Kettering University

Digital Commons @ Kettering University

HLC: Higher Learning Commission

1-2020

HLC Focused Visit Report 2020

Kettering University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.kettering.edu/hlc2019-2020

Focused Visit Report

After the team reaches a consensus, the team chair completes this form to summarize and document the team's view. Notes and evidence should be essential and concise. **Note:** If the visit involved more than five areas of focus, please contact the institution's HLC staff liaison for an expanded version of this form.

Submit the completed draft report to the institution's HLC staff liaison. When the report is final, submit it as a single PDF file at hlcommission.org/upload. Select "Final Reports" from the list of submission options to ensure the report is sent to the correct HLC staff member.

Institution: Kettering University

City, State: Flint, Michigan

Visit Date: 01/27-28/2020

Names of Peer Reviewers (List the names, titles and affiliations of each peer reviewer. The team chair should note that designation in parenthesis.)

Dr. Randall S. Bergen, Associate Provost, Bethel University

Dr. Erika A. Goodwin, Vice President for Academic Affairs & Strategic Initiatives, Dean of Faculty, Professor of Athletic Training & Sport Sciences, Wilmington College

Part A: Context and Nature of Visit

1. **Purpose of the Visit** (Provide the visit description from the Evaluation Summary Sheet.)

   A visit focused on faculty workload policy

2. **Accreditation Status**

   ☒ Accredited

   ☐ Accredited—On Notice

   ☐ Accredited—On Probation

3. **Organizational Context**

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2019 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Focused Visit
Contact: peerreview@hlcommission.org
Page 1

Kettering University is a selective, primarily undergraduate not-for-profit private institution. It is focused exclusively on STEM and business programs. It is situated near the historic capital of the automotive industry in Flint, Michigan.

Kettering's data update for HLC in 2019 showed total enrollment at 2,265, of which 1,861 were undergraduates. Most students study full-time. Its academic calendar is unique in that it has four condensed semesters per year, each three months long. Undergraduate students are enrolled year-round and study on campus for one term, followed by one term in off-campus internships. This cycle repeats for the entire undergraduate experience.

The vast majority of faculty are full-time and tenured or on tenure track. These faculty teach three of the annual terms and have the fourth off for research. A smaller percentage of faculty are full-time on 9- or 12-month contracts and are lecturers or "professors of practice." This latter group of faculty does not have scholarship expectations or voting privileges. Senior leadership has been in place for many years. President Robert McMahan took office at Kettering in 2011. Dr. James Zhang was named provost in 2014.

4. **Unique Aspects of Visit**

None

5. **Interactions With Institutional Constituencies and Materials Reviewed.** List the titles or positions, but not names, of individuals with whom the team interacted during the review and the principal documents, materials and web pages reviewed.

President

Provost

Special Assistant to the President/ALO

Deans (4, one of whom is also associate provost)

Board leadership – Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary (via conference call)

Faculty Senate Moderator, Moderator Elect, Immediate Past Moderator, Secretary

Members of the "President's Task Force on Faculty Workload Model and the Thesis" (14 of the 16 still employed at Kettering)

Governing faculty:

      Full professors (19)

      Associate professors (16)

      Assistant professors (9)

Lecturers and Professors of Practice (14)

6. **Areas of Focus.** Complete the following A and B sections for each area of focus identified in the visit description on the Evaluation Summary Sheet. Note that each area of focus should correspond with only one Core Component or other HLC requirement.

    A1. Statement of Focus:

        Kettering's 4-year comprehensive evaluation resulted in a required focus visit

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2019 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Focused Visit
Contact: peerreview@hlcommission.org
Page 2

"…no later than January, 2020, to determine that the faculty workload policy has been revised to equitably account for the variety of both teaching and non-teaching responsibilities of Kettering's faculty, and for which there is evidence that the policy was developed in collaboration with faculty. The revised policy should be approved by the faculty and should appear in the Faculty Handbook."

Relevant Core Component or other HLC requirement:

3.C. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

B1. Statements of Evidence (check one below):

☐ Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

☒ Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention, rather than monitoring, is required in the area of focus.

☐ Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.

☐ Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

The team will also note its determination as to each applicable Core Component or HLC requirement in Part B.

Evidence:

The focus visit team interpreted the "Statement of Focus" to have four parts. Specifically, the team investigated whether Kettering had (1) equitably accounted for the variety of both teaching and non-teaching responsibilities of Kettering's faculty, (2) evidence that the policy was developed in collaboration with faculty, (3) approved by the faculty, and (4) appears in the Faculty Handbook.

