

**Reaccreditation**

HLC Self Study Design

**2010**



# Kenyon College

**Reaccreditation Self Study Office**

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## Preface

Kenyon College is a nationally prominent liberal arts college where academic excellence goes hand in hand with a strong sense of community and close relationships among students and professors. Highly selective in admissions, the College attracts talented young men and women from all fifty U. S. states and more than two dozen countries. The 1,600 students benefit from Kenyon's small size: the student-faculty ration is 10 to 1, and the most common class size is 15. The College prides itself on its faculty, accomplished scholars whose first priority is teaching and who regularly involve students in collaborative research. The curriculum is grounded in the traditional liberal arts and sciences but includes a number of interdisciplinary programs and many opportunities to study abroad.

Founded in 1824, Kenyon is the oldest private college in Ohio. The thousand-acre hilltop campus, considered one of the country's most beautiful, is on the National Registry of Historical Places. Since the founding of the *Kenyon Review* in 1939, the College has enjoyed a strong reputation for literary study. Originally an all-male school, the college welcomed women students in 1969.

Through its alumni, Kenyon has made its mark on the world. Notable Kenyon graduates include Edwin M. Stanton, Lincoln's secretary of war, and President Rutherford B. Hayes. The poet Robert Lowell and the novelist E. L. Doctorow are among a number of prominent writers who graduated from the College. The College also numbers birth-control-pill developer Carl Djerassi, Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme, and actor-philanthropist Paul Newman among its alumni.

Kenyon offers a Bachelor of Arts degree in 26 majors. The academic program is spread over 18 departments and 13 interdisciplinary programs.

Kenyon College has been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools continuously since 1938. Our last reaccreditation review was conducted in 2000-2001. Our next comprehensive review is scheduled for 2010-2011. Toward that end, over the next two academic years the college will engage in a self-study process that will result in a document describing our mission, goals, curriculum, resources, faculty, staff, student body, assessment tools and results, facilities, and other elements of our program. This documents presents a plan for conducting a comprehensive self-study of the college to prepare for the college's decannual reaccreditation visit.

The importance of accreditation is two-fold. First, engaging in the process of self-examination necessary to write a thorough self-study inevitably leads to reflective and fruitful conversations among the participants--both those centrally involved in

the tasks of preparing the self-study and those stakeholders across the institution, in our case students, faculty, staff, and administrators on campus, as well as trustees, alumni, and friends of the college in the community, non-local as well as local. Such conversations generate shared understanding and renewed commitment to the [mission and goals](#) of the college. As a group, then, we gain clarity and focus, we share ideas, and we improve our ability to deliver on the mission we set for ourselves. Second, a reaccreditation review is valuable for the external validation and perspective it gives an institution. In this review, we'll hear from evaluators from similar institutions whose training by the Higher Learning Commission has equipped them to analyze our program and provide feedback on both our strengths and our challenges as an institution.

Table 1: Kenyon College snapshot for each of the last three Reaccreditation Cycles

	1st Semester 1990	1st Semester 2000	Fall, 2008
<b>Students</b>			
<b>Enrollment</b>	1524	1579	1636
<b>Employees</b>			
<b>Faculty</b>	138	137	188
Full time	119	131	152
Full Professors	42	48	65
Associates	32	42	57
Assistants	37	36	52
Part Time	17	6	36
Adjunct			
Visiting			
<b>Staff (non-exempt)</b>		232	231
<b>Administration (exempt)</b>		208	242
<b>Board of Trustees</b>	33	40	41
<b>Academics</b>			
Majors	17	28	31
Minors	0 (Began in 1993)	17	26
Concentrations	9	9	10
<b>Financial</b>			
Operating Budget	55,828,841	53,028,000	95,873,000
Endowment	35,008,662	115,000,000	146,727,228

