisfying the fourth purpose for self-study.

- Finally, it is the belief of the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and staff of Marietta College that this self-study report clearly demonstrates that the Criteria for Accreditation are being fulfilled by the College, resulting in the College’s request for the continuation of accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.