

**Periodic Review Report (PRR)**  
**for the**  
**Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

Presented by Albright College

June 1, 2012

Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Lex O. McMillan, III, President

Commission actions that preceded this report:

- June 26, 2008 | Affirmed substantive change
- January 3, 2008 | Acknowledged receipt of substantive change request
- March 8, 2007 | Reaffirmed accreditation

Date of the decennial evaluation team's visit: October 28 – November 1, 2006

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*Strategic Planning*  
*Budgeting*

## Section 1 Executive Summary

### Overview

Albright College, a nationally ranked, private, liberal arts college, offers a rigorous curriculum with an interdisciplinary focus. Founded in 1856 as Union Seminary and formed by the mergers of several institutions of higher learning, Albright maintains an affiliation with the United Methodist Church. The College honors and advances this legacy through its mission *to inspire and educate the scholar and leader in each student, building on a strong foundation in the liberal arts and sciences and a commitment to the best of human values, fostering a commitment to a lifetime of service and learning*. The hallmarks of an Albright education are connecting fields of learning, collaborative teaching and learning, and a flexible curriculum that allows students to create an individualized education as reflected in Albright's [Mission, History and Tradition](#).

In recent years Albright has enjoyed a strong and growing enrollment of about 2,500 students. The traditional day program enrolls more than 1,600 undergraduates in a residential setting. Students may choose from among 60 concentrations and programs in the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, and fine arts (see [Areas of Course and Study](#) in the College catalog). More than half of traditional students have combined or individualized concentrations, with as many as 200 different combinations annually. The [Accelerated Degree Program \(ADP\)](#), with about 850 adult students, offers six concentrations, with courses available at the main Reading campus and eight other Pennsylvania sites. The master's program in education, offered at the Reading campus, enrolls about 70 students.

Despite the current challenging economic environment, Albright College is financially sound. The College depends on student tuition and fees for most of its budget, though additional resources are available through the endowment, the Fund for Albright, and grants. Since the self-study and decennial evaluation team visit, Albright has completed a highly successful, \$43 million comprehensive campaign, [Crossing Boundaries](#), and begun another, [That Their Light Might Shine](#), allowing the College to strengthen its position academically and financially, and to move forward with its facilities master plan.

### Approach to Preparation of the Periodic Review Report

Preparation of the PRR began in March 2010 when Albright sent a team of three faculty and administrators to the Middle States PRR Workshop in Philadelphia. In August 2010, the provost established a core team to guide the PRR process, consisting of three members: Dr. Brian Buerke, associate professor and chair of the physics department and co-chair of the Assessment

Committee; Mickey Baines, director of the Accelerated Degree Program and liaison to the Strategic Planning Committee; and Dean Foster, director of assessment and co-chair of the Assessment Committee. Mickey Baines was later replaced by Jack LaFayette, director of institutional research and liaison to the Strategic Planning Committee.

The core-team model was chosen over a steering-committee approach in response to ongoing campus concerns over work-life balance and the already-substantial number of active committees. The core team was charged with coordinating all efforts related to the PRR, including collection of information and writing of the document, especially the summary of responses to the self-study recommendations ([Appendix A](#)). This coordination involved the participation of many members of the Albright community, especially all vice presidents and deans. A list of these contributors is provided in [Appendix B](#).

In September 2010 the core team met with the President's Advisory Council (PAC) to obtain approval for the PRR plan, including the core-team structure, the proposed calendar, and the general approach to the PRR. In addition, the Assessment Committee endorsed the plan and took up several projects intended to advance the PRR process.

Several documents were completed by the end of the 2010-2011 academic year: an assessment inventory, a catalog of responses to the recommendations in the last self-study, advanced drafts of a revised assessment plan, and a first draft of the new strategic plan. Based on these documents, the core team solicited targeted information and written text from PAC and from academic and administrative constituencies across campus, while simultaneously assembling the information into a first draft of the PRR. In January 2012 the first draft of the PRR began to be disseminated across campus for review and revision. A first draft of the main sections of the PRR, in particular the response to the Middle States recommendations, was posted in the assessment section of the Albright intranet for community review. Available drafts were reviewed and updated by members of PAC throughout the spring. A series of four roundtables and open forums sponsored by the Assessment Committee in March and April focused on the PRR and gave all community members a chance to engage in public comment and discussion.

Feedback from the review process was incorporated into subsequent drafts of the PRR, which were reviewed and discussed by PAC and the Board of Trustees in early May 2012. Based on these discussions, the PRR was completed for final review and approval toward the end of May 2012.

## **Major Changes and Developments**

### *Academic*

- In May 2011 the faculty voted to adopt a new [General Education Plan \(Appendix C\)](#) emphasizing a more developmental integration of general education courses while still maintaining the flexibility required for interdisciplinary study and the combining of concentrations. Implementation of the new curriculum, beginning in fall 2013, will be guided by the General Education Committee, comprising five elected and *ex officio* faculty members, the dean of undergraduate studies (*ex officio*), and several students. The First-Year Seminar, the initial phase of the new curriculum, was implemented in fall 2009.
- The [Academic Learning Center](#) (ALC) has been greatly expanded, with the addition of multiple staff positions and an attendant increase in usage, disability services, and positive outcomes. The redesigned and expanded peer tutoring program received international certification from the College Reading and Learning Association.
- The Career Development Center and the Center for Experiential Learning and Research (CELAR) have been integrated in the newly established [Center for Experiential Learning and Career Development \(Geiser House\)](#). Due in part to a more central location, usage of Geiser House programs has increased dramatically, especially among first-year students. Student involvement in the innovative [Albright Creative and Research Experiences \(ACRE\)](#) program has continued to grow and encompass a wider range of fields.
- The [ADP](#) has increased steadily over the last five years, with fall enrollments of fewer than 500 in 2006 growing to more than 600 in 2011. Albright is exploring options for expanding to new sites and adding new concentrations.<sup>1</sup> A 2005 external review of the program concluded that it “is an excellent program well positioned and carefully constructed to serve the adult population.” Even so, Albright has implemented the recommendations of the reviewer and continued to improve the program. The program’s cohort model was nationally recognized for its high retention rate in a [May 2012 Huffington Post article](#).
- Albright has made substantial improvements in faculty support. Faculty salaries, a problem since the financial difficulties of the 1990s, have now reached parity with those of Albright’s comparison group for the professor and associate ranks and are making progress at the assistant level. In 2009 the College received the [Alfred P. Sloan Award for Faculty Career Flexibility](#), one of six \$200,000 awards given out that year. The award is being used to analyze and address work load, promotion and tenure, and governance issues, as well as implement several faculty-friendly policies, including family leave, phased retirement, and shared-position policies

