

Accreditation Summary

On March 30 and 31, 2020, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign will have its onsite peer review visit to reaffirm its institutional accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission. The assurance argument prepared in advance of the visit is summarized below. Prior to the visit, university community members are encouraged to read the entire argument, which will be available at <https://reaccreditation.illinois.edu/> in February.

Accreditation criteria and argument summary

Criterion 1 – Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

From its founding in 1867 to today, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign leans into its land-grant mission of serving the state, nation, and world through education, research, engagement, and economic development. The mission is reaffirmed during regularly occurring strategic planning processes, where it also serves as the basis for goal setting and new initiatives. All academic programs and support services align with the mission. The university takes seriously a commitment to diversity in its many forms from the enrollment and hiring of diverse students, faculty, and staff to programming, education, and training. In celebrating its sesquicentennial, the university community examined the question of what it means to be a land-grant university in the 21st century, and it is re-envisioning being a university with engagement programs to being a “publicly engaged” university, with an active and visible presence throughout the state and the world.

Criterion 2 – Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Illinois has well-established offices to ensure compliance with laws and policies regarding ethical conduct of its staff and board members in financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary matters. There are also clear expectations for student behavior and academic integrity. The university's Board of Trustees is guided by state law, university rules, and its own bylaws to function transparently, with integrity, and in the best interests of the institution, while delegating day-to-day management to administrators and academic matters to faculty. Illinois presents its programs, costs, and activities transparently. It takes seriously its commitment to freedom of expression as shown in ongoing discussion, committee recommendations, and policy revisions. As a university with a Highest Research Activity Carnegie classification, Illinois carefully maintains its research integrity and safety through education, training, and ethical oversight.

Criterion 3 – Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Illinois' academic breadth allows students to pursue high-quality academic programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional level. The commitment to maintain a highly qualified professoriate and professional staff is evidenced by campus-wide policies. Procedures and practices have been designed to ensure students have access to quality instruction, regardless of modality; support services; and learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom. For undergraduate students, General Education is intended to help students understand and appreciate diverse areas of



scholarship, to develop and enhance a wide range of intellectual abilities, and to strengthen students' abilities to form and communicate ideas effectively and responsibly.

Criterion 4 – Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Illinois offers quality educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it regularly assesses those activities for both quality assurance and improvement. The institution does so by engaging in a rigorous program review and specialized accreditation processes, by having policies and practices for evaluating courses and transfer credits, and by engaging in student learning outcomes assessment for both curricular and co-curricular aspects of the students' education. The university tracks the success of its students in seeking employment and graduate education, through the Illini Success survey. The university clearly posts its learning outcomes for all degree programs in the course catalog, allowing students to know what to expect. These learning outcomes are assessed on a regular basis to confirm the learning goals are being met or to identify areas where the curriculum can be strengthened.

A goal of the 2018-23 strategic plan is to provide transformative learning experiences, and a part of that goal is improving students' retention, persistence, and overall success rates. While the university has had a long-standing, decentralized commitment to student success and has an 85% six-year graduation rate, the activities branching from the new strategic plan have led to more planning on ways to scale up and create additional programs that focus on assuring that every admitted student is successful.

Criterion 5 – Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Illinois maintains sufficient fiscal, human, physical, and technological resources to be a successful flagship university ranked 14th among public schools by U.S. News & World Report. While the university experienced state appropriation decreases in recent years, its financial and educational position remains strong due to efficient use of resources and prudent planning. Qualified faculty and staff combined with effective governance allow Illinois to provide quality education and contribute to scholarship at the highest level.

To ensure continued success, the university uses internal and external data sources to systematically develop attainable improvement plans. Goal-setting in the 2013-16 strategic plan was proven realistic, given the proximity of campuswide 2016 metrics to each target on the tracking dashboards. A new budget model was developed in order to enhance efficiency and better support flexibility in times of shifting revenue streams. Illinois seeks to be a pre-eminent public research university. It will continue to progress toward this vision through policies and processes that foster careful stewardship of resources, improved education, and an ongoing pursuit of increased operational efficiency, with a steady adherence to its mission.

What questions might I be asked?

Criterion One. Mission

- How does Illinois live its land-grant mission?
- How does Illinois address and show commitment for its role in a multicultural society?
- How does Illinois demonstrate a commitment to the public good?

Criterion Two. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

- Where does one find Illinois policies on governance, diversity, respect, academic honesty, safety, etc.?
- Could you name a university policy (i.e., sexual harassment, academic freedom, conflict of interest) and then walk through how it is upheld?
- As a research institution, what policies are in place and how are they enforced for research safety, academic honesty and integrity, and ethical use of information?

Criterion Three. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

- What does the oversight for educational programs and support look like at Illinois?
- In what ways do faculty and students work together to contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of new knowledge?
- What strategies are used to ensure that students learn about diversity?
- What resources are provided to faculty for teaching?
- What is the student experience like with advisors, career counselors, mental health counselors, etc.?

Criterion Four. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

- How does Illinois examine the quality of academic programs?
- What evaluation and assessment processes are in place to ensure and continuously improve upon a high quality student learning experience?
- How does Illinois prepare students to reach their immediate and long-term goals for personal and professional development?
- In what ways does Illinois support retention, persistence, and completion goals?

Criterion Five. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

- How does Illinois maintain the physical and technological resources needed to ensure excellent academic experiences?
- How does Illinois ensure its human resources are sufficient and well qualified to fulfil its mission?
- How is Illinois thinking about future challenges and considering ways to adapt or innovate?
- How is Illinois ensuring that the university remains accessible?
- How does Illinois ensure that governance is a shared responsibility between administration, faculty, staff, and students?
- How does Illinois adjust operations based on evidence to improve institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability?