Main points in the *Report of a Comprehensive Visit to ISU, 2000*, from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA)  
Karen Schmid

The report is posted at [http://www.indstate.edu/acad-aff/78.html](http://www.indstate.edu/acad-aff/78.html). It is generally a very positive report. On pp. 30-31, the report states:

> The team observed many strengths of this university and provides the following as a sample of some of the unique attributes that characterizes the excellence of this university.

1. The willingness of the Indiana State University community to engage in an experimental self study model and to make public the results of their surveys and their budget process.

2. The depth and breadth of the campus participation in the development of the self-study and the resulting updated strategic plan to prepare the university for the transition of leadership to the new president.

3. Faculty who are student-centered and committed to the goal of educating the whole student recognized through the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Lilly Grant and the participation of faculty in developmental programs so they may better serve each student.

4. The faculty and administration who are committed to serving an extended clientele in both the local community and other constituencies in the western region of Indiana.

5. The commitment to provide Information Technology that is well integrated into the administrative, teaching and learning functions of the university and supported by informed technology leadership, a superb infrastructure, appropriate faculty development, and funding for continued maintenance and development.

6. Students and faculty are provided an attractive and well-maintained campus guided by a well conceived master plan with good attention to deferred maintenance.

7. The success of the university in securing significant foundation and federal research grant funds and for the progress in the development of the Indiana State University Foundation as a source of scholarships and other support.

8. The visionary leadership of the university who has earned the support of the faculty and the entire Indiana State University community.

**Challenge**

On pp. 31-32, one challenge is given:

The team encourages the university community to give high priority to addressing the following challenge which has also been included in the reports of the past two comprehensive visits:
The implementation of processes to redirect the use of resources historically allocated to low enrollment programs so that these resources are made available to support the achievement of the high priority goals of the new strategic plan.

**Low-Enrollment Program and Courses**

The need to address low-enrollment programs and courses was repeated throughout the report. For example,

The team notes with concern that the subject of resources allocated to maintain the operation of low enrollment programs and courses has been addressed by the past two NCA visiting teams and is, for the third visit, a concern for this visiting team. However, throughout the ensuing period of 20 years, the university community remains unwilling or unable to reallocate resources from low enrollment activities to areas that the university itself has identified as high priority…. It shall remain the opportunity for the NCA team that visits in ten years to determine the real effectiveness of the strategic planning process as measured by the resolution of the allocation of resources to low enrollment activities (p. 25).

**Other Areas Discussed in the Report**

*General Education:* “[A] great deal of faculty time and expertise have been devoted to the development of a general [education] program…There is…need for additional dialogue with faculty, students, and advisors about the nature of the program and fundamental issues in the design of the implementation of the program.”

*Recruitment and Retention:* “The university is encouraged to continue to give high priority attention to the recruitment and retention of all students.”

*Distance Education:* “While some faculty raised concerns about quality, workload, and intellectual property issues often associated with distance education, there seemed to be widespread commitment and even excitement about the university’s distance learning efforts among both faculty and administration.”

*Low Enrollment Programs:* “[T]he university must give the highest possible priority to the implementation of processes to redirect the use of resources historically allocated to low enrollment programs.”

*Information Technology Support:* “Indiana State University has responded well to the challenges of the information age by capturing and strategically allocating key resources…The challenge…is to develop a financial plan that strengthens the operating fund base for information technology.”

*Human Resources:* “The strategic planning process…identified faculty concerns with workload: even though student credit hours per faculty member are low, the number of
sections taught is high…low beginning salaries in specific areas cause the university to have a high turnover rate and unfilled positions.”

Assessment of Student Achievement: “The plan provides for a decentralized approach to assessment in the major [in] which each academic program develops its own assessment plan….the team urges the institution to implement strategies to help faculty and staff shift from a teaching paradigm to a learning paradigm.”

Resource Allocation: “[R]eallocation of funding presently consumed through the continued maintenance of low enrollment programs…each section taught with a small number of students consumes at least as much preparation time and faculty salary as would be required if directed to a large enrollment course.”

Three items were given in the “Advice and Suggestions for Institutional Improvement” section of the report:

- Pursue research agendas that fall under the scholarship of teaching. ISU could become well known as a center for excellent action-oriented research focused on teaching and learning in higher education.

- Consider an expanded role of the Center for Teaching and Learning to provide support for all faculty as they address the many issues associated with embracing a new, learning-centered paradigm.

- Address the challenges for creating a truly multi-cultural campus community.