(1) Equity in teaching and non-teaching responsibilities: Kettering University is currently implementing a revised faculty workload policy that it states will be fully executed by July 1, 2020. This has been the combined efforts of the Governing Faculty, Faculty Senate, a specially appointed President's Task Force, the Provost and the President of the University. The visiting team recognized that this was a huge undertaking considering the varied academic departments at the University and thus the varying degrees of opinions on the issue of workload. The varied opinions have been an impediment to progress in the past, so the team congratulates the University on its collaborative efforts in designing the final workload policy and making the first substantive change to the faculty handbook in almost a decade. The transition to the new model began July 1, 2019. The new workload policy was presented in the report and is outlined in "Draft 4" of 2020 Faculty Handbook. Furthermore, interviews with faculty, administration and select board of trustee members confirmed the transition to the new policy. It was noted to the team during on-campus interviews that the new faculty workload policy was "very reasonable" and "provides fairness to general faculty." A number of faculty stated that they "felt heard" during task force sessions and that the process had "good transparency."

The report noted that, "The approved revised workload policy now incorporates a variety of principles, qualifications, and attributes that balance faculty interests and students' needs with those of the administration. They describe requirements and expectations, as well as opportunities for teaching load reductions." Furthermore, both faculty and the administration noted there is the provision that the workload policy will be reviewed every three years.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2019 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Focused Visit
Contact: peerreview@hlcommission.org
Page 3

The previous workload policy did not clearly define or describe expectations for either teaching terms or non-teaching terms. Both on campus meetings with governing faculty and lecturers/ professors of practice confirmed that the absence of expectations caused confusion and what the visiting team found to be both perceived and real inequities among faculty, as well as operational inefficiencies. Furthermore, department chairs and deans confirmed that students could be particularly impacted, especially those writing theses (which is a requirement of every undergraduate student) if a faculty member was inaccessible. The administration and faculty further recognize the need to update Promotion and Tenure policies and Annual Review criteria accordingly. The team recommends this be a priority for the University to aid and assist faculty and build trust amongst constituencies that all expectations are clear.

The new workload model better outlines teaching term and non-teaching term expectations. These include a new annual teaching load model that specifies both minimum and maximum contact hours (28 and 32, respectively) and minimum credit hours (24). This combination of contact and credit hours balances faculty and administrative concerns. The former model was based solely on contact hours. [Note – Kettering University makes no distinction between graduate and undergraduate course credits.] Some faculty voiced concerns over how this affects lab classes. Both faculty and administration agreed that work will need to be done on curricular changes to take the new policy into account. In fact, the President has already launched an "Innovative Curriculum Challenge" to faculty. This is a call to review department curriculum and degree requirements to further improve instructional efficiency and teaching effectiveness. Another change included a change of tenure track time limit on reduced teaching load (24 contact hours per academic year) reduced from six years to two years, with a possible one year extension for faculty who have active research programs.

Enrollment parameters were also established: a minimum of eight students in elective courses and, a maximum of 36 students in lecture courses (unless a lower maximum was approved by Kettering's curriculum committee). Labs should now generally have 16 students before additional sections are offered. Thesis advising has been recognized as a component of teaching and will be awarded four credits of teaching load for every 15 completed theses. A thesis capstone course as an alternative to the thesis was also recently approved by the board of trustees. Governing faculty almost universally stated that the recognition of thesis advising in teaching load was one the most significant and positive additions in the workload policy. The team noted that the faculty did not always understand how this new policy will work and when it will be applied. The administration will need to better develop these details so that faculty are clear about the policy and so that it can be applied consistently. A review of credit load by type of theses would also be beneficial. Faculty voiced concerns that a co-op thesis is very different than a graduate thesis, research thesis or entrepreneurial business plan thesis, all of which may be done by students at the university.

The non-teaching term expectations more clearly address issues associated with reduced teaching loads related to course buy outs, scholarship/research and service. Although, again, many faculty voiced concerns of the details of these components not yet clearly and fully outlined. However, the team felt confident that the administration was still actively working out these details and they would be forthcoming.

A key to the success of the new work plan will be that the policy is applied fairly across departments. Faculty voiced the need for department chairs to have more training in this area as well as doing annual reviews to keep the momentum moving forward with the established new policy and to help cultivate a culture of trust and accountability. This is especially important since department chairs are given considerable latitude in determining teaching loads and other work performed in the department that may be given load for independent or directed study courses, grant writing, and significant service work in assessment.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2019 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Focused Visit
Contact: peerreview@hlcommission.org
Page 4

It is clear to the visiting team, that if implemented completely and with further clarifying details currently being developed, the new policy will make work load more equitable for faculty generally and especially across departments. Further organizational attention is needed to fully actualize the policy. Other related policies on tenure and promotion and curricular issues should also be addressed as well as further training of department chairs to ensure fair and consistent application of the policy.

(2) Evidence that the policy was developed in collaboration with the faculty: Kettering provided evidence that faculty collaborated with the administration in development of the policy. In May of 2018, President McMahan created a task force to develop a new workload policy. The task force was co-chaired by the faculty senate moderator and the provost. The task force itself had ten additional "voting members" and seven "consulting members," nominated by the co-chairs and named by the president. Seven of the ten voting members were full-time faculty and one additional member was a department head. Three consulting members were "governing faculty" (i.e. voting faculty) and two were lecturers. The president and the task force reported the intention to have a body that was representative of departments and ranks for faculty. Despite Kettering's effort to form a representative body, the visiting team had some concerns about the gender composition of the task force because women were only two of 12 voting members.

The task force reported that they sought to include all faculty in the process in multiple ways. They conducted listening sessions in departments, solicited faculty opinions via email, conducted a faculty survey, held two "all faculty" round-table discussions, and held an additional "town hall meeting" one evening between August of 2018 and March of 2019. Nine meetings were also open meetings in which any campus member could attend. The evidence shows that some faculty did attend the open meetings. Members of the task force reported that the policy was the result of a combination of "bottom up" efforts from faculty and "top down" input from administration. In spite of the numerous opportunities for input, some governing faculty reported frustration either at too few opportunities or perceived suppression of opinions by the administration in soliciting feedback.

The visiting team believes that, despite concerns expressed by some faculty, Kettering administration showed clear evidence that it developed the new policy in collaboration with the faculty.

(3) Approval by the faculty: The Faculty Workload Policy is a change to the Faculty Handbook. Changes to the Faculty Handbook at Kettering require affirmation from 67% of those who attend a meeting where a quorum exists and a vote is taken. This super-majority of faculty in favor of the policy proved difficult to achieve. A total of five votes were held to achieve the requisite two-thirds, and the final vote process was controversial.

The first vote was held at a full meeting of the governing faculty on March 4, 2019. After extensive debate (as recorded in the "March 4, 2019 Meeting Notes") the motion to approve the new policy failed by a vote of 43 in favor and 45 against. Following the vote, President McMahan referred the proposal back to the task force for "amendment and reconsideration." Importantly, those minutes record President McMahan as saying that, "The provost and I will not vote [in spite of being members of the governing faculty] because we also have direct administrative responsibilities in the chain of responsibilities up to the board." This statement became particularly relevant later because, in fact, the president and provost's votes were necessary to achieve the required two-thirds majority necessary to approve the new policy.

In March and early April of 2019, the task force revised the policy by adding clarifying language. The modified proposal was then taken back to the governing faculty at a meeting on April 15, 2019. After presentation and discussion of the revised proposal, a vote was taken by ballot that failed: 48 in favor, 37 against.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2019 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Focused Visit
Contact: peerreview@hlcommission.org
Page 5

The April 15 meeting continued after the vote. Faculty made a motion to consider parts of the proposal, rather than the whole. The motion was seconded and discussed but did not come up for vote. Instead, another faculty member made a motion to reconsider the original workload policy proposal that had just been voted down. The motion to reconsider the full policy passed and, therefore, allowed a second vote in that meeting on the original motion to affirm the policy. The policy was again discussed. A second vote was held by ballot, but also failed the two-thirds requirement with 56 in favor and 27 against (58 affirmative votes were required).

Following this second failed vote, faculty again made a motion to reconsider the motion. The reconsideration motion passed and allowed for a third vote in the same meeting on the workload policy. At this point, the meeting was running long and eight faculty members are recorded as leaving the meeting, but a quorum was maintained. A third vote was taken. Multiple faculty reported that as the ballots were being counted, a faculty member who had left returned and tried to vote. She was denied a ballot because the counting had started. Then, after the ballots were counted, but before the outcome was announced, the minutes record that the president announced that he and the provost would exercise their right to vote. They cast the deciding votes and the motion passed 52 to 26 (51 ayes were required given the attendees at the time of the vote).

