REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE

Statement Regarding the Report

The Commission on Colleges is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with the Commission on Colleges.

Name of the Institution: University of Houston

Date of the Review: November 7-8, 2007 (Off-Site)
April 7 – 9, 2008 (On-Site )

COC Staff Member: Dr. Jack Allen

Chair of the Committee: Dr. Wilsie S. Bishop
Vice President for Health Affairs
And Chief Operating Officer
East Tennessee State University
Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution

The University of Houston (UH) was founded in 1927, and enrolls approximately 35,000 students in nearly 300 undergraduate and graduate (masters, professional, and doctoral) academic programs, on campus and online. UH awards more than 6,500 degrees annually, and has nearly 200,000 alumni.

UH is part of the University of Houston System, a group of six public institutions of higher learning in the Houston area that share common goals and are governed by a Board of Regents. The System comprises four universities and two multi-institution teaching centers that offer degrees in partnership with the universities. The University of Houston is the largest and most comprehensive institution of the System.

Relationships among System institutions are collegial and collaborative. Credits transfer easily from one to another, and students move freely from one campus' library to another. Each institution within the System has a distinct mission; together, the institutions' missions and programs complement and support one another. Together with UH, the universities that make up the System are UH-Clear Lake, UH-Downtown, and UH-Victoria. These three institutions are separately accredited units. The President of the University of Houston is also the Chancellor of the University of Houston System.

The main campus in Houston, Texas is located on 550-acres adorned with fountains and sculptures on well manicured lawns offering a beautiful park-like setting in a large urban environment. The institution has off-campus teaching centers at Cinco Ranch (Katy), Sugar Land, The University Center in the Woodlands, and the Texas Medical Center. This team did site visits at the main campus in Houston, Cinco Ranch and Sugar Land.

The institution also offers the Master of Science in Geophysics at the University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa (since January 2008); the Master of Science in Petroleum Engineering (since Fall 2006) and the Master of Science in Geophysics (since Spring 2008) at the Petroleos de Venezuela Sociedad Anonima (PDVSA); and the Master of Business Administration with the cooperation of the Franklin Institute in Beijing, China (since January 2006).

On Site Review

The On Site Reaffirmation Committee for reaffirmation of accreditation visited the University of Houston on April 7 – 9, 2008. The Committee wishes to express its appreciation to Dr. Renu Khator, President, and the faculty, staff and students of the University who welcomed us to the campus and provided outstanding hospitality and assistance in our search for information and insight into UH's educational and administrative processes, procedures, and practices, and its Quality Enhancement Plan. The Committee was particularly impressed with the "can do" attitude of Dr. Jerald Strickland and the SACS Leadership Team and QEP Leadership group. The assistance with our logistical needs was especially appreciated. The Committee also expresses appreciation for the outstanding hospitality that began when we set foot in the Conrad Hilton College of Hotel & Restaurant Management Building and continued throughout our visit with excellent meals and every need addressed.
Part II. Assessment of Compliance

A. Assessment of Compliance with Section 1: The Principle of Integrity

1.1 The institution operates with integrity in all matters. (Integrity)

Comment:
From the perspective of the Committee the University of Houston operates with integrity in all matters. The institution and its members were forthright and provided all information requested.

B. Assessment of Compliance with Section 2: Core Requirements

2.1 The institution has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies. (Degree-granting Authority)

Comment:
The degree-granting authority of the University of Houston is recognized in the Education Code of Texas. That Code also specifies that degree programs at the University will be approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

2.2 The institution has a governing board of at least five members that is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The board is an active policy-making body for the institution and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from it. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting members of the board are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

A military institution authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees has a public board on which both the presiding officer and a majority of the other members are neither civilian employees of the military nor active/retired military. The board has broad and significant influence upon the institution’s programs and operations, plays an active role in policy-making, and ensures that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the Board except as specified by the authorizing legislation. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting board members are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. (Governing Board)

Comment:
The governance of the University of Houston System, which consists of several educational locations and media components, is by a nine-member Board of Regents (BOR). This Board is appointed by the Governor with the consent of the State Senate (Chapter 111.11 and 111.12 of the Texas Higher Education Code). The responsibilities of the BOR are outlined in Section 51.352 of the Texas Education Code with additional responsibilities stated in the Board’s Bylaws and in Section VI.57 of the Board of Regents Policies. These responsibilities cover
and are consistent with the compliance requirements for the governing body stated in 2.2. Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics that apply to the BOR can be found in Texas Government Code 572.051 and in Board of Regents Policies Section 57.01. These documents satisfy the requirements stated for compliance in Standard 2.2.

2.3 The institution has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the Board. (Chief Executive Officer)

Comment:
The Chancellor/President of the University of Houston is responsible for the management and success of the University as stated in Section 111.18 of the Texas Education Code. Section VI, 57.06 of the Board of Regents Policies prohibits the Chancellor/President, the University Presidents, or Vice Presidents from being a member of the BOR. The responsibilities of the BOR and the Chancellor/President are outlined in Section 51.352 and Section 111.21(b) of the Texas Education Code, the job description of the Chancellor/President can be found in “Chancellor/President Job Description,” and the “Organizational Chart” gives the relationships between the BOR, Chancellor/President of the System, and the Presidents.

Dr. Renu Khator was appointed Chancellor/President effective January 15, 2008.

2.4 The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission statement that is specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning, and where applicable research and public service. (Institutional Mission)

Comment:
The Mission Statement is clearly stated and appropriate for an urban research institution. Creating knowledge, serving traditional and non-traditional students, and establishing relationships with the local and state community are all emphases of the institution.

The Mission Statement can be found in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, the Faculty, Staff, and Student Handbooks, in the planning and budget documents, and is available online at: http://www.uh.edu/admin/mission.html. The approved Mission Statement is on file with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. (Institutional Effectiveness)

Comment:
Through strategic planning at the institution level and by supporting the strategic initiatives of the University of Houston System, the University of Houston has developed a planning system that supports continuous improvement. The annual calendar established for institutional effectiveness, planning, and budgeting allows Deans and Vice Presidents to review annual assessment reports in their area before developing their planning and budget requests.
The President and Provost, with the assistance of the Chief Financial Officer, review the plans and budget requests, and, after meetings with Deans, Vice Presidents and the UH Tuition and Fee Committee, develop the University of Houston Annual Budget Plan. The Board of Regents then reviews and approves the plan. Data on the progress on the 30 System initiatives is gathered and reported every year. In addition, the University of Houston has institution-specific initiatives that are measured each year:

2.6 The institution is in operation and has students enrolled in degree programs. (Continuous Operation)

Comment:
The University of Houston has provided ample evidence of continuous operation since 1927. A scan of Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs reveals comprehensive academic programs with degree offerings in numerous fields of study.

2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit. (Program Length)

Comment:
Review of the Undergraduate, Graduate, and Professional School Catalogs verify that the minimum number of hours required for the bachelor degree is 120 semester hours credit. Required hours for graduation with a bachelor's degree range from 120–160; hours, variances depend on the major and requirements of each major. The minimum number of hours for the master's degree is at least 30 hours for the thesis option and 36 hours for thesis option. Professional schools require additional hours for the master's degree.

2.7.2 The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. (Program Content)

Comment:
Review of the catalogs and websites affirm that the programs of study offered are in concert with the University of Houston mission of research, artistic, and scholarly endeavors to meet the needs of the communities served. The review processes of the Undergraduate and Graduate Professional Studies Council ensures that the existing and any new programs meet the mission of the University.

2.7.3 In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts,
social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses. (General Education)

Comment:
As evidenced on the University of Houston’s SACS website, the Texas Education Code requires the University, along with other academic institutions in Texas to design and implement a core curriculum. The University of Houston has a core curriculum of 42 hours selected from Communication, Mathematics, Math/Reasoning, US History, Government, Humanities, Visual and Performing Arts, Natural Sciences, Social Behavioral Sciences and Writing in the disciplines. The core curriculum requirement is outlined in the Undergraduate Studies Catalog 2005-2007. Since the catalog is under revision, there is a website specifically for the Core Curriculum (www.uh.edu/academics/corecurriculum).

There is a published list of Texas Common Course Numbers with UH equivalents for transfer students from institutions in Texas. Students transferring from other institutions can transfer credit for those courses determined to be equivalent to UH core courses. Also, as presented in the UH Undergraduate Studies Catalog 2005-2007, the core courses were selected based upon six essential intellectual competencies for students: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, Critical Thinking and Computer Literacy.

2.7.4 The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. If the institution does not provide instruction for all such course work and make arrangements for some instruction be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia, or uses some other alternative approach to meeting the requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on College. In all cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program.

Comment:
The University of Houston comprises 13 colleges and schools. It offers fourteen baccalaureate degrees in over 100 fields of study, 26 masters’ degrees and 6 doctoral and professional degrees. A review of the Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Design, described in the University of Houston Undergraduate Studies Catalog, provides evidence that the institution provides instruction for all coursework in that program.

A review of the Master of Business Administration degree program and the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies, described in the University of Houston Graduate Catalog, provide evidence that the institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each of these levels.

The inter-institutional working policy that UH has with institutions in which students may enroll states that students may enroll in a total of no more that six semester hours of credits at another institution. This can be done only if the University of Houston does not offer a comparable course during the same term, the course must be offered for graduate credit at the other institution, the class
must be required for graduation, and the student must obtain permission from both the host institution and UH. A review of the agreement with Baylor University verifies that this policy has been implemented in this agreement.

*2.8 The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs.

Comment:
The compliance report from the University of Houston states that the State of Texas measures student/faculty ratios as student full-time equivalent divided by faculty full-time equivalents. The range for comparable universities in Texas ranges from 21-26. The ratio for the University of Houston is 23.

The report states that in one department, Human Development and Consumer Sciences, full-time faculty teach fewer than 25% of the undergraduate student credit hours. The report stipulates that this is a small department that offers a general education course that satisfies three hours of the University's undergraduate requirements which skews the ratio.

The University employs 1,290 full-time faculty and almost 700 part-time faculty. This means that 35% of the faculty are part-time and 65% are full-time. If one uses a ratio of full-time faculty to all students (not just full-time), the ratio is 1/27.

A review of the classes taught by full-time faculty for the Fall 2006 and Spring 2007 reveals that about 86% of the classes are taught by full-time faculty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Spring 2007</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Classes-43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Departments</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Full-time Faculty Teaching</td>
<td>% Full-time Faculty Teaching</td>
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<td>100-75</td>
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<td>19 = 44%</td>
<td>18 = 42%</td>
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<td>5 = 12%</td>
<td>4 = 9%</td>
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The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs.

Summary of Off-Site Report: The Off-Site Committee found that the University of Houston measures student/faculty ratios as student full-time equivalent divided by faculty full-time equivalents. Using that measure, the ratio for the University of Houston is 23. The range for comparable Texas universities is 21 – 26.

According to the report, there is one small department, Human Development and Consumer Sciences, where full-time faculty teach less than 25% of the undergraduate student credit hours. About 86% of classes offered in Fall 2006 and Spring 2007 were taught by full-time faculty. The university employs 1,290 full-time faculty and about 700 part-time faculty members. Using a ratio of full-time faculty to all students, the ratio of full-time faculty is 1/27.

