

**Summary of the
New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
Visiting Committee Accreditation Report**

**Boston University Academy
2017**

NOTE: All text in this summary document was excerpted from the NEASC Accreditation Report. NEASC visiting teams are encouraged to use direct quotes from a school's self-study where applicable. Language appearing in italics are direct quotes from BUA's Self-Study Report. Standard 7: Early Childhood Program, and Standard 8: Residential Program and/or Homestay Program were not completed as they are not applicable to Boston University Academy.

Assessment of Standard	
Passing (The students' experience is supported)	Failing (The students' experience is compromised)
P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendation or issues for reflection.	F1. Fails Standard: aware and plans remediation.
P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.	F2. Fails Standard: aware, but plan of remediation is uncertain.

INTRODUCTION

The Visiting Committee thanks the Boston University Academy administrators, faculty, and staff for their warm welcome and the extraordinary care that they showed for us during this visit. We also wish to thank the BUA administration, faculty, and staff for writing a thorough, thoughtful, and forward- focused Self-Study. In particular, the Visiting Committee is grateful for the Self-Study's historical context, its detailed examination of strengths and areas for improvement, and its substantive recommendations for improvement.

Overview of Team Findings

BUA is unique, in that it is affiliated with a major research university in one of the nation's most historic and vibrant cities, and yet it has the feel of a lively, rigorous high school filled with eager students and talented faculty. Over its first 24 years of existence, BUA has built a reputation as a haven for serious, smart kids who appreciate and enjoy their school community and are kind to each other. As the Visiting Committee members heard from a variety of individuals, BUA revels in being "a young school that reads old books." In a way, however, that very strong academic reputation may function as a bar to continued growth and improvement; that is, in ensuring known, historic strengths, BUA may insulate itself from opportunities to serve students better. Fortunately, the Visiting Committee sees in the school's leadership, particularly its new Head, now in his second year, the ability to confront BUA's challenges and take advantage of the opportunities before it. Given its distinctive identity as an early college institution located within a diverse, vibrant city, and one on the verge of marking its 25-year milestone, BUA is well-poised to chart a strategic path into its next, certain to be strong chapter. The Visiting Committee hopes that the following report will assist the leadership of BUA in this important work.

STANDARD 1: MISSION

There is congruence between the school's stated mission and core values and its actual program, policies, planning, and decision-making at both the operational and governance levels.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Observations

The Visiting Committee saw ample evidence of BUA's mission in action: classes filled with "*talented students*" who are indeed "*passionate about learning and who share the joy of inquiry[,]*" partnering with "*dedicated teachers in a small and caring community[.]*" Visiting Committee members also agreed with the Self-Study's conclusions about mission implementation, namely that, while reflective of the school's desire to adhere to its historical roots, mission implementation is also sufficiently broad as to invite a lack of shared understanding.

The Visiting Committee also recognizes both the value and the challenge inherent in BUA's historical emphasis on a "classically-based curriculum." While the Visiting Team heard from a range of voices testifying to the value of this focus and its historical significance to the school, team members also noted that students' courses of study do not reflect this descriptor's prominence in the mission implementation. In 2006, during its last accreditation process, both BUA and the Visiting Committee identified this element of the mission as one worth review and possible revision. This Visiting Committee wishes to echo that advice.

Visiting Committee members heard ample testimony about the appeal of BUA's affiliation with Boston University. Indeed, whether BUA students later enrolled at BU or at another college, all spoke about the value of this early college experience in preparing them not just for the academic demands of college, but of the social and emotional demands as well. Current students cited this opportunity, as did their parents, along with the parents of graduates, as a leading reason for enrolling at BUA. The Visiting Committee observed firsthand the benefits of university-level classes to high school-age students. For a school that began as an experiment...BUA has established the validity of President Silber's hypothesis!

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee concurs with the [self-study] rating of P2 for this standard. The Visiting Committee agrees that, while BUA is a vibrant learning environment, community members do not share a common understanding of the underlying mission. BUA recognizes the need to review the mission with an eye to fostering such understanding, and the Visiting Committee agrees with that point of view.

Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends BUA for:

1. Living its mission of educating "*talented students who are passionate about learning and who share the joy of inquiry.*"
2. Creating a "*vibrant school culture that supports student learning in the spirit of BUA's mission, mission implementation, and core values.*"
3. Its administration's commitment to "*mission-driven, data-informed decision-making.*"

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee concurs with the Self-Study's recommendation that BUA engage in an inclusive process to review and clarify the school's mission, including its commitment to "a classical education in advance of the school's next strategic plan." While the committee recognizes that final decision-making authority to revise BUA's mission rests with the Head of School, Provost, the President of BU, and the Trustees of Boston University, the Visiting Committee would emphasize the value of building consensus among key stakeholders, particularly faculty and staff, in order to ensure the success of any review process.
2. The Visiting Committee concurs with the recommendation that BUA consider its own curriculum in the context of BU's soon-to-be-unveiled undergraduate general education program (BU Hub). Given BUA's strong bond with Boston University, "alignment will help both the progress of students in Boston University courses, and the educational trajectories of those graduates who attend Boston University."
3. The Visiting Committee encourages BUA to consider the ways in which early college education could be a defining element of its mission. BUA has been a pioneer in this area for nearly a quarter century, and yet the early college educational landscape has grown and changed since BUA's founding; nevertheless, the Visiting Committee believes that BUA may have an opportunity to take advantage of its expertise and standing in this area.
4. The Visiting Committee recommends that BUA consider the role of diversity, equity, and inclusion as core elements of its mission. BUA currently draws students from nearly sixty cities and towns in the Boston area, yet both its student body and its faculty/staff ranks do not reflect the diversity of the city around it, or the university with which it is so closely connected. The Visiting Committee believes that these elements are highly worthy of consideration for inclusion in BUA's mission statement.

STANDARD 2: GOVERNANCE

The school has an appropriate system of governance that assures that the school remains true to its mission and that it has the necessary resources to support its present and prospective operations.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Observations

While the governance of BUA is technically shared by BU's Provost and Chief Academic Officer, President, and Trustees, the Head of School effectively reports to one person, the Provost. This structure allows for more streamlined and efficient decision-making for BUA, particularly with respect to mission and strategic planning, but it does not always allow for the type of reasonable financial flexibility that could benefit the running of a small-scale, independent school. Nevertheless, the Visiting Committee found that the Provost's supervision of BUA's Head of School is generally appropriate and allows the Head of School adequate space to supervise the daily operations of the school without undue interference.

BU itself is a NEASC accredited institution.

The Head of School was appointed after a well-designed national process, and the search committee appointed by the Provost had a fine balance of BU and BUA constituents. The Head of School has worked masterfully since his arrival to forge meaningful and authentic relationships across the Office of the Provost, as well as in the Office of General Counsel, and has the continuous counsel of a member of the search committee who is also a member of BUA's Advisory Board, BU's Board of Overseers and its Board of Trustees.

The Head of School has reconfigured the Advisory Board to include broader community perspectives beyond those of parents - for the first time, alumni are among the members of the board - but the Visiting Committee would like to see greater diversity in the composition of the board.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Head of School is working well within the constraints on BUA's unique governance model, and has healed past relationships and formed new ones with important allies in BU's administration. The Visiting Committee is confident that the Head of School will continue moving these relationships forward, and over time may bring those structures to which he reports in greater common understanding of the needs of BUA. The Head of School Advisory Board is now restructured to be more responsive to the needs of the Head of School beyond fundraising, and the Visiting Committee heard from board members that they are ready to be more included in the Head of School's vision for BUA.

Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends Boston University Academy for the following:

1. *"Strong appropriate governance of BUA through University supervision of the Head of School, reporting to BU's Provost and Chief Academic Officer, without unduly influencing day-to-day operations."*
2. *"Utilizing access to expert legal advice and guidance from Boston University through the Office of the General Counsel; utilizing similar guidance in administrative planning, HR, etc., consistent with the way individual board members would provide content expertise in a more traditional independent school model."*
3. *"Accessing Boston University resources in the cultivation of increased philanthropic support, including endowment growth as a major part of the school's upcoming 25th anniversary fundraising efforts."*
4. *"A thoughtful 2014-2015 Head of School search and transition process that engaged and was*

supported by the BU Provost.”

5. Reinvigorating the function of the Head of School Advisory Board *“(consistent with other advisory boards across Boston University) to provide significant support, both through advice and philanthropic giving, to the school.”*

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee supports BUA's recommendation that the Head of School *“continue to strengthen BUA's connections to the Office of the Provost, Office of the President, Board of Trustees, and Board of Overseers as appropriate.”* The Head of School should remain steadfast in communicating, with care, the unique financial and risk management challenges faced by BUA to which current BU processes may not sufficiently respond.
2. The Visiting Committee agrees that BUA should *“establish broader community understanding of the composition and purpose of the BUA Head of School Advisory Board.”*
3. The Visiting Committee agrees with the recommendation to *“broaden diversity within and balance of the composition of the Advisory Board (current parents, parents of graduates, alumni, BU Faculty, external experts,”* gender and racial diversity).

STANDARD 3: ENROLLMENT

The admissions process assures that those students who enroll are appropriate, given the school's mission, and are likely to benefit from their experience at the school.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Observations

During its time at BUA, the Visiting Committee witnessed joyful, intellectually engaged students thriving under the guidance of dedicated teachers and administrators. Just as remarkable was the high level of respect the students demonstrated toward each other across a multitude of differences (e.g., academic interest, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and political affiliation). Indeed, *"the success of the admission team in assembling cohorts of students who are intellectually curious and all-around nice kids is one of the essential ingredients of BUA."*

The school's admission team takes incredible care to get to know well each and every family that participates in BUA's admission process. The team also does a large amount of outreach despite the office's small scale. The school's yields have increased over time, but despite this good work, the school has not been able to attract the number of underrepresented students of color that it would like, although the numbers have improved recently (around 5%). BUA's overall student of color percentage (44%) is impressively higher than that of its peer schools.

The Visiting Committee was impressed that for the second year in a row, the school has achieved gender balance in the incoming class. Nevertheless, as of April 11, 2017, the rising 9th grade class numbers 56 students, about 25% larger than the 42 to 45 students budgeted. As of April 11, 2017, the rising 9th grade class numbers 56 students, about 25% larger than the 42 to 45 students budgeted (no doubt due in part to the warm and empathic atmosphere created by the admission team). BUA can accommodate a class of this size, but it does necessitate an additional four-section grade at the school. It is also important to note that BUA does not necessarily benefit from the extra tuition dollars a larger class might bring.

Beginning this year, BUA's financial aid process is separate from that of admission, with the goal of greater objectivity in the final awards. BUA has a well-explained financial aid process that meets full financial need as defined by the school, and the school awards additional dollars for books and incidentals, as applicable.

The Head of School's restructuring of the administrative team introduced an Assistant Head of Institutional Advancement role that oversees admission, communications, and development. Having a more integrated relationship-management structure for students and families should increase the consistency of messaging across these departments.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

BUA is incredibly ethnically diverse, but that diversity does not adequately reflect the demographics of the Boston area. The admission office does an incredible amount of outreach, including working with area charter schools and CBOs, but perhaps due to a lack of critical mass of faculty of color or underrepresented students of color, the number of black and Latino students is very low. The Visiting Committee also noted that there may be some conflation of under-resourced students and underrepresented students of color in the school's recruitment strategy.

The Visiting Committee was impressed by the large percentage of the operating budget BUA sets aside for its

financial aid program. The committee was pleased to know that a plan is in place to capture the full incidental costs of attendance.

Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends Boston University Academy for the following:

1. *“The personal relationships forged between the admission office and the families in BUA's admission pipeline, relationships that lay a foundation for cordial and trusting interactions throughout the admission cycle and once enrolled at the school.”*
2. *“The thorough process followed by BUA's dedicated admission team to explain BUA's program and get to know applicants holistically. This yearlong process, containing many touch points, results in a student body that is by and large an excellent match for the program and a new student cohort that is the most gender- balanced and diverse group in BUA history.”*
3. A deep commitment to socioeconomic diversity with a robust need-based financial aid budget in comparison to benchmarked peer schools.
4. A five-year attrition rate that is around 4.7%, lower than the national average and that of peer schools.

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee endorses the *“initiative to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion at BUA, as outlined in the Head of School's February 2016 letter to the community.”* Furthermore, the Visiting Committee recommends that the admission office continue to direct efforts toward recruiting more underrepresented students of color, including those who are full pay.
2. The Visiting Committee agrees that BUA should *“continue to develop a deeper understanding of BUA's position in the Boston area independent school marketplace.”* Additionally, the Visiting Committee recommends that the Head of School work with faculty so that they are prepared to welcome bright students who may be underprepared yet who have the raw skills to “do the work” at BUA.
3. The Visiting Committee affirms the school's recommendation to *“continue to ensure adequate institutional capacity for admission, enrollment management, and financial aid functions.”* The committee further recommends that BUA adjust the financial aid needs analysis to better reflect the cost of living in the Boston area and the full cost of attending BUA.

STANDARD 4: PROGRAM

The school provides a comprehensive program of intellectual, aesthetic, and physical activities that is appropriate to support the school’s mission and core values, and is consistent with the needs of the range of students admitted. Program planning is informed by relevant research regarding how students learn and the knowledge and capacities they will need to lead purposeful and constructive lives.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Observations

The Visiting Committee was impressed with the intentionality and implementation of BUA's program, especially the academic component. The unparalleled engagement of students in BUA classrooms reflects positively both on the talented faculty and on the intellectual curiosity and energy of the students. The academic experiences in the Academy are formative for BUA students, and many alumni, students and parents extol their BUA teachers as the most engaging and challenging they have ever had. As BUA students begin taking BU classes during their 11th grade year, the “ceilingless curriculum” at a major research university provides students with incomparable opportunities to expand on their interests and to demonstrate their readiness for college work. A liaison team, in consultation with the faculty, directs the student to appropriate courses to meet their ability level and interests; the University Liaison also coordinates communication between BU professors and parents.

The small size of the school and the accessibility of faculty for students creates meaningful relationships, and alumni reported that their comfort with adults translated into productive relationships with college professors. In conjunction, the invigorated advising system allows for more systematic contact between students and faculty, and a health curriculum that draws on BU resources for speakers and consultants on topics ranging from nutrition to stress management informs students about developmental issues. The arts program, reflected in the impressive quality of student work that the Visiting Committee observed, has been significantly enhanced. The Visiting Committee can clearly see the arts are a vibrant component of the school tapestry. Similarly, the athletic component of the program has advanced, as evidenced by the increased participation on school teams and recent implementation of a physical education program that better utilizes the resources of the FitRec. Other extracurricular offerings at BUA include a wide range of clubs and activities; given the small size of the school, this array reflects the student initiative and appetite to get involved in their school community. Several clubs (Robotics and Model UN are two examples) have attained recognition for their excellence.

While the faculty are eminently qualified for their roles in the classroom, professional development opportunities and support could be improved. In addition to making BU classes available to faculty, a closer connection with other BU resources, such as the Center for Teaching and Learning, might allow faculty access to training in non-curricular topics such as diversity and adolescent development as well as pedagogical techniques and resources. More support could be put in place for those students with learning differences, such as executive function disorders. A question about the effectiveness of the scaffolding for the Senior Thesis program was raised in the Self-Study and during the Visit. Lastly, the greater opportunities in athletics reflects interest by the student body, but there is a real sense that maintaining and building upon this trend will require greater resources in terms of budget and access to BU facilities.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee supports the P1 rating that BUA gave its program in its Self-Study. The evidence we garnered about the success of the program includes quantitative metrics...Anecdotally, the conversations that the Visiting Committee had with students, alumni, parents, and faculty supported the sentiment that BUA is the right school for its students; one parent noted, in an opinion that we heard echoed throughout the visit, that her daughter had found “her tribe” at BUA and loved every aspect of her daily routine here. While every institution could become a better version of itself, and we have recommendations for BUA, the school's program matches its current mission and clientele well.

Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends BUA for the following aspects of their program:

1. A rigorous academic experience that prepares student for and supports them during an early college experience at BU
2. A committed and accomplished faculty that both challenge and nurture their student charges
3. A significantly more vibrant arts program thanks to a devoted space and hiring of full-time faculty
4. The many initiatives enacted through the office of the school counselor to support students and their development

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee endorses the following recommendation that BUA “[e]stablish a structure and process to work on”:
 - *“clarity about the meaning and role of ‘a classically-based curriculum.’”*
 - *“BUA's program in light of the upcoming BU Hub general-education initiative.”*
2. The Visiting Committee endorses the following recommendation that BUA *“create a working group to evaluate and propose improvements to the Senior Thesis experience.”*
3. The Visiting Committee recommends that BUA foster more professional development, especially around topics involving adolescent development and general pedagogy.
4. The Visiting Committee recommends that BUA support the athletic department with a larger budget and/or more access to BU facilities.

STANDARD 5: EXPERIENCE OF THE STUDENTS

The school actively considers individual students and has developed plans, policies, programs, and pedagogy to nurture, support, and encourage all students to reach their potential and to participate in the life of the school.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Observations

The student experience as it relates to academics gets very high marks. BUA's students are in an elite class. Alumni feel their level of preparation is second to none. They cite "learning how to think critically" and the impact of taking college courses early as critical to their successful transition to academics in college. BUA is described as "an intense academic environment," yet nurturing. All signs point to BUA students being engaged and happy.

The Visiting Committee concurs that BUA students are "known, cared for and advised well." The Student Support team meets weekly to talk about any students of concern. Twice a year, the faculty reviews each student and comments on their progress. They put plans/supports in place for students who struggle and have a process to counsel out those for whom BUA turns out not to be a good fit.

The College Counseling department also receives high marks for their work with students. The advising process for juniors and seniors, whether related to course selection at BU or college selection, is seen as consistently strong, ensuring that students receive the support they need at every key juncture of their journey at BUA.

The new Head has infused life and energy into the student experience. Students talked at length about the impact the Head has made in his first two years at BUA. In speaking with the Student Council, the Visiting Committee heard explicitly that students feel that their voice is being heard and that they have a clear process that allows them to propose changes to existing policies. From the perspective of BUA's students, it is a very exciting time to be at the school.

Conversely, the Visiting Committee heard concerns about the school's capacity to meet students' social-emotional needs under BUA's current system. While the school is characterized as caring and nurturing, the Visiting Committee also heard it described as "a grind." The Visiting Committee agreed that students would benefit from a clearer, more intentional effort to help them deal with anxiety and stress. The Visiting Committee also heard a number of voices asking for more support for students with different learning styles and/or disabilities. The current model, in which these responsibilities fall to the School Counselor, is not sustainable.

The Visiting Committee finds BUA to be a very open and supportive environment with regard to gender and sexuality, but less so with regard to racial and ethnic diversity. Some cultures are supported by affinity groups, but those are few. The Visiting Committee observed a lack of representation at BUA of racial and ethnic groups that are represented on the BU campus.

The Visiting Committee also observed the lack of access to health services for BUA students. Team members heard from students and adults alike that the school has no place for students to go if they become ill at school, nor adequate staff to attend to them. The Visiting Committee also learned that the School Counselor is tasked with managing students with diabetes, concussions, and severe allergies; the Visiting Committee

agrees this division of responsibilities is far from ideal. The Visiting Committee is encouraged to know that BUA is looking into the possibility gaining access to BU health services for BUA students.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee agrees with the rating of P1 and agrees with the school's recommendations.

Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends BUA on the following:

1. *“High level of student satisfaction with academic engagement, critical thinking, preparation for college, and love of learning, as reported on the 2016 survey of students and alumni.”*
2. *“Fostering strong student relationships with adults in the community, including teachers, advisors, staff, administrators, and college counselors.”*
3. *“Supporting students in college applications through an informative, personalized, two-year college counseling process with thoughtful preparation for that process during a student's first two years at BUA.”*
4. *“Creating a community in which students thrive socially, as reported in the 2016 survey.”*
5. *“Creating an active student life that includes a great variety of clubs and activities (as well as supports for further academic, athletic and artistic pursuits) and provides a rich and varied extracurricular experience for students.”*
6. *“Supporting an environment in which students feel physically safe. In the 2016 survey, this represents a ‘new high score’ among all schools surveyed by the company.”*

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee concurs that BUA should *“continue to explore ways to be responsive to student stress levels and to encourage self-care habits, including sleep, workload, diet, exercise, social media distraction, etc.”*
2. The Visiting committee concurs that BUA should *“continue to be aware of celebrating, addressing, and supporting diverse student needs (learning, social-emotional) and diverse student backgrounds (family structures, culture, race, socio-economic backgrounds, languages, ethnicities, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)”* We also believe that moving forward they should find ways to increase the diversity of the faculty (as the openings arise). The Visiting Committee encourages BUA to spend some time thinking deliberately about how they can encourage more conversation around race, culture, and ethnicities with students and faculty.
3. The Visiting Committee concurs that BUA needs to *“ensure that there is adequate organizational capacity in oversight and implementation of both student learning support and social/emotional support of students.”*

STANDARD 6: RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM

Given the school's mission, there are adequate resources (space, equipment, technology, materials, and community) to support the school's program.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Observations

The Visiting Committee was impressed by BUA's unique access to and relationship with BU. BUA enjoys both the academic and operational resources of a world-class research institution. However, BUA's intention to balance the flexibility and autonomy of a high school with the priorities of its parent university relies heavily on the working relationship between the school's faculty, staff, and administration and the University. BUA has access to key BU facilities. The Visiting Committee confirms the priority of student experience and learning within these facilities in BUA's scheduling decisions. Perhaps equally invaluable are BU's operational resources and support, which are at the disposal of BUA's small administrative team.

BUA also supplies adequate in-house resources. Instructional classrooms are fitted with Smart Boards and projectors, and laboratories are installed in the school's science classrooms. BUA dedicates some rooms to student use for collaborative study, and the school's open door policy allows students to make use of all classrooms, where throughout the day students are found collaborating amongst themselves or with faculty. Most notable is the newly renovated Arts Wing, which the Visiting Committee confirmed results in *"a greater reach of artistic projects and a deeper and richer in-house experience for the students."* The Modern Language Pilot program is well staffed and BUA's plan to assess the success and longevity of this resource is well organized. The Visiting Committee agrees with faculty concerns over the in-house resources and space being "just sufficient," given next year's increase in student population.