The process of voting in the April 15 meeting is unfortunate. A number of governing faculty reported that they perceived the vote as being unfair. They argued that the allotted time for the meeting had been exceeded, that some faculty had departed, and a faculty member was denied a vote while the president and provost were allowed to vote. Given the fact that a quorum of faculty were still present for the vote, that the president and the provost were technically allowed to vote given Faculty Handbook rules, and that one nay vote would not have changed the outcome, the team concluded that the faculty did legitimately vote to approve the policy. Faculty senate leadership affirmed this conclusion. However, the circumstances of that vote could easily lead to lessened support for the policy and contentious interaction between faculty and administration.

(4) Inclusion of the Workload Policy in the Faculty Handbook: The team received "Draft 4" of the 2020 revision of the Faculty Handbook. That Handbook included the full workload policy. Because the handbook is not yet proofed and still requires minor edits, it has not yet been distributed to faculty. The team expects that it will be distributed prior to the July 1 date when the policy is to be fully implemented. The team concluded that this requirement was met by Kettering.

A2. Statement of Focus:

Relevant Core Component or other HLC requirement:

B2. Statements of Evidence (check one below):

☐   Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

☐   Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention, rather than monitoring, is required in the area of focus.

☐   Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2019 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Focused Visit
Contact: peerreview@hlcommission.org
Page 6

☐   Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

The team will also note its determination as to each applicable Core Component or HLC requirement in Part B.

Evidence:

A3.   Statement of Focus:

Relevant Core Component or other HLC requirement:

B3.   Statements of Evidence (check one below):

☐   Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

☐   Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention, rather than monitoring, is required in the area of focus.

☐   Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.

☐   Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

The team will also note its determination as to each applicable Core Component or HLC requirement in Part B.

Evidence:

A4.   Statement of Focus:

Relevant Core Component or other HLC requirement:

B4.   Statements of Evidence (check one below):

☐   Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

☐   Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention, rather than monitoring, is required in the area of focus.

☐   Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2019 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Focused Visit
Contact: peerreview@hlcommission.org
Page 7

☐ Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

The team will also note its determination as to each applicable Core Component or HLC requirement in Part B.

Evidence:

A5. Statement of Focus:

Relevant Core Component or other HLC requirement:

B5. Statements of Evidence (check one below):

☐ Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

☐ Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention, rather than monitoring, is required in the area of focus.

☐ Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.

☐ Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

The team will also note its determination as to each applicable Core Component or HLC requirement in Part B.

Evidence:

7. **Other Accreditation Issues**. If applicable, list evidence of other accreditation issues, identify the related Core Components or other HLC requirements and note the team's determination as to each applicable Core Component or other HLC requirement in Part B.

Part B: Recommendation and Rationale

Recommendation:

☒ Evidence demonstrates that no monitoring is required.

☐ Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.

☐ Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2019 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Focused Visit
Contact: peerreview@hlcommission.org
Page 8

Rationale for the Team's Recommendation

The team found that Kettering University made a concerted effort over years to revise their faculty workload policy. HLC's required focus visit promoted an intense effort on the part of the senior administration and faculty to ensure that a new policy was written, approved, and included in the faculty handbook. The president's task force charged to develop the policy demonstrated a commitment to collaboration between faculty and administrators. The members of the task force affirmed that the many voices shaped the policy. Consequently, the proposal resulted from compromises from both the administration and faculty. We, the reviewers, saw evidence that the compromises made progress toward improving equity across departments and programs that have very different curricula, specialized accreditation requirements, and student enrollments.

Achieving the required two-thirds majority support from faculty on a compromise document proved extremely difficult. After hours of debate and multiple votes, the needed majority was achieved, albeit with controversy. Nevertheless, senior faculty leaders and administrators agreed, in separate meetings, that the policy was approved and would be implemented.

The totality of evidence showed that all four parts of the focus visit were achieved adequately. These were that

1. The faculty workload policy was revised to more equitably account for the variety of both teaching and non-teaching responsibilities of faculty.
2. The policy was developed in collaboration with faculty.
3. It was approved by the faculty
4. It was included in the Faculty Handbook.

Stipulations or Limitations on Future Accreditation Relationships
If recommending a change in the institution's stipulations, state both the old and new stipulation and provide a brief rationale for the recommended change. Check the Institutional Status and Requirement (ISR) Report for the current wording. (Note: After the focused visit, the institution's stipulations should be reviewed in consultation with the institution's HLC staff liaison.)

None

Monitoring
The team may call for a follow-up interim report. If the team concurs that a report is necessary, indicate the topic (including the relevant Core Components or other HLC requirements), timeline and expectations for that report. (Note: the team should consider embedding such a report as an emphasis in an upcoming comprehensive evaluation in consultation with the institution's HLC staff liaison.)