## Kenyon College Self-Study Goals

Kenyon College will conduct a rigorous self-study that will

1. Affirm the strengths and accomplishments of the college by documenting and evaluating them, adhering to the highest standards of research;
2. Evaluate and document in particular our belief that academic excellence is best achieved in a non-competitive environment that stresses the value of interpersonal relationships for student learning;
3. Respond systematically and contextually to identified challenges and opportunities through development of recommended plans of action;
4. Engage the community in honest and productive dialogue around those controversial issues that we find difficult to discuss;

The process for the self-study will

5. Holistically examine the entire institution;
6. Encourage a culture of discovery and imagination by asking questions about the institution that we really want to answer, enabling us to use the results of the process for our own ends;
7. Research and write the self-study in the most efficient manner, avoiding both unnecessary bureaucracy and jargon.
8. Invite and engage all members of the community in the self-study process by creating mechanisms for information sharing and feedback among the College's various constituencies.

Meeting both content and process goals will result in

9. Continuing unqualified reaccreditation through the Higher Learning Commission, a commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools;
10. An opportunity to build on the self-study process, using it as a guide for continuous improvement.

## Self-Study Process and Organization

### Preparation Spring and Summer 2008

Kenyon launched its self-study process in January of 2008 when Provost Greg Spaid asked Laurie Finke, Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, to serve as the self-study coordinator and, later that semester, Sarah Murnen, Professor of Psychology, to serve as assessment coordinator, with responsibilities for data analysis. Together with Associate Provost Paula Turner, they attended the annual HLC meeting in Chicago to learn about the self-study process. During the rest of the spring 2008 semester and into the summer this small group began to get organized—identifying the individuals who needed to be involved and the resources necessary, and drafting timelines. With the appointment of a half-time Administrative Assistant, Michelle Foster, in July, the group was able to go forward with a number of preparatory projects, including creating a web site (see [reaccreditation.kenyon.edu](http://reaccreditation.kenyon.edu)) that would provide information to the campus about the reaccreditation process and encourage feedback from the campus as we proceeded. We also set up an electronic database that would log every document we received. Every piece of paper, every document, that comes to the Self-Study office will be scanned into pdf form (if necessary) and added to this database, with a link to an electronic file. Eventually the web site and database will serve as an electronic resource room for the HLC visit team. In addition, we set up a duplicate paper filing system in the AA's office, giving us double coverage for most of the documents we were collecting. Finally, we sent a mailing to all campus offices informing them of the upcoming reaccreditation and making a preliminary request for relevant information (annual reports, external reviews, data from surveys, etc.). While this initial contact did not yield a lot of data, it did serve as to inform the campus--especially the non-academic units—about reaccreditation and begin a conversation about it that would continue into the semester.

By the end of the summer we had also made some decisions about the make-up of the task force that would direct the self-study work. While we were committed to a process that was both transparent and inclusive, we were also aware of how busy most members of the community are. Many faculty for instance, feel that faculty governance already takes up too much of their time, while administrators are similarly overcommitted. Even on our own task force, our data analyst is also the chair of the Psychology department, our Institutional Research director is also the Vice-President of LBIS, and so on (see below for a list of task force members). We decided in the end to put together a small centralized task force of individuals with specific skills or information that would be critical for the self-study. That task force would handle the actual work of the self-study, acting as a clearinghouse for all

information collected. All information requests would go through the Self-Study office. We would use the existing administrative and committee structures where their expertise was relevant rather than create new subcommittees. We believe that, while it would be exceedingly difficult to ask a large number of faculty, administrators, or students to devote two years to the work of reaccreditation, it is possible to ask them to be involved intermittently when their expertise is needed. For instance, we will turn to the Resource Allocation and Assessment Subcommittee of the Faculty to work with us on developing the evidence base for Criterion 3 on Student Learning and Effective Teaching, as they are the faculty committee tasked with managing the college's assessment. This structure, we felt, would integrate the reaccreditation process into the daily working life of the college rather than adding a new layer of committee meetings and reports. To that end, in appointing the task force members, we were less worried about representation, since our committee structures are generally representational. Rather we looked for specific skills that would contribute to the research and writing of the self-study.

### **Self-Study Working Group**

Laurie Finke, Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, coordinator

Sarah Murnen, Professor of Psychology, assessment coordinator

Paula Turner, Associate Provost

Ron Griggs, Institutional Research

Jared Hoffman, Institutional Research and Technology Liaison

Tacci Smith, Associate Dean of Students

Chris Kennerly, Associate Dean of Students and Director of Multicultural Affairs

Ellen Harbourt, Registrar

Michelle Foster, Administrative Assistant

### **Phase One 2008-2009: Essentially Kenyon and Working Papers**

During the first year of the process the coordinator has been meeting (and will continue to meet) with personnel in departments and offices, with division heads, student government and other small groups to discuss the reaccreditation process and to solicit documents, data, feedback, and expertise.

The Self-Study Task Force began meeting regularly in the fall of 2008. We oriented ourselves by reading the HLC Reaccreditation Manual and reviewing the last two Kenyon reaccreditation cycles (1990 and 2000). We read both the self-studies and the visit reports for those years. Having oriented ourselves to the task, we set two

goals for AY 2008-09. In the fall we would create an event that would call upon the entire community to help us articulate specific goals and themes for the Kenyon self-study and we would research and write seven working papers over the course of the year that would outline the entire task, including all five of HLC's criteria for reaccreditation. We decided we could complete three of these working papers in the fall semester and the final four in the spring and summer of 2009.

The seven working papers included a history of reaccreditation at Kenyon, a discussion of Kenyon's goals for reaccreditation, and a working paper on each of the five criteria.

### *Working Papers*

- 1) History of Reaccreditation at Kenyon: What does the college gain from reaccreditation?
- 2) Kenyon's goals for Reaccreditation: What's in it for us?
- 3) Criteria One: Mission and Integrity
- 4) Criteria Two: Preparing for the Future
- 5) Criteria Three: Teaching and Learning
- 6) Criteria Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge
- 7) Criteria Five: Engagement and Service

These white papers will serve four purposes:

- 1) They will enable the task force to unpack the various criteria, understanding better what they might mean specifically for Kenyon.
- 2) They will enable us to identify the best sources of evidence for each criterion and then to request only the evidence we need. Again the hope is that we can streamline the process by asking in a targeted way for the types of evidence we think will best support our claims about each of the criteria.
- 3) We can begin to test out our arguments at an early stage, making more efficient use of the feedback we receive early in the process.
- 4) Finally, these working papers will also allow us to identify early in the process challenges in the research and writing process (for instance, the task force must learn how to write and edit documents collaboratively; as we work through the first working paper we have also been learning how to use Google.docs).

### **Essentially Kenyon**

The other task we set for ourselves for this semester was to figure out a process for establishing some goals for the self-study that represent the interests of the community as widely as possible and that give as many constituencies as possible

some voice. This process should enable us to go beyond simply responding to the HLC's criteria. It will allow the college's constituencies to set the terms of our evaluation.

### The Process

With the backing of the Office of the President, the Provost, the Dean of Students, the Chair of the Faculty, and Student Council, we set aside November 1, 2008 for a half-day retreat that would be called "Essentially Kenyon." The purpose of the retreat was to engage the community in a series of guided discussions that would allow us, as a community, to articulate our first principles, what is "essentially Kenyon"; and to engage in a dialogue about current issues that have long-term implications for the College. All members of the college—students and employees—were invited to discuss a collective vision of what the college should be in the year 2020 and to describe the attributes that define excellence for our institution. The aim was not to force premature agreement about what those are, but to open up a conversation that will continue over the next two years as we prepare the reaccreditation self-study.

Because we wanted the questions we asked to come from the community itself, we used a grounded theory approach to generate the questions that would guide this conversation, beginning with observations from the entire community about what is essential to Kenyon and allowing the organization of the data to emerge from the data itself. To that end we conducted an on-line survey, asking two open-ended questions.

What is essentially Kenyon; what are the qualities and ideas at Kenyon that are most enduring?

What do we need to do to maintain these qualities as we address the challenges we face over the next decade?

The survey drew 283 total responses. The breakdown by area (to protect anonymity and encourage frankness, this was the only demographic information we requested):

Student	142	50%
Faculty	72	25%
Administration	34	12%
Staff	32	11%

From the results of the survey, we selected two themes that represented as fully as possible the most frequent answers we received. The retreat on November 1 began with two panels in Rosse Hall to discuss each of the two themes. The panels

consisted of a faculty moderator, a faculty member, administrator, staff member, and two students. Each panel was given 45 minutes to discuss its question (Working Paper #2 contains a full report on Essentially Kenyon). After listening to the panels, the group moved to the Alumni Dining Room of Peirce Hall for lunch and small group discussions. Each table carried on discussion based on the panels; they were free to pursue whatever issues interested them. The only prompt they were given was to think about potential goals for the reaccreditation self-study. Paper and pens were provided to record those conversations.

The retreat attracted somewhat fewer than 100 participants. While the turnout was somewhat disappointing, it was successful to the extent that it at least started a discussion that will continue over the next two years. It is important to move forward by reporting back to the community about the conversations begun and inviting further discussion of the issues they raised. We will be continuing the Essentially Kenyon conversations through a bi-weekly lunch table in the dining hall to which all members of the community will be invited. Each lunch will have a specific topic as its focus. These will begin spring semester 2009.

### **Feedback:**

As we complete the working papers, we will make them available to the Kenyon community for extensive feedback. We will ask specific individuals and groups to examine carefully working papers that deal with their area of expertise (and indeed such individuals may be involved in writing those working papers). And we will solicit feedback from the community at large. We are currently exploring our options for collecting and organizing feedback to our work. We hope to have the first of our working papers available to the campus community by the end of the semester or early in second semester.

