

2017-2018 HLC Reaffirmation Review Summary

Criterion 1: The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Drake University has developed a well-publicized, explicitly-defined, and broadly-utilized mission statement. A true area of strength for the University is the direct connections between the institution's operations and their core mission.

In recent years, Drake has significantly increased their commitment to addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, although there is much more work ahead of them in this area. Their commitment to the public good is evident through both the high degree to which they connect students, faculty, and staff to the community, as well as the myriad and multiple opportunities that Drake opens up to the public.

Criterion 2: The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Drake University operates with integrity in its operations and they seek to encourage and model ethical and responsible conduct. The University operates with integrity in almost all functions and establishes fair and ethical behavior as the standard for all community members. Drake presents itself clearly and completely to the public, including students. The governing Board of Trustees is autonomous, makes decisions in the interest of the University, follows appropriate policies, and delegates daily responsibilities to the President and his staff. Drake's commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth is frequently demonstrated. Its policies and processes seek to encourage the responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge by all community members.

One area of Drake's operations shows deficiencies in integrity. The decentralization of both staff and faculty personnel procedures has produced an incomplete record of personnel reviews, as well as faculty and staff qualifications. The current system cannot either demonstrate or guarantee good, University-wide practice in regard to employee evaluation. Likewise, the University does not have complete records that demonstrate faculty and staff have the specific qualifications required to carry out their job descriptions. The University is engaged in a re-evaluation of its processes in relation to HR.

Criterion 3: The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Drake University provides a high quality education wherever its programs are offered and in all modalities. Drake's tenure and promotion guidelines ensure that the University maintains a core of highly qualified faculty to develop and guide its academic program.

These faculty also oversee the development of the online programs and continued curriculum development. They are provided professional development resources, opportunities, and facilities to enable them to provide high quality instruction. This instruction is supported by a robust system of student support and co-curricular programming offered by qualified staff.

Criterion 4: The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Drake has made significant progress in their course-level student learning outcomes assessment. Faculty members are heavily engaged in the assessment process and evidence-based improvement. However, Drake lacks a solid structure and framework to support the assessment of student learning. The mechanism to gather the assessment data, the report system to receive and to distribute the gathered data, and the dissemination of their data analysis throughout the campus also needs refinement and further implementation.

The program-level assessment of student learning outcomes system has some strengths, but has room to improve. The Visiting Team had significant concerns about both the lack of coordination across the campus as well as the lack of connection to institutional goals. (4.B.) The lack of program review coordination occurs in the main three areas of 1) alignment between Institutional learning outcomes and program learning outcomes, 2) communication across academic schools and colleges, and 3) sharing institutional data through a centralized depository system.

Overall, Drake demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its education programs; yet, the university-wide effectiveness for student learning through systematically-organized processes has yet to be fully realized.

Criterion 5: The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Drake has demonstrated the financial and operational capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of educational programs and services, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. Through effective budget management, debt refinancing, and successful fundraising Drake has shown a commitment to financial stewardship. Planning process are in place to identify opportunities, allocate resources, measure performance, and plan for the future.

Conclusion

Drake University has a strong academic program, committed and accomplished faculty, dedicated staff, and an excellent reputation which continues to attract students. The University's finances are healthy; the campus benefits from new construction, and financial processes are increasingly transparent. Recent initiatives in the area of diversity and inclusion show considerable promise; further pursuit and development of these initiatives can help the University reach its goals in this area. The University's commitment to its mission of integrating the liberal arts with professional preparation permeates the campus. Thus, the Visiting Team recommends that Drake University should have the opportunity to remain on the Open Pathway, should they choose.

Drake confronts the difficulties in maintaining its enrollment levels and enrollment goals that face almost all private institutions at this time. While enrollment has declined steadily for several years, the University is taking action to stabilize enrollment numbers. Deferred maintenance remains a stubborn, but not impossible problem for the University's finances. Drake has also grown in complexity and developed specialized areas of excellence in its six schools and colleges; the integration of these different areas of excellence is not yet fully realized. The unevenness of academic assessment, as well of record-keeping in personnel procedures, may be improved with greater integration of the work of the different schools and colleges.

The Visiting Team heard often of improvements in communication, transparency, and accountability, attributed to the work of the relatively new president and the nearly new President's Council. Those changes appear to have been embraced by the entire community.