

**AGREEMENT BETWEEN
INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION ON A
SPECIAL EMPHASIS SELF-STUDY OPTION
FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION SCHEDULED FOR 2009-10**

**SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON:
BECOMING RECOGNIZED FOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

Purpose

The special emphasis Self-Study is an option made available to accredited, mature institutions that have a recent history of decennial review cycles in conjunction with their comprehensive evaluation visits and with no major interim monitoring. Through this arrangement, an institution seeks Commission authorization to do its focus study on one or more issues that are critical to significant advancement and improvement in the achievement and realization of its mission and vision. Collaboration between the institution and the Commission staff is essential when a special emphasis focus is contemplated.

Eligibility and Background

Indiana State University (ISU; website: <http://www.indstate.edu>) is one of five public, four-year institutions in the state. ISU offers a wide array of undergraduate programs and a more limited number of graduate ones, including nine doctoral degrees. It is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a doctoral/research-intensive institution. In 2006, ISU also received the elective community engagement classification from the Carnegie Foundation.

The University was founded on December 20, 1865, pursuant to an Indiana Statute, and was originally known as the Indiana State Normal School. Its primary mission was to prepare teachers for the common schools of Indiana. Indiana State Normal School awarded its first baccalaureate degrees in 1908; master's degrees were granted in 1928; and the first doctor of philosophy degrees were awarded in 1968. Indiana State University has been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), an independent corporation and one of two Commission members of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), since 1915.

Community engagement and experiential learning introduced by President Benjmain as desirable strategic initiatives for the University at a campus-wide retreat in January 2003. This retreat was followed by two years of planning that involved faculty, students, and staff from all areas of campus, as well as external stakeholders. Following another campus-wide retreat in January 2004, a plan entitled *Indiana State University: Fulfilling the Promise – The Path to Pre-Eminence* was drafted to guide the University's move toward deliberate application of student learning to real-world issues and resolution of community problems. The intended outcomes were to enhance the University's reputation and to attract greater numbers of better prepared students to Indiana State University. After four years of implementation, community engagement and experiential learning have become accepted as distinguishing characteristics of education at Indiana State University.

In 2007, ISU became one of the first institutions in the nation to receive the elective Carnegie classification for community engagement. ISU's commitment to community engagement is evident in the new mission statement that was approved by the Board of Trustees in February 2008. The new mission statement states:

Indiana State University, a doctoral research university, combines a tradition of strong undergraduate and graduate education with a focus on community and public service. We integrate teaching, research, and creative activity in an engaging, challenging, and supportive learning environment to prepare productive citizens for Indiana and the world.

We believe ISU is a leading institution in the areas of community engagement and experiential learning. ISU has a well-established infrastructure to support these initiatives and has demonstrated that it is central to our mission.

Collaboration and Preliminary Submission

In October 2007, the campus leadership convened to begin preparations for the development of the 2010 NCA Self-Study. At a follow-up meeting in November, there was consensus by this group that it was appropriate and desirable for the University to participate in a special emphasis study that focuses on the University continuing to be among the nation's most recognized institutions for its work in experiential learning and community engagement.

In February 2008, the institution submitted a preliminary document that:

- Provided data addressing its founding and history;
- Showed the relationship between the identified special emphasis and the institution's mission;
- Documented institutional consensus and support for the special emphasis area chosen;
- Provided evidence that the institution has made progress relative to challenges identified by the team that conducted the last comprehensive evaluation visit or any subsequent on-site visit team;
- Provided evidence that the institution has adequate financial resources and a comprehensive planning and budgeting process.

The self-study coordinator has been in regular contact with the liaison regarding the special emphasis. Campus leadership met with the Commission staff liaison about the special emphasis option during his visit to campus in February 2008. After reviewing the document, the staff liaison signaled his readiness to review a formal submission on which to base an agreement between the institution and the Commission.