The Visiting Committee echoes concerns over BUA's heavy dependence on BU resources, which may obscure the school's in-house needs. Importantly, BUA lacks an academic technology plan. The Committee recognizes the caliber of BUA's faculty and the longstanding culture of autonomy and trust afforded to them. However, BUA lacks a policy or procedure to ensure that the faculty remain at the forefront in determining the use of technology in classrooms.

The Visiting Committee observed that BUA lacks an in-house space to host large groups. The Visiting Committee recognizes the crucial role of the Director of Operations and Head of School in scheduling and negotiating sharing rights for the resources with BU's Student Activities Office. Strong organization and creativity are required to reconcile the flexibility demanded of a high school with the necessarily strict operations involving university resources. The faculty voiced concerns over this dynamic but overwhelmingly feel supported by the administration.

The Visiting Committee also recognizes the significant role of the Student Counselor along with the *"growing recognition that BUA should evaluate whether more resources are needed to support student learning in addition to social and emotional needs."* To its credit, BUA has been honest and open in its discussions with parents, especially during enrollment, about such limitations.

Ultimately, the excellent student experience is a testament to BUA's program as a whole. Additionally, the students have the opportunity to partner with faculty across the university network and explore interests in world-class facilities for their Senior Thesis. BUA's extensive extracurricular offerings also exhibit the freedom and support with which students can explore interests. The Visiting Committee recognizes that this excellence

is upheld not only by the University's world-class facilities, but perhaps even more importantly by the unmistakable dedication and initiative of the faculty in raising BUA's programs beyond operational and budgetary constraints. In particular, the Visiting Committee shares the hope reflected in BUA's alumni outreach efforts and the opportunity represented by the upcoming 25th anniversary to build on current *"philanthropic support of [BUA's] operations and strategic initiatives."*

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee supports the Self-Study's rating of P1. The excellent student experience is a testament to BUA's program as a whole.

Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends BUA for:

1. *"The quality and quantity of University resources at the Academy's disposal, especially educational resources including library and laboratories, as well as facilities and legal support."*
2. *"A major commitment of resources over the last decade which has resulted in a vastly improved Visual and Performing Arts program, complementing the rest of the academic program and deeply enriching the life of the school."*
3. *"The initiative and dedication of the faculty and administration."*

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee recommends that BUA develop an academic technology plan.
2. The Visiting Committee concurs with the recommendation that BUA should *"continue to build and deepen relationships with donors in support of BUA's operations, strategic initiatives, and endowment while ensuring there is sufficient Institutional Advancement staff to support these efforts."*
3. The Visiting Committee concurs with the recommendation that BUA should *"evaluate necessary resources to further improve social, emotional, and learning support for students."*
4. The Visiting Committee concurs with the recommendation that BUA should *"continue to allocate resources in support of BUA's programs in the arts, athletics, and extracurricular as areas vital to a well-rounded student experience."*
5. The Visiting Committee concurs with the recommendation that BUA should *"examine the support of the online Modern Language Pilot and use lessons learned from the experience to inform future online learning initiatives (if any)."*

STANDARD 9: FACULTY

There is a sufficient number of appropriately qualified faculty to carry out the mission of the school and the school follows a comprehensive and defined program of professional development that supports continued enhancement of teachers' skills.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Observations

The Visiting Committee agrees wholeheartedly that the faculty at BUA is extraordinarily talented and committed to the welfare and development of its students. The committee observed all members of the faculty in their teaching roles and agreed that the teaching was of universally high quality. The committee further observed a palpable concern for and dedication to BUA students, particularly their intellectual development but also their personal development and that faculty often extend themselves well beyond the bounds of their responsibilities for the students in their care. Finally, the committee observed a high degree of loyalty to BUA and genuine concern for its future. Despite low salaries, faculty remain at the school because they believe deeply in the work they are able to do with students.

One consequence of its unique design is that BUA's faculty is far smaller than the faculties at other, similarly sized schools. This size can make it difficult for the school to accommodate enrollment surges in any area while continuing to deliver the same quality program to students. Given the unique nature of BUA's program, with its emphasis on primary sources and first-hand experiences, the work of onboarding new staff and maintaining quality is nuanced and demanding.

