

Criterion Three—Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Core Component 3.E.

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

Ball State University supports its claim of making the educational experience of students enriching. This section includes discussion of how co-curricular programs fit the institution's mission and contribute to the student educational experience.

Subcomponent 3.E.1.

Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.

Subcomponent 3.E.2.

The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

A hallmark of a Ball State education—and cornerstone of the university's mission and strategic plans—is the hands-on, real-world immersive learning experiences beyond the classroom that enrich and transform our students' academic careers. A key component of these creative, collaborative, interdisciplinary projects is that they have a lasting impact on a community partner such as a business, agency, or nonprofit organization.

One of the best examples of immersive learning and community engagement is the Building Better Communities (BBC) Fellows program. This immersive learning experience assists Ball State's BBC initiative with its mission to use university expertise to enhance community, economic, and business development throughout Indiana. For example, two student teams partnered with the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program in Delaware County to increase its volunteer base.

Student Research

Also enhancing the educational experience in a variety of disciplines are meaningful research opportunities starting early in students' academic careers, giving them valuable experience and an advantage over peers at larger institutions. Students work side by side with faculty mentors and become familiar with state-of-the-art equipment used by professionals. For example, the Department of Chemistry provides the Chemistry Research Immersion Summer Program (CRISP), one of the largest undergraduate research programs in chemistry in the nation, for even freshmen and sophomores.

While it is possible for student projects to receive external funding, Ball State's ASPIRE Internal Grants

Program provides university funding for research and creative projects that are specifically targeted to students. Categories include graduate creative arts, graduate research, undergraduate creative arts, undergraduate research, and travel support for professional meetings staff. Of the 173 total internal grants awarded for the 2010–11 academic year, graduate students received 57 grants and undergraduates received 16 grants. Although the number of funded projects has ranged from 161 to 219 each academic year since 2002–03, the level of funding available for internal grants dropped from a high of \$492,896 in 2006–07 to \$289,677 the following academic year.

Co-curricular Programs

Ball State offers a large number and variety of co-curricular programs that are congruent with the mission of the university. The mission statement of the Division of Student Affairs provides guidance for developing and implementing programs and activities that enhance student learning, provide opportunities for personal growth and development and civic engagement, and nurture appreciation of diversity, civic responsibility, and the cultivation of leaders.

Examples of out-of-class programs that build upon the curricular experience include living-learning communities, service learning, the leadership minor through the Excellence in Leadership Program, and comprehensive customer service training developed and administered through the Career Center.

Four learning outcomes are assessed through the Division of Student Affairs:

- Students will demonstrate competence in life skills gained through participation in programs such as living-learning communities, career exploration opportunities, student employment, student organizations, and other co-curricular experiences that support academic excellence.
- Students will demonstrate multicultural competence and active citizenship through participation in multicultural organizations, community service projects, campus diversity programs, and civic engagement opportunities.
- Students will demonstrate leadership competence through involvement in residence halls, Greek letter organizations, student organizations, and other co-curricular experiences that promote engagement with the university.
- Students will demonstrate behaviors consistent with institutional values, including academic integrity, civility, personal wellness, and respect for others and their property.

In 2011, several assessment projects involving 1,594 students were conducted by eight departments in the Division of Student Affairs, investigating what students learned from participating in programs and activities that were provided.

Competence in Life Skills—Individual growth and development of students through participation in student clubs and campus activities continues to be a strength of Ball State. We have more than 380 active student organizations and a vital residence life program housing approximately 34 percent of the student body. Students also benefit from programs such as the Online Career Center Assessment and participation in Counseling Services. Examples of co-curricular experiences that build life skills include:

- **Student Organizations**—Campus organizations run by students include sports clubs, academic honorary societies, fraternity and sororities, and affinity groups. Faculty and professional staff advisors work with each of the recognized student organizations. Involvement in student organizations on campus provides an avenue for developing skills related to leadership, organization, time management, teamwork, communication, financial management, critical thinking, and stress management.
- **Living-Learning Communities**—About a third of all students in the residence halls participate in one of our 10 living-learning communities (LLCs). Data indicate LLC students participate more regularly in study groups, have more contact with faculty members, and have a higher fall semester grade point average and fall-to-spring retention rate than students not living in an LLC.
- **Summer Bridge Programs**—Pre-enrollment summer bridge programs are an innovative approach to helping new students adjust to the university and be more successful in their freshmen year. Seven separate programs were available for the fall 2012 entering class. These programs are described in subcomponent 3.D.1. (First-Year Support). In summer/fall 2009, 411 students participated in summer bridge programs, and data indicate their retention rate from the fall to spring semesters was 86.5 percent, compared with 79.6 percent for freshmen who did not participate.
- **Campus Employment**—Various student jobs on campus provide meaningful opportunities to enhance life skills while earning some income. Nearly 4,800 students are employed in offices and departments throughout the university, providing a mutually beneficial relationship. Many of these jobs have important responsibilities and provide excellent experience, from being a resident assistant in student housing or a lab assistant for a professor to serving as a tutor in the Learning Center or a note taker for the Office of Disabled Student Development.