### **Phase Two: Drafting the Self Study AY 2009-2010**

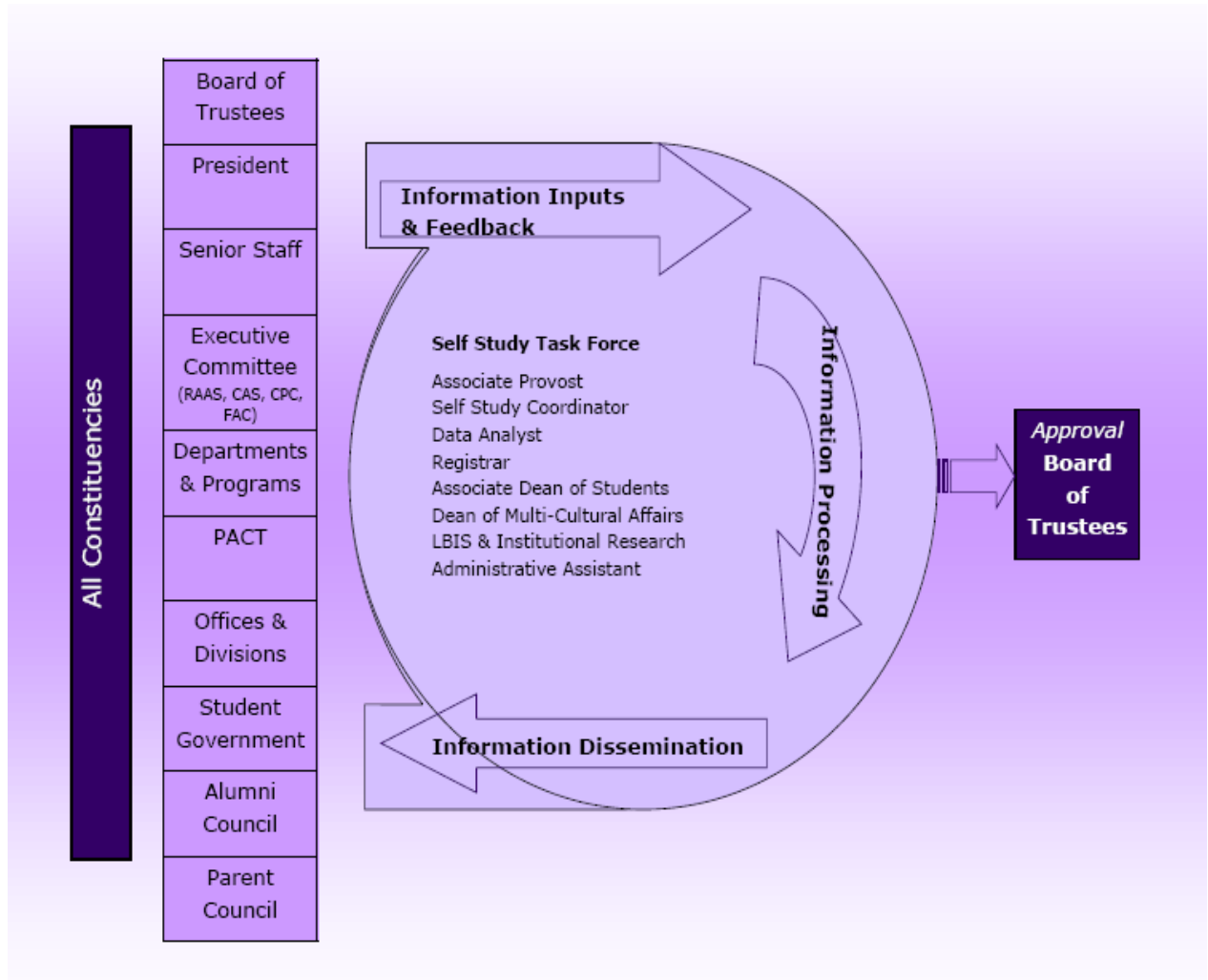
During the second year, AY 2009-2010, the task force will prepare a series of drafts of the self-study based on the working papers. Again we will circulate these drafts as widely as possible, soliciting both specific and general feedback from the community. We will hold a series of forums (including faculty meetings and common hour meetings) to solicit further feedback in addition to the electronic forums for feedback we will host during the first year. During the second year, we will bring onto the task force two new members, an editor and a designer, to help us with the details as we move toward creating a final document that is carefully edited, internally consistent, and attractive looking.

After evaluating the feedback and making the necessary corrections, the task force will finalize and submit the self-study to the Board of Trustees for approval in the spring or early summer of 2010.

Concurrently and in consultation with the Presidents' Office and Coordinator of Faculty Support, the Self-Study Office will begin the process of designing the Resource Room for the Self-Study. We expect that the vast bulk of the documentation for the Resource room will be electronic and we are already developing a searchable database that will eventually be part of the Resource Room. Most of the documentation for the five criteria will already be collected and catalogued by the end of the first year of the process. The focus of our activities in year two will be on collecting those materials required for visit team (see Handbook 9.4-1) that are not part of our evidence database. We will also begin working on arranging the physical space that will be needed for the team visit.

We believe that this self-study process will be successful to the extent that the Task Force plans carefully, communicates frequently and effectively with the community in a variety of venues both electronic and face-to-face, solicits extensive feedback on our work, and that we "cycle" people in for finite tasks, making the process, as far as we can, part the work people are already doing.