The On-Site committee reviewed the adequacy of the faculty and concur that the University of Houston employs faculty for its academic programs within an acceptable range of full-time versus part-time faculty coverage.
2.9 The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections and services and to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. Collections, resources, and services are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs. (Learning Resources and Services)

Comment:
On campus, a newly renovated main library, four branch libraries serving specialized programs, and a Law library provide access to 2.4 million volumes, a mix of print and electronic resources, and special collections of unique materials. Electronic resources include databases, full text serials, and e-books. The main library's hours are sufficient to accommodate access to resources and services (typically 7:00 a.m.-12:45 a.m. on week days).

Many services (circulation/borrowing, course reserves, interlibrary loan, and reference) are available electronically as well as in person. Services targeted to distance learners and to persons with disabilities are highlighted on the library's website and can be easily found.

The library has several consortial arrangements to provide access to other collections: the broader University of Houston System; the Houston Area Research Library Consortium; TexShare (for the state of Texas); and the Greater Western Library Alliance. Association of Research Library (ARL) statistics for 2004-2005 indicate the library is a net lender.

Subject specialists assigned to each department help ensure the relevance of the collection. The library has conducted the LibQUAL survey annually to gauge user satisfaction and expectations. The UH Libraries' Strategic Directions, 2006-2010 articulates an awareness of the challenges facing library and information services in the 21st century and charts an ambitious agenda for meeting the needs of the University of Houston community.

*2.10 The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. (Student Support Services)

Comment:
The University offers vast and comprehensive student support programs designed to address student personal, physical, psychosocial and academic needs. Evidence is presented of services delivered through numerous departments and agencies under well coordinated management structures with much centered in Student Affairs and others clustered under formal academic support entities. Several departmental websites were reviewed (in particular, Campus Activities, Health Center and Learning and Assessment Services) and all featured well articulated and resourced functions focused on student support. Further, the University provided access to Institutional Effectiveness Plans in Student Affairs where further evidence of UH's commitment to student support services were noted.

The On-Site Committee determined that the University provides a wide variety of student affairs resources that allow the students on the main campus and at its off-site locations to access services that complements their academic
enrichment. It also has partnered with academic programs to complement the development of the total student. The websites were clean and informative allowing the students the opportunity to locate services and support programs available to them. The “Ask Shasta” site complimented the FAQ site and was very informative and directs the students to areas of interest throughout the University.

2.11.1 The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (1) an institutional audit (or Standard Review Report issued in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a systemwide or statewide audit) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or Standard Review Report) guide; (2) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and (3) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing Board. (Financial Resources)

Comment:
The institution provided the Off-Site Committee the information requested except for the most recent year’s institutional audit and management letter and the statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets. The documentation included FY 2005, 2006 and 2007 budget plans and Board approvals as well as an explanation of the budget and planning process.

In March 2008, in time for the On-site Review, the University of Houston presented a well-prepared and comprehensive review report from the state auditor’s office for the fiscal year ended August 31, 2007. Additionally a management letter was provided specific to the institution with no management findings indicated.

A schedule of unrestricted net assets exclusive of plant, as required in CR 2.11.1, was included in the report.

Highlights of the institution’s financial status at fy07 include:

Total net assets, an indication of the overall worth of the institution, rose from 578 million to 634 million to 688 million from fy05 to fy07.

Unrestricted net assets, reported net of plant, increased from 157 million in fy06 to 181 million in fy07, an indication that assets available for day-to-day operations are adequate and increasing. The current ratio for fy06 and fy07 was 2.15 and 2.14, respectively. This strong current ratio coupled with robust unrestricted available net asset balances suggests the institution is managing its assets in an appropriate manner with adequate and conservative fiscal controls. Revenues available for operations (operating and nonoperating) exceeded operating expenses in both fy06 and fy07, with an operational surplus in those years of 18 million and 17.8 million, respectively.
Operations, when appropriations are considered, produced a strong positive cash flow in both fy06 and fy07.

This institution appears well-funded and appropriately fiscally managed.

The report was extremely well-done by the state auditor's office. No issues of noncompliance with the fiscal standards of the POA are readily apparent.

2.11.2 The institution has adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. (Physical Resources)

Comment:
The institution did provide information addressing the adequacy of physical resources including the updated strategic plan as well as the 2006 Framework Plan. An analysis of all physical projects since 2000 and planned projects was provided. Members of the On-Site Committee were able to tour the buildings and grounds and were impressed with the beauty and quality of the physical facilities of the institution.

2.12 The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that (1) includes a broad-based institutional process identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment, (2) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution, (3) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP, (4) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP, and (5) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement. (Quality Enhancement Plan)

Comment:
The Quality Enhancement Plan was reviewed and evaluated by the On-Site team. (See Appendix III)

The Committee presented one recommendation to the institution for the QEP.

Recommendation #1:
The Committee recommends that the University of Houston develop a more detailed five-year budget plan for the QEP to reflect added faculty and administrative resources, equipment, supplies, and other items required for QEP implementation. The budget plan should reflect sources of funds by allocating new dollars, reallocating existing dollars, and in-kind support and should set forth priorities for expenditures on the basis of the pyramid on Page 23 in the QEP document.

C. Assessment of Compliance with Section 3: Comprehensive Standards

3.1.1 The mission statement is current and comprehensive, accurately guides the institution's operations, is periodically reviewed and updated, is approved by the
governing Board, and is communicated to the institution's constituencies. (Mission)

Comment:
The Mission Statement is explicit, appropriate for a research institution, and is referenced in major catalogs, handbooks, and in planning and budget documents. A Mission Statement review and approval process is required by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The new Mission Statement was developed by the Faculty Senate and approved by the UH System's Board of Regents. It was then approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

3.2.1 The governing board of the institution is responsible for the selection and the periodic evaluation of the chief executive officer. (CEO evaluation/selection)

Comment:
In both the Texas Education Code paragraph 51.352 and in the UH System Board of Regents Policies in Section I, Subsection 1.2(D) (3) the following statement appears relative to the responsibility of the BOR:

"...appoint the President or the Chief Executive Officer of each institution under the Board's control and management and evaluate the Chief Executive Officer of each component institution and as the officer in the achievement of performance goals."

Dr. Renu Khator was appointed president of the University of Houston and chancellor of the UH System in November 2007, by UH System Board of Regents. Dr. Khator took office on January 15, 2008, moving to the University of Houston from the position of provost and senior vice president at the University of South Florida.

3.2.2 The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution's governance structure: (Governing board control)

3.2.2.1 the institution's mission;
3.2.2.2 the fiscal stability of the institution;
3.2.2.3 institutional policy, including policies concerning related and affiliated corporate entities and all auxiliary services;
3.2.2.4 related foundations (athletic, research, etc.) and other corporate entities whose primary purpose is to support the institution and/or its programs.

Comment:
Mission: At the state level, the Texas Education Code 61.051 gives the BOR the legal authority to establish and also periodically review the role and mission of the University of Houston. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Code 5.23 clearly states that each institution should develop a Mission Statement to be approved by the Board, and Code 5.24 states that this Mission Statement should be reviewed every four years.

Fiscal Stability: At the state level, the Texas Education Code Sections 51.0051 and 51.352(e) define the responsibility for fiscal stability and oversight to the Board of Regents and give them the authority to approve yearly budgets. This is repeated in Section 1.2(e) of the BOR Bylaws.
Affiliated Entities and Auxiliary Services: Texas Education Code 111.11 gives the authority and control to the BOR. The Board of Regents document MAPP 04.03.01 and Section IV does delegate the authority to deal with the financial affairs of auxiliary enterprise departments, and SAM (System Administrative Memorandum) 03.C.01 at 4.4(b) gives the campus the budget and fee responsibility for auxiliary enterprise units.

Related Foundations and Corporate Entities: Texas Government Code 2255.001 outlines the relationship and agreements that any government agency or institution must have with related foundations or other corporate entities, and thus the authority and responsibility of the BOR of the University of Houston is determined by this document. Board of Regents Policy 32.06 described the agreements that must be in place for such entities, and a template of such a general agreement is given in the document “support organization template.”

3.2.3 The board has a policy addressing conflict of interest for its members. (Conflict of interest)

Comment:
Texas Government Code Section 372.051 has general statements relative to conflict of interest and code of ethics for all state employees. Sections 57.01.1 and 57.01.2 of the Board of Regents Policies also has general statements concerning a code of ethics for members of the Board. However, Section 57.08 of the Board of Regents Policies has very explicit statements relative to conflict of interest for the members of BOR.

3.2.4 The governing board is free from undue influence from political, religious or other external bodies and protects the institution from such influence. (External influence)

Comment:
Texas Education Code paragraph 51.352 has one statement relative to external influence. The governing Board “is expected to preserve institutional independence and defend its right to manage its own affairs through its chosen administrators and employees.” The Board of Regents policies 57.01 and 57.08 are statements of a code of ethics and conflict of interest statements respectively that imply indirectly to external influence, and the same is true of the oath of office (Texas Constitution Art. 16. Sec. 1) taken by members of the BOR.

3.2.5 The governing board has a policy whereby members can be dismissed only for appropriate reasons and by a fair process. (Board dismissal)

Comment:
The Texas Education Code addresses the appointment of members of the Board, but there is no mention of any dismissal process in the information provided. However, Article 15, Section 9 of the Texas Constitution states that a public officer can be dismissed with the advice and consent of two-thirds of the members of the Senate present. Article 15, Section 3 of the Texas Constitution states that when the Senate is sitting as a Court of Impeachment, the “Senators shall be on oath, or affirmation impartially to try the party impeached, and no person shall be convicted without the concurrence of two-thirds of the Senators present.”
3.2.6 There is a clear and appropriate distinction, in writing and practice, between the policy-making functions of the governing Board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy. (Board/administration distinction)

Comment:
Each of the documents, Texas Education Code 51.352(b) and 51.353, Board of Regents Bylaws 1.2, and Board of Regents Policy 01.01, define the role of the BOR with the a statement very close to the following: “The governing Board of an institution of higher education shall provide the policy direction for each institution of higher education under its management and control.” However, there are no statements that make a clear distinction between the policy-making functions of the governing Board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to implement these policies. The Off-Site committee could not discern a distinction between these two functions based on a review of the “Meeting Minutes” of the BOR meetings.

On-site reviews of documents and interviews of the Chairman of the Board of Regents and administrative and academic officials provides ample evidence that responsible University of Houston officials (faculty and administrative) carry out Regents policies and are fully responsible for the oversight, management, and leadership of the institution without Regents' meddling or undue involvement. Indications do not exist that the Regents as a body or individually are in the midst of the academic and administrative matters of the University of Houston.

The On-Site Committee advises that the University of Houston's Board of Regents and administrative leaders will profit from putting in a policy document a clear statement of the major responsibilities of the governing board and of the administration and faculty.

3.2.7 The institution has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies. (Organizational structure)

Comment:
The organizational structure for the University of Houston System is given in the Organizational Chart, and the organizational structure for the University of Houston is given in a chart which also appears on the University website. There is also in the “Delegations of Authority” document descriptions of lines and areas of responsibilities. The organizational structure of the System and the University is clearly defined by these documents.

