



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA®  
*A Student-Centered Research University*

**NCA2000**  
Self-Study Report  
North Central Association

**The University of Arizona  
Tucson, Arizona 85721**

**Designed by: Biomedical Communications  
Arizona Health Sciences Center**

NCA 2000: UA Request for Continued NCA Accreditation  
Self-Study Report

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# Executive Summary

This self-study for the University of Arizona's decennial review by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) was designed to ascertain whether the University satisfies five basic criteria for accreditation. The evidence accumulated in the nearly two-year process of completing this self-study affirms that the University satisfies these criteria.

The significant effort involved in the self-study process has had two additional purposes. First, it provided the opportunity for the University to focus more closely on its purposes, accomplishments, and challenges while engaging in strategic planning for the new millennium. Second, it has been the framework for evaluating the University's progress toward preeminence as a student-centered research university.

NCA accreditation criteria and evidence that the University meets them:

*Criterion 1-- The University has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education:*

The University of Arizona, a state land-grant university and Research I institution, has made impressive progress in articulating, communicating, and implementing its mission and purposes. Its published strategic plan (<http://daps.arizona.edu/daps/pubrec/reports/splan/uastatplan98.pdf>) includes statements of the mission and vision of the University "to be a preeminent student-centered research university" and identifies the goals, objectives, and strategies for accomplishing the mission.

*Criterion 2--The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes:*

Decision making at the University of Arizona involves administrative, advisory, and faculty councils in a shared-governance structure, ensuring the application of human, physical, and financial resources to the University's mission and vision.

*Criterion 3--The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes:*

The highest priority of the University of Arizona is to advance learning through the integration of teaching, research, and service to others. The following accomplishments demonstrate the measure of success attained:

- The University is proceeding with an aggressive plan to enhance instruction, particularly for undergraduate students, that has introduced the new First Year Colloquia and University-wide general education program. The University is engaged in a number of activities that are changing the campus culture in recognizing assessment as critical for improving student learning.
- The University has maintained a high level of research productivity and creative scholarship; it is currently ranked 13th among U.S. public universities, and it has been in the top 20 U.S. universities throughout the 1990s (National Science Foundation research expenditure rankings).
- The University is committed to outreach as an extension of teaching and research/creative activity for audiences outside the University, and to improving the well-being of citizens of the state and the world beyond.

*Criterion 4--The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness:*

The University of Arizona has fostered a more participatory and inclusive planning process and developed a more diversified resource base to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead.

*Criterion 5--The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships:*

The University promotes integrity and ethical behavior on the part of its students, faculty, and staff through leadership, continual review and updating of policies, and the clear expectation that practice will follow policy.

The major accomplishments of the last decade:

The following accomplishments illustrate the commitments made by the University of Arizona during the 1990s to improve the academic experiences for its students, to integrate research and creative scholarship into the curriculum, to augment evaluation processes, and to enhance the campus environment for all of its constituents:

- The Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee (SPBAC) and policies promoting shared governance have increased the involvement of faculty, staff, and students in University planning and decision making.
- Substantial investments have been made to renovate classrooms, construct new facilities, modify existing buildings, and enhance the campus infrastructure (particularly in telecommunication and information technology). These improvements provide an environment that supports excellence in the instruction and research pursuits of students and faculty, and in the administrative processes that advance the University's educational mission.
- Diversity and access have exhibited positive trends, as illustrated by continued progress in minority student recruitment and retention, modest growth in the numbers of new woman and minority faculty, and attention to salary equity issues for women on the faculty. However, there remains substantial room for improvement in these areas.
- Undergraduate education has benefited from a major refocus, supported by initiatives such as creation of a vice president for undergraduate education position, a new University-wide general education program, a Freshman Year Center, and First Year Colloquia.
- Tenure-track faculty are more involved in teaching undergraduate students, particularly freshmen, and increasingly use new instructional methods and technologies that emphasize active learning.
- Extramural funding for research rose 92% and funding for other awards increased 168% between fiscal 1989 and 1998.
- Graduate Interdisciplinary Programs have expanded in several areas, and their importance in graduate instruction and research has grown. The University's graduate interdisciplinary programs are now among the strongest in the nation.
- Outreach activities are flourishing not only among colleges with rich outreach traditions but in areas where outreach emphasis is comparatively new.
- The establishment of a new branch campus, University of Arizona South, solidified outreach to southern Arizona.
- A reorganized Academic Program Review (APR) process was reinstated in 1995 and prescribes evaluation of each academic program at least every seven years. Each APR must now describe how the program assesses student learning outcomes and evaluates its educational, research, service, and outreach activities.



- Assessment is integrated into the planning process, as illustrated by the UA strategic plan's goals, objectives, and measures; the Undergraduate Education Outcome Measures; and SPBAC's 1998 "environmental scan."

## Issues and challenges facing the University of Arizona

- Expand the activities that support the University's vision to become a preeminent student-centered research university.
- Maintain and improve the vitality of academic programs by recruiting and retaining talented faculty, raising faculty salaries to competitive levels, and increasing emphasis on teaching in the faculty reward system.
- Address shortages of space for research and instructional laboratories and for the library.
- Address the issue of enrollment management at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and the balance between quality of education and quality of students in the context of a student-centered research university.
- Plan for significant investments in, and maintenance of, the technology infrastructure to support institutional needs.
- Increase support for student services, especially advising and mentoring.
- Improve financial support for graduate students
- Build on initial efforts to assess the effectiveness of the University's new general education program.
- Improve central coordination, tracking, internal communication, and recognition of various forms of outreach.
- Improve the way in which planning priorities are linked to budgeting processes.
- Continue efforts to strengthen and improve the campus climate.

## The University of Arizona: A Student-Centered Research University:

The University has changed significantly since the 1990 NCA accreditation review. Today, campuswide learning – particularly student learning – is given the focused attention that is its due. This involves placing greater emphasis on considering the University from a student perspective and on access by all students, especially undergraduates, to the full learning environment of this major research University. To make fundamental changes in the way the University functions, the faculty, staff, and administration must continually analyze whether student learning and success are enhanced by the University's organizational structure, business practices, teaching methods, curriculum, faculty hiring and promoting procedures, and student support services. Progress as a student-centered research university has paralleled the University's achievements as a prominent research university ranked among the top 20 in the nation. The UA remains committed to creating knowledge, applying this knowledge to the solution of societal problems and needs, and improving the quality of life for all those who attend the University and become lifelong learners. In essence, the University's goal is to foster student learning that is enhanced and deepened by the integration of teaching, research and creative activity, and service.

