The Cleveland State community has used the two-year Self Study process to examine where it has been, where it is, and where it is going—all to increase the quality of the educational opportunities of its students and to improve the lives of the citizens of the Greater Cleveland Metropolitan area. The study focuses on the five criteria established by the Higher Learning Commission (http://www.ncahlc.org/) of the North Central Association:

- Mission and Integrity
- Preparing for the Future
- Student Learning and Effective Teaching
- Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge
- Engagement and Service

In each of the subsequent chapters, the University’s responses to the five Criteria and the 21 Core Components are discussed.

**Purposes of the Self Study**

Although the Self Study process described later in this chapter was enacted to fulfill the obligations of re-accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (http://www.ncahlc.org/), the University found the work to be advantageous for the following reasons:

- The work gave the University the opportunity to engage the entire campus in examining how it meets the standards set by the Higher Learning Commission (http://www.ncahlc.org/), as described by the five Criteria and 21 Core Components (see Chapters 4–8).

- It allowed the University to test its recently developed (2007) strategic plan, *Vision Unlimited* (http://www.csuohio.edu/offices/planning/documents/VisionUnlimited.pdf) as a vehicle for taking Cleveland State University into the future.


- The Self Study was timely in that it allowed the University to reflect upon its place and role in the recently formed University System of Ohio.

- Finally, the process required the University to view its past, its present, and its future regarding the offering and delivering of a quality educational experience to its students and how it can better act as a resource of great value to the Greater Metropolitan Cleveland and Northeast Ohio community.
The Self Study Process

Organizing

The initial planning team consisted of the two co-coordinators (the Vice Provost of Planning, Assessment, and Information Resource Management and an Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum & Foundations) and the Director of Student Learning and Assessment. They began planning for Phase 1 in March 2008, attending the NCA/HLC Conference in Chicago in April of that year (See Self Study Timeline in Appendix 2.1).

The team developed a database with the five core criteria, the 21 core components, and the 182 examples of evidence, identifying persons responsible for each example. In May 2008, Dr. John Taylor, NCA/HLC Liaison for CSU, was scheduled for the Self Study Kick off on September 11. In the following month, the coordinators presented a timeline and challenges for the Self Study to the President’s Council for their approval and feedback. A steering committee (https://mycsu.csuohio.edu/committees/selfstudy2010/documents.html) of 14 members was approved by the President and Provost in August, and held their first meeting on September 2, 2008, initiating Phase 1. Members were selected based on their expertise and their ability to inform the Self Study process.

Internal (http://mycsu.csuohio.edu/committees/selfstudy2010/) and external (http://www.csuohio.edu/committees/selfstudy2010/) Self Study Accreditation websites were developed in August 2008 and underwent constant reorganizing and updating throughout all phases of the process.

Process

Dr. Taylor met with the Self Study Steering Committee and representatives from the University Strategic Planning Committee and Assessment Council the morning of September 11, 2008. He also met individually with the Provost, the President, the Vice President of Operations, and the Vice President of Enrollment Services. Finally, he presented an overview of the Self Study process to over 80 members of the University community.

The Steering Committee met monthly throughout Phases 2 and 3 to discuss marketing and data collection (see Steering Committee minutes (https://mycsu.csuohio.edu/committees/selfstudy2010/documents.html)). The Assistant Vice President of Marketing, a Steering Committee member, helped the Committee devise a marketing plan that included a newsletter that was first published on the Internet and throughout the campus in paper form in April 2009 (and subsequently in October 2009 and March 2010). A plan for ongoing dissemination of information was developed utilizing the two Self Study websites.

Criterion Leaders (CLS) and Core Component Leaders (https://mycsu.csuohio.edu/committees/selfstudy2010/documents.html) (see “Master Organizational Charts” in Virtual Resource Room) were assigned during Phase 2 in October 2008. Each CL met as needed with Core Component Leaders and others key to data collection as established by the Data Chart (https://mycsu.csuohio.edu/committees/selfstudy2010/documents.html) (see “Master Organizational Chart” in Virtual Resource Room). Criterion Leaders were also members of the Steering Committee and were asked to update the committee at each monthly meeting.

The Director of Student Learning Assessment worked with eLearning (https://mycsu.csuohio.edu/elearning/) to establish a space on Blackboard for
each CL to upload data; he provided training and reminders on how to use Blackboard at Steering Committee meetings and some Criterion meetings. This provided an easily accessible, yet secure place for data storage. The co-coordinators had each CL provide him with a list of questions for associate deans so that they would not be asked for data from a plethora of sources and for duplicate information. They sent these to the associate deans, who sent the data directly to the Director of Student Learning Assessment.

The co-coordinators updated each academic college at their fall faculty meetings. Feedback on the process was solicited.

A draft of all six chapters (one for each criterion plus the Introduction) was written from the reports during the summer months of 2009. This draft was shared two chapters at a time with the Steering Committee at the September, October, and November meetings. Based on this feedback, a revised draft was submitted to the Provost in December 2009.

An Executive Summary based on the strengths, challenges, and self recommendations was developed in January 2010. This, along with the full report, was sent to the President for his review. Also in January, the University was notified by the Commission that the comprehensive site visit was to take place on October 18–20, 2010. Collection of data for the Virtual Resource Room began in March 2010; the collection and categorization of these data, and the development of the Resource Room extended throughout the summer of 2010.

In February 2010, the co-coordinators gave updates to the Faculty Senate’s Academic Steering Committee, the Student Government Association, and the Management and Administrative Staff Association. Finally, a critical reading group consisting of an associate dean from each academic college responded to the strengths, challenges, and self-recommendations for each chapter.

In February and March 2010, focus groups of students (one for undergraduate, one for graduate students) and faculty representing each academic college were assembled. They, as an associate dean group had done previously, reviewed and commented on the strengths, challenges, and self-recommendations and other questions regarding their perspectives about the University. The University Strategic Planning Committee and University Assessment Council also engaged in a combined critical reading group on March 11, 2010, examining specified sections of the report.

The full report and the Executive Summary were placed onto the internal Self Study website on March 6, 2010. Comment sections on the website allowed campus constituents to react to the drafts (an updated draft was posted every two to three weeks).

In April 2010, the co-coordinators held three review sessions with academic deans and vice presidents, collecting input on the report draft. In early May, six students recruited by Student Life volunteered to review specific chapters of the report. These April and May reviews led to a revised report which was sent to an outside editor on May 15, 2010. Final revisions of the report were made by the co-coordinators in June, whereupon the report was sent to an outside publishing firm.

The steering Committee selected a space in the new Student Center to house the Visiting Committee for the Comprehensive Site Visit. Conference
Services and Information Services and Technology were instrumental providing the necessary equipment for this space. Student Life and University Marketing, in collaboration with the Steering Committee, made preparations for the campus visit during summer 2010 including meeting with each academic college during August and September 2010 to update faculty and staff on the process and prepare them for the Comprehensive Site Visit.