None

The team may call for a follow-up focused visit. If the team concurs that a visit is necessary, indicate the topic (including the relevant Core Components or other HLC requirements), timeline and expectations for that visit. (Note: The team should consider embedding such a visit as an emphasis in an upcoming comprehensive evaluation in consultation with the institution's staff liaison.)

Core Component Determinations
Indicate the team's determination(s) (met, met with concerns, not met) for the applicable Core

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2019 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Focused Visit
Contact: peerreview@hlcommission.org
Page 9

Components related to the areas of focus or other accreditation issues identified by the team in Part A. If a Core Component was not included in an area of focus, it should be marked as not evaluated.

Number	Title	Met	Met With Concerns	Not Met	Not Evaluated
1.A	Core Component 1.A	☐	☐	☐	☒
1.B	Core Component 1.B	☐	☐	☐	☒
1.C	Core Component 1.C	☐	☐	☐	☒
1.D	Core Component 1.D	☐	☐	☐	☒
2.A	Core Component 2.A	☐	☐	☐	☒
2.B	Core Component 2.B	☐	☐	☐	☒
2.C	Core Component 2.C	☐	☐	☐	☒
2.D	Core Component 2.D	☐	☐	☐	☒
2.E	Core Component 2.E	☐	☐	☐	☒
3.A	Core Component 3.A	☐	☐	☐	☒
3.B	Core Component 3.B	☐	☐	☐	☒
3.C	Core Component 3.C	☒	☐	☐	☐
3.D	Core Component 3.D	☐	☐	☐	☒
3.E	Core Component 3.E	☐	☐	☐	☒
4.A	Core Component 4.A	☐	☐	☐	☒
4.B	Core Component 4.B	☐	☐	☐	☒
4.C	Core Component 4.C	☐	☐	☐	☒
5.A	Core Component 5.A	☐	☐	☐	☒
5.B	Core Component 5.B	☐	☐	☐	☒
5.C	Core Component 5.C	☐	☐	☐	☒

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2019 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Focused Visit
Contact: peerreview@hlcommission.org
Page 10

Number	Title	Met	Met With Concerns	Not Met	Not Evaluated
5.D	Core Component 5.D	☐	☐	☐	☒

Other HLC Requirement Determinations

Indicate the team's determination(s) (met or not met) for the HLC requirements related to the areas of focus or other accreditation issues identified by the team in Part A.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2019 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Focused Visit
Contact: peerreview@hlcommission.org
Page 11

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

INSTITUTION and STATE:	Kettering University, MI
TYPE OF REVIEW:	Monitoring Focused Visit
DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW:	A visit focused on faculty workload policy.
DATES OF REVIEW:	1/27/2020 - 1/28/2020

☐ **X No Change in Institutional Status and Requirements**

Accreditation Status

Nature of Institution

Control: Private NFP

Recommended Change:

Degrees Awarded: Bachelors, Masters

Recommended Change:

Reaffirmation of Accreditation:

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2013 - 2014

Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2023 - 2024

Recommended Change:

Accreditation Stipulations

General:

Accreditation at the Master's level is limited to the Master of Business Administration and the Masters of Science degrees in Management, in Supply Chain Management, in Information Technology, and in Engineering.

Recommended Change:

Additional Location:

Prior HLC approval required.

Recommended Change:

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:

Approved for distance education courses and programs. The institution has not been approved for correspondence education.

Recommended Change:

Accreditation Events

Accreditation Pathway   Standard Pathway

Recommended Change:

Upcoming Events

Comprehensive Evaluation: 2023 - 2024

Recommended Change:

Monitoring

Upcoming Events

None

Recommended Change

Institutional Data

Educational Programs		**Recommended Change:**
Undergraduate		
Certificate	4	_____
Associate Degrees	0	_____
Baccalaureate Degrees	13	_____
Graduate		
Master's Degrees	8	_____
Specialist Degrees	0	_____
Doctoral Degrees	0	_____

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

Extended Operations

Branch Campuses

None

Recommended Change:

Additional Locations

None

Recommended Change:

Correspondence Education

None

Recommended Change:

Distance Delivery

14.1301 - Engineering Science, Master, Engineering

52.0201 - Business Administration and Management, General, Master, Business Administration

52.0205 - Operations Management and Supervision, Master, Operations Management

52.0299 - Business Administration, Management and Operations, Other, Master, Engineering Management

52.1201 - Management Information Systems, General, Master, Information Technology

52.1399 - Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods, Other, Master, Manufacturing Management

52.9999 - Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services, Other, Master, Manufacturing Operations

Contractual Arrangements

None

Recommended Change:

Consortial Arrangements

None

Recommended Change: