I. Introduction

The systematic assessment of an institution’s academic programs is essential for ensuring that a quality educational experience is provided to all students. Internal academic program review is a central component of institutional effectiveness, strategic planning, assessment of student learning outcomes and in achieving organizational goals and objectives. While certainly motivated by standards and requirements established by regional and other specialized accreditation bodies like the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), internal academic program review at Clark Atlanta University (CAU) is recognized as a core component of the institutional mission.

The impetus for academic program review at CAU is faculty driven and is guided by Section 1.4.6.3 of the Faculty Handbook. The Faculty Handbook provides a policy for periodic review of academic programs by the faculty for the purpose of determining, at a minimum, the “quality of academic curricula, the utilization of existing resources, the research and service activities, long-range plans and objectives, adequacy of financial support and the physical facilities, and the appropriateness of the departmental or program structure.” The academic review will determine the effectiveness of each academic program.

Assessment of student learning outcomes is a key component of academic program review. Expected educational outcomes must be established for each graduate and undergraduate degree program offered by the University. Respective faculties within the academic departments should identify what students should know (cognition), think (attitude) and be able to do (behavior) upon completion of their degree programs inclusive of outcomes specifically for the general education curriculum. Moreover, the respective faculties are expected to assess the extent to which established educational outcomes are achieved by their students. Further, results of assessment must be used to enhance curricula and instructional strategies as well as improve the administration of the academic programs.

These regulations establish procedures that are to be followed in implementing Section 1.4.6.3 of the Faculty Handbook and were informed by the work of the Committee on Academic Program Reviews and the Committee on Student Learning Outcomes,¹ two of the Ground Work Committees, established as a part

of our Institutional Effectiveness process. The Committees’ recommendations are codified in these regulations.

As noted, the periodic academic program review is articulated as item 1.0 Academic Programs, among our Institutional Strategic Plan Focus Areas. Most relevant in this focus area is the affirmation that “Clark Atlanta University will maintain its tradition of providing strong academic programs that are consistent with its mission. The program will be framed by demands for intellectual rigor, critical perspective, and connected learning. The University affirms the importance of providing students with diverse curricular offerings at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels, and will place high priority on [periodic] review and evaluation of degree programs consistent with the benchmarking framework established through the Strategic Academic Plan.”

As an institution of integrity it is imperative that CAU, also continue to ensure its external constituents, i.e., external accreditation associations, that the quality of the educational programming is and will remain consistent.

The Committee on Academic Program Review report further delineates the framework for academic program review at CAU. It warrants repeating here.

Preparation for the program review should be carried out and conducted by the faculty with the Dean/Chair/or Degree Program Coordinator playing a role in the process.

Program review is evaluative, not just descriptive.

Program review is directed toward improvement of the program, not simply assessment of its current status.

Degree programs, departments, and schools are evaluated based on academic criteria, not financial or political ones. They are looked at on the basis of their academic strengths and weaknesses, not on the basis of their ability to produce funds for the institution. While financial and organizational issues are relevant to the review, they are relevant only as they affect the quality of the academic program.

Degree program review is an objective process in which degree program coordinators, departments, and schools assess their effectiveness, as objectively as possible. Faculty members from other programs, departments, and schools within the University make independent judgments about degree programs under review as part of the Internal Review Team. Their primary purpose will be to review the self study conducted by the respective department. The inclusion of persons who have no vested interest in the results is important.
Program Review is an independent process, separate from any other review, i.e., regional, professional accrediting body, or licensing agencies.

Program Review results in action. Recommendations are used to bring about desired changes based upon an agreed upon timetable.

As noted previously, a significant part of the evaluation is the review of student learning outcomes. The basis for assessment of student learning outcomes is the following:

- An acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan includes ongoing evaluation of student learning outcomes.
- The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and assesses whether it achieves these outcomes and provides evidence of improvements based on analysis of those results.
- The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty.
- The institution identifies competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those college-level competencies.
- The institution publishes student learning outcomes in all relevant CAU publications to inform the constituency.

Further, the report from the Committee on Student Learning Outcomes clarifies the linkages between assessment and student learning. The report notes that:

- The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
- Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
- Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
• Assessment requires attention to outcomes, but equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.

• Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.

• Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.

• Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions about which people really care.

• Assessment is most likely to lead to improvements when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.

• Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.

These principles form the substance and intent of internal academic program review.

II. Time Lines and Procedures

The Self-Study Cycle:

Individual academic program assessment will occur on a five- (5) year cycle. If a school, department or program is scheduled for review by an external specialized, professional or licensing agency in the same year as the internal assessment is scheduled, it may request a modification of the five-year review cycle from the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The request must be made in writing.

Notification:

Schools/departments or programs will be notified of the date that their self-study report is in January. Notification will be made by the Vice President for Academic Affairs in writing to or through the office of the Dean of the school in which the degree program is located. Upon notification, the preparation for the self-study process should commence.

Conducting the Self-Study:

The self-study report must be completed in the spring semester of the academic year immediately following the official notification that the unit is scheduled for review. The period of assessment is the prior academic year. The responsibility for completing the self-study will rest with the School Dean, Department Chair
(Degree Program Coordinator) and the program faculty following the guidelines set for in the Standards for Internal Academic Program Reviews.

Appointment and Role of an Internal Review Team:

By January of the self-study year, the Vice President for Academic Affairs in collaboration with the Dean and department chair (or degree program coordinator), and program faculty will appoint a team to review the degree program’s self-study report.

Program Data:

Data for the review should cover that from the previous academic year. The Office of Planning, Assessment and Research (OPAR) will provide data needed for the self-study. The use of data developed by the school, department, or the degree program coordinator is permissible, as long as the validity of such data is documented. Units planning to conduct a degree program self-study should consult with the OPAR regarding data requirements in the year prior to the actual self-study.

Submission of the Self-Study Report:

A draft report will be submitted to the University Effectiveness Committee no later than April 30 following the self-study year. The report will be reviewed by the UEC in conjunction with the IRT. The Internal Review Team will conduct a series of activities designed to review and evaluate the degree program’s self-study report between May and June following the self-study year. This will include (1) evaluation of the report, (2) interviews with faculty, students and staff, and (3) a review of additional data as needed.

An original and three (3) bound copies of the degree program’s completed self-study report should be submitted to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs no later than July 31 following the self-study year. A copy should also be provided to the school dean.

Submission of the Internal Review Team Report:

The final report of the Internal Review Team will be submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs by August 30 following the self-study year. A final copy of this report will be provided to the Dean and Department Chair or Program Coordinator.

Program Quality Enhancement Plan (PQEP):

A Program Quality Enhancement Plan will be developed by the Department Chair or Degree Program Coordinator for each degree-program. It should identify plans to address those findings in the self-study report and
recommendations in the report of the Internal Review Team. This plan should be submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs by September 30 following the self-study year.

Documentation of Academic Assessment Process:

A copy of the degree program’s self-study report, the report of the Internal Review Team, and the Program Quality Enhancement Plan should be provided to the Office of Planning, Assessment and Research (OPAR) and the Vice President for Academic Affairs by September 30 following the self-study year.

III. Internal Review Teams

Role:

The role of the Internal Review Team (IRT) is to evaluate the self-study report for each degree program against regional (SACS) and professional accreditation standards (e.g., AACSB, NCATE) and benchmarking comparisons with peer and aspirant institutions, conduct additional inquiry through the review of supporting data, such as faculty, staff, and student interviews. The IRT should utilize any other appropriate means needed to provide information by which a determination can be made as to the validity of the degree program’s self-assessment. The IRT’s report should be a standard-by-standard evaluation of the degree program’s report and culminate in a specific recommendation for:

- Enhancing the degree program;
- Continuing the degree program;
- Placing the degree program on probation; or
- Terminating the degree program.

Review of self-study reports and formulation of specific recommendations must be done in a collegial fashion adhering to the highest standards of professional ethics and confidentiality.