### *Facilities*

- Shortly after the self-study, Albright completed and opened the [Schumo Center for Fitness and Well-Being](#), a 22,000-square-foot addition that provides not only a venue for new wellness and fitness activities but also an improved gateway to the athletic complex

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<sup>1</sup> In fall 2012 Albright will begin offering programs in psychology and business in Mesa, Arizona.

and the campus. With the building of a new stadium in 2005 and subsequent renovations to the [Bollman Center](#) and [John Scholl Life Sports Center](#), Albright now has among the best [athletic facilities](#) at the Division-III level. The Schumo Center has become a significant fitness and health resource for the broader Reading community.

- Fall of 2011 saw the completion of the [Science Center](#), including a 42,000-square-foot addition and complete renovation of the 37,000-square-foot original building. The completed center brings together for the first time all natural science departments in a single building and will allow for improved collaboration among departments. The modern facilities will enable new approaches to teaching and improve opportunities for interdisciplinary research for students.
- Albright developed and began implementing a new [Facilities Master Plan](#) that will transform the campus over the next two decades. Current (Phase I) projects include [Founders Walk](#), which will physically integrate the campus, extensive renovations to the library, and the relocation of multiple administrative and academic departments to more appropriate or newly acquired buildings.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Finances*

- In 2008 Albright concluded a successful, \$43 million comprehensive campaign, [Crossing Boundaries: The Campaign for Albright](#), which exceeded its goal by \$8 million. The campaign included \$13 million in gifts for Albright's endowment, bringing the total with investment gains from \$38 million to \$55 million in five years.<sup>3</sup> The College is in the quiet phase of another comprehensive campaign, [That Their Light May Shine: The Campaign for Albright College](#), with a working goal of \$50 million. In its first year the campaign raised more than \$14 million, the largest amount of money raised in one fiscal year in the history of the College.
- Albright has maintained a stable financial position despite the economic downturn. Over the last four years, revenues have exceeded expenses by at least \$1 million each year, substantially increasing the College's net assets.
- The [Timetable for Planning and Budgeting](#) has been revised across the campus. Departments and areas now submit goals for the next fiscal year during November and December to guide development of their budgets, which are submitted in December and January. New or revised goals and allocation of resources are based on assessment results. "Closing the loop" with planning and budgeting is now expected practice.
- The Controller's Office has developed a five-year financial plan (Budget Statement of Activities FY 2009-2016 - [Appendix D](#)) with detailed assumptions (included in Section 4 of this report) and an Excel-based modeling capacity that allows the College to monitor

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<sup>2</sup> Since 2005 Albright has made \$65,000,000 in capital improvements. The Master Plan proposes to invest nearly three times that much in the next two decades.

<sup>3</sup> Despite the sharp downturn and only partial recovery of the stock market over the last four years, Albright's endowment has held steady. As of May 31, 2011, the endowment was \$53 million.

the impact of variances in revenue, expense, enrollment, and retention. These and all required financial documents are included in the [Financial and Enrollment Appendices and Documents folder](#) on the accompanying flash drive.

## **Highlights of the Periodic Review Report**

Albright College has made impressive progress over the last five years. With increasing enrollment, a strengthened fiscal position, and a developing culture of assessment and improvement, the College is poised to move forward with innovative academic offerings and a more vibrant campus life. Evidence of this progress is presented in the following sections:

**Section 2:** The summary of responses to recommendations includes the three recommendations given in the Middle States evaluation team report from the last self-study, relating to financial planning and budgeting (Standard 3), institutional assessment (Standard 7), and classification of instructional sites (Standard 13). This section provides evidence that these recommendations have been addressed and that the College is in compliance with the related standards. Related self-study recommendations are also treated. Detailed responses for the 54 self-study recommendations are given in [Appendix A](#).

**Section 3:** Major challenges and opportunities have been identified through a number of College-wide and self-reflective initiatives, and pertain to three broad areas: academics, community, and resources and stewardship.

**Section 4:** Enrollment and finance trends are fully discussed, including the assumptions on which projections are based. Enrollment is strong and growing, especially in the adult programs. The College continues to work hard to improve retention. Albright's long-term financial outlook is positive; in the short-term, the budget is constrained due to the financial implications of significant capital investment, most notably the Science Center project.

**Section 5:** Newly developed and sustained processes for assessment of institutional effectiveness and student learning are given in detail. Evidence of assessment at all levels is provided, and a clear picture is presented of how this assessment is an integral part of the cycle of goal setting, improvement, and resource allocation.

**Section 6:** The College has made great progress with linking institutional planning and budgeting over the last five years. Aspects of this progress not addressed in Section 2 are discussed, especially the strategic planning process and the related operational plan.