* 3.2.8 The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience, competence, and capacity to lead the institution. (Qualified administrative/academic officers)

Comment:
Either a Curriculum Vitae or Resume was reviewed for each of the individuals in an administrative position as listed in the UH Organizational Chart. All were found to be qualified.
The On-Site Review Committee reviewed pertinent information in support of the institution’s case for compliance and sustained the Off-Site Review Committee’s findings.

3.2.9 The institution defines and publishes policies regarding appointment and employment of faculty and staff. (Faculty/staff appointment)

Comment:
The University of Houston clearly defines and publishes policies regarding the appointment and employment of faculty and staff. The online University of Houston Faculty Handbook, most recently revised in 2004, describes recruitment and appointment procedures for prospective faculty. Faculty ranks and tracks are also described in the Faculty Handbook, as are promotion and tenure policies. Appointment and employment policies concerning graduate student assistants may also be found in the Faculty Handbook. Policies concerning employment of and services for non-faculty staff may be found in the University of Houston’s Staff Handbook and on the extensive University of Houston online Human Resources website.

3.2.10 The institution evaluates the effectiveness of its administrators on a periodic basis. (Administrative staff evaluations)

Comment:
The Chief Executive Officer is reviewed by the Board of Regents every five years per the requirements of the University of Houston System policy. Academic Deans are also reviewed every five years. Vice Presidents are reviewed every year based on their performance on the Strategic Principles.

The Off-Site Committee was concerned that the University of Houston self-study report did not document that evaluations of administrators other than the Chief Executive Officer, academic deans, and vice presidents were conducted to assess their effectiveness.

Based upon its review, the On-Site Committee determined that:

1. Policies and guidelines exist for the evaluation of the Chief Executive Officer at least every five years, each dean every five years, the vice presidents annually, and other staff members annually under human resources policies that relate to merit pay raises, promotions, and negative discipline. Human resources policies were reviewed on-site.

2. Evidence was presented and found by on-site document reviews and interviews that major academic and administrative units regularly evaluate the performance of administrators at differing levels of responsibility. Written evaluation reports were reviewed by the On-Site Committee. The evaluations result in commendations when merited and in corrective actions when deserved.

The On-Site Committee advises that the vital positions of President and deans certainly merit evaluations more often than once every five years for the benefit of the occupants of those positions and of the University of Houston. The On-Site Committee did not learn of valid reason for evaluating vice presidents annually and deans and the president every five years.

3.2.11 The institution’s chief executive officer has ultimate responsibility for, and exercises appropriate administrative and fiscal control over, the institution’s intercollegiate athletics program. (Control of intercollegiate athletics)
Comment:
The institution provided documentation that the Chief Executive Officer has ultimate control and responsibility for the intercollegiate athletics program. This documentation included a review of the organizational structure and a review of external oversight and control.

3.2.12 The institution’s chief executive officer controls the institution’s fund-raising activities exclusive of institution-related foundations that are independent and separately incorporated. (Fund-raising activities)

Comment:
The institution provided documentation that the Chief Executive Officer has control over the institution’s fund raising activities including Board and System Policies and templates for formal written agreements. Acknowledgment that all entities have signed agreements was given.

3.2.13 Any institution-related foundation not controlled by the institution has a contractual or other formal agreement that (1) accurately describes the relationship between the institution and the foundation and (2) describes any liability associated with that relationship. In all cases, the institution ensures that the relationship is consistent with its mission. (Institution-related foundations)

Comment:
The institution provided documentation in the Texas Government Code and in Board Policy that institution-related foundations have formal agreements that accurately describe the relationship and any liabilities.

3.2.14 The institution’s policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property. These policies apply to students, faculty, and staff. (Intellectual property rights)

Comment:
The Intellectual Property Policy of the University of Houston was established by the Board of Regents (Policy 21.08). It is applicable to all faculty, staff, and students. The policy may be found online in the Faculty Handbook, in the Staff Handbook, and on the University of Houston home page under resources within the Intellectual Property Management Department section of the Division of Research website. New faculty and staff sign a Patent Disclosure and Assignment Agreement as part of their employment orientation. A Standing Committee on Intellectual Property, appointed by the System Chancellor/President, is composed of active members of the faculty from each component University and advises and recommends to the Chancellor/President guidelines and procedures for implementation of the intellectual property policy. The Chancellor/President has delegated responsibility for the management of intellectual property to the Vice Chancellor/Vice President for Research. The policy clearly defines the various categories of intellectual property and specifies ownership depending on the type of property and the conditions under which the property is developed. Guidelines for income distribution are stated clearly.
*3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs (including student learning outcomes for educational programs) and its administrative and educational support services, assesses whether it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results. (Institutional effectiveness)

Comment:
A 20% sample stratified on college and degree level was used to review the academic assessment plans. Of the plans reviewed, 98% used multiple measures, 95% specified outcomes at the program level, 93% used at least one direct measure, 90% listed specific results, and 43% specified changes to the curriculum based on the assessment results.

The quality of the assessment plans varied greatly. Almost one in four programs reviewed made excessive use of grades in course or pass rates as measures of outcomes. In addition, vague results, use of results, and lack of clearly stated learning outcomes were common problems in some programs, especially those programs without professional or specialized accreditation. There is also doubt that assessment is ongoing at the University of Houston. As an example, in 2005, 14 Liberal Arts/Social Sciences Departments have assessment plans, compared to 13 in 2004, 11 in 2003, and 8 in 2002. No assessment plans are available for Pharmacy or Law or for undergraduate programs in Hotel/Restaurant Management for 2005.

The administrative assessment plans are of sufficient quality to support continuous improvement. Again, there is doubt as to whether or not the assessment is an ongoing process. In 2005, 17 administrative units have assessment plans, compared to 11 in 2004, 6 in 2003, and 5 in 2002.

In their Focused Report and subsequent to the On-Site visit, The University of Houston provided additional Institutional Effectiveness Plans to evidence assessment of its educational programs and services. The quality of student learning outcomes was less strong in the programs without professional accreditation. Much of the evidence that student learning is being assessed was determined through one-on-one interviews during the On-site committee’s visit, as opposed to through written documentation. Additionally, the University’s professional accreditations contributed to the committee’s determination that student learning outcomes assessment is occurring. The committee advises that the University improve its efforts to document student learning outcomes assessment and the changes that have been made on the basis of assessment findings.

3.4.1 The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration. (Academic program approval)

Comment:
Review of the Faculty Bylaws, the Undergraduate Council, and Graduate and Professional Council Mission and Bylaws outline the processes for the approval of academic courses, programs, and revisions of programs. There is faculty representation from each of the Colleges on the respective Councils, including student members. A clear process for new program approval and revisions of
existing programs is listed with the Undergraduate or Graduate and Professional Council being the first level of approval, and recommendations forward to the appropriate administrators. The final approval of new programs rests with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Review of the Undergraduate Council progress reports and Graduate Council minutes confirm adherence to the review/approval processes.

3.4.2 The institution's continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with the institution's mission. (Continuing education/service programs)

Comment:
The continuing education, outreach, and service programs listed show direct relationship to the institutional mission of meeting the needs of traditional and non-traditional students as well as meeting the needs of the community. Continuing Education programs are offered in a decentralized manner by the specific schools, such as the Colleges of Business, Optometry, Law, Education, and Social Work as documented on the UH website. Review of the course offerings demonstrates consistency with the institutional mission. In addition, multiple outreach education programs have been offered by the colleges to provide information to high school students and others involved in the community. Review of the continuing education policies and criteria indicate adherence to SACS Policies as well as the specific disciplinary accrediting bodies for the Continuing Education offerings (Law, Social Work, Optometry, and Education).

*3.4.3 The institution publishes admissions policies that are consistent with its mission. (Admissions policies)

Comment:
Admission policies and procedures are published in the UH Undergraduate Studies Catalog 2005-2007. These include general admission requirements, freshman admission requirements, and transfer student admission requirements. The Texas Education Code requires that entering undergraduate students take an assessment test and meet a minimum passing score. There are published exemptions to the tests. There are general admission requirements and also specific requirements for various programs published in the catalog. These are also placed on the UH website. Students may request further review of their admission status through the Admissions Review Committee.

Admission to a graduate program is determined by the specific program, department and/or college to which the student has applied. The Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies provides oversight of the admission policies and procedures. The UH Graduate Catalog online provides evidence that there are general requirements for graduate study and, in addition, each specific program publishes its own requirements. The general admission is completed using the Texas Common Application form. Each program at UH determines the process and deadlines for admission.

The On-Site Committee determined that the University publishes its' policy statement on line that indicates that the System's Board of Regents endorses the benefits of diversity in the university setting. This is consistent with the university's mission statement to 'disseminate knowledge through the education of a diverse population of traditional and non-traditional students...'. The University offers 109 undergraduate majors that cover a diverse offering for first
year students. The Graduate program offers just fewer than 200 programs (master and doctoral levels). This array of majors provides student who are admitted to the institution or a program the opportunity to benefit from the university's programs.

The admission policies appears to conform to acceptable higher education standards for admissions and they clearly provide directions for first time students (both freshmen, international, transfers and transient), degree and non-degree seeking students, honors and graduate students. The web site search engine quickly takes you to the site that explains probation and conditional admissions.

Admission requirements and criteria are listed in the Undergraduate Studies Catalogue 2005 – 2007. Explanations on Orientation, Academic Advising, Registration, Residency Status, Special Examinations etc. are included in the section on Admission, Advising Orientation and Registration.

3.4.4 The institution has a defined and published policy for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, advanced placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution's own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript. (Acceptance of academic credit)

Comment:
As a public institution in the State of Texas, UH is obligated to conform to the Texas Education Code. This code notes mandatory credit transfer rules among Texas' public institutions as well as establishing consistent evaluation methods for course designation and transfer. The University also has appropriate processes for dealing with courses that are unique and non-conformist. A Manager of Transfer Credit and Articulation oversees transfer processes and consults with academic leadership as needed to clarify policies and procedures. Though experimental courses are generally not awarded credit, clear processes are in place for consideration of unusual experiences.

Review of Advanced Placement and Professional Certification websites reveal well articulated and easily understood policies and procedures for the awarding of credit.

3.4.5 The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. (Academic policies)

Comment:
Academic policies are readily accessible through distribution both in print publications (such as the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs) and online. The Manual of Administrative Policies and Procedures (MAPP) is accessible online; it has an outline arrangement that is clear enough to allow the identification of any administrative policies that could affect the academic enterprise.

Faculty have appropriate involvement in determining academic policies through the Undergraduate Council and the Graduate and Professional Studies Council.
3.4.6 The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. (Practices for awarding credit)

Comment:
While in most areas the institution was in consistent with this standard, issues were identified with cross-listed courses. (See narrative below.)