Definition of Special Emphasis

The special emphasis will focus on the question, "How do we expand and deepen our commitment to community engagement and experiential learning?" As ISU moves forward with a mission focus on community engagement and experiential learning, it faces a number of key

issues. The general exploration categories and examples of questions to which ISU seeks answers are:

- Mission – How do we ensure that ISU’s mission, as related to community engagement and experiential learning central, is reflected in the mission statements and strategic plans of academic and administrative units across the institution?
- Leadership – In what ways can institutional leadership demonstrate consistent support for our community engagement and experiential learning goals? How can we improve opportunities for community input? How can institutional leadership better utilize funding resources to support community engagement and experiential learning?
- Promotion, Tenure, Hiring – How can we recognize faculty for their work in community engagement and experiential learning? In addressing this question, the self-study will include the extent to which the scholarships of teaching and engagement are and should be recognized in tenure and promotion policies. How can community engagement and experiential learning be factored into faculty and administrative hires?
- Organization, Structure, and Funding – What infrastructure is needed to support departments, faculty, students, and staff? What financial resources are needed to support community engagement and experiential learning activities at the university-wide and department/program levels.
- Student Involvement and Curriculum – How can community engagement and experiential learning be integrated across the curriculum and linked to learning goals and assessment?
- Faculty Involvement – How can community engagement and experiential learning be integrated across disciplines? How can we ensure that faculty and staff are adequately prepared to incorporate community engagement and experiential learning into their work? What professional development opportunities should be made available?
- Community Involvement – How can we better involve the community in defining, conducting, and evaluating community-based research and teaching? Are there numerous and diverse sustained partnerships with community partners? What new partnerships should be pursued?
- External Communications and Fundraising – What are the fundraising priorities for community engagement and experiential learning? How can community engagement and experiential learning priorities be communicated regularly to internal and external audiences, including prospective students?

ISU desires to devote a portion of its current self-study to these and related questions. It also desires consultation and advice from the Higher Learning Commission Consultant Evaluators on these questions through the special emphasis portion of its accreditation review.

Outline Format for Self-Study

An outline report that will present the results of our institutional self-study is attached. Briefly, the report will have three preliminary chapters providing an overview of the institution and its response to concerns raised during the last review, five chapters on the five new criteria for accreditation, and a section in which the special emphasis is addressed.

Institutional Capacity and Commitment to Special Emphasis

The 2010 NCA Self-Study structure is comprised of five core committees that represent the five criteria established for ISU's self-study by the NCA. These five committees are supported by the Mission Team, Data and Analysis Team, and Special Emphasis Team. The Mission Team will provide guidance concerning the future mission of the university. The Data and Analysis Team will provide data and information to the committees as required to fulfill their charters.

The Special Emphasis Team will provide oversight of the Special Emphasis section of the study. In addition, each core committee will have responsibilities related to the special emphasis. The Special Emphasis Team will be chaired by the Director of the Center for Public Service and Community Engagement. Members of the Special Emphasis Team will include representatives from the Divisions of Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Business Affairs, Enrollment, Communications, and Marketing, the ISU Foundation, and Faculty Senate.

The core committees and support teams will be overseen by a Steering Committee chaired by the President's Chief of Staff and Executive Assistant for Strategic Planning, Institutional Research, and Effectiveness. The overall oversight of the 2010 NCA Self-Study will be by the Accreditation Oversight Committee and the President.

Administrative support for the Self-Study is provided by the Office of Strategic Planning, Institutional Research, and Effectiveness, the Associate Provost in charge of curriculum and student outcomes assessment, and Student Affairs Office of Assessment and Research.

Summary of Agreement

Indiana State University agrees to completion of the special emphasis self-study under the terms set forth above, which are listed in summary form below.

- Define need for and nature of the *special emphasis* self-study focus;
- Use of outline format for the self-study that indicates the *Criteria of Accreditation* will be addressed;
- Statement of institution's capacity to support the *special emphasis* initiative;
- Statement of institution's commitment to report the comprehensive results of the special emphasis as a part of the self-study and to being evaluated, in part, on the conduct of the outcomes achieved through the special emphasis;
- Commitment to provide the Commission with follow-up, generally through a later consultative visit, on the recommendations (internal and external) and utilization of the findings resulting from the self-study and evaluation processes.

Upon execution of this agreement, Commission staff will work with institutional representatives in organizing the special emphasis self-study, selecting team members, arranging the on-site visit, following the review process to completion, and monitoring institution/Commission follow-up.

The Consultant-Evaluators Team conducts the comprehensive evaluation visit to determine the institution's fulfillment of the *Criteria for Accreditation*, and evaluate the special emphasis initiative under the agreed upon format and provide consultative advice regarding the outcomes achieved and, under special conditions, participate in follow-up activities as may have been proposed as a part of the special emphasis focus.

Lloyd W. Benjamin III
President, Indiana State University

Date

Steven D. Crow
President, Higher Learning Commission

Date