

SECTION IV: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The University of South Alabama, created by an act of the State Legislature in 1963, has awarded 46,968 degrees: 74.2% of these were bachelor's degrees, 22.1% were master's degrees, 3.3% were medical degrees, and 0.4 % were doctor of philosophy degrees. USA's first graduation in the spring of 1967, conferred 88 bachelor's degrees, while 1,285 bachelor's degrees, 511 master's degrees, 8 doctor of philosophy degrees, and 65 doctor of medicine degrees were awarded in the academic year, 2000-2001. USA awarded its first master's degrees in 1968, its first doctor of medicine degrees in 1976, and its first doctor of philosophy degrees in 1983 (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 4.3).

USA's Mission statement indicates that the primary purpose of the University is to "serve as a major center of high quality and accessible undergraduate, graduate, and professional education for metropolitan Mobile, the State of Alabama, the Gulf Coast region, and the southeastern United States." USA's undergraduate mission is "designed to promote the growth of the individual to think critically and analytically, to communicate effectively, to acquire information and apply it to problem-solving, and to understand the context of global complexity and diversity in which knowledge is applied." USA's graduate education mission is to provide "students with increasing levels of challenge and opportunities for independent investigation, creative achievement, the advancement of knowledge, and participation in traditional and new forms of scholarly activity in a broad range of discipline-based and interdisciplinary programs." Finally, USA's professional education mission focuses on training physicians and health scientists, who along with allied health professionals and professional nurses "will provide the community and

the region with the highest quality health care” (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*, p. 3).

4.1 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

#1 of 4

Relationship of Programs to Purpose

(Page 22, Line 1): *All aspects of the educational program **must** be clearly related to the purpose of the institution.*

USA’s educational programs reflect the USA’s Mission Statement by emphasizing the following:

1. Attracting and retaining high-quality students with varied backgrounds,
2. Presenting challenging and diverse undergraduate and graduate curricula,
3. Employing competent faculty, and
4. Providing adequate support services.

These four aspects of the educational program are discussed below.

Varied Backgrounds of Students

The student body is diverse in terms of ethnic backgrounds, gender representation, age groups, and the geographic areas from which students arrive. For example, recent data indicate the ethnic background of students to be as follows: 72.7% white, 15.8% African American, 1.2% Hispanic American, 2.4% Asian American, 0.7% Native American, and 8.4% international students (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 3.1). While percentages of Asian American,

Hispanic American, and Native American have remained relatively stable between 1997 and 2001, the percentage of African American students has steadily grown from 11.9% to 15.8%, and the percentage of white students declined from 77.1% to 72.7% for that same time period (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 3.7).

In fall of 2001, 59.8 % of students were females and 40.2% were males. The percentage of females has steadily grown from 57.8% in 1997 to 59.8% in 2001, while the percentage of male students declined from 42.7% to 40.2% (USA Enrollment Services).

The average age for undergraduate students is 24.1 years, while the average age of graduate and professional students is 32.1 years. In addition, 25.6% of undergraduates are over 25 years of age, while 68.8% of graduate and professional students are over 25. The average age of female students is 26.3 years, and the average age of male students is 25.0 (USA Enrollment Services). Over 78% of the students originate from Alabama, 14.8% are from other states (including foreign students with permanent visas), and 7.2 % are non-resident aliens. More students come from Mississippi, Florida, and Louisiana than any other state besides Alabama. India, Pakistan, and Malaysia are the major countries of origin for international students, who make up 8.4% (foreign students with permanent visas and non-resident aliens) of total University enrollment; a total of 100 countries are represented by international students at the University. Of the 946 foreign students, 794 (86.6%) have non-permanent visas and 152 (13.4%) have permanent visas (USA Enrollment Services).

Quality of Students

For the fall of 2001, 2,576 individuals applied for freshman enrollment, and 2,401 (93.2%) were offered admission, while 1,265 (49.1%) matriculated. The average high school grade of the matriculated freshman students was 3.10 GPA out of 4.0 (USA Enrollment Services).

The average Enhanced ACT composite score for first-time enrolled freshmen during fall 2000 was 22.3, which was higher than the Enhanced ACT for Alabama (20.2) or the United States (21.0) (Office of Institutional Research and Planning).

In fall of 2001, 1,531 undergraduate transfer students applied for admission and 1,326 (86.4 %) were admitted, while 985 (64.3 %) matriculated. The average GPA of matriculated transfer students was 2.8 out of 4.0 (USA Enrollment Services).

During the same period, 245 students applied for admission to the Developmental Studies Program (see Section 4.2.1, #8 of 24), and 244 were offered admission. Of these, 121 (49.4%) matriculated as full-time students. Their average Enhanced ACT score was 16.0 (Office of Institutional Research and Planning; Document 4.1: 1 of 4a).

In fall of 2001, 1,788 graduate students applied for admission; 1,209 (67.6%) were offered admission, and 515 (28.8%) matriculated (Enrollment Services). For fall 2000, the average GRE score of matriculated students was 1,027 (Office of Institutional Research and Planning).

The Medical School had 743 applications for fall of 2001, 199 were interviewed, 124 were accepted, and 64 matriculated. The average MCAT score of matriculated students was 29 (the

national average was 29.5), and the average GPA was 3.70 (the national average was 3.60) (email from Vice Dean for Student Affairs and Medical Education; Document 4.1: 1 of 4b).

The University Honors Program, created in 1999, “offers a curriculum of interdisciplinary excellence designed to stimulate analytical and critical thinking for exceptionally qualified and highly motivated students” (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*, p. 29.) There were 127 applications for fall 2001, 32 were admitted, and 28 matriculated. The mean Enhanced ACT of matriculated students was 28.1(email from Director of the University Honors Program; Document 4.1: 1 of 4c).

Retention of Students

USA is an urban public institution with a relatively liberal undergraduate admissions policy. Its six-year graduation rate is approximately 31% for all students and 42% for student-athletes. While these graduation rates compare favorably with USA’s NCAA Division I peer institutions, some of whom have a more selective admissions policy, the Office of Academic Affairs felt that the University should develop an extensive program to enhance student retention (memorandum and *Comparison of Student and Student-Athlete Graduation Rates Table from the Statistical Research Analyst*, Office of Institutional Research and Planning). It should be noted that USA is an urban institution whose student population is diverse and largely non-traditional. Thus, traditional measures of retention such as six year graduate rate are not necessarily appropriate.

The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs appointed a Student Retention Committee in 1999, which was charged with “researching University retention issues and developing

recommendations and implementation strategies to improve student retention at the University” (Document 4.1: 1 of 4d, *Plan to Enhance Student Success and Retention, 2000*, p. 2). The Committee found that over one half of student attrition occurred in the freshman year. The Committee then identified several groups of students at risk of attrition prior to graduation, analyzed factors that contributed to attrition, identified current retention programs, and recommended additional retention initiatives.

Undergraduate and Graduate Curricula

USA’s seven colleges and two schools offer a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs leading to post-secondary certificates as well as bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*, p. 6; *Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 4.1).

In the fall of 2001, the ten undergraduate programs with the highest enrollment were as follows: Business Administration (1,258), Nursing (726), Elementary Education (615), Computer and Information Sciences (546), Biomedical Sciences (409), Communication (397), Secondary Education (343), Psychology (280), Biology (267), and Adult Interdisciplinary Studies (259) (Office of Institutional Research and Planning).

The ten graduate programs, in the fall of 2001, with the highest enrollment were: Nursing (415), Counselor Education (232), Alternative Masters I and II (166), Computer and Information Sciences (129), MBA–General (125), Educational Leadership (114), Instructional Design and

Development, PhD (86), Elementary Education (85), Instructional Specialist (78), and Instructional Design (72) (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 3.5).

Many of the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs are accredited by professional associations including (*Bulletin*, p. 4; *Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 4.2):

- Association for Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business-International
- Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)
- Accreditation Review Committee for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) and Committee on Accreditation of Allied Health Educational Programs (CAAHEP)
- American Chemical Society
- American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association
- Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education of American Physical Therapy Association
- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
- Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) , and
- Committee on Accreditation of Allied Health Educational Programs (CAAHEP)
- Computing Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc.
- Engineering Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc.
- Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology
- Liaison Committee for Medical Education

- National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences
- National Association of Schools of Art and Design
- National Association of Schools of Music
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

Competent Faculty

In fall of 2000, USA had 688 full-time faculty and 231 part-time faculty who are involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating courses and programs of their respective colleges and schools (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 5.1). The faculty's competence in teaching, research, and service are discussed in Section 4.1: #2 of 4.

Student Services

Students at USA have access to a variety of student services that focus on the student's recreation and entertainment, mental health, physical health, and academic well-being. Figure 4.1: B provides a breakdown of relevant results from the *Self-Study Student Survey, 2001*.

A variety of recreational facilities are available to students, including racquetball and basketball courts, a fitness center, indoor track, outdoor pool, and tennis courts. Approximately 67% of the students reported using the recreational facilities, and 89% of those who used the facilities were satisfied (*Self-Study Student Survey, 2001*). The Student Center offers a variety of academic and entertainment programs; of the 71% of students who said they used the facility, 86% are satisfied with the service. While less than 10% of students said they used the Disabled Student Services, Student Support Services, and the Developmental Studies Program, those students who did use these services report being satisfied. The Counseling Service and Student Health Service were

used by 18% and 38% of the students respectively; the majority of these students reported being satisfied. Over 74.7% of the first-time students in fall of 2001 reside in Mobile and Baldwin counties and probably use their family physicians (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 2.12). Finally, the University Writing Center, which is open to any student needing help with a writing project, was used by 11% of students, but the majority of those who used this service reported being satisfied.

**Table 4.1: B
Student Evaluations of Student Services**

	Used Service	Did Not Use Service	Satisfied With Service (if used)	Not Satisfied With Service (if used)
Student Recreation Center (racquetball & basketball courts, fitness center, indoor track)				
Undergraduate	67%	33%	89%	11%
Graduate and MD	77%	23%	90%	10%
Student Center (programs, student activities & services, meeting rooms, lounge areas)				
Undergraduate	71%	29%	86%	14%
Graduate and MD	48%	52%	86%	14%
Counseling Services (psychological evaluation, counseling, testing)				
Undergraduate	18%	82%	76%	24%
Graduate and MD	7%	93%	73%	27%
Disabled Student Services (special services for students with physical, emotional, or learning disabilities)				
Undergraduate	5%	95%	56%	44%
Graduate and MD	2%	98%	-	-
Student Support Services (support services for students who are first-generation college students or who are from low-income families)				

Undergraduate	6%	94%	53%	47%
Graduate and MD	5%	95%	100%	0%
Student Health Services (ambulatory health care services-located in Health Services Building)				
Undergraduate	38%	62%	73%	27%
Graduate and MD	76%	24%	89%	11%
University Writing Center (available to students who need help with any kind of writing project)				
Undergraduate	11%	87%	68%	32%
Graduate and MD	2%	98%	-	-
Developmental Studies Program (non-credit courses for students with special academic needs)				
Undergraduate	8%	82%	58%	42%
Graduate and MD	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#2 of 4

Faculty and Resources

*(Page 22, Line 3): The institution **must** provide a competent faculty, adequate library/learning resources, and appropriate computer resources, instructional materials/equipment and physical facilities.*

Competent Faculty

A review of faculty credentials (see University *Bulletin and faculty vitae*) indicate that USA provides a highly competent faculty to teach its undergraduate, graduate, and professional curricula. Twenty-eight percent of the full-time faculty are full professors, 24% are associate professors, 37% are assistant professors, 10% are instructors, and fewer than 1% are classified as lecturers (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 5.1). The data also indicate that 53% of the full-time instructional faculty (excluding College of Medicine faculty, librarians, and administrators holding faculty rank) are tenured (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 5.5).

Competence of the faculty is evidenced in a variety of ways including teaching, research, and service outcomes that are recorded in annual written performance evaluations and in annual reports of scholarly and professional activities. The aforementioned accreditation associations (see Section 4.1: #1 of 4) also evaluate faculty competency as part of their program evaluations.

The *Self-Study Student Survey, 2001* found that the majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the courses they had taken so far had been intellectually challenging. As seen in Figure 4.1: C, the majority of students strongly agreed or agreed that the faculty present material effectively, help students when they need assistance, are objective when evaluating their work, and are available outside of class. The majority of students also strongly agreed or agreed that they receive the academic advising they need.

**Table 4.1: C
Student Evaluations of Instruction & Advising at USA**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The courses I've taken so far have been intellectually demanding.				

Undergraduate	30%	66%	4%	
Graduate and MD	57%	42%		1%
I receive a written syllabus for each course I take, outlining the contents of the course and the schedule of exams.				
Undergraduate	56%	41%	3%	
Graduate and MD	64%	32%	3%	1%
Instructors make clear at the beginning of each course what we're expected to learn from the course.				
Undergraduate	29%	66%	5%	
Graduate and MD	36%	59%	5%	
Instructors present their material effectively.				
Undergraduate	12%	73%	14%	1%
Graduate and MD	19%	71%	10%	
Instructors give me the help I need.				
Undergraduate	17%	69%	13%	1%
Graduate and MD	31%	64%	4%	1%
Instructors are interested in how well I do in their courses.				
Undergraduate	10%	58%	29%	3%
Graduate and MD	26%	58%	13%	3%
Instructors are available outside of class when I need them.				
Undergraduate	19%	70%	11%	
Graduate and MD	35%	58%	6%	1%
Instructors are objective in evaluating my work.				
Undergraduate	16%	74%	9%	1%
Graduate and MD	23%	71%	5%	1%
I receive the academic advising I need.				
Undergraduate	25%	51%	21%	3%
Graduate and MD	35%	54%	8%	1%

To provide further evidence of the quality of teaching at USA, students were asked whether or not they had developed various academic skills and abilities. As seen in Figure 4.1: D, the majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they write effectively, get their ideas across when talking with others, apply mathematical principles effectively, use the information

resources of the library, think critically, think creatively, and do independent research (*Self-Study Student Survey, 2001*).

Table 4.1: D
Student Evaluations of Development of Academic Skills

Development of the ability to...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Write effectively.				
Undergraduate	23%	65%	11%	1%
Graduate and MD	12%	61%	25%	2%
Get ideas across in talking with others.				
Undergraduate	22%	67%	10%	1%
Graduate and MD	29%	58%	12%	1%
Apply mathematical principles effectively.				
Undergraduate	13%	63%	21%	3%
Graduate and MD	15%	62%	22%	1%
Use computer resources effectively.				
Undergraduate	19%	62%	17%	2%
Graduate and MD	24%	59%	16%	1%
Use the information resources of a library.				
Undergraduate	19%	61%	18%	2%
Graduate and MD	26%	58%	15%	1%
Think critically (to analyze closely what is written or said)				
Undergraduate	28%	64%	7%	1%
Graduate and MD	39%	52%	6%	3%
Think creatively (to come up with ideas).				
Undergraduate	24%	64%	11%	1%
Graduate and MD	22%	60%	13%	5%
Do independent research.				
Undergraduate	25%	62%	11%	2%
Graduate and MD	29%	55%	14%	2%

The faculty are honored for their teaching efforts by the USA Alumni Association, which has an annual award for Excellence in Teaching. Since the award's inception, eighteen faculty from five colleges/schools and representing thirteen departments have been recognized by the Alumni

Association for teaching and scholarly excellence (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 5.6).