The University of Houston awards course credit according to the rules established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, which uses the standard guideline of "traditionally-delivered three-semester-credit-hour courses should contain 15 weeks of instruction (45 contact hours) plus a week for final examinations so that such a course contains 45 to 48 contact hours depending on whether there is a final exam." The UH Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs describe the term semester hour as normally equivalent to 1 hour of class work or from 2 to 6 hours of laboratory work per week for a semester. For distance education via online, television, or tape, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board allows institutions to offer courses in a non-traditional ways "(for example, over the internet, or through a shortened, intensive format) that does not meet [standard] contact hour requirements, if the course has been reviewed and approved through a formal, institutional faculty review process that evaluates the course and its learning outcomes and determines that the course does, in fact, have equivalent learning outcomes to an equivalent, traditionally delivered course." For undergraduate courses, approval of courses and assignment of semester credit hours is usually initiated by a faculty member who submits the proposal to the department chair. After review and approval by the department, the proposal is submitted to the College's Dean. After review and approval by the Dean, the proposal is then submitted to the Office of Academic Program Management for consideration by the Undergraduate Council. If the Undergraduate Council approves the document, the proposal is sent to the Provost's Office for final approval. The process is similar for approval and assignment for credit of graduate and professional school courses except that approval by the Graduate and Professional Studies Council is necessary.

However, a memorandum dated April 3, 2007, includes, a statement noting that undergraduate courses for students who wish to take them for graduate credit must be cross-listed as a graduate class. The faculty member must submit a CBM003 form to create the graduate class. The form must include a copy of the undergraduate and graduate syllabus indicating the additional requirements for the graduate student. Examples of additional requirements are noted. The cross-listing of a course must also be approved by the Undergraduate Council before it can be submitted to the Graduate Office.

The memorandum also states that this form will be reviewed and approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies if it meets the requirement of having the graduate student do more advanced work than undergraduate students taking the cross-listed course.

Since no syllabi were available, it is not possible to verify whether this policy is being followed and whether there are differences in requirements for graduate and undergraduate students taking the same course at the same time in cross-listed courses. The committee was not able to determine whether these cross-
listed courses previously required more advanced work for graduate students than for undergraduate students.

The Off-Site Committee noted that the University of Houston awards course credit as mandated in rules established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The Off-Site Committee examined the processes for approval of undergraduate courses and graduate courses. These processes appear to be appropriate. Courses that are cross-listed for both undergraduate and graduate credit require that additional course requirements be stipulated for graduate credit, and that these must be approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies for inspection of the syllabus and approval, following approval of the cross-listing by the Undergraduate Council. The Off-Site committee did not have syllabi available to inspect so that they could verify whether the policy is followed.

The Focused Report provided to the On-Site Committee includes syllabi for cross-listed courses. An inspection of these syllabi revealed that the graduate course listings included additional requirements for grade, beyond the requirements for receiving undergraduate credit. There is a broad range in the types of additional credit awarded for graduate credit. Examples of the types of assignments or requirements for graduate credit include: presenting a summary of a journal article, writing one or more short essays, extra readings, and term papers.

In summary, the Committee concludes that the institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery.

3.4.7 The institution ensures the quality of educational programs and courses offered through consortia relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing compliance with the comprehensive requirements, and evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the purpose of the institution. (Consortia relationships/contractual agreements)

Comment:
The University of Houston has numerous consortial relationships and contractual agreements with other institutions. The Office of International Studies and Programs is responsible for three major Study Abroad Programs. The Affiliated Studies program makes international study available to every student through a network of quality programs conducted in accredited foreign universities throughout the world. Each program has a Program Director and Program Staff in each University to assist students from UH in matters relating to classes, home-stay, lodging, or any other matter. The University of Houston also has agreements with several international universities via the Reciprocal Educational Exchange Program, which is supported by State of Texas legislation. UH students can go abroad and have their host institution’s tuition waived. During their studies abroad, they continue to pay regular UH tuition and fees and have full access to their financial aid. In turn, international exchange students pay their University’s tuition and fees, and have UH tuition and fees waived. Each foreign University that participates in the Reciprocal Educational Exchange Program has a memorandum of understanding with the University of Houston. The third type of international program is the Faculty Led Program, which are study abroad programs, led by department faculty who “wish to extend the educational experience to the real world.”
The University of Houston is a partner in a consortial agreement with Methodist Hospital and Cornell University Weill Medical School to create the Institute For Biomedical Imaging Science (although it is called "Imagining" in the Compliance Certification Document and the word "For" was omitted). This Institute will create interdisciplinary programs of excellence in the science of biomedical imaging.

The University of Houston offers courses at three Multi-Institutional Teaching Centers in the Houston metro area: Sugar Land; Katy; and the University Center at Woodlands. The last site offers classes in collaboration with Prairie View A&M University, Sam Houston State University, Texas A&M University, Texas Southern University, under a memorandum of understanding. All classes offered at these sites are upper-division (junior-, senior-, and graduate-level) courses. Educational Outreach is a service unit that facilitates course and program offerings for the UH colleges and departments. All courses and programs must have college/departmental approval and have the same prerequisites, standards, and requirements as classes taken on campus.

The University of Houston also has active Extension Programs in China, Venezuela, and Mexico.

All of the University of Houston's educational consortial relationships and contractual agreements appear to be well within the University's stated mission "to create and disseminate knowledge through the education of a diverse population of traditional and non-traditional students, and through research, artistic, and scholarly endeavors... In this role, the University of Houston applies its expertise to the challenges facing the local state, national, and international communities and it establishes and nurtures relationships with community organizations, government agencies, public schools, and the private sector to enhance the educational, economic, and cultural vitality of Houston and Texas."

However, there does not appear to be any periodic review of the programs referenced above to ensure compliance to the comprehensive standards.

The University of Houston uses a multi-level review process, overseen by The Provosts' Council to ensure that educational program/courses offered through consortia relationships and contractual agreements, are consistent with the SACS comprehensive requirements.

The Provosts' Council meets monthly and has a regular agenda item regarding consortia relationships and contractual agreements. The Provost’s Council is composed of the four provosts of the UH System, The Executive Associate Vice Chancellor of Faculty Affairs, and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Planning and University Outreach.

Policies guiding collaborations at the UH’s teaching centers are formally approved and reviewed by the Provosts' Council. The Council establishes the formal mission and goals for the Office of International Studies and Programs and ensures ongoing compliance with comprehensive standards. The Academic Administration Support group makes recommendations to the Provosts' Council to ensure that students taking classes at the Teaching Centers have access to appropriate instructional support services. All Extension Programs and Facilities are required to be regularly reviewed and must meet the same standards as on campus programs. The University provided evidence through minutes, policy
3.4.8 The institution awards academic credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis only when there is documentation that the noncredit course work is equivalent to a designated credit experience. (Noncredit to credit)

Comment:
The University of Houston usually awards credit only for course work taken for credit. In special situations, credit may be granted for specified circumstances, such as by taking special examinations, as cited in the Undergraduate Catalog: "Some academic departments at the University offer students an opportunity through special examinations to earn credit for unusual experience related directly to a course or for completion of a course equivalent at a non-accredited institution. No grades are assigned to credit earned by special examinations. No residence credit is given."

Credit may also be granted for courses taken at military service training schools based on recommendations made in the Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experience in the Armed Services, which may be found on the American Council on Education's website.

Credit may also be granted for courses taken through various non-collegiate organizations, based on the recommendation made by the Commission on Educational Credit (The American Council on Education College Credit Recommendation Service) when such training is considered by the University to be at the baccalaureate level and consistent with the student's educational objective.

3.4.9 The institution provides appropriate academic support services. (Academic support services)

Comment:
The University has provided evidence of compliance primarily through services offered for students through Learning and Assessment Services (LAS) and the Academic Advising Center (AAC). Through LAS, an extensive program of tutoring services is offered as well as workshops on a variety of learning support concepts (e.g., time management and writing). AAC advises all undergraduate students and provides advisor training and support University-wide.

Many other academic support services are noted, many of which target unique cohorts of students representing distinctive curricular foci, varying levels of pre-college academic preparation and other student characteristics associated with academic capacity and resources. Several were scanned for evidence of depth and breadth and in the aggregate, the University has provided considerable evidence of compliance with this section. The University has also provided reasonable evidence of evaluative processes to ensure the delivery of a contemporary and competent set of academic support services.

UH also provides numerous academic support services for faculty as evidenced on their website. The UH Learning and Assessment Services has a Measurement and Evaluation Center that assists faculty with administration of
faculty and course evaluations, design of research and assistance with research methods, instrumentation, data analysis, program evaluation, exam scoring and consultation for outcome assessment. The Undergraduate Scholars Academic Advising Center offers programs for faculty advisors and has assistance for faculty on their website. UH offers grants to faculty through the Faculty Development Initiative Program to support their efforts to foster innovative use of technology in the classroom. Information Technology offers many workshops and training sessions for faculty to assist them with educational technology. The UH library offers workshops for faculty. They offer faculty support with interlibrary loans, reserves services and special collections requests. The library support faculty with their requests for purchases.

3.4.10 The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty. *(Responsibility for curriculum)*

Comment:
Review of the Faculty Senate Bylaws, the Undergraduate Council, and Graduate Professional Council missions outlines a clear process for course development that is initiated with the faculty, reviewed by the Department and Department Chair, and then the Undergraduate/Graduate Professional Council. The Councils which are composed of faculty representatives from the Colleges serve as the initial review process and advise the Provost about academic matters. There is an Academic Program Evaluation Committee for the Graduate and Professional Schools to monitor the programs, whereas this function is included in the responsibilities of the Undergraduate Council. Review of the Undergraduate Tracking website confirm adherence to the policies as described.

*3.4.11 For each major in a degree program, the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, this requirement applies to a curricular area or concentration. *(Academic program coordination)*

Comment:
There is a list of Program Coordinators for UH on their SACS website. A random review of 30 Coordinators in the Faculty Roster File indicates these individuals are academically qualified in their field. The Undergraduate Council is charged with the assessment of undergraduate academic programs. The development and assessment of graduate and professional curricula is one of the purposes of the Graduate and Professional Studies Council. The Coordinators of the programs participate in these reviews at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The On-Site Review Committee reviewed pertinent information in support of the institution’s case for compliance and sustained the Off-Site Review Committee’s findings.

3.4.12 The institution’s use of technology enhances student learning and is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs. Students have access to and training in the use of technology. *(Technology use)*

Comment:
The University offers a range of training options to ensure that students have access to and training in the use of technology. Both information technology and
the library provide training for students in online and in classroom settings. Educational Technology and University Outreach provides orientation sessions for distance education students as well.

The University's multi-faced approach to the use of technology appears to be driven by the goal of broadening accessibility to learning opportunities for its diverse student body.

For faculty, the Center for Learning Enhancement focuses on promoting teaching and learning effectiveness. Educational Technology and University Outreach (ETUO) assists faculty in developing and delivering electronic course material, and Information Technology (IT) maintains the campus computing and network infrastructure. All three areas offer training opportunities, and many ETUO personnel are embedded in academic departments. The campus utilizes courseware to support classes and provides technology-enhanced classrooms and computer labs.

The University has committed significant resources to its Faculty Development Incentive Program (FDIP), and faculty have introduced (and assessed) the use of electronic portfolios, student interactive devices, and podcasting into the classroom.

3.5.1 The institution identifies college-level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies. (College-level competencies)

Comment:
A set of basic intellectual competencies are set forward by UH as outcomes of their core curriculum. These are Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, Critical Thinking and Computer Literacy. At UH, assessment of the core curriculum is the responsibility of the Core Curriculum Subcommittee of the Undergraduate Council and the Executive Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The institution's report provides evidence of the evaluation of students' performance in various areas, such as Writing and Algebra. However, the institution has not established a clear link between each general education competency and the means for evaluation of the students' attainment of those competencies.

The University of Houston provided the On-Site Committee four documents to evidence assessment of their core curriculum: the Undergraduate Writing Assessment conducted in 2004-05, the Program Evaluation of College Algebra dated fall 2002, and two reports on the pilot assessment of critical thinking and quantitative reasoning conducted during spring 2008. The reports did not evidence assessment of all of the core competencies or present an assessment plan that would provide evidence of a comprehensive assessment of attainment of college level competencies of the core curriculum.

Recommendation #2: The Committee recommends that the University develop a written comprehensive assessment plan for the core curriculum that clearly documents when and how each core competency, defined by the State and organized by the University of Houston, is assessed and measured, and documents the results of those assessments.
3.5.2 At least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. In the case of undergraduate degree programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortia arrangements, the student earns 25 percent of the credits required for the degree through instruction offered by the participating institutions. **(Institutional credits for a degree)**

**Comment:**
The University of Houston's *Undergraduate Catalog* states that students must complete at least 25% of the semester hours required for a degree in residence. The *Catalog* states that the undergraduate degree must contain a minimum of 120 semester hours of courses. It states that no more than 30 semester hours of correspondence work and extension class credit may be applied to the degree (25% of total). The maximum correspondence credit that can be applied is 18 hours (15%). The student must complete 30 semester hours in residence which must be applied toward the bachelor's degree (25%).

In recognition that the number of hours required for certain degrees exceeds the University standard of 120, the Undergraduate Council last year passed a new policy (to appear in the 2007 *Undergraduate Catalog*) that states explicitly that students must complete at least 25% of the semester hours required for a degree in residence or if 25% includes a fraction of a semester hour, the requirement must be rounded up to the nearest whole number of semester hours.

The *Catalog* states that a maximum number of 66 semester hours (55%) of lower division transfer work from another institution can apply toward a baccalaureate degree.

3.5.3 The institution defines and publishes requirements for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. **(Undergraduate program requirements)**

**Comment:**
The *Undergraduate Studies Catalog 2005-2007* identifies the requirements for all undergraduate programs. Also in the UH *Catalog* is a listing of the core curriculum requirements in the areas of Communication, Mathematics, Mathematics/Reasoning, American History, Government, Humanities, Visual and Performing Arts, Natural Sciences and Social and Behavioral Sciences. The Undergraduate Council oversees that the programs meet commonly accepted standards, and the UH *Catalog* lists accreditation information for its programs.

3.5.4 At least 25% of the discipline hours in each major at the baccalaureate level are taught by faculty members holding the terminal degree-usually the earned doctorate-in the discipline, or the equivalent of the terminal degree.

**Comment:**
The Compliance Certification Report states that the percent of undergraduate hours taught by faculty with terminal degrees ranges from 100% to 29%. The report of undergraduate credit hours taught by faculty with terminal degrees verifies this statement. Of the 77 programs reviewed, 10 (13%) had classes where less than 50% of the classes were taught by faculty without terminal degrees. The report states that none had classes with less than 25% of faculty holding terminal degrees.
Data from CR3.7.1, Faculty Credentials, indicate that the vast majority of faculty has terminal degrees. Combining these data provides evidence that there are no outstanding concerns in this area.

3.6.1 The institution's post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, and its master's and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than its undergraduate programs. (Post-baccalaureate program rigor)

Comment:
The University of Houston Graduate Catalog states, "Due to the very nature of graduate and post-baccalaureate professional education, students admitted to Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of Houston should expect the coursework to be at a more advanced level. In addition, students are expected to display a greater level of maturity and self-learning skills. UH has a set of requirements for all graduate programs and states that programs must meet these minimum requirements for admissions, credit transfer and cross-listing of courses but can develop policies that supersede the minimum requirements.

A review of requirements for the baccalaureate, masters and doctoral degrees in Mechanical Engineering, History, and Mathematics found higher entry levels and courses with higher levels of academic content at higher degree levels.

3.6.2 The institution structures its graduate curricula (1) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (2) to ensure ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experiences. (Graduate curriculum)

Comment:
The University of Houston offers six doctoral degrees in 62 fields and masters degrees in 133 fields via twelve Colleges: Architecture; Business; Education; Engineering; Hotel and Restaurant Management; Law; Liberal Arts and Social Sciences; Natural Sciences and Mathematics; Optometry; Pharmacy; Technology; and the Graduate School of Social Work. All appear to require knowledge of the pertinent literature in the discipline. Almost all of the doctoral programs require a dissertation and many of the masters programs require a thesis or special project. The Professional Schools all appear to require professional practice and training experience.

New Graduate and Professional Studies programs are offered at the University of Houston only after a very rigorous review by the College in which the program resides, the Graduate and Professional Studies Council, the Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies, the Provost Council and Provost, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Each review at the College and University level verifies that the program ensures that students have a clear grasp of the current and seminal literature relevant to their discipline and have the opportunity to engage in research with a mentor. Additionally, guidelines are established to ensure that the student's knowledge base is current and up-to-date with changes in his/her field of study. When substantive changes are made to the coursework or overall curriculum, these must be approved by the same procedures listed above.
All graduate programs are reviewed on a periodic basis by external reviewers to ensure that this particular guideline is being enforced, even as disciplines change. The external review program was established or revised in 2000.

The University provides numerous opportunities and has sufficient funding for student research. Students are also provided with the opportunity to engage in internships, practicum, and coop programs.

All programs and program requirements are described in the online Graduate Catalog. There is a section devoted to the preparation of theses and dissertations.

3.6.3 The majority of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. In the case of graduate and post-baccalaureate professional degree programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortia arrangements, the student earns a majority of credits through instruction offered by the participating institutions. (Institutional credits for a degree)

Comment: The Graduate Catalog states that all graduate programs have a residency requirement and minimum course requirements. The number of semester credit hours applied to the graduate degree is subject to approval by the individual department in which transfer credit is determined after enrollment. Except in the case of planned coordinated inter-institutional programs approved in advance by the Graduate and Professional Studies Council, not more than nine semester hours of transfer credit may be applied to a master's degree.

The catalog also states for the masters degree with theses option, at least 21 of the 24 required semester hours of credit must be earned in residence at the University (88%).

For the non-thesis degree which usually requires 36 hours of course work, at least 27 hours of credit must be earned in residence at the University (75%).

For a doctoral degree, a minimum of 24 semester hours beyond the master's degree is required. The minimum residency requirement is one academic year of continuous full-time enrollment. Full-time residency is defined as at least nine semester hours in fall and spring semesters. The Catalog also states that the College of Business Administration and the Cullen College of Engineering will not accept more than nine and six semester hours of transfer credit, respectively, under any circumstances. Under no circumstances may more than one-half of the course credit necessary for any graduate degree within the jurisdiction of graduate studies be represented by credit transferred from other institutions. With the approval of the Dean of the College, a maximum of six semester hours of an earned master's degree may be applied to a second master's degree.

The Inter-Institutional Agreement limits students to earning 12 semester hours at a host institution. The memorandum of agreement with Baylor University School of Medicine and with the University of Houston School of Law, agreed upon in September 2006, verified that this policy is being enforced for students who are taking courses from Baylor which will be applied to the UH degree.
3.6.4 The institution defines and publishes requirements for its graduate and post-graduate professional programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. *(Post-baccalaureate program requirements)*

**Comment:**
The University of Houston's guidelines for admission, adequate progress in the major, and graduation may be found in the online *Graduate Catalog*, and in a shorter brochure, the *Graduate and Professional Student Resource Guide*. Copies of the Resource Guide are provided to every program to be handed out to students at a required orientation program held by each department before each "long" semester. The requirements for admission, academic progress, and graduation are also summarized in the *Graduate Catalog* in the Summary of University Regulations and Requirements. All of these documents are reviewed and updated before every new academic year by College Associate Deans, Graduate Directors, and Chairs to ensure that they accurately reflect current practice in each program. In addition, this review ensures that the requirements conform to accepted standards in the field.

The University of Houston offers graduate degrees in nearly 200 programs. All of them appear to conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs, as well as to rules established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

3.7.1 The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty. *(Faculty competence)*

**Comment:**
UH hires faculty on tenure track and non-tenure track appointments in keeping with its mission of educating students through research, artistic and scholarly endeavors. There is a published procedure for hiring tenure track, clinical and instructional faculty and also non tenure track faculty available on their website. Qualifications for a faculty member are determined by the department, college and ultimately approved by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

The outcome of the assessment of the UH Faculty Roster is outlined in the SACS Faculty Worksheet attached to the Compliance Certification Report. The Worksheet identifies individuals that, in the opinion of the reviewers, there were not adequate qualifications presented to justify the teaching assignments.

There is a published set of guidelines for the appointment of Graduate Teaching Assistants on the UH website and in the *Graduate Catalog* online. These
appointments are related to Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows and Instructional Assistants. The qualifications as presented on the website do not speak to the Commission guidelines for graduate preparation or describe other appropriate preparation. It cannot be determined if qualifications are appropriate.

The concern of the Off-Site Review Committee was that the qualifications as presented on the website did not speak to the Commission's guidelines for graduate preparation or describe other appropriate preparation. Also, the Off-Site Review Committee was concerned that in the SACS Faculty Worksheet attached to the Compliance Certification Report for specific individuals inadequate qualifications were presented to justify the teaching assignments.

The Focused Report provided a revision of the institution's statement of requirements for Teaching Fellows that is now before the Faculty Senate for approval needs to have the word "have" inserted before "direct supervision" (which is bolded), so as to make sense. This minor editorial change addresses the area of concern.

Regarding the SACS Faculty Worksheet, the Committee reviewed the pertinent information provided in the Focused Report of February 25, 2008, and reviewed transcripts from a random sample of faculty with questions concerning their qualifications. All faculty qualifications were in order and appropriate for areas of instruction.

Therefore, in light of the Focused Report of February 25, 2008, and the On-Site review of faculty qualifications, the Committee concludes that the institution has made its case that it employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution.

3.7.2 The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status.

(Faculty evaluation)

Comment:
The Faculty Handbook describes procedures for tenure and review. The procedures include reviews at the Department, College, and University levels. Although each Department and College is responsible for setting and upholding standards, the final decision is made at the level of the Chancellor's Office after review at the other levels. The Board of Regents Policy also states that a comprehensive evaluation process, including peer review, must occur every third and sixth year of service for newly appointed tenure-track faculty. Less than satisfactory results requires enrollment in a Faculty Development Plan.

The Board of Trustees Policy Handbook presents policies for Post-Tenure Review. These policies state that all faculty will be reviewed no more often than once a year and no less than once every six years after attaining tenure. The evaluation must include peer review. There is no evidence to verify that they occurred.

The Handbook states that all tenured full-time faculty will be reviewed annually. The Faculty Handbook also states that faculty may receive salary increments on an annual basis based on merit as determined by the annual performance evaluation of each faculty member. Although the policies are in place to evaluate faculty, there is no evidence in the report to verify that they are occurring.
The *Faculty Handbook* states that faculty will be evaluated by students. The Measurement and Evaluation Center website indicates that faculty course evaluations are developed into reports which can be accessed by faculty, providing evidence that these evaluations are occurring. However, it appears these are accessed by faculty only. The University needs to provide evidence that these evaluations are occurring.

The SACS offsite committee identified three issues related to faculty evaluation: 1) There is no evidence that Post-tenure reviews have taken place; 2) There is no evidence that Annual Reviews are occurring; 3) There is no evidence that Evaluations of Faculty by students is made available to students.

The On-Site Committee determined that as mandated, and documented, by the UHS Board of Regents (April 16, 1998) a comprehensive peer review of all full-time faculty is conducted annually at UH. The annual review is a comprehensive performance evaluation, based on the professional responsibilities of the faculty member in teaching, research, service, patient care, and administration. The annual review includes peer review, and is directed towards the professional development of the faculty member. The UHS Focused report provided documented examples of annual reviews of faculty in the various UHS colleges and units. The on-site committee found adequate evidence that annual reviews of tenure/tenure track faculty are being carried out and are used to assess faculty performance.

An unsatisfactory annual review is intended to trigger a post-tenure review as mandated by statute and Board policy. A one page redacted example of the outcome of an admittedly “rare” post tenure review case was provided to the on-site committee. In interviews with University Administrators, it was determined that all faculty participate in the annual review process regardless of tenure status. Should a tenured faculty not be performing adequately then a post-tenure review with a faculty development plan and/or corrective steps is initiated.

All UHS colleges factor student evaluations into a faculty member's performance review. Student evaluations of courses/professors are kept in the M.D. Anderson Library (main library) for students to examine. The On-Site Committee reviewed the multiple rows of current faculty evaluations shelved at the library. These evaluations are available to students and anyone wishing to view them. The evaluations are in their raw form without any analysis.

The institution is required to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status. Through interviews and policy review, it was determined that all consortial/contractual faculty are assigned to a department on the main campus and are evaluated with the regular cycle of faculty evaluations and these evaluations are available in the M.D. Anderson Library (main library).

3.7.3 The institution provides evidence of ongoing professional development of faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners. *(Faculty development)*

**Comment:**
The University of Houston has excellent opportunities for professional development of faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners, beginning with a two-day New Faculty Orientation provided by the Office of the Provost every year. In addition to general information pertaining to employment at the
University of Houston, the orientation covers teaching philosophies, University resources, electronic instruction, faculty grants, promotion and tenure guidance, student behavior, legal issues, student retention, and faculty research.

The University’s Center for Learning Enhancement (CLE) mission is to support faculty in developing constructive learning environments by exploration and assessment of effective instructional methods; to advocate innovative and appropriate use of technology to enhance the quality of instruction; to provide professional consultation on quality course design and effective delivery utilizing best practices; to facilitate and help faculty develop, implement and assess research projects related to teaching; to collaborate with faculty to host academic seminars and workshops to promote teaching excellence on campus; to provide research, teaching and learning resources for professional development; and to collaborate with other units to build an academic community that is supportive of excellence in teaching and lifelong-learning. The excellent CLE website (which could not be found on the public UH website) contains very useful information for faculty and graduate teaching assistants, including learning theories; instructional resources; best practices for online courses, use of media and accessibility; academic assessment; and links to training and tutorials, online resources, and campus resources. Current educational research projects supported by the CLE are also discussed on the website.

UH Information Technology offers classroom support to faculty in electronic instruction, including media streaming, video production, WebCT training and tools, and instructional television; and online and in-classroom instruction in database applications and reporting, desktop publishing, presentations, spreadsheets, web design, graphics applications, project management, and operating systems. The University also offers faculty access to analysis, data, and trends through affiliation with Gartner, a provider of IT research, and EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit association linking faculty to sources examining the use of information technology in higher education.

The University of Houston Writing Center provides assistance in course design, particularly core courses, and in design of writing assignments.

Faculty development in research is supported by the Research Council, a Faculty Advisory Committee which participates in establishing policies and practices pertaining to faculty development in the area of research. The Council reviews proposals submitted for internal funds and makes recommendations to the Vice President for Research on the allocation of funds. The Division of Research (DOR) supports faculty research by providing resources to help secure external funding. It assists faculty in locating funding opportunities and brings writing professionals to campus to conduct free workshops on how to write competitive proposals. The DOR also provides internal funding to support several faculty grant programs, including startup funds and a competitive peer reviewed program that supports faculty who are attempting to initiate high quality research and scholarship. The DOR also assists faculty development via technology transfer. Other research opportunities are available through several UH research centers and institutes.

A Faculty Development Initiative Program (FDIP), funded by the Office of the Executive Associate Vice President for Academic and Faculty Affairs, provides grants for faculty to develop projects utilizing technology in particular courses or across curricula.
Other modes of faculty development provided by the University of Houston include faculty development leaves; formal faculty reviews conducted for the promotion and tenure process and post-tenure review; and numerous faculty awards.

3.7.4 The institution ensures adequate procedures for safeguarding and protecting academic freedom. (Academic freedom)

Comment:
Review of the UH Board of Regents Policy on Academic Freedom, Post-Tenure Review process, and the University Grievance Committee procedures confirms that there are processes in place to ensure academic freedom of the faculty.

3.7.5 The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. (Faculty role in governance)

Comment:
The Faculty Handbook, Board of Regents Policy, and Faculty Senate Constitution provide evidence of the governance structure of the University that includes the faculty in the academic responsibilities and governance of the College/Schools and within the University. Faculty are actively engaged in the Faculty Senate and within the Colleges/Schools in making decisions concerning admissions, curriculum, and evaluation policy matters. Review of the University Coordinating Council Committee Membership and Policies indicate faculty responsibility and participation in the shared governance of UH.

3.8.1 The institution provides facilities and learning/information resources that are appropriate to support its teaching, research, and service mission. (Learning/information resources)

Comment:
The University has demonstrated an investment in facilities with the recent (2005) renovation and addition to the main library. The renovated space recognizes current design principles by offering users a variety of inviting spaces and seating options (both group and individual), robust support of technology with 250 workstations, and wireless capacity. Laptops are available to loan to students. The library has expanded its shelving capacity to 2.4 million volumes and offers a 24-hour study area. The renovation allowed the implementation of the interesting concept of placing the honors college in the heart of the library.

The Law library has also been recently remodeled and can now seat 50% of those engaged in law studies. Wireless capacity supports access to online resources and services.

According to the 2004/05 ARL data, the library expended approximately $7.7 million for collections in that year, and the library is acquiring an appropriate mix of print and electronic resources. The library's website identifies subject specialists and their contact information, and they help ensure the relevance of the collection. See Certification Report 2.9 for further details about the collection.
3.8.2 The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources. (Instruction of library use)

Comment:
Subject liaisons and instructional specialists engaged in 412 sessions and reached 11,000 students in the last ARL statistical period. The staff provides instructional services through a variety of venues (interactions with faculty, instruction blog, workshops, group tours, online tutorials, etc.) and a variety of methods (one-on-one, classroom setting, via the web, and consultations with faculty to incorporate information into WebCT). The Law library provides in-depth one-on-one assistance and classroom presentations.

Information about the library's instructional program can be easily located on the library's website. The site posts a schedule of workshops and has a form that faculty can submit to request sessions customized to the needs of specific courses. The website also informs distance education students about options in obtaining one-on-one assistance.

Outside of the library, design specialists and web specialists are available through educational technology and University outreach to assist faculty in incorporating technology into the delivery of course material.

3.8.3 The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experiences in library and/or other learning/information resources—to accomplish the mission of the institution. (Qualified staff)

Comment:
The total number of staff appears sufficient to offer the library's range of services. There does seem to be a discrepancy in the number of staff reported in the narrative (47 professionals, 84 support staff, and 43 student assistants, for a total of 174) and that reported in the UH rankings in the 2004-2005 ARL statistics in section 2.9 (87 professionals, 68 support staff, and 43 student assistants, for a total of 198).

Librarians are required to have an ALA-accredited master's degree or a suitable equivalent. Once hired, librarians' progress through the ranks in a system similar to that of tenure; a librarian must move from assistant to associate within six years. Librarians receive support to attend conferences and to engage in training opportunities. Reference librarians in the Law library hold both Law and Library degrees.

The Librarian's Governance Document outlines the expectations required for each rank and the procedures to be followed in submitting appropriate documentation.

A list of librarians, including earned degrees, is needed to verify that stated hiring requirements are being met.

Summary of Off-Site Report: The Off-Site Committee found that the total number of staffing in the library system appears to be sufficient. However, they observed a discrepancy in the staff level reported in the narrative (47 professionals, 84 support staff, and 43 student assistants) and the staff number reported in the University of Houston rankings in the 2004-2005 ARL statistics section (87 professionals, 68 support staff, and 43 student assistants). The University of
Houston requires all librarians to have an ALA-accredited master's degree or equivalent. The Off-Site Committee stipulated that a listing of librarians, including their credentials, would be needed to verify that hiring requirements are met.

The Focused Report explains the variance in the staffing level reported in the ARL statistics against that noted in the 2004 – 2005 ARL statistics. The ARL data include the MD Anderson Library and its branches, and the University of Houston Law Library. The Law Library numbers had been reported separately in the SACS report. Additionally the ARL report defined staff differently than in the SACS report. The Focused Report included a listing of librarians and their vitae. Inspection of the vitae verifies that all librarians in the Focused Report have an ALA-accredited Masters degree or equivalent. However, there are only 40 librarians listed in the Focused Report against the 47 that are reported in the original SACS report. During the On-Site visit, the other seven librarians were identified as being faculty in the Law Library. Their vitae were reviewed and deemed complete and appropriate.

Therefore, the Committee concluded that the institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff – with appropriate education or experience in library and/or other learning/information resources – to accomplish the mission of the institution.

3.9.1 The institution publishes a clear and appropriate statement of student rights and responsibilities and disseminates the statement to the campus community. (Student rights)

Comment:
The 90-page Student Handbook offers extensive detail on all student policies, procedures for response to violations and general student and community expectations. It is appropriately disseminated to students with hard copies to incoming students and online access to all. Notices in the campus newspaper augment the Handbook with timely communication of policy and procedure changes.

3.9.2 The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records and maintains special security measures to protect and back up data. (Student records)

Comment:
The University offers ample of evidence of attention to and compliance with the security of student records requirement. Employees are required to complete Information Security Awareness Training expectations, and the University strives to meet all federal requirements requiring protection and release of confidential records. Appropriate personnel oversee information security processes and audits are regularly done to ensure compliance. The website entitled "Practices for Protecting Information Resources Assets" was reviewed and offered substantial evidence of compliance with this section.
3.9.3 The institution employs qualified personnel to ensure the quality and effectiveness of its student affairs programs. *(Qualified staff)*

**Comment:**
Student Affairs personnel are appropriately qualified for their roles and functions. Many hold leadership roles in their respective professional associations (based on a scan of provided CVs), and hiring processes noted in various websites confirm institutional expectations of competence and appropriate training and educational certification. The Division offers a comprehensive professional development program and various training and educational activities.

3.10.1 The institution's recent financial history demonstrates financial stability. *(Financial stability)*

**Comment:**
The institution provided the information requested except for the most recent year institutional audit and management letter. FY 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 annual financial reports, and corresponding enrollment, endowment and financial analysis were provided.

For the On-site Committee, the University of Houston presented a well-prepared and comprehensive report from the state auditor's office for the fiscal year ended August 31, 2007. Additionally a management letter was provided specific to the institution with no management findings indicated.

Information provided demonstrated that total net assets, an indication of the overall worth of the institution, rose from 578 million to 634 million to 688 million from fy05 to fy07.

Unrestricted net assets, reported net of plant, increased from 157 million in fy06 to 181 million in fy07, an indication that assets available for day-to-day operations are adequate and increasing. The current ratio for fy06 and fy07 was 2.15 and 2.14, respectively. This strong current ratio coupled with robust unrestricted available net asset balances suggests the institution is managing its assets in an appropriate manner with adequate and conservative fiscal controls.

Revenues available for operations (operating and nonoperating) exceeded operating expenses in both fy06 and fy07, with an operational surplus in those years of 18 million and 17.8 million, respectively.

Operations, when appropriations are considered, produced a strong positive cash flow in both fy06 and fy07.

This institution appears well-funded and appropriately fiscally managed.

3.10.2 The institution provides financial profile information on an annual basis and other measures of financial health as requested by the Commission. All information is presented accurately and appropriately and represents the total operation of the institution. *(Submission of financial statements)*

**Comment:**
The institution provided documentation of financial profile and financial health including financial profiles for FY 2004, 2005 and 2006.
**3.10.3** The institution audits financial aid programs as required by federal and state regulations. *(Financial aid audits)*

*Comment:*
The institution did provide the information requested in CS3.10.3 for the documentation of audits of federal financial aid programs including the most recent year institutional audit and management letter.

The On-Site Review Committee reviewed pertinent information in support of the institution's case for compliance and sustained the Off-Site Review Committee's findings.

**3.10.4** The institution exercises appropriate control over all its financial resources. *(Control of finances)*

*Comment:*
The institution provided documentation of appropriate control over financial resources including policies on budgeting, finance and accounting. The FY2006 Internal Audit Report was also provided.

**3.10.5** The institution maintains financial control over externally funded or sponsored research and programs. *(Control of sponsored research/external funds)*

*Comment:*
The institution provided documentation of financial control over externally funded or sponsored research and programs including institutional policies, a certification program and a compliance program.

**3.11.1** The institution exercises appropriate control over all its physical resources. *(Control of physical resources)*

*Comment:*
The institution provided documentation of appropriate control over all its physical resources including property management rules, handbooks and an emergency management and continuity plan.

**3.11.2** The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all members of the campus community. *(Institutional environment)*

*Comment:*
The institution provided documentation of safety-focused links, plans and guidelines that show a high concern for providing a healthy, safe and secure environment for the campus community.

**3.11.3** The institution operates and maintains physical facilities, both on and off campus, that appropriately serve the needs of the institution's educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities. *(Physical facilities)*

*Comment:*
The institution provided information addressing the adequacy of physical resources including a summary of physical resources and an analysis of deferred maintenance.
The On-Site Review Committee toured campus facilities, interviewed faculty, staff and students concerning perceived adequacy of physical resources and found the campus facilities in outstanding physical condition and very appropriate to meet the mission of the institution – both on the main campus and at the off-site locations visited.

3.12.1 The institution notifies the Commission of changes in accordance with the substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes. (Substantive change)

Comment:
The institution notified the Commission of four substantive change items on September 4, 2007. While two of these programs are to begin in January 2008, two already are in progress. All involve the delivery of degree programs at other sites, a change requiring notification six months prior to implementation and requiring SACS approval.

The institution is now providing all requested information to the Commission including appropriate prospectuses.

The institution has instituted new written policies and procedures for timely notification of SACS-COC regarding potential substantive changes and incorporated these into the UH Manual of Administrative Policies and Procedures (MAPP).

3.13.1 The institution complies with the policies of the Commission on Colleges. (Policy compliance)

Comment:
Based on its review of the Compliance Certification Report and the On-Site Committee visit, the Committee found that the University of Houston complies with the policies of the Commission on Colleges.

3.14.1 A member or candidate institution represents its accredited status accurately and publishes the name, address, and telephone number of the Commission in accordance with Commission requirements and federal policy. (Publication of accreditation status)

Comment:
The institution includes appropriate information about its accreditation, including the name, address and phone number of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, in its Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, its Faculty Handbook, and on its website.

D. Assessment of Compliance with Section 4: Federal Requirements

*4.1 The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates. (Student achievement)

Comment:
Student success is measured in terms of retention and graduation rates for both first-time students and transfers and licensure exam pass rates. These data are
available at the college level and are included in reports to the Legislature, the State Coordinating Board, and the Board of Regents.

The use of these data is apparent in support of Initiative 5 of the strategic planning and budgeting process. In addition, each program in the College of Education monitors student retention and graduation rates as part of the annual Institutional Effectiveness reports. Some programs also track the success of their graduates in gaining admission to Graduate School or in obtaining employment in a related field.

The on-site committee reviewed the relevant documentation and concurs with the off-site committee’s finding that the institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates.

*4.2 The institution’s curriculum is directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates, or degrees awarded. (Program curriculum)

Comment:
As documented on the UH website, the University of Houston is the largest component of the University of Houston System. It is authorized to offer bachelors, masters, doctoral degrees and three professional degrees. Programs are approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board that requires that degree programs offered by UH are consistent with its mission. Academic departments have oversight of program offerings with approval at UH by the Undergraduate Council or Graduate and Professional Studies Council. Further evidence of appropriate curriculum is the specialized accreditation status documented in their catalogs and on their website for numerous programs as appropriate.

The on-site committee reviewed the relevant documentation and concurs with the off-site committee’s finding that the Institution’s curriculum is directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates, or degrees awarded.

*4.3 The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies. (Publication of policies)

Comment:
The University publishes its academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies in ways that are readily accessible to students and the general public. Its Undergraduate Studies Catalog, for instance, is well organized and detailed; the publication includes a thorough index and a table of contents that facilitate retrieval of the information. The information is also available online, with multiple links to facilitate access.

The On-Site Committee observed that the Institution makes available on line the current academic calendars, the grading policies and refund policies. The Undergraduate Studies catalogue does not have the current academic calendars for the years of the Catalogue. The Graduate and Professional Studies Catalogue on- line provides information by college and is easily accessible.
*4.4 Program length is appropriate for each of the institution's educational programs. **(Program length)**

Comment:
All undergraduate degrees at the baccalaureate level at the University of Houston must have at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent. Degrees at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or special professional level have at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent. The special professional programs of Pharmacy, Optometry and Law require at least 90 semester credit hours in the discipline. The faculty at UH, working through department and college committees, determine the scope and length of degree programs. Proposed programs are submitted to the appropriate faculty governing body (Undergraduate Council or the Graduate and Professional Studies Council) and approved finally by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Many University of Houston programs are accredited by discipline-specific organizations and all graduate programs are reviewed on a periodic basis by external reviewers, as discussed under CR 3.6.2.

The On Site Committee observed that The University of Houston publishes its Undergraduate Studies Catalog, in a fashion that makes it easily accessible. The Catalog states that all undergraduate degrees require at least 120 credit hours for completion. Post-baccalaureate, graduate, or special professional level degrees require at least 30 credit hours for completion. Specialized professional degrees in Pharmacy, Optometry, and Law require at least 90 credit hours for completion. There is an appropriate process in place for determination of scope and length of existing and proposed degree programs.

The On-Site Committee did not identify any issues of concern regarding the appropriateness of program length for any of the University of Houston's degree programs and confirmed that program length is appropriate at each level of offering.

*4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. **(Student complaints)**

Comment:
Written student complaints are responded to through several agencies and structures depending on the nature of the complaint. An Undergraduate Grievance Policy addresses academic challenges by students with appropriate appellate processes. A comparable process is provided for graduate student complaints and challenges. Other units address complaints associated with discrimination and harassment. A review of websites confirms the availability of these complaint routes and adequate processes for attention and response. Evidence was provided of regularized reporting of student complaints and outcomes.

The Dean of Students Office serves as the department assigned responsibility for response to all other student complaints.

The On-Site Committee observed that procedures for addressing student complaints range from informal discussions with the professor to formal settings with a grievance committee. The students written complaints are handled by various departments each having a different procedure. In the academic area, the student must first complete the General Petition form and that procedure is
detailed in the Student Handbook. The appeal and/or grievance policies and procedures for Affirmative Action, Academic Honesty, Student Life and Financial Responsibility are all handled from those departments. Each one is outlined in the Student Handbook. The Graduate Students are also afforded the opportunity to file written complaint. Based on the number of publicized sites and departments addressing student complaints, as well as the role of the Students Ombudservice, it is apparent that these policies and procedures are given high priority. The general petition form, as well as published policies and procedures were reviewed on site.

*4.6 Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution’s practices and policies. *(Recruitment materials)*

**Comment:**
The University consistently conveys the message that it is an urban, comprehensive University with a strong commitment to a diverse student body. The Office of Recruitment and University Marketing are responsible for recruiting undergraduates, while individual programs play the major role in the recruitment of graduate students. For undergraduates, recruitment efforts are targeted to the Houston area and the State of Texas. Admission criteria are accessible and clearly explained, both in print publications and online.

The University’s website conveys a sense of the University that matches its recruitment message. The website makes it easy for prospective students to meet a counselor, request information, schedule a visit, or check on the status of an application.

The On-Site Committee reviewed printed material and website information which both convey a strong academic reference to the university. The primary focus of the recruitment is the local market with secondary emphasis on the state and regional localities. In each case, the institution is acting consistent with its mission to nurture its relationships with public schools in the area and to place emphasis on its academic policies and practices. There are several programs that have their own recruitment plans including the graduate schools. In each instance the materials are consistent with the mission of the university and the institutions policies.

*4.7 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the 1998 Higher Education Amendments. *(Title IV program responsibilities)*

**Comment:**
The institution did provide documentation addressing compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the 1998 Higher Education Amendments including a 2007 Final Program Review Determination Letter.

The On-Site Committee conducted interviews and reviewed pertinent documentation in support of the institution’s case for compliance and sustained the Off-Site Committee’s findings.

E. Additional Observations regarding strengths and weaknesses of the institution. *(optional)*

No additional comments.
Part III. Assessment of the Quality Enhancement Plan

University of Houston Quality Enhancement Plan

On-Site Committee Evaluation

A. Brief description of the institution's Quality Enhancement Plan

The University of Houston’s Quality Enhancement Plan is thoughtful, well-written, very forward-thinking, and bold. The QEP calls for the creation of an Office of Undergraduate Discovery Programs and sets forth existing cooperative campus resources to include the library, Writing and Communications Center, Office of Educational Technology and University Outreach, Office of Undergraduate Research, and Office of Institutional Research of Effectiveness. Plans are outlined to engage undergraduates in faculty-mentored research experiences and to build a research-supportive curriculum at three levels of challenge and intensity. Commitments are set forth for faculty and departmental and collegiate support, a Faculty Development Initiative Program, work-study research internships, campus research conversations, opportunities for sharing student research, graduate student peer mentors for undergraduate research, workshops and tutorials, Houston research internships, faculty-supported research assistantships, stipend-based research opportunities, and campus-wide resources to assist faculty and students in promotion of undergraduate student research opportunities.