## Reaccreditation Organization Flow Chart



**HLC SELF-STUDY: TIMELINE**

MONTHS OUT	MONTH YEAR	ACTIVITY	PERFORMED BY	STATUS
<b>SUMMER 2008</b>				
	Jan-08	Identified Self-Study Coordinator and Data Analyst	Provost	√
	Apr-08	Attend HLC self-study workshop	Team Members	√
	8-May	Complete HERI Faculty Survey	Instnl Research	√
	Jul-08	Administrative Assistant Hired	Coordinator	√
	Jul-08	Web site up	Coordinator	√
	Jul-08	Letter to Campus Offices requesting information	Research Consultant	√
	Aug-08	Self-Study Budget	VP Finance	√
	Aug-08	Self-Study Task Force created	Coordinator	√
	Aug-08	Report at Senior Staff/Executive Comm. Retreat	Coordinator	√
	Aug-08	Analysis and Summary of FacPacs from 2000	Research Consultant	√
	Sep-08	Preliminary Self-Study Plan and Timeline	Coordinator	√
	Sep-08	Create Blog on Reaccreditation	Coordinator/AA	√
	Sep-08	Create Data Base and Filing for Storing Documents	Admin. Asst.	√
<b>FALL 2008</b>				
	Sep-08	Finalize Task-Force membership/begin meeting	Task Force	√
	Sep-08	Orient Task Force-Read Reaccreditation Handbook	Task Force	√
	Sep-08	Read and Analyze Previous Self-Studies and Visits	Task Force	√
	Sept-Dec-08	Meet with Campus Departments and Offices	Coordinator	ONGOING
	Sept-Dec-08	Working Paper on the History of Reaccreditation at K	Task-Force	√
	Sept-Dec-08	Criterion One Working Paper #3	Task Force	√
	Oct-08	Essentially Kenyon Survey	Coordinator	√
	Nov-08	Essentially Kenyon Retreat	Campus	√
	Nov-08	Create Staff and Administrators' Survey	Research Consultant	√
	Dec-08	Administer Staff & Administrator's Survey	Research Consultant	√
	Dec-08	Compile and Analyze Results	Research Consultant	In Process
	Dec-08	Finalize Self-Study Design	Task Force	
	Dec-08	Notify Commission of Preferred Dates, etc.	President	√
<b>SPRING 2009</b>				
	Feb-09	Self-Study Design Approved	Board	
	Jan-May-09	Circulate drafts for Feedback	Campus	
	Jan-May-09	Continue to Analyze Criteria 2-5	Task-Force	
	Jan-May-09	Write Working Papers 4-7	Task-Force	
	Jan-May-09	Circulate Working Papers for feedback	Campus	
	Apr-08	Attend HLC self-study workshop	Team Members	√
	Jan-May-09	Meet with Campus Departments and Offices	Coordinator	ONGOING
	Jan-May-09	Create and Administrator Remaining Surveys	Research Consultant	

<b>SUMMER 2009</b>		
June-Aug 09	Continue to Analyze Criteria 2-5	Task-Force
June-Aug 09	Finish Working Papers 4-7	Task-Force
June-Aug 09	Confirm Date of Visit	President ✓
June-Aug 09	Finish Analyling Survey Data	Research Consultant
<b>FALL 2009</b>		
Sep-09	Begin Draft of Final Self-Study	Task-Force
Sept-Dec-09	Circulate Drafts for Feedback	Campus
Sept-Dec-09	Task Force Compiles Feedback and Revises	Task Force
Sept-Dec-09	Collect required materials for Resource Room	Self-Study Office
Sept-Dec-09	Begin to Design Resource Room	Self-Study Office
<b>SPRING 2010</b>		
Jan-10	Task Force Compiles Feedback and Revises	Task Force
Feb-10	Begin editing final version	Editor
Feb-10	Begin design of final version	Designer
Mar-10	Editor compiles final version	Editor
Apr-10	Self-Study to Board of Trustees for approval	Board
Jan-May-10	Continue to work on Resource Room	Self-Study Office
<b>SUMMER 2010</b>		
12-Jul	Mail Self Study to HLC for final review before visit	Self-Study Office
	Duplicate Self-Study Report	Self-Study Office
	Send out set of evaluation materials	Self-Study Office
	Complete Resource Room	Self-Study Office
<b>FALL 2010</b>		
Sept 27-29	HLC TEAM VISIT	Self-Study Office