Multicultural Competence and Citizenship—Ball State is committed to diversity and multiculturalism on campus. One performance metric of *Education Redefined: Strategic Plan 2007–2012* was to increase the percentage of students from underrepresented groups to 15 percent of total undergraduate enrollment. While that goal has yet to be reached, the percentage rose from 8.1 percent in 2006–07 to 11.9 percent in 2011–12. Among freshmen, the numbers reached 13.8 percent. Continued efforts to increase the diversity of the campus community are required. Examples of co-curricular programs that foster multicultural awareness and active citizenship include:

- **Multicultural Center**—A component of this center’s mission is to offer collaborative cultural programs for the campus community. To that end, Multicultural Center staff collaborated with academic departments, administrative offices, and student organizations on 27 of its 53 programs for the 2010–11 academic year. The total number of programs represents an increase of seven from 2009–10. Several other student organizations on campus also provide support and programs for students of various racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds.
- **Institutional Diversity**—This office helps to foster a safe and welcoming environment on campus for all. The university’s equal opportunity and affirmative action policies use a broad definition of diversity referring to race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, national origin, ancestry, age, and citizenship. The Office of Institutional Diversity is not only committed to programming for students, but it also supports several faculty development programs, including the Diversity Associates Program, Developing Pedagogies to Enhance Excellence Seminar, and Diversity Seminars, which encourage faculty to explore the

relevance of diversity in classes.

- **International Recruitment**—To provide a more global view to everyone on campus, the university has increased efforts to recruit students from countries other than the United States. The number of Ball State students participating in study-abroad programs has increased since 2003. In the 2010–11 academic year, 654 students participated in a study abroad or international internship opportunity.
- **Student Voluntary Services**—During the 2010–11 academic year, 1,961 Ball State students volunteered their time to help with needs on campus and in the local community through 2,993 placements sponsored by Student Voluntary Services, accounting for 25,557 hours of service. This was an increase from 1,612 volunteers giving 21,271 hours of service the previous year.

Leadership Competence and Engagement—Ball State provides numerous opportunities for students to develop, enhance, and practice their leadership skills on and off campus. Examples of co-curricular programs that foster student leadership and engagement with the university include:

- **Excellence in Leadership**—This two-year development program for emerging campus leaders incorporates three strategies: weekly workshops, keynote speakers, and retreats and conferences. In the 2010–11 academic year, 28 workshops involved 2,180 participants. In addition, the university’s leadership studies minor increased from 246 credits generated in 2009–10 to 492 credits in 2010–11.
- **Residence Hall Community**—Student organizations in the residence halls are also involved in leadership and service. Notable programs in 2010–11 included the Student Action Team’s 24 Hours of Service, with 250 volunteers at 20 locations in the Muncie community; the National Residence Hall Honorary’s Koin for Kids, which raised \$6,000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation; The Chicken Launch to raise funds for the Muncie Mission; and numerous social and educational programs in each residential unit.
- **Greek Community**—Fraternalities and sororities on campus sponsored 54 educational programs with an attendance of 9,704 individuals, participated in seven leadership conferences and retreats involving 120 members, donated \$66,607.18 to charitable organizations, and provided 20,709.95 hours of service to the community in the 2010–11 academic year. In addition, 1,432 fraternity and sorority members contributed an average of 14 hours of community service and donated \$46.51 per member.

Behavior Reflecting Institutional Values—Ball State students are given high expectations for their personal behavior and their responsibilities in the campus community. The Preamble of the Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities states:

“Students of the university have an obligation to fulfill the responsibilities incumbent upon all citizens, as well as the responsibilities of their particular roles within the academic community. All students share the obligation to respect:

The fundamental rights of others as citizens;

The rights of others based upon the nature of the educational process;

The rights of the institution; and

The rights of students to fair and equitable procedures determining when and upon whom penalties for violation of campus regulations should be imposed.”

Through participation in groups such as the Residence Hall Association, Black Student Association, and Student Government Association, students are involved in the university's governance structure and have opportunities to provide input into important issues on campus. Many opportunities are also available for civic engagement through student organizations, service learning experiences, and campus and community volunteer programs.

Criterion Recommendations

Based on this evaluation of Ball State's success in meeting the standards of the Higher Learning Commission's Criterion Three, the following recommendations will help the university further enhance the high quality of its educational programs and corresponding resources and support:

- Ball State should continue to strive toward high course and program quality. The university should consider creating a role on campus for a "program assessment coordinator" who can assist departments with accreditation tasks and self-studies.
- The university should consider creating one location on campus to serve as a clearinghouse for course and program assessment data. This office could provide and update this information through a website created for this purpose, making it available internally.
- Ball State should continue to strive toward consistent learning goals and educational quality across all delivery modes.
- Programs and services should be implemented to improve the four-year graduation rate of students, with emphasis on advising students to plan a program of study that allows them to maintain academic progress.
- Increased attention should be given to the orientation and retention of transfer students.
- Ball State's living-learning communities should continue to grow through both curricular and extracurricular enhancements.