Also, each college gives a yearly teaching award, as do many individual departments.

USA's faculty competence in scholarship is evidenced by their publications and by their success in obtaining extramurally sponsored research totaling \$21,800,000 in 2001. The extent of the faculty's scholarly efforts in publishing, grant writing, and faculty development can be seen in various college year-end reports and in faculty vitae.

USA's commitment to faculty engagement in research, scholarship and creative activity is evidenced by the support it provides, including library, laboratory facilities and equipment, technology, research "start-ups" funds for new faculty, support for faculty travel, funding for intramural research grants, and assistance provided by the Office of Sponsored Programs for faculty to succeed in obtaining extramural research funding.

Faculty members wishing to present a paper at a professional meeting or attend a workshop have access to travel funds at both the department and college level. In addition, the USA Foundation provides supplemental travel funds up to \$1,000 annually to each faculty member. Each year the USA Research Council provides intramural grant support to encourage faculty research, increase competitiveness for extramural grants, and support projects for which external funding is not generally available (memorandum from the Dean of the Graduate School). Individual colleges also provide start-up funding for new faculty to implement their research programs and the college also provides modest funding for other faculty to support their research efforts. In addition each college has an annual recognition program for outstanding faculty research.

Faculty are actively engaged in service within the University community and the nation. Faculty play an integral role in all facets of the University, serving on an extensive array of committees. (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001, Chapter 2, pp. 39-40*). Faculty serve the local community by serving on community boards such as the city planning commission and by serving as judges for social science and science fairs. In addition, the allied health, nursing, and medical faculty provide needed health services to the community. Many faculty serve their professional organizations as officers or by serving in various capacities.

The competency of the faculty is also reflected in students' responses to other statements from the *Student Survey*. As indicated in Table 4.1: E, 98% of the undergraduate students and 96% of the graduate students strongly agreed or agreed that they were receiving a good education at USA. Furthermore, 74% of the undergraduate students and 87% of the graduate students either strongly agreed or agreed that they would still choose to attend USA if they had the opportunity to start over with their college education (*Self-Study Student Survey, 2001*).

**Table 4.1: E
Students' Overall Satisfaction with USA**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I believe I am receiving a good education at South.	27%	71%	2%	0%
Undergraduate	46%	50%	2%	2%
Graduate and MD				
If I had it to do all over again, I would still choose to attend South.				
Undergraduate	26%	48	20%	6%
Graduate and MD	37%	50	9%	4%

Library and Learning Resources

USA has several libraries to provide adequate library and learning resources for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. The USA Libraries are as follows:

- University Library (on-campus),
- Charles M. Baugh Biomedical Library (on-campus and USA Medical Center),
- Archives at USA Springhill campus, and
- the extension at USA Baldwin County Campus.

An online catalog and several periodical indices are available through the University’s website (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*, p. 4). USA library holdings include 410,075 bound volumes, 1,668 current serial titles, 852,325 microforms, and 1,078,292 government documents. In 2000, there were over 9,681 interlibrary transactions and over 334,000 external database uses. All told, over 96,000 books were in circulation, and 3,786 students received instruction in how to use the library (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 4.10). The Charles M. Baugh Biomedical Library has 83,971 bound volumes, 1,477 current periodical subscriptions, and 10,819 microforms. In 2000, over 32,720 people used the external database (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 4.11). As Table 4.1: F reveals, the *Self-Study Student Survey, 2001* indicates that a majority of both undergraduate and graduate students strongly agreed or agreed that they are able to get the information they need from the USA libraries.

Table 4.1: F
Student Evaluation of University Libraries

	Strongly				Strongly
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	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree
I am able to get the information I need from the USA libraries (University or Biomedical)				
Undergraduate	24%	62%	12%	2%
Graduate and MD	29%	58%	12%	1%

The *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* indicates that the faculty were not as positive as the students in terms of whether the USA Libraries provide resources needed for undergraduate and graduate programs Table 4.1:G. The faculty did, however, strongly agreed or agreed that the USA Libraries are incorporating information technology effectively, that the Libraries have an adequate professional staff, and that students taking web-based courses have adequate access to a library.

**Table 4.1: G
Faculty Evaluations of University Libraries**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The USA Libraries (University and Biomedical) are accessible to all students.	31%	59%	8%	2%
The USA Libraries provide the resources needed for undergraduate academic programs.	19%	55%	21%	5%
The USA Libraries provide the resources needed for graduate academic programs.	15%	42%	30%	13%
The USA Libraries provide the resources I need in my own research.	16%	44%	27%	13%
The USA Libraries are	22%	65%	10%	3%

incorporating information technology effectively.				
The USA Libraries have adequate professional staff.	27%	59%	13%	1%
Students taking web-based courses have adequate access to a library.	17%	62%	16%	5%

Computer Resources

USA provides appropriate computer resources for both students and faculty. All classroom buildings and campus residences are wired to the campus network so that faculty and students can have access to the Internet. Many departments have their own dedicated computer laboratory for students (see program descriptions in *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*). Students can also use public-access computers in the University Libraries and in the Computer Science Classroom Building. Computers and Internet access are supplied to all full-time faculty.

The University’s Computer Center and the College of Education offer computing and instructional technology workshops for faculty and staff. USA contracts with NETg which provides access for students, faculty, administrators, and staff to tutorials for over five hundred computer applications. Effective fall of 2001, all students entering USA must have personal access to a personal computer. This access includes, as a minimum, a current version of the Microsoft Office software package to include word processing and spread-sheet capabilities, provision for email with attachments, and Internet access for research (*Bulletin*, p. 24).

As shown in Table 4.1: H, the *Self-Study Student Survey, 2001* indicates that both undergraduate and graduate students strongly agreed or agreed that computer resources available to them at USA are adequate. Table 4.1: I indicates that over 82% of the students surveyed own their own computer. Of those students who own or have access to a computer where they live, 89% indicated their computers are connected to the Internet.

**Table 4.1: H
Student Evaluation of Computer Resources**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The computer resources available to me at USA are adequate.				
Undergraduate	20%	61%	16%	3%
Graduate and MD	28%	58%	9%	5%

**Table 4.1: I
Student Access to Computers**

	Yes—desktop computer only	Yes—laptop computer only	Yes—both desktop & laptop computers	No—but have access to a computer where I live	No –Do not have access to a computer where I live
Do you own your own computer?	64%	8%	10%	12%	6%

Instructional Materials/Equipment

The *Self-Study Student Survey, 2001* indicates that over 80% of both the undergraduate and graduate students surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that the laboratory facilities available to

them at USA are adequate, as seen in Table 4.1: J. According to the *Faculty Senate Survey, 2000* (www.southalabama.edu/fsenate), faculty rated the USA Computer Center at 3.21 on a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) in terms of keeping abreast of the latest technology. Faculty rated the Center at 3.23 for the services provided.

**Table 4.1: J
Student Evaluations of Laboratory Facilities**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The laboratory facilities available at USA are adequate.				
Undergraduate	18%	69%	10%	3%
Graduate and MD	26%	62%	9%	3%

The *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* indicates that some 75% of faculty believe that USA provides adequate laboratory support for undergraduate and graduate education as well as for their own research. As seen in Table 4.1: K, 74% of faculty also believe USA is effectively incorporating information technology resources and systems into educational programs, while 68% believe USA offers adequate access to undergraduate and graduate students.

**Table 4.1: K
Faculty Evaluations of Laboratory & Technology Resources**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My department provides adequate laboratory support for undergraduate education.	24%	47%	23%	6%
My department provides adequate laboratory support for graduate	22%	45%	25%	8%

education.				
I have adequate laboratory support for my own research.	17%	49%	23%	11%
USA is effectively incorporating information technology into its educational programs.	15%	58%	23%	4%
My department is effectively incorporating information technology into its educational programs.	21%	53%	22%	4%
USA offers undergraduate students adequate access to information technology.	16%	52%	24%	8%
USA offers graduate students adequate access to information technology.	19%	49%	22%	10%
I have adequate information technology in classrooms in which I teach.	20%	45%	25%	10%
I have adequate information technology in my own research.	22%	57%	14%	7%

Physical Facilities

USA's physical facilities include 204 general classrooms with 11,982 seats and 141,134 net assignable square footage. There are 232 instructional laboratories with 3,153 seats and 150,097 net assignable square footage (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001, Table 7.5*).

In fall 2000, 23.5% of the undergraduate sections of courses contained 2 to 9 students, 23.9% contained 10 to 19 students, 24% contained 20 to 29 students. In other words, over 70% of the class sections had 29 students or fewer, while only 1% of the class sections had over 100 students (*USA Institutional Research: Common Data Set, 2000-2001*).

Fall 2000 data on the utilization rate of classrooms on the main campus indicate that 38.51% of the classroom hours available were used, with the greatest utilization on Mondays (42.73%) and

Wednesdays (42.21%) and the least utilization occurred on Fridays (32.68%) (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 7.6. Document 4.1: 2 of 4).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#3 of 4

Enrollment and Financial Resources

*(Page 22, Line 7): The student enrollment and financial resources of an institution **must** be sufficient to support an effective educational program.*

In fall 2001, 12,122 students were enrolled at USA. There were 7,598 full-time and 4,524 part-time students. Of those enrolled, 9,407 were enrolled in the undergraduate division while 2,149 were enrolled in master's programs and 150 were enrolled in Ph.D. programs. Two hundred and fifty-one students were enrolled in medical school (first professional) and 165 were unclassified.

In fall of 2001, 1,101 undergraduates declared majors in Allied Health Professions, 3,059 in Arts and Sciences, 1,752 in the Mitchell College of Business, 1,277 in Education, 788 in Engineering, 726 in Nursing, 546 in Computer and Information Science, and 333 in Continuing Education and Special Programs. In addition, 175 students were enrolled in graduate programs of Allied Health Professions, 223 in Arts and Sciences, 153 in the Mitchell College of Business,

1,032 in Education, 136 in Engineering, 415 in Nursing, 287 in Medicine, and 129 in Computer and Information Sciences.

For the academic year 2000-2001, the total numbers of undergraduate and graduate degrees awarded are found in Table 4.1 L (Office of Institutional Research and Planning).

**Table 4.1: L
Degrees Awarded by Academic Division**

College/Schools	Bachelor's Degree	Masters Degree	Doctor of Philosophy Degree	Doctor of Medicine Degree	Totals
Allied Health Professions	132	84	0		216
Arts and Sciences	316	50	1		367
Mitchell College of Business	230	57	-		287
Education	271	186	4		461
Engineering	123	18	-		141
Medicine	-	-	3	65	68
Nursing	105	91	-		196
Computer and Information Sciences	53	25	-		78
Continuing Education and Special Programs	55	-	-		55
Totals	1,285	511	8	65	1,869

USA's financial resources as expressed in the educational and general expenditures budget for FY 2000 were \$168,489,703. Of this amount, \$80,571,584 was budgeted for instruction and \$12,610,881 for academic support, with \$12,239,206 for institutional support (*USA Institutional Research: Educational and General Expenditures Actual FY 2000 and Budgeted FY 2001*.

Document 4.1: 3 of 4). The University's 2000-2001 state appropriations were prorated (reduced)

by 3.1 percent. The shortfall was offset by growth in tuition revenues, by a temporary hiring freeze, and by reducing certain non-personal budget items such as travel.

Conclusions

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#4 of 4

Student Achievement and Quality of Programs

*(Page 22, Line 9): In addition, the institution **must** ensure appropriate levels of student achievement and equivalent quality of programs regardless of method of instruction or location of program.*

Regardless of the method of instruction or the location of the instructional program, USA ensures the appropriate levels of student achievement and quality of programs through the hiring of qualified faculty, as discussed in Section 4.1: #2 of 4. At all sites of instruction, faculty are responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating all curricular activities, including the method of instruction. The qualifications of faculty (full-time or part-time) are the same no matter if the faculty member teaches on the main campus or the Baldwin County Campus. Furthermore, the requirements of courses taught at the Baldwin County Campus are the same as those for the equivalent courses taught at the main campus (*Bulletin; Schedule of Classes, Summer/Fall 2001*). The duties and responsibilities of faculty do not differ from campus to campus (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001, Chapters 3, 4, and 6*).

A sampling of faculty who teach courses at both the main campus and the Baldwin County Campus indicates that course content and course assignments are the same for both campuses (Document 4.1: 4 of 4, personal communications with sampled faculty and department chairs). Although most courses at the Baldwin County campus meet one day a week and most courses at the main campus meet two or three days a week, the class meeting time (clock hours) per credit hour is the same (*Schedule of Classes, Summer/Fall 2001*). The sampled faculty report that there are no differences in the academic performance or course completion rates between students taught at the two locations.

Courses taught both online and on campus have the same requirements and differ only in method of delivery (personal communication with faculty and department chairs). The USA *Online Learning Plan, 1998-2001* specifically states that online courses and campus courses must have the same content and requirements. An extensive evaluation of the online courses is underway at the writing of this document and will be available for review.

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning compiles grade distribution reports each semester for each course. These enable the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, college/school deans, and department chairs to compare grade distributions by University, college, department, and individual faculty member. This information is used to identify courses that have grade distributions out of the norm (see Section 4.2.4: #7 of 16).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

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UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

4.2.1 Undergraduate Admissions

#1 of 24

Establishment of Admission Policies

*(Page 22, Line 13): General admission policies **must** be established by the governing board on recommendation of the administration.*

The authority to operate USA is vested in the Board of Trustees by the Alabama Legislature.

The Board of Trustees, acting upon recommendations set forth by the President and the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, is ultimately responsible for establishing general admission policies for USA (*Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 2, p. 1; *Minutes of the Board of Trustee Meetings*).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#2 of 24

Responsibility for Student Body

*(Page 22, Line 15): The board is **responsible** for deciding the size and character of the student body.*

The authority to operate USA is vested in the Board of Trustees by the Alabama Legislature.

The Board of Trustees, acting upon recommendations set forth by the President and the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs is ultimately responsible for deciding the size and character of the student body. The Board of Trustees delegates administrative responsibility to the President, administrative officers, and faculty (*Faculty Handbook, 2001, Chapter 2, p. 1; Minutes of the Board of Trustee Meetings*).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#3 of 24

Administration and Faculty Responsibility

*(Page 22, Line 16): Implementation of specific admission policies, however, **is the responsibility** of the administration and faculty of the institution.*

The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs is the chief academic officer of the University

and has the administrative responsibility for the implementation of specific admission policies, as specified in the *Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 2, p. 10). The University Admission and Records Committee, which is composed of faculty and admissions administrators, recommends specific admission policies to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs (*Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Section 2.28). The Office of Admissions, a division of Student Enrollment Services, assists the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs in the implementation of specific admission policies.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#4 of 24

Administration of Policies

*(Page 22, Line 19): The unit responsible for administering the policies **must** be clearly identified.*

The Office of Enrollment Services, Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Services, and the Director of Admissions, are responsible for administering the admissions policies as outlined in the *Bulletin*, the *Academic Advising Handbook, 2000*, and USA's website (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 2, p. 24).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#5 of 24

Separate Admissions Requirements

*(Page 22, Line 20): In those institutions in which various subdivisions maintain separate admissions requirements, there **must** be institution-wide coordination of all admission policies and procedures.*

USA maintains no separate undergraduate admissions requirements for its separate colleges or any other sub-divisions. The *Bulletin* (pp. 7-8) outlines the general admission requirements for first time freshmen/high school graduates, freshmen with previous credits, early admission applicants, special freshmen admission applicants, GED first-time freshmen, transfer students, transient students, unclassified applicants, and audit students. While programs in the College of Allied Health Professions, the colleges of Education, Engineering, Business, Nursing, and the School of Computer and Information Sciences do not have separate initial admissions requirements, they do have special admission requirements for their upper division professional components. The additional requirements are listed in the respective college narrative of the *Bulletin*.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#6 of 24

Admission Policies and Educational Purposes

*(Page 22, Line 24): Admission policies **must** be consistent with the educational purposes of the institution.*

USA’s admission policies are consistent with the educational purposes (or mission) of the institution. The undergraduate admission policy states that USA “seeks to admit only those students who possess the intellectual capacity, maturity, previous training, and motivation necessary for success” (*Bulletin, 2001–2002, p. 7*). This policy is consistent with USA’s mission for undergraduate education, which is “designed to promote the growth of the individual to think critically and analytically, to communicate effectively, to acquire information and apply it to problem-solving, and to understand the context of global complexity and diversity in which knowledge is applied” (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001–2002, p. 3; Institutional Self-Study Report, 2001*).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#7 of 24

Qualitative and Quantitative Requirements

*(Page 22, Line 25): They **must** include qualitative and quantitative requirements that identify students who demonstrate reasonable potential for success at the institution.*

The *Bulletin* (pp. 7-8) lists the qualitative and quantitative requirements for the following: (1) first-time freshmen/high school graduates, (2) freshmen with previous credits, (3) early admission, (4) special freshmen admissions, (5) GED first-time freshmen, and (6) transfer students. All admission requirements for the various classes of students include qualitative and quantitative requirements. Students must also submit an official high school transcript and official college entrance examination scores (either the ACT/Enhanced ACT or the SAT).

USA recommends, but does not mandate that first time-freshmen have completed a defined core of secondary school courses; four units of English, two units of algebra, one unit of precalculus, trigonometry, or other higher math, one unit of geometry, two units of natural science, one unit of American history, one unit of world history, two units of additional academic courses in foreign languages, social sciences, natural sciences, or mathematics, and three units of vocational electives.

The appropriateness of this recommendation is corroborated by the difference in first-year college performance between students who have followed a similar set of core requirements

established by ACT and students who have not followed that core. For example: in academic year 1999-2000, first-time, full-time freshmen who had followed the ACT core in high school (defined as four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of social sciences, and three years of natural sciences) achieved an overall GPA of 2.43. First-time, full-time freshmen who had not followed the core achieved an overall GPA of 2.16.

Moreover, in each of the specific subject areas studied (English, mathematics, social sciences, and natural science), students who had followed the recommended core in high school achieved higher GPAs than students who had not followed the core. These data support the conclusion that USA's admission policies and procedures require levels of academic achievement that are effective in identifying students who demonstrate potential for success at the institution.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#8 of 24

Remedial Support

*(Page 22, Line 28): An institution admitting students with deficiencies in their preparation for collegiate study **must** offer appropriate developmental or remedial support to assist these students.*

USA's Developmental Studies Program provides remedial support for entering students having deficiencies in their preparation for collegiate study (*Bulletin*, p. 9; *Academic Advising Handbook*, 2000, p. 10). The program serves two groups: students admitted to USA through the Developmental Studies Program with enhanced ACT Composite scores of 15 to 18 (along with a small number with enhanced ACT composite scores of 14 and good high school records) and students regularly admitted to USA who take Developmental Studies courses because they are not prepared for college work, especially in writing and mathematics. The Developmental Studies Academic advisor works with approximately 140 first-time students admitted each year to the University through Developmental Studies, as well as approximately 120 returning developmental studies students. The advisor closely monitors individual progress, diagnosing deficiencies and providing appropriate intervention.

To eliminate collegiate preparation deficiencies, these students must successfully complete a course in Study Skills, a course in Developmental Writing (unless they have an Enhanced ACT English score of 21 or more), and a mathematics sequence.

For both developmental and regular admission students, diagnostic placement testing identifies areas of deficiency and determines the first developmental mathematics course: pre-algebra, elementary algebra, or intermediate algebra. Students admitted through Developmental Studies who successfully complete program requirements move to mainstream programs in the University, with faculty in their major field of study serving as academic advisors.

During 2000 to 2001, the Developmental Studies Program served 188 students in Study Skills, 177 students in Developmental Writing, and 624 students in Developmental Mathematics.

Students who successfully completed Developmental Writing (fall 1999-fall 2000) with a grade of A, B, or C had an 82% pass rate in English 101 (spring 2000-spring 2001) that equaled the 82% pass rate for all USA students. Students who successfully completed Developmental Intermediate Algebra (spring 1999-fall 2000) with a grade of A, B, or C had an 83% pass rate in pre-calculus algebra (summer 1999-spring 2001), a rate significantly higher than the 53% pass rate for all USA students.

The one-year (fall 1999-fall 2000) retention rate for students admitted through Developmental Studies was 65% compared to 66% for all students. Since 1981, students admitted through the Developmental Studies Program have an overall six-year graduation rate of 14.5% compared to a 37% rate for USA, and have spent on average, 6.5 years to graduate from USA compared to 5.3 years for all students. (*Developmental Studies Program Assessment Activities Report, July 2001*, and *Statistical Profiles, 2001-2001*).

The Developmental Studies Program provides remedial support for entering students having deficiencies in their preparation for collegiate study and prepares the students for beginning college-level courses. Throughout their first year DS students receive personal attention from the developmental course instructors, as well as the program's academic advisor, and have access to many learning support services. The one-year retention and pass rates in beginning college level courses for those who take advantage of the program's opportunities attest to the success of this approach. After successfully completing all of the required developmental

courses with grades of A, B or C, students transfer to departments throughout the University, leaving behind the Developmental Studies support system. It has been observed that DS students graduate at a lower rate than regularly admitted students and take longer to do so. It is hypothesized that the slower graduation rate is caused by the absence of the enhanced Developmental Studies support system. Within the next two years, the Developmental Studies Program will conduct a follow-up study to investigate these issues.

.Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#9 of 24

Diagnostic Testing

*(Page 23, Line 9): Diagnostic testing **should** be an important element of a developmental or remedial program.*

USA's Developmental Studies Program is designed to help students admitted to the University through Developmental Studies, as well as regularly admitted students, to overcome deficiencies in their preparation for collegiate study. Students with Enhanced ACT Composite scores of 15 to 18 (along with a small number with enhanced ACT composite scores of 14 and good high school records) are admitted to USA through the Developmental Studies Program.

Students must successfully complete a course in Study Skills, a course in Developmental Writing (unless they have an Enhanced ACT English score of 21 or more), and a mathematics sequence.

Students take a mathematics diagnostic placement test to identify areas of deficiency and to determine the first developmental mathematics course: Pre-algebra, Elementary Algebra, or Intermediate Algebra (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*, p. 118). Because of the basic skills nature of each developmental course, diagnostic testing and remediation are important ongoing activities.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#10 of 24

Admission Policy Evaluation

*(Page 23, Line 6): Each institution **must** regularly evaluate its admission policies.*

USA's admission policies and procedures are under continuous review by the Director of Admissions and staff. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning annually provides data and correlative analysis to the academic community (Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, Deans, Chairs, Director of Admissions, and Admission and Records Committee) concerning Freshmen course grade point average and entering grade point average and ACT scores. USA's admission criteria correspond to nationally accepted standards.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

Proposal for Excellence

The Committee suggests that the Committee on Admissions and Records annually review USA's admission policies and procedures and report necessary recommendations to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Deans.

#11 of 24

Recruiting Activities and Materials

*(Page 23, Line 7): It is **the responsibility** of the institution to ensure that its recruiting activities and materials accurately and truthfully portray the institution.*

The Office of Admissions schedules a variety of recruiting activities during the year, including the following: Preview Nights held around the state of Alabama and the Gulf Coast service area in Florida and Mississippi; Get Acquainted Days held on campus; visits to individual high schools; and contact with prospective students identified through ACT tapes. The *Bulletin*, which is also available at USA's website, is the basis for the majority of the information that the Office of Admissions uses recruiting. The information in this document originates in the respective academic units and is updated yearly. To support its recruiting efforts, the Office of

Admissions also uses a variety of supplemental publications, including brochures on the individual colleges, scholarships and financial aid, transfer student policy, adult degree programs, and the Development Studies Program. The majority of the supplemental publications originate in the respective academic units (see various departmental and University brochures). The Office of Admissions reviews its recruiting activities and admissions materials yearly to ensure that they accurately portray the institution. Examples of recruitment publications are available for review in the Self-Study Office (see Document 4.2.1: 11 of 24).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#12 of 24

Evidence of Success

*(Page 23, Line 10): To be admitted to degree programs, applicants **must** show evidence of high school graduation or other successful experiences which reasonably predict their ability to make satisfactory progress at the institution.*

Applicants to USA must show evidence of high school graduation or other documentation, which will reasonably predict satisfactory progress at the institution. The *Bulletin* states that a high school transcript is required (pp. 7–8). If an applicant did not graduate from a high school, s/he must take the General Education Development (high school level) test and score at least a 50.

Students still enrolled in high school can attain early admission if they have earned at least a 3.5 average in academic subjects, scored at least a 28 composite on the ACT/Enhanced ACT Assessment (or comparable SAT scores), and are recommended by their school guidance counselor. It should be noted that early admission rarely occurs.. Students with previous collegiate work and transfer students must also submit official transcripts of all previous collegiate work. Data from the *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* indicate that 81% of the faculty either strongly agree or agree that USA uses appropriate criteria to admit first-time freshmen and transfer students.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#13 of 24

Admission Without a High School Diploma

*(Page 23, Line 13): Each institution **must** assess and justify the appropriateness of experiences offered in lieu of a high school diploma.*

USA admits students without a high school diploma under three circumstances: (1) the student passes the GED Test with a score of 50 or higher, or (2) the student is admitted as part of the Early Acceptance Program (EAP) before completing high school, or (3) a local high school

senior is admitted to take one course per semester while concurrently enrolled in high school as part of the Accelerated College Entry Program (ACEP). (*Bulletin*, pp. 7-8).

Early admission requires recommendations from a high school counselor, a minimum average of a 3.50 in academic subjects, a minimum composite score of 28 on the ACT/Enhanced ACT, completion of at least the junior year of high school, and evaluation and approval by the Director of Admissions. Early admission rarely occurs. The Accelerated College Enrollment Program requires completion of the junior year of high school with at least a 'B' average and ACT/Enhanced ACT of at least a 28 composite or comparable SAT scores. (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin*, p. 7). These requirements exceed those of high school graduates applying for admission.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#14 of 24

Admissions Procedures

*(Page 23, Line 16): Procedures established for implementation of institutional admission policies **must** be followed in the admission of all students.*

The procedures established for the implementation of institutional admission policies are followed in the admission of all students. Either the Director of Admissions or Admissions Officer, or the Coordinator of Adult Students reviews an applicant's file and makes the

admission decision. The Enrollment Services Division trains all application reviewers and provides a manual with instructions for reviewing applicant files (*Admission Staff Manual, 2000*), thus ensuring consistency in the implementation of USA's admission policies. (The *Admission Staff Manual* is available in the Self-Study Office: Document 4.2.1: 14 of 24.)

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#15 of 24

Student Selection

*(Page 23, Line 18): The institution **must** provide evidence that it selects students whose interests and capabilities are consistent with the admissions policies.*

The Enrollment Services Division prepares an annual report that includes statistics on all matriculated students (*Enrollment Statistics for Recently Matriculated Students, 1999*.

Document 4.2.1: 15 of 24). The statistics include the number of students enrolled by college, average ACT/Enhanced ACT scores (or comparable SAT scores), number of Presidential Scholarships awarded, and the retention of students. Analyses of retention data are based on year of admission, college, ACT/Enhanced ACT scores (or comparable SAT scores), race, gender, and method of entry. Although no statistics are maintained on students denied admission to USA, records of these students are kept in the Office of Admissions.

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning prepares an annual *Freshman Class Profile*, which documents academic preparedness in terms of Enhanced ACT scores, high school grades, and demographics of the freshman class (*Freshman Class Profile, 1999–2000*).

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning also conducts surveys of admitted but non-enrolled students. These surveys provide information regarding the reasons why students apply to USA, why they chose not to attend USA, what college/university they currently attend, and why they chose their current college/university. The 1999 survey found that cost considerations were a major reason why students did not attend USA. Students stated they choose another college/university because it gave them more financial aid, often in the form of a scholarship (*Survey of Admitted, Non-Enrolled Students, Fall 1999*). Given this information, USA increased the number of scholarships offered to first-time freshmen.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#16 of 24

Compromising Admission and Retention

*(Page 23, Line 20): An institution's admission and retention policies **should** not be compromised to maintain a desired enrollment.*

USA does not compromise its admission and retention policies to maintain a desired enrollment.

While the number of freshmen admitted to USA has increased in the last two years, the percent of the applicants admitted has remained relatively the same for the last five years (*Statistical Profiles, 2000 -2001*, Table 2.1). The ACT composite scores for the first-time freshman have also remained relatively the same (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 2.3). *Freshman Class Profiles, 1999-2000*, which documents academic preparedness of entering students in terms of ACT/Enhanced ACT scores and high school grades, also reveals that enrollment and student preparedness have remained relatively constant through time.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#17 of 24

Publishing Transfer Student Admission Policy

*(Page 23, Line 23): An institution **must** clearly define and publish its policy on the admission of transfer students.*

USA clearly defines and publishes its policy on the admission of transfer students in the *Bulletin* (pp. 8-9), in the *Academic Advising Handbook, 2000* (p. 4), and on USA's website. The section of the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002* entitled "Admission of Undergraduates" lists the academic requirements and documents required of transfer students who have attended a college or university after high school graduation, regardless of the time spent in attendance or credit earned. Policies regarding the transfer of credit from junior colleges and military service schools are also stated.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#18 of 24

Contents of Transfer Policy

*(Page 23, Line 23): The policy **must** include the following: the requirement for official transcripts of credits earned from all institutions of higher education previously attended; qualitative and quantitative criteria determining the acceptability of transfer work; criteria regarding the award of advanced standing, whether by credit earned at another institution or by*

advanced placement examinations, or through experiential learning; and conditions governing admission in good standing, admission on probation, and provisional admission.