Composition and Appointment:

The Internal Review Team will be composed of faculty appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs in consultation with chairpersons and faculty of supporting departments for each degree program and the School Dean and the UEC. The size of the Team will range from three to five members depending on the size of the degree program under reviewed. At least one or two of the members of the IRT will be appointed from the primary supporting department, the
remaining members must be appointed from outside the school, the primary supporting department, and the degree program under review. The chairperson of the IRT will be appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and must not be a member of the primary supporting department for degree program under review. (The chairperson of the IRT should request recommendations for a qualified external consultant (e.g., from one of the aspirant degree programs identified in the self-study report) from the chairperson of primary supporting department for the degree program under review to serve as a member of the IRT (Do we still want this.)

Final Report and Debriefing:

A final written report of the findings of the IRT will be completed and submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs no later than August 30 following the self-study year. Prior to being finalized, a draft of the IRT’s report will be submitted to the UEC of the primary supporting department of degree program under review. The primary supporting department may submit any comments or responses to the IRT for further consideration in finalizing the report. These comments may be incorporated into the final report by the IRT or they may be submitted as a separate attachment to the final IRT report.

Presentation to the Vice President for Academic Affairs:

A meeting should be scheduled with the Vice President for Academic Affairs by the chairperson of the IRT to formally present the final report. This meeting should include the Director, Office of Planning, Assessment and Research (OPAR), the school Dean, chairperson of the UEC committee, and the department chair of the primary supporting department or the coordinator for the degree program. The purpose of the meeting is to present the findings and recommendations of the IRT’s review. The school dean and the department chair (or degree program coordinator) should share the results of this meeting with the faculty and staff.

Peer Review

The review process is intended to be fair, comprehensive, utilizing multiple sources of data to review several criteria referenced standards. Peers should make an effort to have a positive expression and remain objective about the academic programs throughout the review process.

IV. The Self-Study Report

Assessment of any degree program must flow from its mission, major goals, objectives, and student learning outcomes as well as benchmarking of best
practices at peer and aspirant institutions. Therefore, the process should identify peer and aspirant institutions, expected outcome measures, the collection and analysis of valid, relevant, and timely data, and a set of actions to improve the quality and competitiveness of the degree program based on the assessment results. Such assessment requires feedback to the respective department and school and to the university. A chart depicting how this process should flow is shown below.

**Academic Program Assessment**

Strategic Planning Focus Areas & Objectives → Mission → Program Goals & Objectives → Benchmarking

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Action ← Feedback ← Report Generation ← Data Analysis ← Data Collection ← Student Learning Outcomes

Program reviews are conducted against sets of *standards* (including regional (SACS) accreditation standards and in some cases, professional accreditation standards as they affect the evaluation of degree program quality) and *benchmarks of best practices* at peer and aspirant institutions. The primary supporting department chair or degree program coordinator in coordination with the faculty, school dean, and the Director, OPAR should identify at least two peer and two aspirant institutions with a similar degree program as the one scheduled for self-study. The Director, OPAR will assist the faculty, department chair or program coordinator in identifying appropriate data points to be used in benchmarking the degree program with that at peer and aspirant institutions. Standards and benchmarks frame the essential processes used by educational institutions in determining the quality of academic programs and should form the basis for the self-study. The standards and benchmarks should be applied to the following:

1. Planning – Assessment of the articulation of the strategic plan, mission statement, major goals, and objectives for each degree program with strategic plans for the school and university.

2. Faculty Qualifications – assessment of faculty qualifications (compared to peer and aspirant institutions, per faculty handbook criteria, and regional (SACS) and professional accreditation standards) (For documentation purposes, the SACS Faculty Roster Form provided in the *Standards for Internal Academic Program Review 2008 – 2011* should be completed for each degree program. In addition, faculty qualification and sufficiency tables provided in AACSB Standards for Accreditation should be completed for each School of Business degree program; faculty qualification and sufficiency tables provided by NCATE Standards for Accreditation should be completed for each School of Education degree program.)
• Quality of Teaching (including but not limited to student evaluations of instruction, adequacy of syllabus, and assessment of student learning outcomes, course integration of information technology, innovative teaching methods, and availability to students re advisement and supplemental instruction.)