B. Analysis of the Acceptability of the Quality Enhancement Plan

1. Broad-based Process

Members of the University of Houston's administration, faculty, staff, and students invested considerable time both identifying a QEP topic and then developing and refining the elements of the QEP. Under the direction of an institutional leadership team that broadly represented the various constituents of the university, discussions related to a QEP topic started in September of 2006. This team developed a list of topics through conversations with all of the colleges, the Faculty Senate, other academic committees, student groups, and alumni. The Faculty Senate's fall retreat focused on selecting a QEP topic, as did the deans’ retreat in January of 2007. QEP topic selection was the focus of numerous other meetings. Three topics were originally identified as having the potential to meet the QEP (undergraduate research, mentoring, and writing in the disciplines), with concept papers developed on each of the three. An online survey allowed ALL faculty, staff and students to review the concept papers (over 350 responses were cataloged). The three proposals were presented to and discussed at meetings of a wide array of governance bodies (Undergraduate Council, Faculty
Senate, Research Council, Graduate and Professional Studies Council, Deans’ Council, Student Government Association, among others). Based on extensive feedback, the Committee selected undergraduate research as the QEP topic and recommended that mentoring and writing be addressed within the context of undergraduate research.

The development of the QEP was overseen by a planning group appointed by the Provost that included deans and associate deans, department chairs, the Faculty Senate president, the Student Government president, faculty, program directors, and other university administrators. Three subcommittees worked to develop ideas that would “appeal to the students’ real world interests in order to attract students to the university, retain them and engage them in a culture of research.” A second subcommittee worked on a definition of research that would apply broadly across diverse disciplines and on a set of preliminary goals and measurable student learning outcomes. A third subcommittee worked to ensure the QEP adequately dealt with transfer student needs and distance education students. Finally, four specific subcommittees reviewed best practices to allow the development of central programs and services, as well as new grant programs. In all phases of their work, the committee and subcommittees sought extensive input from the University of Houston’s colleges, faculty, students and staff through numerous channels. A draft of the QEP was posted online from December 20, 2007 to January 18, 2008 for public comment. The presentation of the Discovery-Based Learning Initiative was broadly distributed in March of 2008.

2. Focus of the Plan

The QEP, through its Discovery-Based Learning Initiative, seeks to provide UH students with “above all else a useful education.” QEP student learning outcomes are aligned with the widely recognized core competencies of critical thinking, information literacy, research ethics, and communication skills. The goals and student learning outcomes are well articulated and well defined.

The linkage between the core competencies and the likelihood that the QEP will strengthen and enhance them needs greater specificity. For example, problem-based instruction and writing-intensive instruction seem intrinsically less well-connected to the proposed emphases in the QEP than the curricular approaches embodied in project-oriented laboratories and instruction in research methods. In addition, the focus of the written plan could benefit from further discussion as to how the humanities and the arts, and to a lesser extent, the social sciences, will be able to effectively participate in the proposed QEP. It might benefit the QEP initiative if written implementation plans that included timelines were submitted by each department.

The QEP could benefit from additional discussion as to how improving undergraduate research will specifically enhance some of the specified goals, especially student retention and four- and six-year graduation rates as opposed to improving core competencies.
3. Institutional Capacity for Initiation and Implementation of the QEP

The On-Site Committee found in the University of Houston QEP a host of thoughtful, creative, and sound plans to involve undergraduate students in research and to expose these students to essential concepts basic to research -- critical thinking, information literacy, research ethics, and communications skills. However, the QEP is incomplete in the area of concrete estimates of the numbers of added faculty, staff, graduate students, and other resources to activate the plan. Solid cost estimates are not set forth even though the statement is made on page 52 of the QEP that “we anticipate that the University will invest approximately $5,000,000 over the five-year implementation of the QEP.” The sources of funding are not identified. Will the anticipated $5,000,000 be in new dollar allocations or reallocated existing dollars? When will anticipation become reality? What will be done if anticipation does not become reality? The On-Site Committee was given a rough draft of the $5,000,000 budget plan, but it did not answer the preceding questions. At the point of the On-Site Visit, it does not appear that the Board of Regents has approved a budget and committed funds to the QEP initiative.

Added faculty, staff, and graduate students will be required. Equipment, supplies, printing, IT, and travel will be needed. Therefore, these elements must be placed into the QEP to give it reality for implementation. Otherwise, the QEP is only a plan.

Recommendation #1: The On-Site Committee recommends that the University of Houston develop a more detailed five-year budget plan for the QEP to reflect added faculty and administrative resources, equipment, supplies, and other items required for QEP implementation. The budget plan should reflect sources of funds by allocating new dollars, reallocating existing dollars, and in-kind support and should set forth priorities for expenditures on the basis of the pyramid on Page 23 in the QEP document.

The On-Site Committee urges University of Houston faculty and officials to decide how much of the pyramid can be effectively handled, ranging from the intense mentored research to the more general and all-encompassing college-wide initiatives. When resources are available, to which pyramid level will they be applied? Implementation of the plan may require additional resources, something the On-Site Committee could not evaluate with the budget that was provided.

The On-Site Committee did not find in the QEP document evidence of wholehearted support from the senior administrative leadership and the Board of Regents. When the On-Site visit was made, however, the committee found informed, enthusiastic endorsement by the Chair of the Board of Regents, the President, and a wide range of academic and administrative leaders. Their support will be of untold value to QEP implementation.
4. Broad-based Involvement of the Community

The university solicited information from students, faculty, staff and alumni to develop the Quality Enhancement Plan. This was done through on-line surveys, forums and faculty and staff meetings. The plan was develop by considering best practice that would benefit the students. The definition of community involvement for the university includes only the university community. If the university involved the external surrounding community, the students, the community and the university would benefit from the partnership. The synergy developed would only strength the university’s mission in the community, city, state, nationally and internationally.
Observation: Bring in community leaders and extend the QEP to include them.

5. Identification of Goals and Assessment Plans

The assessment plan for the QEP identifies the program goals and student learning outcomes that are to be assessed, as well as assessment methods, implementation, performance criteria and assessment schedule. The committee suggests the following additional steps to enhance the QEP assessment plan:

The student learning outcomes need to be mapped to the elements of the QEP (i.e., mentored research, research-supportive curriculum, department-wide initiatives and college-wide initiatives) such that it is clear which undergraduate students will be assessed on each outcome since not all undergraduate students will engage in the same research experiences.

Terms such as “adequate or advanced proficiency,” “expert proficiency,” “advanced critical thinking skills,” “competency,” “improved skills” need to be restated in quantifiable terms so that actual performance can be compared to the performance criteria and improvements can be made on the basis of such comparisons. New assessment instruments need to be developed (or existing ones identified) for each student learning outcome.

Additional Comments of the Quality of the Plan

Observation: While the University of Houston has put forward a strong quality enhancement plan, the On-site Committee believes that the initiative could be strengthened by bringing in outside evaluators in years three and six of the proposed program.

Observation: Candidates who are interviewing for faculty positions at the University of Houston should be made aware of the University’s undergraduate research program and its QEP.
Strategies for Building Successful Undergraduate Research Programs

There are a number of strategies that have been used by successful UR programs and practitioners that should be considered by the University of Houston. The following is a summary of these strategies.

For faculty-mentored research activities, programs that are "win-win" for both students and faculty should be created whenever possible. Starting undergraduates early in their college careers and allowing these students to work on projects for multiple years quite often leads to work that can be presented at professional society meetings and publications in professional journals. For the student, an early start will allow the student to complete a project that can be used in a job application and/or in an application for professional or graduate school.

To mitigate the time spent training new research students, faculty should consider building "research teams." Optimally, a research team consists of a freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and one or two graduate students. Peer learning has many positive attributes that are listed in the literature. Not only is this a positive experience for students who are just becoming involved in research, the old adage, "you never really understand a subject until you have to teach it" clearly applies for the more senior students in the group. Graduate students should, whenever possible, be a part of the research team. They serve as excellent role models for undergraduates and are particularly helpful to first-generation-college students who may not have these kinds of role models. It gives the undergraduate a sense that they too can be successful in graduate school. If the program is properly designed, undergraduates can become both valuable and valued members of the institution's overall research program.

Successful programs also minimize unnecessary work that detracts from the time faculty spend with students. The On-Site Committee suggests that the University of Houston look for efficiencies in its instructional, research and service areas.

Marshalling the resources necessary to support the kind of comprehensive program the University of Houston has put forward will also be a challenge. Success will critically depend upon the support provided by the Board or Regents and the University of Houston administration. The amount mentioned in the QEP, approximately $1 million per year for the next five years, provides baseline support for a project of this magnitude. The idea of using work-study dollars to support undergraduate research opportunities is a good one; however, additional support will likely be needed. There are two examples of mechanisms used by other academic institutions to support undergraduate research that might be considered at the University of Houston. At the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, undergraduate research is supported by the student government at a level of approximately $500,000 annually. These funds are raised through student government fees. A second strategy for supporting faculty-mentored research opportunities is to "reprogram" existing scholarship dollars. Three years ago, Morehead State University in Kentucky began to change scholarship dollars into undergraduate research...
fellows. As they always have, Morehead State students receive a stipend, but now it is tied to a faculty mentor and a research project in their area of interest.

While not mentioned in the QEP, there are a number of on- and off-campus offices that can help change the culture of the institution and support the University of Houston’s undergraduate research initiative. Among these are the admissions office (display UR posters in admissions area, promote UR on web admissions office web site, engage UR Office in open houses, have UR students talk with prospective students and their parents), alumni affairs (identify alumni who might be able to provide undergraduates with research experiences, spread the word about UR by publishing articles on UR in the alumni magazine; find alumni who can help students build connections and be student “champions” – It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.), student services/career development office (promote UR on web page, present professional development workshops for undergraduates, maintain a list of off-campus research opportunities), library (library orientation sessions, provide resources – databases, searches, etc., display student posters, display student publications), student center (display student posters), public relations office (press releases, radio/television interviews with students and faculty mentors, submit stories to students’ hometown papers), sponsored programs (find additional financial support for research and the involvement of undergraduates in that research), student government association (provide financial support and raise visibility of UR programs), and President's/Provost's offices (solicit donors, place UR on the agenda of the Board of Trustees, work to build into the institution's mission statement, faculty handbook, tenure and promotion procedures). It takes an “urban“ village!
APPENDIX A

Roster of the On-Site Review Committee

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January 2007
APPENDIX B

Off-Campus Sites or Distance Learning Programs Reviewed

Off-campus teaching centers:

U.H. System at Cinco Ranch (Katy)

U.H. System at Sugar Land
APPENDIX C

List of Recommendations
Cited in the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee

C.R. 2.12 Recommendation #1:

The Committee recommends that the University of Houston develop a more detailed five-year budget plan for the QEP to reflect added faculty and administrative resources, equipment, supplies, and other items required for QEP implementation. The budget plan should reflect sources of funds by allocating new dollars, reallocating existing dollars, and in-kind support and should set forth priorities for expenditures on the basis of the pyramid on Page 23 in the QEP document.

C.S. 3.5.1 Recommendation #2:

The Committee recommends that the University develop a written comprehensive assessment plan for the core curriculum that clearly documents when and how each core competency, defined by the State and organized by the University of Houston, is assessed and measured, and documents the results of those assessments.