USA's transfer policy includes the requirement that students submit official transcripts of all courses for which they have been registered at other colleges or universities, even if no credits were earned (*Bulletin*, p. 8). Applicants who have attempted fewer than thirty semester hours or forty quarter hours of college work must submit all college transcripts, high school transcripts, and either ACT/Enhanced ACT or SAT scores.

Qualitative and quantitative criteria are used to determine the acceptability of transfer work (*Bulletin*, p. 8). The Director of Admissions evaluates all credits to determine the number transferable to USA. No credit is given for coursework in English composition unless the final course grade is a C or higher. No credit is given for college-level GED tests, non-credit courses, or remedial courses. No more than a combined total of thirty-two hours will be accepted for credits received through Advanced Placement, CLEP, credit by examination, correspondence, military service, or other approved non-collegiate-sponsored programs, as recommended by the American Council on Education. A maximum of sixty-four semester hours can be transferred from a two-year college.

The criteria regarding the award of advanced standing, whether by credit earned at another institution or by advanced placement examinations, are identified in the *Bulletin* (p. 9). For example, students receive AP credit if they score a 3 or higher on an AP exam; students receive CLEP credit if they achieve a minimum score of 50 (*Bulletin*, p. 9).

Transfer students are admitted in good standing if they have earned a cumulative average of at least C (2.00) on all work attempted (*Bulletin*, p. 8). Transfer students with less than the requisite 2.0 average but who show promise of success may be given provisional admission. USA has no policy to admit transfer students on probation.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#19 of 24

Credit Based on Advanced Placement or Other Examinations

*(Page 23, Line 35): Institutions which award credit based on advanced placement or other examinations; training provided by non-collegiate institutions, such as armed forces and service schools; professional certification; or experiential learning **must** meet the following conditions governing the award of such credit:*

- 1. The amount of credit awarded is clearly stated and is in accord with commonly accepted good practice in higher education.*
- 2. Credit is awarded only in areas offered within the current curriculum of the institution, and is appropriately related to the student's educational programs.*
- 3. Decisions regarding the awarding of credit and the determination of such credit are made by qualified faculty members at the institution, or according to procedures and standards*

approved by qualified faculty. The institution demonstrates that assessment procedures verify that the credit awarded is appropriate.

USA offers credit through the AP Program, CLEP, credit by exam, correspondence courses, military service, or any other approved non-collegiate-sponsored programs, as recommended by the American Council on Education (*Bulletin*, p. 9). No more than a combined total of thirty-two semester hours from the aforementioned sources are allowed for credit. The number of semester hours to be awarded is clearly stated and is in accord with commonly accepted good practice in higher education. AP courses, for example, will be granted USA credit with a score of 3 or higher. Students can receive CLEP credit for nineteen different courses or general areas with a minimum score of 50. Military-service school courses are evaluated with reference to the recommendation of the American Council on Education.

Currently USA offers the following options for students through the AP Program, CLEP, credit by exam, correspondence courses, military service, or any other non-collegiate-sponsored programs as recommended by the American Council on Education (*Bulletin*, p. 9).

- Advanced Placement (AP) credit for twenty-three courses. Students who have taken the advanced placement courses in high school may qualify for this credit if they make a satisfactory score on subject examinations. Usually this credit is obtained while in high school and prior to admission to college.
- College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Credit for nineteen courses. The Office of Counseling and Testing Services administers CLEP examinations for USA.
- Credit for military courses that have been evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE). Students apply for evaluation of military credit by submitting

qualified military documents to either the Office of Admissions (upon admission to USA), or to the Office of the Registrar.

- Credit for other approved non-collegiate-sponsored programs as recommended by ACE. Students apply for evaluation of non-collegiate-sponsored programs by providing qualified documents to either the Office of Admission or the Office of the Registrar.
- Credit by Examination. USA students may receive credit by special examination upon approval of the appropriate academic department. The application is handled through the Office of the Registrar.

No more than a combined total of thirty-two semester hours of non-university-sponsored credit as specified above is allowed toward any student's degree program (*Bulletin*, pp. 9 and 12).

During the fall 2000 to summer 2001 semesters, the numbers of undergraduate students attending USA who had non-university-sponsored learning posted on their transcripts are as follows:

- Advanced placement 644
- College Level Examination Program 165
- ACE Military Service 30
- ACE Non-Collegiate-Sponsored Training 342
- Credit by Examination 185

Policies and procedures governing the award of credit for experiential learning are presented in the following **must** statement report.

Conclusion

Compliance

Recommendation

None.

#20 of 24

Experiential Learning Credit

*(Page 24, Line 12): In awarding credit for prior experiential learning, the institution **must** (1) award credit only for documented learning, which demonstrates achievement of all outcomes for specific courses in an approved degree program; (2) award credit only to matriculated students, identify such credit on the student's transcript as credit for prior experiential learning and, upon request from another institution, document how such learning was evaluated and the basis on which such credit was awarded; (3) ensure that credit for prior experiential learning does not duplicate credit already awarded or remaining courses planned for the student's academic program; (4) adopt, describe in appropriate institutional publications, implement and regularly review policies and procedures for awarding credit for experiential learning; (5) clearly describe, and establish the validity of, the evaluation process and criteria for awarding credit for prior experiential learning.*

In September 2001, the Senior Vice President 's Council approved the establishment of the USA Prior Learning Assessment Center. The Center will serve as a central location where potential and enrolled USA students can obtain information and advising on the options available at USA

for earning college credit for prior learning. The center is also the primary academic unit responsible for the coordination and administration of evaluation of experiential learning through portfolio development. The Center ensures that:

1. Credit will be awarded only for documented college-level learning and not experience.
2. Credit will be awarded only in areas offered within the USA curriculum with the goal of obtaining credit for specific courses listed in the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin*.
3. Credit will be awarded only to degree-seeking students at USA, and will not be applicable as transfer credit to another college or institution.
4. Credit does not duplicate credit already awarded to the student or remaining courses planned for the student's academic program.
5. Posting of credit on the student's transcript will follow guidelines similar to the posting of other non-university-sponsored credit which are established by the Office of the Registrar.
6. A student may not enroll in a course for credit and subsequently seek credit through prior learning assessment by portfolio
7. Credit for prior learning assessment by portfolio will be treated as other non-university-sponsored credit and will be included in the maximum thirty-two semester hours allowable toward a student's degree program (Bulletin, pp. 9 and 27) and see Documents 4.2.1 (#20 of 24 a) and 4.2.1 (#20 of 24 b).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#21 of 24

Transfer Student Credit Information

*(Page 24, Line 30): The institution **must** inform transfer students of the amount of credit which will transfer, preferably prior to their enrollment, but at least prior to the end of the first academic term in which they are enrolled.*

USA informs transfer students of the amount of credit that will transfer prior to the end of the first semester in which they are enrolled (*Bulletin*, p. 8). Each transfer student who submits all admission documents in a timely manner is issued a transfer credit form with his/her admission packet. Students bring the transfer credit form to the initial meeting with their advisor to determine course placement. If all the admission documents are not made available in a timely fashion, a preliminary transfer credit form is generated to show at least the number of hours eligible for transfer. In most cases, the preliminary transfer credit form allows an advisor to make a reasonable estimate of course placement. Within several weeks of the initial semester, the preliminary form is updated and forwarded to the dean's office for final approval. Once approved, the final transfer credit form is placed in the student's file and used for advising in the future.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#22 of 24

Collegiate Level Coursework

*(Page 24, Line 34): Coursework transferred or accepted for credit toward an undergraduate degree **must** represent collegiate coursework relevant to the degree, with course content and level of instruction resulting in student competencies at least equivalent to those of students enrolled in the institution's own undergraduate degree programs.*

Using an established guide as the American Council on Education, the Office of Admissions evaluates credits to determine the number transferable to USA. The Statewide Articulation Reporting System (STARS) is used to evaluate transfer credit from two- and four-year institutions within the state of Alabama. The STARS website lists explicit statewide degree requirements and articulation agreements for each two- and four-year institution (stars.troy.edu/home.htm). Both guides ensure that the courses listed represent collegiate-level work (*Bulletin*, pp. 8-9).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#23 of 24

Academic Dismissal, Suspension, and Readmission

*(Page 25, Line 6): There **must** be clearly defined policies regarding the academic dismissal, suspension and readmission of students.*

USA has clearly defined policies regarding academic dismissal, suspension, and readmission of students (*Bulletin*, p. 27-28). Academic suspension and academic dismissal are based on students' incurring a deficit in their overall grade-point balance (GPB). Academic suspension for one regular semester occurs if at any time a student accrues a negative GPB in excess of -24. Reinstatement after academic suspension can occur after one semester of academic suspension. However, the student is readmitted on academic probation. Academic dismissal results when the GPB exceeds a -24 a second time. Students academically dismissed can be considered for readmission, with approval from the appropriate dean's office, after a period of one calendar year has passed.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#24 of 24

Readmission of dismissed or suspended students

*(Page 25, Line 8): Readmission of students dismissed or suspended for academic reasons **must** be consistent with the academic policies of the institution.*

Students face academic dismissal or suspension if they incur a deficit in their overall grade-point balance. Academic suspension results if at any time a student accrues a negative GPB in excess of -24. Academic dismissal results when the deficit exceeds a -24 for a second time. Students reinstated following one regular semester of academic suspension are placed on academic probation and are required to reduce the GPB deficit to at least -24. Students academically dismissed can be considered for readmission on academic probation after a period of one calendar year has passed and after acquiring approval from the appropriate dean's office. Students are subject to a second dismissal if, after attempting eighteen semester hours for average following reinstatement, the GPB deficit is not reduced to at least -24. The readmission policies for students dismissed or suspended for academic reasons are consistent with academic policies concerning a required GPB (*Bulletin*, pp. 27-28).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

4.2.2 Undergraduate Completion Requirements

#1 of 11

Sequence of Courses

*(Page 25, Line 11): In each degree program, there **must** be an appropriate sequence of courses leading to the degree.*

Each degree program at USA has an appropriate sequence of courses, as determined by the program's faculty, leading to each specific degree (p. 8 of departmental self-studies). The requirements for each degree are listed in the individual program narratives provided in the *Bulletin*, at USA's website, at department websites, and in various departmental brochures.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#2 of 11

Degree Requirements

*(Page 25, Line 12): An institution **must** publish the requirements for each degree it awards.*

The specific degree requirements for all undergraduate degrees—including the sequence of courses leading to the degree, the total credits required in general education, the majors offered, and electives—are published in the *Bulletin* (p. 24-26 and departmental section). These requirements are also published at USA's website, at department websites, and in various departmental brochures.

Degree requirements for transfer students are also published in the *Bulletin* (pp. 8-9) and on USA's website. The Statewide Articulation Reporting System (STARS) (stars.troyst.edu/home.htm) has a web-based articulation and transfer planning system that assists transfer students from two- and four-year institutions (see Section 4.2.1 #22 of 24). This system offers assistance in determining degree requirements, course equivalents, and specific major requirements at all state-funded four-year institutions, including USA.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#3 of 11

Requirements of Degree Programs

*(Page 25, Line 14): The requirements **must** be appropriate to the degree offered and **must** specify the total credits, the number and distribution of general education credits, the number of credits to be earned in the major or area of concentration, the number of electives, standards for satisfactory progress, and other degree requirements.*

The requirements for the degrees offered at USA, which are determined by a program's faculty and are in keeping with national norms established in the various fields of study, are appropriate to the degrees offered (p. 8 of departmental self-studies). The *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001*

indicates that 99% of the faculty feel that the graduation requirements for their major are appropriate for the degree offered, while 96% believe that the curriculum for their major is also appropriate for the degree offered.

In addition to periodic departmental reviews, many educational programs undergo peer review through national and professional accrediting associations including those shown below (*Statistical Profiles, 2000–2001, Table 4.2; Bulletin, p. 4*).

- Association for Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business—International
- Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)
- Accreditation Review Committee for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) and Committee on Accreditation of Allied Health Educational Programs (CAAHEP)
- American Chemical Society
- American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association
- Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education of the American Physical Therapy Association
- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
- Committee on Accreditation of Allied Health Educational Programs (CAAHEP) and the Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC).
- Computing Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc.
- Engineering Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc.

- Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology
- Liaison Committee for Medical Education
- National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences
- National Association of Schools of Art and Design
- National Association of Schools of Music
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

The total credits, number and distribution of general education credits, credits for majors and electives, standards of satisfactory progress, and other degree requirements are published in the *Bulletin* (p. 25 and department descriptions), at USA's website, at department websites, and in various departmental brochures.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#4 of 11

General Education Core Requirements

*(Page 25, Line 21): Undergraduate degree programs **must** contain a basic core of general education courses.*

The State of Alabama mandates a common general studies curriculum for all state-supported institutions of higher education. The legislation created the Articulation and General Studies

Committee whose mandate was to develop “a statewide freshman and sophomore level general studies curriculum to be taken at all colleges and universities.” The general education requirements for undergraduates are listed in the *Bulletin* (pp. 24-25), in the *Academic Advising Handbook, 2000* (p. 28), and on USA’s website. The state-mandated general education core consists of four parts: (1) written composition, (2) humanities and fine arts, (3) natural sciences and mathematics, and (4) history and social/behavioral sciences. The core requirements, which account for a minimum of forty-one semester hours, also include two designated writing courses (beyond EH 101 and EH 102). Many of USA’s programs exceed the state-mandated general education core requirements.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#5 of 11

Minimum Hours for Completion

*(Page 25, Line 22): A minimum of 15 semester hours for associate programs and a minimum of 30 semester hours for baccalaureate programs **are required** for degree completion.*

The *Bulletin* (p. 24) states that a minimum of 128 approved semester hours are necessary for baccalaureate degree completion at USA (the University does not award associate degrees). The

minimum semester hour requirement includes general education courses and major coursework. Some colleges or degree programs also require students to complete a minor. This information is also available at USA’s website and in the *USA Academic Advising Handbook, 2000* (p. 29).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#6 of 11

Specific Core Requirements

*(Page 25, Line 25): The core **must** include at least one course for each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics.*

USA’s general education core includes at least one course for each of the mandated areas of study. USA’s minimum core requirements are outlined in the *Bulletin* (p. 25), in the *USA Academic Advising Handbook, 2000* (p. 28), and on USA’s website. The minimum core requirements are indicated below in Table 4.2.2a

**Table 4.2.2a
Minimum Core Requirements at USA**

	Required Semester Hours	Remarks
Written Composition	6	Must complete with minimum grade of C
Humanities & Fine Arts	12	To include a minimum of 3 semester hours in

	(Engineering students are required to take 9 hours).	literature (if the 2 course history sequence was elected) and a minimum of 3 semester hours of fine arts
Social & Behavioral Sciences	12	To include a minimum of 3 semester hours of history (if the 2 course literature sequence was elected)
Natural Science & Mathematics	11	To include a minimum of 3 semester hours in mathematics at the pre-calculus algebra level or higher; at least 8 semester hours in a laboratory science

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#7 of 11

Communication and Computer Competencies

*(Page 25, Line 29): The institution **must** demonstrate that its graduates of degree programs are competent in reading, writing, oral communication, fundamental mathematical skills and the basic use of computers.*

Undergraduate students are required to demonstrate competencies in reading, writing, oral communication, fundamental mathematical skills, and the basic use of computers, (*Bulletin*, pp. 28 –29; *Academic Advising Handbook, 2000*, pp. 28–29; USA website).

Students demonstrate their reading competencies in each of their required or elected courses by completing assigned readings in textbooks, compilations of written materials, laboratory manuals, and reserved reading material.

USA undergraduates must take EH 101 and EH 102 (freshman composition) with a minimum grade of C. Students are also required to complete two designated writing (W) courses, one of which must be in their major or minor. The designated W courses are part of the University's Writing Across the Curriculum Program (Document 4.2.2: 7 of 11a, *Writing Across the Curriculum Newsletter*).

While students enrolled in the Colleges of Engineering and Nursing must meet the specific oral communication requirement of their major, students in the colleges/school of Allied Health Professions, Arts and Sciences, Mitchell College of Business, Education, and Continuing Education fulfill the basic oral communication requirement by taking CA 110: Public Speaking (*Bulletin*, p. 25).

Students demonstrate their competency in the fundamentals of mathematics by passing a required mathematics course at the finite mathematics or pre-calculus algebra level or higher (*Bulletin*, p. 25).

Finally, the requirement for basic computer competency is fulfilled through successful completion of a placement examination or by successful completion of a specific computer

course or by demonstrating computer competencies as part of successful completion of a course.

Table 4.2.2: b summarizes the computer competency requirements for the various colleges:

**Table 4.2.2: b
Computer-Competency Requirements within Colleges**

College	Competencies
Allied Health Professions	Completion of CIS 150: Intro to Computer Applications, or pass a placement exam administered by School of Computer and Information Sciences (CIS)
Arts & Sciences	Completion of CIS 150: Intro to Computer Applications, or demonstrate proficiency in a computer-designated A&S course, or pass placement exam administered by School of Computer and Information Sciences
Mitchell College of Business	Completion of CIS 250: Advanced Computer Applications
Continuing Education	Completion of CIS 150: Intro to Computer Applications for Adult Interdisciplinary Studies
Education	Completion EDM 310: Microcomputing for Education
Engineering	Demonstrate proficiency for course completion
Nursing	Demonstrate proficiency for course completion

USA has entered into an agreement with National Education Training Group to lease NETg's interactive training programs. Students--as well as administrators, faculty, and staff--now have the opportunity to access over five hundred training modules via the Internet free of charge (Document 4.2.2: 7 of 11b, *Midweek Memo* dated February 8, 2001).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#8 of 11

Definition of a Major

*(Page 25, Line 33): An institution **must** clearly define what a major means or an area of concentration and **must** state the number of credits required for each.*

The college and school descriptions within the *Bulletin* define the majors or areas of concentration, along with indicating the number of credits each requires. This information is also available at USA's website, at department websites, and in various departmental brochures.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#9 of 11

Hours Above Elementary Level

*(Page 25, Line 35): An adequate number of hours with appropriate prerequisites **must** be required in courses above the elementary level.*

All degree programs offered at USA require an adequate number of hours, with appropriate prerequisites, above the elementary level (see individual program sections of the University *Bulletin*).

These upper-division requirements reflect the individual needs of programs and a University requirement that candidates for graduation must take at least thirty-two hours of upper-division (300 and 400) courses at USA in order to graduate (*Bulletin*, p. 25; *Academic Advising Handbook*, 2000, p. 29; USA's website). This requirement can be fulfilled by major, minor, or elective hours.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

Proposal for Excellence

The course listings in the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002* (pp. 122–225) include the course title, number of credits, course description, and—in most cases—the course's prerequisites and/or co-requisites. The Principal Committee suggests that all course prerequisites and/or co-requisites be clearly and consistently listed along with the course title, number of credits, and course description.

#10 of 11

Minimum Hours for Completion

(Page 25, Line 38): *For degree completion, at least 25 percent of semester credit hours **must** be earned through instruction by the institution awarding the degree.*

USA requires students to complete a minimum of 128 approved semester hours--32 semester hours of which are upper-division (300- or 400-level) courses that must be taken at USA. This requirement of 32 semester hours is equivalent to 25% of semester credit hours that must be earned through instruction by the institution awarding the degree (*Bulletin*, p. 25; *Academic Advising Handbook*, 2000, p. 29; USA website)

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#11 of 11

Applicable Courses

*(Page 26, Line 3): All courses, other than those identified by the institution as developmental/remedial, offered by an institution for credit **must** be acceptable as requirements or electives applicable to at least one of its own degree or certificate programs or **must** be clearly identified on transcripts as not applicable to any of the institution's own degree or certification programs.*

With the exception of Developmental Studies courses and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, all courses offered by the University for credit are acceptable as requirements or as electives applicable to at least one of its degree programs (*Bulletin*, p. 25; *Academic Advising Handbook*, 2000, p.10; USA website).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

Proposal for Excellence

The Principal Committee suggests that the section entitled Advising Foreign Students in the *Academic Advising Handbook* (pp. 64-65) state that ESL courses will not meet USA degree requirements.

4.2.3 Undergraduate Curriculum

#1 of 19

Related to the Goals of the University

*(Page 26, Line 10): Curriculum **must** be directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates or degrees awarded; to the ability and preparation of the students admitted; and to the financial and instructional resources of the institution.*

USA's Mission Statement confirms the University's commitment to undergraduate education:

“Undergraduate education is designed to promote the growth of the individual to think critically

and analytically, to communicate effectively, to acquire information and apply it to problem-solving, and to understand the context of global complexity and diversity in which knowledge is applied” (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*, p. 3).

Keeping the mission of USA in mind, academic departments provide curricular offerings that support the students’ learning activities as well as challenge both students and faculty. The programs of study leading to a bachelor’s degree are designed to prepare students to be successful by enabling the student to integrate knowledge, to discover knowledge, and to communicate effectively in diverse and changing communities. Realizing that some students will pursue graduate study, academic departments design instructional activities that encourage creativity and investigation. Undergraduate programs of study are offered in the following colleges and schools; their specific academic requirements can be found in the *Bulletin*:

- Allied Health Professions
- Arts and Sciences
- Mitchell School of Business
- Computer and Information Sciences
- Continuing Education and Special Programs
- Education
- Engineering
- Nursing

USA seeks to admit students who possess the motivation and intellectual capacity needed to be successful in all undergraduate academic programs (*Bulletin*, p. 7). At the same time, USA

recognizes the variation of students' backgrounds. For example, some curricular offerings take into account the needs of the adult learner returning to college or the student seeking a paraprofessional or professional plan of study. The professional degree programs are supported by general education requirements that are taught by the departments in the College of Arts and Sciences. In addition, the University Honors Program offers specific programs of study in fields that challenge the exceptionally capable student (*Bulletin*, p. 29).

USA provides financial support for the curricular offerings (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, Table 6.2). This support is appropriate to the needs and demands of the programs of study (departmental self-studies, p. 48). Faculty are academically prepared in the areas in which they provide instruction (departmental self-studies, p. 41). Faculty also meet any professional licensure or certification that may be required in their respective fields (departmental self-studies, p. 41; faculty vitae). In addition, USA allocates financial resources for technology support as well as faculty development (departmental self-studies, pp. 48-49).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#2 of 19

Curriculum Process

*(Page 26, Line 15): The institution **must** have a clearly defined process by which the curriculum is established, reviewed and evaluated.*

USA has a clearly defined process for establishing, reviewing, and evaluating curriculum; the University form known as a *Curriculum Action Form* identifies the steps that must be followed for a curricular action. Curricular actions—adding, deleting, modifying courses, as well as initiating new majors and minors—are initiated by faculty in the academic department (departmental self-studies, p. 10).

Once a review at the departmental level is complete, the appropriate college curriculum committee considers curricular actions at the college level. The proposed addition, deletion, or revision to the curriculum must also be approved by the appropriate college/school dean. The next review level is at the institutional level (Academic Affairs Curriculum Committee). Final review and approval is provided by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs (Document 4.2.3: 2 of 19a).

Thus, in summary, curriculum actions originate at the departmental level and must be considered and approved at the departmental committee level and then proceed through the following levels of review: College/School Committee; Dean; Institutional Committee level; and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. Each department and college/school has a Curriculum Committee. The institutional-level committee is called the Academic Affairs Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. All committees are composed entirely of faculty.

New degree programs or areas of concentration within existing degree programs must also obtain the approval of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (Document 4.2.3: 2 of 19b. *ACHE Revised Procedures for the Evaluation and Review of New Programs of Instruction*).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

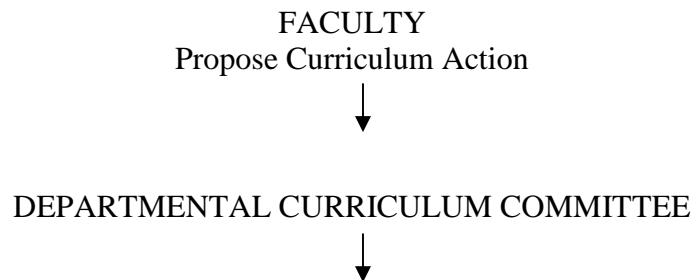
None.

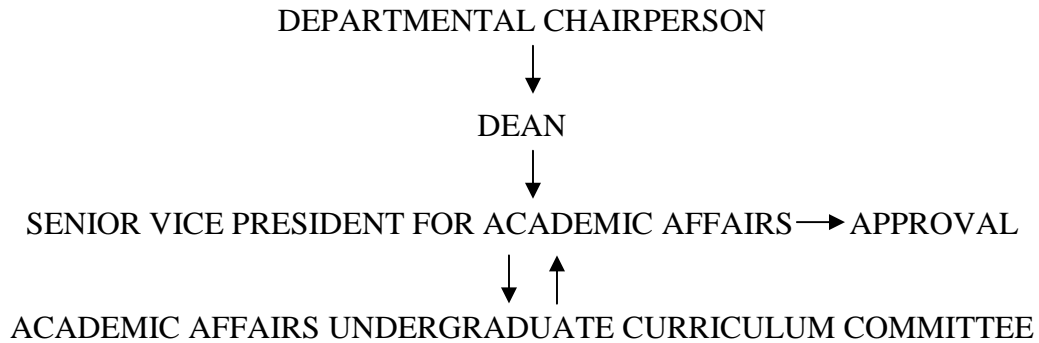
#3 of 19

Role of Faculty, Administration, Governing Board

*This process **must** recognize the various roles of the faculty, the administration and the governing board.*

USA’s process for developing the undergraduate curriculum recognizes the various roles of the faculty, the administration, and the governing board (Document 4.2.3: 3 of 19a, *Curriculum Action Form*; *USA Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 2, pp. 10, 33-34, and 41; departmental self-studies, p. 10; *Minutes of the Board of Trustees*). The process and roles are outlined below:





The University's Board of Trustees is not directly involved in curriculum; however it is involved in the approval of new programs of study. The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs reports to the Student and Academic Affairs Committee and to the full Board of Trustees at each quarterly meeting.

The involvement of the faculty and administration in curriculum is evidenced by the required approving role of faculty and administration.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#4 of 19

Responsibility for Each Major

*(Page 26, Line 20): For each major in a degree program, the institution **must** assign responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field.*

Excluding the Graduate School, USA is administratively arranged into seven colleges and two schools which are in turn organized into departments, each of which is headed by a departmental chairperson. The department chairs have the primary responsibility for program coordination within a department (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 2, pp. 25-26). Department chairs have terminal degrees and/or preparation in their respective fields (see faculty vitae; departmental self-studies, pp. 10-11). The academic qualifications of departmental chairs are ensured through policies governing their employment. In addition, faculty input is actively sought and incorporated in curricular decisions through departmental curriculum committees, which are responsible for individual course actions and general curriculum matters (departmental self-studies, p. 10). This process assures that persons academically qualified in the field are responsible for program coordination.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#5 of 19

Primary Teaching Assignment

*(Page 26, Line 23): At least one full time faculty member with appropriate credentials, as defined in Section 4.8.2, **must** have primary teaching assignment in the major. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, the above requirements apply to a curricular area or a concentration.*

All programs and concentrations have at least one full-time faculty assigned the primary teaching responsibility and coordination (see program descriptions in the *Bulletin*). When specific credentials such as licensure and/or certification are required in the field, the faculty is required to comply with these requirements. Faculty and their qualifications are listed in the *Bulletin* (pp. 226-237), departmental self-studies (p. 41), and faculty vitae. Self-Studies and vitas are on file in the Self-Study Office.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#6 of 19

Degree Responsibilities of Governing Board

*(Page 26, Line 29): The governing board **must** be responsible for approving the number and types of degrees; the number and nature of departments, divisions, schools or colleges through which the curriculum is administered; and the extent to which the institution **should** offer distance learning programs.*

The authority for operation of USA is vested in the Board of Trustees. The Board has authority to approve the number and type of degrees, the number and nature of departments, divisions, schools or colleges through which the curriculum is administered including distance-learning programs (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001, Chapter 2, p. 1; Bylaws of the Board of Trustees; Minutes of the Board of Trustees*).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#7 of 19

Administrative and Faculty Responsibilities

*(Page 26, Line 35): The administration and faculty **must** be responsible for the development of academic programs recommended to the governing board.*

USA's Board of Trustees delegates to the President of USA, the faculty, and the administrative officers the authority necessary for operation of the institution. The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs is the Chief Academic Officer and has administrative responsibility for academic programs. In addition, college deans are responsible for the development of academic programs compatible with the college's and University's mission. As explained above (Section 4.2.3: #3 - #5 of 19), the administration and the faculty are clearly responsible for the

development of academic programs recommended to the Board of Trustees (*Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 2, pp. 10, 33-34, and 41).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#8 of 19

Implementing and Monitoring

*(Page 26, Line 37): They **are also responsible** for implementing and monitoring the general curriculum policy and the academic programs approved by the board.*