• Quality of Scholarship (including but not limited to quality and quantity of published peer reviewed contributions to new knowledge in each faculty member’s discipline, profession, and teaching assignments.)

• Quality of Service (including service to the department, school, university, profession, and other stakeholder communities.)

• Quality of Administration (for those faculty serving in full-time administrative positions, including but not limited to knowledge of administrative policies and procedures, quality of faculty performance evaluation, availability to faculty and students.

3. Curriculum Quality - (per peer and aspirant institutions, faculty handbook criteria, and regional (SACS) and professional accreditation standards); also assessment of the currency and adequacy of the mission statement, major goals, and objectives of the degree program and processes for (1) curriculum reviews and (2) implementation of changes improving the curriculum.

4. Assessment Framework for Student Learning Outcomes - (per faculty handbook criteria and regional (SACS) and professional accreditation standards); assessment of (1) processes for measuring the achievement of student learning outcomes and (2) quality of implementation of the assessment framework for the degree program (including but not limited to recommendations for improvements in the degree program based on assessment of student learning outcomes.)

5. Organizational Structure and Faculty Governance - Assessment of the adequacy of the organizational structure and faculty governance as it applies to each degree program.

6. Student Demographics, Involvement, and Support (per regional (SACS) and professional (AACSB and NCATE) accreditation standards and compared to peer and aspirant institutions.)

• Including but not limited to number of students in the degree program by
year, GPA, gender, number of graduates, and graduates pursuing advanced degrees.)

- Extent of student involvement in faculty research and degree program related organizations.

- Scholarship opportunities for students in the degree program.

- Quality of Student Services – Assessment of the adequacy of student services provided to students in the degree program by the department, school, and university including after-graduation student placement.

- Quality of Support Staff - Assessment of the adequacy of the support staff provided to faculty and students in each degree program by the department, school, and university.

- Quality of Facilities - Assessment of the adequacy of the facilities required to support each degree program.

- Assessment of the Quality of Off-Campus Programs (if the degree program includes off-campus offerings.)

7. Cost Management – Number of full-time faculty and budgeted expenditures (including faculty salaries and fringe benefits as well as other direct and indirect expenditures) for the degree program should be compared to the number of matriculating and graduated students (school and departmental budgets for the self-study year should be used as the major source of data for assessment of cost management for each degree program.)

V. Follow-Up Actions

School Deans and Department Chairpersons (or Degree Program Coordinators)

The purpose of academic program review is to improve the effectiveness and competitiveness of each degree program. It is important, therefore, that the findings of the review process lead to meaningful action by the school and primary supporting department. Upon receipt of the final IRT Report, Department Chairpersons (or Degree Program Coordinators) should develop a Program Quality Enhancement Plan (PQEP). Included in this plan must be a specific set of actions to respond to the findings of the self-study report and the recommendations of the IRT and should reflect the strategic plan for the degree
program. The PQEP should be coordinated with and approved by the School Dean and forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs by June 30th following the self-study year and each subsequent year until notification of the next self-study year. Subsequent annual PQEPs should provide updates on the status and impact of these implementations.

School Deans, Department Chairpersons (or Degree Program Coordinators) should use the findings of academic program reviews and the recommendations of the IRT to guide administration of their respective schools, departments, and degree programs. They should be used to (1) frame the modification of policies and procedures, (2) set degree program goals and objectives, (3) support budget requests and acquisition of resources, and (4) benchmark competitiveness with peer and aspirant institutions.

Vice President for Academic Affairs:

The findings of each academic program review and recommendations from the IRT will be used to provide a framework for (1) the oversight of academic effectiveness and (2) benchmarking competitiveness of all degree programs and support activities at Clark Atlanta University with peer and aspirant institutions, (3) guide policy-making decisions, and (4) provide primary support for budget requests and acquisition of resources.

VI. Expected Outcome

Each program review should result in an evaluative recommendation for the continuation of the program. The following should also be noted in the self study report:

- Program strengths and weaknesses;
- Analysis of cost management;
- Determination if program objectives are met; and
- Results and subsequent recommended course of action