USA's Board of Trustees delegates to the President, the faculty, and the administrative officers the authority necessary for operation of the institution. The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs is the Chief Academic Officer and has overall administrative responsibility for academic programs. In addition, college deans and department chairs are responsible for implementing and monitoring academic programs compatible with the college's and University's mission (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 2, pp. 10, 33-34, and 41; *Self-Study Report*, Section 4.2.3: #3 - #5 of 19).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#9 of 19

Institution-Wide Process

*(Page 27, Line 1): There **should** be an institution-wide process to coordinate programmatic and curricular changes.*

As described in 4.2.3, the Academic Affairs Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (AAUCC), which is an ad hoc committee in the Academic Affairs Division, is responsible for coordinating programmatic and curricular activity at the University level (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 2, p. 41). The Committee is composed of representatives from each academic unit who are recommended by their respective dean or director (see Document 4.2.3: 9 of 19, AAUCC roster). The general purpose of the Committee is to oversee all curriculum actions and assure that curricular structure and development are in agreement with USA's mission.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#10 of 19

Unwarranted Proliferation

(Page 27, Line 3): *The institution **should** avoid the unwarranted proliferation of course offerings and degree programs.*

The prevention of unwarranted proliferation of course offerings and degree programs is ensured in a number of ways. First, justification of student demand, needed resources, and unnecessary duplication must be addressed in the proposal consideration and approval process for new programs and offerings (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 6, p. 11). Committees at the college/school and institutional levels ensure that an unwarranted duplication/proliferation of course offerings and degree programs does not occur (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 2, p. 41). Proposals for curriculum actions that are submitted to the committees must clearly indicate internal and external impacts, including duplication or redundancy. Furthermore, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, which must approve all new degree programs and concentration areas, is concerned with unnecessary program proliferation and duplication (see Section 4.2.3: #11 of 19 of this *Self-Study Report*).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#11 of 19

Needs Assessment

*(Page 27, Line 4): The development of new educational programs **should** be considered only after the institution has completed a needs assessment and has identified resources to support the programs.*

The development of new educational programs is considered only after a needs assessment is completed and resources have been identified to support the programs. The Academic Affairs Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (AAUCC), which receives programmatic requests from the colleges and schools, also requests a needs assessment and has the colleges and schools identify resources to support the programs (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 2, p. 41; correspondence of AAUCC). Their findings then go the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and ultimately to the Board of Trustees.

The final step in the process for the development of new educational programs (concentrations, majors, and new degree programs) involves the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). ACHE requires universities to justify the need for each new program, as well as identify resource requirements and assess the costs and financial support for the program (see Documents 4.2.3: 11 of 19a and 4.2.3:11 of 19b, *ACHE Revised Procedures for the Evaluation and Review of New Programs of Instruction*, and *Formats for New Program Notifications and Proposals*).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#12 of 19

Careful Review

*(Page 27, Line 8): The institution **should** proceed only after careful review by appropriate faculty and administrative bodies, approval by the governing board, and any necessary review and approval by state or other agencies.*

As discussed above (Section 4.2.3: #11 of 19), the process starts within the department or college desiring to develop a new program. First, the new program must be proposed by faculty (except in the incidence of a completely new discipline where no faculty are on board). Next, the college/school's curriculum committee must approve the proposed new program. Following approval by the college dean, the proposal is forwarded to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, who routes the request to the AAUCC. This committee is charged with (1) reviewing curricula for overlap and duplication and (2) recommending approval or disapproval of all proposed curricular actions to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. The final institutional level of review and action resides with the Board of Trustees.

Once the proposed program has received approved by the Board of Trustees, approval must be sought from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). Approval of a new undergraduate program by ACHE is a multi-step procedure:

The first step involves a *Notification of Intent to Submit a Proposal* (NISP) that is submitted by the University to ACHE. The second step involves evaluative responses to the NISP by institutions with similar programs in the state. The third step involves a preliminary meeting with ACHE staff to discuss the NISP and institutional responses. The fourth step involves the submission of the program proposal. The proposal must address the following:

- program objectives and content (including a four-year curriculum)
- admission requirements, enrollment projections, and completion projections
- justification of the need for the program
- adequacy of resources to implement the program (e.g., faculty, equipment, facilities, and library holdings)
- costs and financial support of the program
- institutional program evaluation and approval process
- program review and assessment

The entire proposal is available for other institutions with similar programs to review. This institutional response is focused on the same areas outlined in the proposal as well as any additional questions, suggestions, and/or recommendations that the institutional reviewers may have. A second meeting with ACHE staff follows this institutional peer review to clarify questions and recommendations from the peer review and reach agreement on required proposal changes.

The final step involves ACHE approval or disapproval of the program. If approval is awarded, it is with the understanding that the program will be discontinued if post-implementation requirements as mandated by ACHE are not accomplished within the specified timeframe.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#13 of 19

Curricula and Transferring

*(Page 27, Line 12): Curricula intended to provide basic preparation for students who will subsequently transfer to another institution **must** be designed to consider the institutions to which these students transfer.*

Curricula that provide basic preparation for students who might transfer to another institution are designed based on a consideration of the curricula at other institutions. USA's general education courses fall under the purview of the Alabama Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC) and the Statewide Transfer and Articulation Reporting System, also known as STARS (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*, p. 8). The purpose of the AGSC is to allow the reciprocal transfer of credit for freshman- and sophomore-level classes among all publicly supported institutions of higher learning in Alabama. All general studies credits approved by AGSC can transfer from a two- to a four-year institution, or vice versa, to fulfill general education requirements. The USA courses approved by AGSC for transfer within the STARS program are listed on the STARS website (stars.troyst.edu/home.htm). USA's curriculum

content and credit hour requirements correspond to widely held standards throughout the country (see Section 4.2.1: #22 of 24 and Section 4.2.2: #3 of 11).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#14 of 19

Cooperative Articulation Agreements

*(Page 27, Line 15): Associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions **should** work cooperatively to develop articulation agreements.*

As described above (Section 4.2.3: #13 of 19), an articulation agreement exists for general studies courses within the State of Alabama for all state-supported institutions of higher learning. This agreement was developed by the Alabama Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC), which was created by an act of the state legislature (Document 4.2.3: 14 of 19, *Legislative Act 94-202*). Members of AGSC include two representatives of the state's regional universities, three representatives of the state's two-year colleges, and one representative each from Auburn University, the University of Alabama System, the University of South Alabama, Alabama State University, and Alabama A&M University. Thus, all associate and baccalaureate degree-granting public institutions work together to develop and maintain articulation agreements.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#15 of 19

Evaluation of Agreements

*(Page 27, Line 17): The agreements **should** be evaluated periodically to ensure an equitable and efficient transfer of students.*

AGSC meets regularly to discuss the articulation agreement. These meetings continually evaluate and modify the agreement to ensure it is equitable and promotes the efficient transfer of students between member institutions. A history of AGSC and copies of all minutes can be found at the STARS website. AGSC has contracted for a thorough assessment and evaluation of its agreement and its STARS program for spring of 2002 (*Alabama Articulation and General Studies Committee Assessment and Evaluation Plan*).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#16 of 19

Advanced Coursework in “Two Plus Two” Programs

*(Page 27, Line 19): “Inverted,” “two plus two” and similar programs **must** include an adequate amount of advanced course work in the subject field.*

The University of South Alabama offers only one program (Radiologic Sciences) that is an inverted “two plus two” program. This program (*Bulletin*, pg. 41 and 215) includes required completion of the 90 semester hours certificate program plus an additional 52-57 semester hours for a total of 142-147 semester hours. Required coursework includes 49 semester hours of general education core, 37 semester hours of lower division Radiologic Science, a minimum of 40 semester hours of upper division Radiologic Science coursework and an elective option of either 10 additional semester hours upper division Radiologic Science or upper division management coursework. The program includes more than adequate advanced coursework in the field.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#17 of 19

Partnerships with Secondary Schools

*(Page 27, Line 23): Institutions which enter into programmatic partnerships with secondary schools which result in the award of college credit, such as technical and dual enrollment programs, **must** ensure that the credit awarded is at the collegiate level and is in compliance with the Criteria and with Section IV in particular.*

USA has no programmatic partnerships (such as dual enrollment) with secondary schools. While USA does have a program described below that involves high school students' receiving college credit, USA has no formal contract or agreement with any high school that would constitute a partnership in a contractual sense.

USA offers high school students the opportunity to earn credits from USA through the Early Admission Program (EAP) and the Accelerated College Enrollment Program (ACEP) (*Bulletin*, p. 7). EAP, administered by the high school, is open to any exceptional student who has completed his/her junior year of high school and who wishes to enroll at USA prior to high school graduation. EAP students may select courses each semester from a limited list. To be eligible, the student must (1) be recommended by a high school counselor, (2) have earned at least a 3.5 high school GPA in academic subjects, (3) have scored at least a 27 composite on the ACT/Enhanced ACT Assessment (or comparable SAT scores), (4) completed the junior year of high school, and (5) have been approved by the Director of Admissions. An exceptional student who has not completed the junior year of high school can be granted special admission consideration. Early admission students can take one or two courses while still in high school.

Over the years, very few students have enrolled in this program (*Bulletin*, p. 7; *Academic Advising Handbook*, 2000, p. 3).

The Accelerated College Enrollment Program (ACEP) is administered by USA and is restricted to a limited number of exceptional high school seniors from Mobile and Baldwin Counties, Alabama. ACEP students are given the opportunity to take one free course at USA during their senior year of high school (Document 4.2.3: 17 of 19). The course can be used to fulfill degree requirements at USA, or it can be transferred to other institutions. Eligibility for this program is the same as the EAP requirements outlined above (*Bulletin*, p. 10).

Students enrolled in either EAP or ACEP take a college-level course taught by USA's faculty and are treated no differently from any other student enrolled in the course, thus ensuring that the credit awarded is at the collegiate level. A listing of recommended courses and their respective instructors can be found in *Schedule of Classes, Summer/Fall 2001*.

Conclusion

Not applicable.

Recommendation

None.

#18 of 19

Partnership Evaluations

*(Page 27, Line 28): Partnerships **must** be evaluated regularly by the participating institution of higher education.*

Although USA does not have any formal programmatic partnerships with high schools, both the EAP and ACEP (Document 4.2.3: 18 of 19) programs are evaluated by the Office of Student Enrollment. Given that few students have enrolled in EAP over the years, most of the evidence of evaluation concerns ACEP. ACEP has been in existence for two years and a total of 121 students have enrolled since its inception. Most of these students have received an A or B for their course work. The ACEP academic advisor closely monitors students enrolled in this program. Plans are under way to expand the program to include Baldwin County students beginning spring semester of 2002.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#19 of 19

Responsibility for Partnership

*(Page 27, Line 30): The participating institution **must** assume full responsibility for the academic quality and integrity of partnerships as measured by the Criteria.*

Even though USA does not have any formal programmatic partnerships with high schools, it does assume full responsibility for the academic quality and integrity of the EAP and ACEP

(Document 4.2.3: 18 of 19, personal communication with Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services). The Office of Admissions is delegated the responsibility for monitoring students progress throughout the semester in which they are enrolled at USA. USA's faculty are responsible for the quality of the instruction and awarding of a grade. A special academic advisor is assigned to all EAP and ACEP students; the advisor closely monitors students' success and academic progress.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

4.2.4 Undergraduate Instruction

#1 of 16

Appropriate to Purpose of Institution and Goals of Course

*(Page 27, Line 33): Instructional techniques and policies **must** be in accord with the purpose of the institution and be appropriate to the specific goals of an individual course.*

According to USA's mission, "Undergraduate education is designed to promote the growth of the individual to think critically and analytically, to communicate effectively, to acquire information and apply it to problem-solving, and to understand the context of global complexity and diversity in which knowledge is applied" (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-*

2002, p. 3). USA accomplishes its mission through a variety of teaching techniques that are suited for the particular discipline. Most departments use lectures, class discussions, and problem-solving as instructional techniques (departmental self-studies, p. 11). Science, Engineering and health profession disciplines incorporate laboratory experiences, while clinical departments in the College of Nursing, College of Allied Health Professions, and Emergency Medical Services also report using hands-on clinical experiences. Several departments report using teaching criteria standards established by their respective professional accreditation bodies. The humanities utilize a variety of techniques specialized to the particular discipline. For example, drama classes require performances and set designs.

Departmental curriculum committees review course syllabi and the department's curriculum as a whole on a regular basis. In addition, the chairs of each department are responsible for reviewing course syllabi and making recommendations to faculty (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001, Ch. 2, p. 35*). The curricula of the professional programs are also reviewed by their respective accrediting body (see Section 4.1: #1 of 4 of this *Self-Study Report*), and all are found to be in compliance.

The *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* substantiates the findings of departmental self-studies. Of the faculty responding to the survey, 96% strongly agreed or agreed with the following statement: "My department uses appropriate methods of instruction." A student survey indicates that students develop the abilities established in the USA Mission Statement (*Self-Study Student Survey, 2001*). At least 80% of students surveyed agreed that they developed the following abilities through classes at USA: writing effectively, communicating ideas, applying

mathematical principles, using computer resources, using library resources, thinking critically, thinking creatively, and doing independent research.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#2 of 16

Instruction Evaluation

*(Page 27, Line 36): Instruction **must** be evaluated regularly and the results used to ensure quality instruction.*

USA evaluates full-time and part-time faculty for their effectiveness as instructors. According to the *USA Faculty Handbook, 2001* (Chapter 3, p. 36), students evaluate each faculty member at least one time during the academic year. All colleges/schools, with the exception of the College of Arts and Sciences, require students to evaluate faculty in all courses and sections each semester. All part-time faculty, regardless of college/school, are evaluated by students in all sections each semester (departmental self-studies, p. 12). Most departments use a standard computerized form for student evaluations, with additional questions for written comments (see Document 4.2.4: 2 of 16a, sample *Student Evaluation Form*). In addition to student evaluations, the department chair, often with the help of a departmental committee, evaluates each faculty

member annually using a standardized form entitled *USA: Affirmative Action Evaluation of Faculty* (Document 4.2.4: 2 of 16b).

To complete an affirmative action evaluation, the chair uses the information gathered from the student evaluations along with the faculty member's curriculum vitae and other portfolio materials. Those faculty members found deficient in their effectiveness as instructors may be assigned a faculty mentor or can be asked to attend Faculty Development Workshops (departmental self-studies, p. 12). An untenured faculty's teaching effectiveness is also evaluated during his/her pre-tenure review and tenure review (*USA Faculty Handbook, 2001*, Chapter 3, p. 23; departmental self-studies, p. 12).

Faculty responses to the *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* indicate that some faculty believe departments should improve their evaluation of instructional methods. Faculty who were surveyed generally agreed with the following statement: "My department regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its methods of instruction." Nonetheless, a substantial percentage of faculty disagreed. Specifically, 77 % strongly agreed or agreed, while 34% strongly disagreed or disagreed. This issue is important in that faculty are responsible for instruction, and it is their responsibility, as well as each department chair's, to ensure that effective evaluation of instruction takes place.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

Proposal for Excellence

The Principal Committee suggests that each department in the College of Arts and Sciences conduct student evaluations of instructors in all courses and course sections each semester.

#3 of 16

Providing Goals and Requirements

*(Page 27, Line 38): Students **must** be provided written information about the goals and requirements of each course, the nature of the course content, and the methods of evaluation to be employed.*

The *USA Faculty Handbook, 2001* (Chapter 6, p. 4) specifies that each instructor must provide students in each credit class, in writing, the following information on the first day of class: (1) course goals and objectives; (2) instructional material to be used with a syllabus including a brief course description and topical outline; (3) office hours of the instructor or means of instructor availability for out-of-class consultation with students; (4) attendance policy, (5) number and type of exams to be given during the semester; (6) policy on make-up examinations; (7) course assignments; (8) penalty, if any, for late work; (9) how the final grade is determined; (10) a statement on accommodations for students with disabilities; and (11) a statement regarding revisions of course requirements.

An examination of sample syllabi for fall 2000 revealed that some did not contain course goals and objectives. Consequently, a reminder from the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

was sent to academic deans and department chairs along with the *Course Description and Syllabi Policy*. This memorandum stressed that full compliance with the policy must be made no later than the beginning of fall semester, 2001 (Document 4.2.4: 3 of 16).

The *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* indicates that 99% of faculty agreed with the following statement: “My department provides undergraduate students with appropriate printed information for each course they take.” The *Self-Study Student Survey, 2001* indicates that 96% of the students agreed with the following statement: “I receive a written syllabus for each course I take, outlining the contents of the course and the schedule of exams.” In addition, 95% of the students surveyed agreed with the following: “Instructors make clear at the beginning of each course what we’re expected to learn from the course.”

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#4 of 16

Appropriate Instructional Methods

*(Page 28, Line 2): Methods of instruction **must** be appropriate to the goals of each course and the capabilities of the students.*

Faculty use a variety of teaching techniques to accomplish course goals (departmental self-studies, p. 12) including, but not limited to, lectures, discussions, problem-solving in the

classroom, laboratory experience, online and web supplementation, internships, clinical and service learning experiences. All professional programs report that their curricula reflect content standards established by their respective professional accrediting body. Each respective program utilizes a variety of techniques specialized to the particular discipline. For example, drama classes require performances and set designs.

Faculty generally agreed with the statement: “My department uses appropriate methods of instruction.” Of the faculty responding, 96% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while 4% disagreed (*Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001*).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#5 of 16

Experimentation and Instruction

*(Page 28, Line 4): Experimentation with methods to improve instruction **must** be adequately supported and critically evaluated.*

Approximately 56% of departments report that they experimented with methods to improve instruction and that the methods were adequately supported (departmental self-studies, p. 13).

Some of the experimental methods include team teaching, incorporating new technologies into the classroom or laboratory, and developing and delivering online courses.

Thirty-six percent of the departments report that they did not experiment with methods to improve instruction. This sizable amount of negative responses might be the result of faculty not fully understanding what was meant by the term “experimentation.” Although faculty might “try out” new or different methods of instruction, these faculty might not feel they were “experimenting” with these methods. In fact, 8% of the departments that indicated they did not experiment actually went on to list the methods they employed to improve instruction.

Many departments indicated that instruction was adequately funded and that they used student evaluations and peer review to evaluate instruction, while some departments did not address these points (departmental self-studies, p. 13).

Putting aside the confusion as to what constitutes “experimentation” with methods to improve instruction, faculty have ready access to training programs that focus on new instructional techniques. Experimental methods are critically evaluated by the faculty, the chair, and through student evaluations of the instructor.

The Office of Academic Affairs sponsors Faculty Development Workshops, which allow faculty to learn about the latest teaching techniques (see Section 4.1: #2 of 4). Academic Affairs also sponsors USA Online Faculty Fridays, which introduces faculty to the tools and techniques of developing online courses. Recently, USA contracted with NETg to provide online computer-

tutorial courses (see assorted *Midweek Memos*). These workshops and online courses are usually filled to capacity.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

Proposal for Excellence

The Principal Committee suggests that USA determine if (and how) Faculty Development Workshops, USA Online Faculty Fridays, and NETg tutorials are used to improve instruction.

#6 of 16

Means of Evaluation

*(Page 28, Line 7): An institution **must** use a variety of means to evaluate student performance.*

The primary evaluation of a student is the responsibility of the individual teacher. Syllabi on file in each department and data from the departmental self-studies (p. 13) indicate that a variety of evaluation techniques are being used in courses across the University. Examples include practical examinations, traditional examinations, class presentations, term papers, frequent homework assignments that might include problem solving or a written product, laboratory assignments, class participation, or clinical observation. The *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* indicates that 92% of the faculty strongly agree or agree that their department has been effective

in evaluating undergraduate student performance. The *Self-Study Student Survey, 2001* indicates that 90% of the students surveyed felt their instructors had been objective in their evaluations.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#7 of 16

Quality and Levels of Performance

*(Page 28, Line 8): The evaluation **must** reflect concern for quality and properly discern levels of student performance.*

A review of the departmental self-studies (p. 13) indicates that faculty are confident they can both maintain quality and properly discern levels of student performance. The self-studies also indicate that faculty accomplish these goals through individual contact with students and through the careful examination of each student's performance on examinations and term assignments (e.g., research papers and oral presentations).

In addition, most departments review syllabi to maintain quality. College-level curriculum committees also review syllabi for new courses to ensure quality. The syllabi indicate the levels of student performance required to earn an A, B, C, D, or F grade. In addition, the distribution of grades for each course is available from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning.

Ongoing analyses of grade distributions by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning are

made available to each faculty member so that they can compare their course-grade distributions with other faculty in their department, college, and the University (see Document 4.2.4: 7 of 16a, *Sample Grade Distribution*).

Additionally, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning provides an analysis of undergraduate course GPAs and withdrawal rates by department and division, as well as for specific courses. The Office of Academic Affairs has used these data to target courses that have a high level of D, F, and withdrawal rates that might be due to (1) students' lack of adequate preparation, (2) poor instruction, (3) or the inherent difficulty of the course (*Examination of Undergraduate Course Grade Point Averages and Withdrawal Rates, Fall 1996-Fall 2000*.

Document 4.2.4: 7 of 16). Some of the steps taken to ameliorate the problems include the following:

- Urging students to take a mathematics placement test given by the Department of Developmental Studies,
- Encouraging faculty to attend Faculty Development Workshops to improve their teaching, and
- Designing and implementing a supplemental instruction program for the 'at risk courses' (personal communication with the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#8 of 16

Grading Policies

(Page 28, Line 10): An institution **must** publish its grading policies and its grading practices **must** be consistent with that policy.

USA's grading policy (i.e., grading guidelines) is found in the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002* (p. 26) and on USA's website. Through a four-point grading system, each letter grade is clearly defined, as seen in Table 4.2.4: A.

**Table 4.2.4: A
Definition of Grades**

Letter Grade	Grade Points per Semester Hour	Definition
A	4	Excellent
B	3	Good
C	2	Satisfactory
D	1	Minimum Passing
F	None	Failure
S	None	Satisfactory
U	None	Unsatisfactory

The *Faculty Handbook, 2001* also identifies USA's grading policy, referring to it as a "grading system" (Chapter 6, p. 9). The *Academic Advising Handbook, 2000* lists the letter grades, the number of points each grade is worth, and the grades' relationship to a student's grade point balance (p. 33).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

Proposal for Excellence

The Principal Committee suggests that USA adopt common terminology in all its publications when referring to its grading policy.

#9 of 16

Evaluation of Instructional Programs

*(Page 28, Line 13): The institution **must** evaluate the effectiveness of its instructional programs by a variety of techniques, which may include the following: use of standardized tests and comprehensive examinations, assessment of the performance of graduates in advanced programs or employment, and sampling of the opinions of former students.*

Programs within USA's colleges and schools use a variety of methods to evaluate effectiveness of instruction. The departmental self-studies (p. 14) indicate that the primary methods used include collecting information based on the following:

- surveys and exit interviews given to graduating seniors and to alumni,
- feedback from employers regarding the effectiveness of USA graduates,
- student performance on comprehensive or professional licensing examinations, and
- tracking the success of graduates as they seek advanced degrees or employment.

The methods used are summarized in Table 4.2.4: B.

Table 4.2.4: B
College Procedures for Program Evaluation

College	Senior or Alumni Survey	Employer Information	Comprehensive Test or License Exam	Track Advanced Study or Employment
Allied Health	All programs	All programs	All programs	Some programs
Arts & Sciences	Some programs	Some programs	Some programs	Some programs
Business	All programs	No programs	All programs	No programs
Education	Most programs	Some programs	Most programs	Some programs
Engineering	Most programs	Most programs	Some programs	Some programs
Nursing	All programs	All programs	All programs	All programs
Computer Information Sciences	All programs	All programs	All programs	No programs
Continuing Education & Special Courses	Most programs	No programs	Some programs	Some programs

Professional accreditation organizations are also involved in periodic reviews of many of the programs at USA. Many reviews include an evaluation of the effectiveness of instructional programs (*Bulletin*, p. 4).

Finally, the *Self-Study Student Survey, 2001* measured student perceptions of the scope and quality of the USA educational programs. The survey, completed by approximately 650 undergraduate students, included several questions relating to the instructional programs at USA.

Table 4.2.4: B summarizes the responses to four of these questions. The results indicate a general satisfaction among students with the instructional programs offered at USA.

**Table 4.2.4: B
Student Feedback on Instruction at USA**

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I believe I am receiving a good education at South.	27%	71%	2%	0%
The courses I've taken so far have been intellectually demanding.	30%	66%	4%	0%
I am pleased with my choice of academic major program.	39%	54%	6%	1%
If I had it to do over again, I would still choose to attend South.	26%	48%	20%	6%

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#10 of 16

Courses Offered in Nontraditional Formats

*(Page 28, Line 19): Courses offered in non-traditional formats, e.g., concentrated or abbreviated time periods, **must** be designed to ensure an opportunity for preparation, reflection and analysis concerning the subject matter.*

For the purposes of this section, “nontraditional format” is taken to mean a course taught over a time period of less than one week per semester credit hour. Standard semester classes at USA are taught in a variety of weekly time formats over a fifteen-week period except during the summer session, which is compressed into an eight-week time period with an adjustment in the lecture period to compensate for the shortened timeframe (*Schedule of Classes Summer/Fall, 2001*; departmental self-studies, p. 15). Most evening, weekend, and web-based classes taught at USA are full-term courses.

One department offering web-based courses has argued that students in these courses have more time and greater control over reflection, analysis, and preparation than in regular classroom courses. This potential advantage results when students in web-based courses have more flexibility in obtaining information and completing requirements, as well as using the Internet to have greater access to the instructor, chat rooms, and threaded discussions.

Many academic units do offer half-term accelerated summer courses (typically three or four hours in credit and having the same number of overall contact hours as a full-term course). These summer courses are taught over a four-week period (departmental self-studies, p. 15). Although the courses do not fall under the definition of nontraditional courses as described above, many departments report that extra measures are taken to ensure that students in these courses have sufficient opportunity for preparation, reflection, and analysis.

Students are generally advised to limit their enrollment during summers to two courses, especially if one of the courses is accelerated; departments also emphasize the need for course

organization to adapt classroom procedures and assignments to accommodate the compressed timeframe. Other measures mentioned by the departments include intensive student-teacher interaction, encouraging students to organize study groups outside of class, offering the more challenging academic courses only in the full-semester format, and even limiting class enrollment in accelerated courses. In addition, several departments commented that having longer class periods and meeting daily for the accelerated courses actually offer an advantage for instructors who regularly use extended classroom discussions and group presentations.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

Proposal for Excellence

The Principal Committee suggests that the *Schedule of Classes* for summer include a statement advising students not to overload their summer schedule by taking too many courses in the accelerated format.

#11 of 16

Time for Reflection and Analysis

*(Page 28, Line 22): At least one calendar week of reflection and analysis **should** be provided to students for each semester hour, or equivalent quarter hour, of undergraduate credit awarded.*

As described in the previous section, many academic units offer four-week accelerated courses during summers, and these typically carry either three or four semester hours of credit.

Considering the four-week time period in which they are taught, these courses do provide students a minimum of one calendar week of reflection and analysis for each semester hour of credit awarded. Only one academic department (the Department of Earth Sciences) reported that it was planning to offer a course in a more compressed format (see this department's self-study, p. 15). In connection with the University Honors Program, the geology program within this department will sponsor a two-week field course (GY 113, having three semester hours credit), and it will be taught for the first time during the interim period following spring 2001. The course is designed to introduce freshman geology students to geomorphology and rudimentary field techniques. It includes a daily logbook for reflection and a series of exercises for analysis. Because of the field nature of this course, there should be ample time for reflection and analysis even in the compressed time period.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#12 of 16

Equivalency of Nontraditional Formats

*(Page 28, Line 26): The institution **must** demonstrate that students completing these programs or courses have acquired equivalent levels of knowledge and competencies to those acquired in traditional formats.*

The departments offering courses in the accelerated half-term format during summers emphasize that students completing these courses should acquire levels of knowledge and competencies equivalent to the levels acquired by students in traditional format courses (departmental self-studies, p. 15). To support this assertion, these departments note that the accelerated and traditional courses require the same or similar texts, cover the same course content, involve identical total hours of instruction, are taught by the same qualified faculty, and have the same content, learning objectives, and examinations.

Furthermore, these departments use many methods of assessment to verify the equivalency of the accelerated courses. These methods reported include the following: (1) examining grading patterns for differences in grade distribution between accelerated and standard classes, (2) monitoring the performance of students when they later take courses at a higher academic level, and (3) comparing the performance of students from both traditional and accelerated courses on certification examinations. None of the academic units at USA reported problems with the equivalency of these courses.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#13 of 16

Effective Learning Environment

*(Page 28, Line 30): Effective instruction depends largely upon the maintenance of an environment conducive to study and learning. Therefore, an institution of higher education **must** provide for its students a learning environment in which scholarly and creative achievement is encouraged.*

USA provides its students with a learning environment in which scholarly and creative achievement is encouraged by the faculty and administration (departmental self-studies, p. 16). Faculty regularly engage students in scholarly pursuits by encouraging undergraduates to develop research projects or to assist faculty in their own projects. Students are encouraged to attend colloquia held in the department and to participate in national, regional, and local professional conferences. Students are also encouraged to join professional organizations; most departments sponsor national or international honor societies. Many departments have established student-learning centers filled with books, professional journals, and videos donated by the faculty or purchased by the department. Many faculty lead student field trips so that students can have hands-on learning experiences (e.g., examining how local businesses operate or how runoff adversely affects the flora and fauna of the Mobile Bay estuary). Finally, the University has established an Undergraduate Research Program (URP), which teams undergraduates with a faculty mentor. The URP sponsors an Undergraduate Research Day, allowing students to present their research.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#14 of 16

Outside Agencies and Control

*(Page 28, Line 35): In certain professional, vocational and technical programs (for example, allied health programs), clinical and other affiliations with outside agencies may be necessary. In all such cases, learning experiences for which credit is awarded **must** be under the ultimate control and supervision of the educational institution.*

Programs within the Colleges of Allied Health Professions and Nursing have clinical affiliations with a large number of health care facilities. All of the programs affiliated with outside agencies have a faculty member or someone contracted to the University to supervise the learning experience. Programs in Allied Health Professions, for example, have a designated education coordinator who is the program's liaison with the outside agency, and this coordinator is responsible for evaluating the students and assigning grades. The College of Education is affiliated with school systems for the purpose of student teaching. The control and supervision of the student teaching program is maintained by the College of Education. Likewise, the College of Nursing's clinical education is ultimately under the control and supervision of the College of Nursing.

Many programs in other colleges offer their students the opportunity to engage in an internship with either a local company or a government agency. The Department of Earth Sciences, for example, offers students the opportunity to intern with the City of Mobile's Department of Urban Development or the Mobile School District's Environmental Studies Center. A faculty member assigns a grade based on the interning agency's evaluation of the student's performance and on the student's assigned project.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#15 of 16

Curriculum and Current Practices

*(Page 28, Line 41): The institution **must** demonstrate that an effective relationship exists between curricular content and current practices in the field of specialization.*

Each department evaluates the content of its courses and curricular offerings to ensure currency and relevancy within their discipline (departmental self-studies, p. 16). Faculty stay current in their field by attending and participating in national, regional, and local professional meetings, reading professional journals, and engaging in scholarly or creative activity. All of these professional experiences help faculty to keep their individual courses—and their department's curriculum—current.

Some disciplines follow a curriculum that has been approved by their respective accrediting body. Thus the curricula of the professional disciplines (allied health professions, business, chemistry, music, education, engineering, nursing, and computer and information sciences) reflect their professional accreditation requirements. These professional disciplines can provide ample evidence of curricula relevance to current practice through performance of graduates on credentialing examinations, employability of graduates, success of graduates in the practice of their profession and specialization, and employer satisfaction with alumni job performance.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#16 of 16

Appropriate for Degrees

*(Page 29, Line 2): An institution **must** demonstrate that program length, clock hours or credit hours, and tuition and fee charges are appropriate for the degrees and credentials it offers.*

Corresponding to nationally accepted norms, the length of programs, credit hours, and tuition and fee charges are appropriate for the degrees offered at USA. Students must complete a minimum of 128 approved semester hours in order to achieve a bachelor's degree (*Bulletin*, p. 24; USA's website). Taking fifteen to sixteen hours each fall and spring semester, a student will be able to graduate in four years.

The tuition and fees for in-state and out-of-state students vary (*Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001, Table 6.6; 2000-2001 Annual Tuition and Required Fees for Alabama Public Senior Institutions*). However, the tuition and fees charged by USA for both in-state and out-of-state students are lower than the median tuition and fees for state-supported four-year institutions of higher education, as seen in Table 4.2.4: C.

Table 4.2.4: C
Tuition and Fees at USA and Other Universities

	Cost for Academic Year at USA	Median for Academic Year at Publicly-Supported Four-Year Institutions in Alabama
Full-Time In-State Student 12 hours per term (at \$97.00 per hour) + base fees	\$2,648	\$3,007
Full-Time Out-of State Student 12 hours per term (at \$190 per hour) + base fees	\$4,976	\$6,030

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

4.2.5 Academic Advising of Undergraduates

#1 of 6

Advising Program

(Page 29, Line 6): Each institution must conduct a systematic, effective program of undergraduate academic advising.

USA provides a systematic, effective program of undergraduate advising that is implemented through the academic units as well as University-wide events. University-wide programs are in place to advise students upon admission to USA. The Office of Admissions conducts an orientation program for incoming students entitled Southbound Orientation. Students are introduced to USA's advising programs (*Bulletin*, p. 24; *Lowdown: A Student Handbook, 2001-2002*, p. 31). At the conclusion of Southbound Orientation, students who have indicated interest in a particular program of study are sent to the appropriate college or school, where an academic advisor will initially advise them or direct them to their respective department for advising by a faculty member in their major field of study. Students who are undecided about their program of study are assigned to the College of Arts and Sciences, where they are advised by the college academic advisor with the help of voluntary faculty advisors.

Returning students will either continue to be advised by the college academic advisor or will be advised by a faculty member in their major field of study throughout their matriculation at USA. Once undecided students declare a major, they will be assigned an academic advisor in their major field of study (*Bulletin*, p. 24; *Academic Advising Handbook, 2000*, p. 54).

USA designates two weeks of each semester as Advising Week, during which time students are encouraged to see their academic advisors to plan for the upcoming semester(s). Additionally, representatives of the Council of Academic Advisors hold a two to three day Advising Clinic one week before the official advising week. These clinics are held each semester at various locations on campus to help students who might be between majors or who have general questions about issues such as graduation requirements (*Schedule of Classes, Summer/Fall 2001*; Document 4.2.5: 1 of 6a, Advising Clinic announcements).

Students can consult with the Office of Career Services, a comprehensive career education and career service center. Career Services provides self-directed activities and counseling to assist students in selecting academic programs that will best meet their career goals (*Bulletin*, p. 9).

Both students and faculty agree that USA's advising programs are generally successful. The responses of currently enrolled students to the *Self-Study Student Survey, 2001* indicate that 76% of students agree or strongly agree that they received all academic advising they feel they needed, while 24% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Despite this overall satisfaction, past surveys of alumni or currently enrolled students have also found that not all students have agreed on the quality of advising. In these surveys, students' attitudes toward the quality of advising differed depending on the college in which advising was given, but most students indicated that the basis of any dissatisfaction stemmed from a particular faculty advisor's lack of knowledge or concern for the student (*Survey of 1996-97 USA Degree Recipients; USA Graduates Evaluate Their Overall Experience at South, 1997; Freshman Survey, 1998-99; Freshmen Concur They Receive a Rigorous Education at South, 1999*).

Faculty have a different perspective, for 92% agree or strongly agree that academic advising at the department level offers students the academic advising they need (*Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001*). The Higher Education Research Institute survey of USA faculty found that 25% of the faculty spent one to four hours a week advising or counseling students, while 10% of the faculty spent five to eight hours a week advising or counseling students (*Faculty Survey Institutional Summary, 1998*, p. 7). This survey also found that only 33% of the faculty agreed or somewhat agreed that faculty were interested in students' academic problems. This lack of interest might be the root cause of students' concerns about the quality of advising they receive from faculty (*Faculty Survey Institutional Summary, 1998*, p. 15). USA has taken several steps to improve faculty advising. The Council of Academic Advisors prepared an *Academic Advising Handbook, 2000* to assist faculty members in their advising of students (see Section 4.2.5, #2 of 5 of this *Self-Study Report*). The Office of Academic Affairs sponsors faculty workshops dealing with academic advising. Finally, USA's Alumni Association has established an Excellence in Academic Advising Award to reward exceptional faculty/staff advising.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#2 of 6

Qualified Advisors

(Page 29, Line 7): A qualified advisor **should** be assigned early in the student's program and **should** recognize the individuality of students and their particular needs and goals.

USA's advising programs include professional full-time advisors and faculty who are knowledgeable of their respective discipline's academic requirements. Events such as Get Acquainted Days and the Southbound Orientation alert students to the advising programs at USA (see Section 4.2.5: #5 of 6). Upon entering USA, students are directed to the appropriate academic unit for advising by college academic advisors and/or faculty advisors (*Bulletin*, p. 24).

The advising needs of special populations—such as athletes, disabled students, undecided students, commuter students, adult students, at-risk students, honors students, and international students—are recognized and are incorporated into USA's advising programs (*Academic Advising Handbook, 2000*, pp. 48-66). For example, each student athlete has an advisor that monitors the athlete's academic progress throughout each semester. During the semester, the student's instructors are asked to provide an evaluation of the athlete's coursework; if necessary, the athletic advisor will arrange a tutor for the student. In addition, the College of Arts and Sciences provides special advisors for students who are interested in pursuing pre-health professional and pre-law studies (*Bulletin*, pp. 5-6; *Academic Advising Handbook, 2000*, pp.15-16).

While students have the primary responsibility for planning their academic program and meeting graduation requirements, there is a shared responsibility between students and academic advisors. Academic advisors are expected to:

1. Be available for appointments at appropriate times and places.
2. Provide accurate information about academic regulations and procedures, course requirements, and graduation requirements.
3. Assist students in planning academic programs suited to their interests, abilities, and career objectives.
4. Discuss with the student appropriate course selections in meeting degree requirements and consequences of various alternative course selections.
5. Inform students when their proposed course selections conflict with University academic or curricular policies.
6. Refer students for special testing or counseling as needed.
7. Assist students in considering appropriate academic adjustment where these become necessary (*Academic Advising Handbook, 2000, p. 1*).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#3 of 6

Advisor Proficiency

*(Page 29, Line 10): Advisors **should** be proficient in using data to help determine students' major fields of interest, **should** have access to each advisee's records, and **should** have appropriate training or background and experience to carry out their responsibilities effectively.*

The college- and school-level professional academic advisors are members of the USA's Council of Academic Advisors and, through their shared experiences, are proficient in using data to help determine students' major fields of interest. Individual faculty advisors using information gleaned from professional journals, meetings, and experiences are sufficiently acquainted with their disciplines to advise students in their field of study.

All academic advisors have access to each of his/her assigned advisee's records. The following information about an advisee is available to each advisor:

- Counselor File Data Sheet
- Transfer Credit Evaluations
- Cumulative Grade Report
- Curriculum Sheets

In addition, the Program Academic Curriculum Evaluation (PACE) is a computer-produced academic evaluation (degree audit) that can provide useful information to advisors. PACE shows the requirements for a particular major and how courses satisfy the requirements (*Academic Advising Handbook*, 2000, p. 32). PACE is currently utilized in the College of Allied Health Professions and the Mitchell College of Business, while the College of Education has its own degree audit program.

New faculty members receive training in various aspects of advising during the orientation program for new faculty, which is offered through the Office of Academic Affairs. Some departments assign a senior faculty member to mentor new faculty about advising responsibilities and procedures. The Office of Academic Affairs has issued to all faculty members a copy of the *Academic Advising Handbook, 2000*, which contains specific guidelines and resources to use when advising students.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

Commendation

The Principal Committee commends the Council of Academic Advisors for taking the initiative in developing the *Academic Advising Handbook, 2000*. Faculty now have a wealth of information combined into one document, which they can use to advise their students.

#4 of 6

Number of Advisees

*(Page 29, Line 15): An institution **must** ensure that the number of advisees assigned to faculty or professional staff is reasonable.*

The number of undergraduate advisees assigned to faculty or college level advisors varies between the colleges/schools and from department to department within each college/school (departmental self-studies, p. 18). With the exception of the College of Arts and Sciences, all colleges use a combination of centralized advising office and faculty advising.

The results of the *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* indicate that the number of advisees per faculty is not a major issue. Eighty percent of the faculty noted that they strongly agreed or agreed that faculty in their department have an appropriate number of advisees.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

Proposal for Excellence

The Principal Committee suggests that USA encourage an appropriate distribution in the number of advisees per faculty.

#5 of 6

Orientation for Undergraduates

*(Page 29, Line 18): An effective orientation program **must** be made available to all full-and part-time undergraduate students.*

Southbound Orientation (an orientation program sponsored by the Office of Admissions) is

offered each semester to all incoming students. Some colleges and departments also host orientations for incoming students (*Bulletin*, p. 10; departmental self-studies, p. 19). Beginning fall 2001, the Office of Admissions began to offer an evening version of Southbound Orientation for those students who have difficulty attending day-time events (*Adult Student Orientation Program*).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

Proposal for Excellence

The Principal Committee suggests that USA explore the development of an online orientation program to better accommodate non-traditional part-time students.

#6 of 6

Evaluation of Programs

(Page 29, Line 20): *Orientation and advisement programs **must** be evaluated regularly and used to enhance assistance to students.*

Orientation

Evaluation of Get Acquainted Day, which is an orientation program for prospective students to USA, indicates a high level of satisfaction by the students and parents with the entire experience.

The majority of incoming fall 2001 freshmen reported that they had visited USA during Get Acquainted Day (*Freshman Admission Survey, Fall 2001*). Evaluation of fall 2002 Southbound Orientation, an orientation program for all incoming students, indicated that a majority of the incoming students believed that information they received during the orientation program made their transition to USA easier; they also indicated that they received enough help during the advising period of orientation to enable them to select and register for classes (*Freshman Admission Survey, 2001*).

The individual departments in the Colleges of Allied Health Professions and Nursing have orientation programs for incoming students entering the professional components of these programs.

Data from both the student and faculty surveys present a relatively positive picture. The *Self-Study Student Survey, 2001* indicates that 83% of the student respondents attended Southbound Orientation when they first came to USA. Of those, 62% indicated that the orientation program was helpful, while 38% indicate it was not helpful to them. Furthermore, 73% of the faculty responding to the *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* indicated that they were aware of the orientation program for new students, while 27% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they are familiar with USA's program. In addition, 83% of the faculty familiar with the program agreed that the orientation program for new undergraduate students is effective.

Advising

The Academic Advising Council, which is composed of all college advisors, meets periodically to discuss issues related to advising, admissions, and continuous quality improvement. The Council produced a comprehensive handbook to help faculty and college- and school-level advisors provide quality undergraduate advising (*Academic Advising Handbook, 2000*).

Advising is also evaluated at the college and department levels. Some units have extensive evaluation procedures (e.g., exit interviews, surveys, reviewing of transcripts) to ascertain the quality of advising within their units, but other units do not evaluate their advising programs (departmental self-studies, p.19). Data from the *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* and the *Self-Study Student Survey, 2001* suggest that faculty and students are fairly satisfied with the overall quality of advising at USA.

Some of the specialized programs, such as advising for health pre-professional students and pre-law students, do not evaluate the effectiveness of their respective advising programs. Other programs, such as the Honor's Program, conduct an extensive evaluation asking students to evaluate their own advisors, departmental advising, Southbound Orientation, and Get Acquainted Day (personal communications with Health Pre-Professional advisor, Pre-Law advisor, and a Honors Program student).

Conclusion

Partial compliance.

Recommendation

The Principal Committee recommends that orientation programs and academic advising throughout USA be evaluated regularly, and the results used to enhance assistance to students.

Proposal for Excellence

The Principal Committee suggests that each department develop an orientation program for incoming majors.