The Visiting Committee observed that the faculty and administration do share a common sense of what excellent teaching entails. From many conversations, it does not appear that there is an equally clear and well-understood sense of what other competencies might be beneficial to students. While there is an evaluation process laid out in the faculty handbook, it is not explicit about the competencies expected of faculty. The Visiting Committee further observed that those currently responsible for implementing such a program have a significant number of other responsibilities, making it difficult for them to carry out this important responsibility in any meaningful way.

In a similar vein, the Visiting Committee observed that there is no requirement for annual faculty professional development nor are there regularly planned, scheduled opportunities for faculty either to share their own insights into teaching or developing adolescents with one another or to learn together from the many professionals available to them either at the university or in the local area.

While the BUA faculty is extraordinarily accomplished, the Visiting Committee observed that there is little diversity in either the faculty or the administration. In a school that serves an increasingly diverse student body at a major university in a vibrant, world-class city, the lack of faculty diversity is surprising.

In the course of many conversations, the Visiting Committee heard that there are few opportunities for faculty to be involved (either through committees or through formal meetings) in the decision-making of the school. Finally, the committee heard a genuine desire on the part of the faculty to be a part of the solution, to partner with the administration to forge a path that will best move the school forward.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

After two days of observing and interacting with the BUA faculty, the Visiting Committee affirms the School's rating of a P1 on this standard. The BUA faculty is extraordinarily accomplished and loyal to the school. The committee feels, however, that there are opportunities for improvement as well - particularly in the areas of evaluation/professional development and in hiring. A clearly articulated vision of excellence, an explicit, thoughtful, and regularly implemented program of professional evaluation, and an expectation that all faculty must continue to grow, develop and change throughout their careers will allow the school to more fully meet the needs of a growing and changing student body. Similarly, thoughtful development of an applicant pool of highly qualified and engaging professionals from a variety of backgrounds will add much to professional conversations at the school and will enhance the school's ability to best serve its increasingly diverse student body. Finally, the committee believes that BUA's talented and committed faculty have much to offer the school in terms of wisdom, research skills, and institutional knowledge -- all qualities that should be more fully leveraged as BUA plans for the future.

Commendations

1. The Visiting Committee agrees with the Self-Study and commends the faculty for its superb and engaging teaching.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the faculty for their genuine concern for students and appreciation for the work they are able to do with their students.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the faculty for their genuine concern for the future of the school and for their willingness to be involved in researching and designing the next iteration of BUA.

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee recommends that BUA explore ways to refine and implement an evaluation program at BUA that includes a vision of excellence and that also identifies how the school will implement the system (who will visit, training required, frequency, etc.).
2. The Visiting Committee recommends that the school explore ways to develop a pool of candidates capable of meeting the school's high expectations for teaching while also broadening the range of skills, experiences, and perspectives within the School's professional community.
3. The Visiting Committee supports BUA's recommendation that it develop guidelines for and programming around professional growth expectations for its faculty.
4. The Visiting Committee recommends that the school investigate ways to employ the faculty's considerable skills, dedication to the school and passion for working with young people as it charts a course forward.

STANDARD 10: ADMINISTRATION

The administration provides leadership and maintains a structure to facilitate the effective functioning of the school, including the participation of faculty in decision-making.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Observations

The collective talent, extraordinary energy, and remarkable commitment of BUA's administrative team are very clearly among the school's most valuable assets.

Head of School Ari Betof is a deeply reflective, responsive, thoughtful, and aware leader who brings clarity of vision to an institution in the process of refining its mission and affirming its place within the ecosystem of Boston University. Students, parents, and members of the faculty, staff, and Advisory Board all agree that Dr. Betof's arrival has reinvigorated the community's sense of its own potential, and that his first two years have been defined by a collaborative spirit and positive momentum. While described by some as a "change agent," he is also seen as respectful and admiring of BUA's past traditions, deliberate in his decisions, and attentive to plural and sometimes competing perspectives.

The Visiting Team also observed the strengths of a new organizational structure in which administrative duties are divided between three "umbrellas": Academics, Operations, and Institutional Advancement. The Assistant Head of School for Academics has responsibility for the entire student experience, including student support and co-curricular activities. It is also, however, apparent that the position of Assistant Head of School for Academics is stretched across the many areas within its purview, without sufficient staff support, especially in the area of student support. As BUA builds its advising, accommodations, and academic support services, the challenges facing an already lean staff will only increase. The Visiting Team noted, however, that the existing academic leadership has operated with admirable ability and flexibility.

BUA's operations are in some ways simplified and in some ways complicated by its status as a unit of Boston University. There have been impressive steps to streamline processes with the University and to build the relationships necessary to maintain a safe and well-supported environment for adolescents. Yet the Visiting Team noticed some university services may be difficult to access, or it may be difficult to achieve buy-in from all parties, yet it would be redundant and costly to replicate them in-house at BUA. The scale of the University's operations yields substantial savings and valuable partnerships in most areas. But in other areas the effect is "neither/nor," especially in health services and daily ITS needs. The Visiting Team concurs with this description of the operational paradox: *"BUA is characterized by a relatively small size in both the administrative and the teaching staff. This is due to the fact that many teaching (for eleventh and twelfth graders) and supporting tasks are performed by branches of Boston University. Consequently, all employees need to juggle many roles and perform a variety of duties in order to fully serve the needs of the school."*

The Visiting Committee noted positive consolidation of marketing and development under the position of Assistant Head of School for Institutional Advancement. The goal of this "umbrella" office is to serve BUA constituents from the moment they inquire about the school to the moment they, ideally, make a planned gift to the school, encouraging lifelong engagement with the BUA community and mission. The Visiting Team viewed this structure as strategically smart and already showing gains: enrollment is robust, and alumni and parents have a clear point of access for participation in annual and endowment fundraising. As discussed in Standard 14, the latter is especially important for achieving BUA's strategic goals.

In all of the above "umbrellas," a more diverse administrative team would be better positioned to emphasize the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion to the rest of the community. The Visiting Committee heard that there are few opportunities for faculty to be involved in the decision-making of the school. The administration indicated an awareness of this as an area for growth, and the Self-Study points to several areas where progress has already been made.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

BUA administrators are consistent in what they claim to do and undaunted in what they need to do. Their training, talent, and teamwork are exemplary. Yet it was the unambiguous and unanimous observation of the Visiting Team members that the administrative staff is working at full capacity, and in some cases they are shouldering more than is sustainable. They are ambitious in their goals to sustain excellence and to amplify the impact of BUA; to do so with a lean budget; and to adopt long-term strategic initiatives, most urgently a systemic plan to increase diversity and build a culture of equity and inclusion among students and faculty. With relatively modest investments in administrative support, their goals are achievable; but the present thinness of the administrative staff is likely to delay implementation of strategy and eventually to dampen ambition.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends:

1. The Head of School's efforts to bring new energy and direction to a school already known for excellence, and to make the case that even excellent schools can grow and improve;
2. The clarity and effectiveness of the "*restructured system of administrative decision making*" and "*formalized leadership models and restructured staff positions*";
3. The tenacity of the administrative team in facing pronounced resource constraints;
4. The introduction of a thoughtful, accessible "*statement of principles for faculty and staff engagement*," explicitly keeping the needs of students at the center of institutional planning, discussion, and collaboration.

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee endorses BUA's intention to "*Maintain a commitment to:*
 - *A highly competent Leadership and Administrative Team (LAT)*
 - *A spirit of collaboration, transparency, and communication with the faculty, staff, and broader BUA community*
 - *Genuine faculty involvement in decision making.*"
2. The Visiting Committee concurs with the Self-Study's recommendation to "*address the tension between striving for efficiency and being overly lean in staff. Hiring a limited number of key additional positions supporting faculty and senior administrators will both improve the experience of students and provide the required agility and capacity to address strategic institutional priorities.*"
3. The Visiting Team concurs with the Self-Study's recommendation to "*Make efforts to broaden the applicant pool and refine search processes for candidate selection in administrator hiring to support a commitment to enhancing diversity within the administration, while acknowledging the context of the school's small size and low rate of administrative turnover.*"
4. The Visiting Team recommends increasing staffing in support of Student Affairs and Marketing/Communications.

STANDARD 11: EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

The school engages in forms of programmatic assessment consistent with fulfilling its mission and core values. This data is used to inform decision-making and planning.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Observations

The Visiting Committee was impressed by the passion that faculty had for their disciplines and for the intellectual development of their students; the extensive comments on assignments and thoughtful observations made on academic reports at the midterm and end of semester reflect the intense and productive scrutiny that students receive. The mechanism of bi-weekly reports for those students who are struggling provides an important support structure. The recent addition of biannual advisor comments helps provide a more coherent overview of all aspects of a student's BUA experience and highlights the personal relationships between students and their advisors.

The administration and staff are annually and thoroughly evaluated by the BU Human Resources department. However, the faculty evaluation process is inconsistently carried out, and the Visiting Committee agrees with BUA that improvements should be made to ensure that this process becomes a vehicle for regular reflection and professional development. It was clear that, in order for faculty evaluations to occur on the intended timeframe, those administrators involved will need to have relief from some portion of their other duties. With all of that said, the Visiting Committee agrees with the sentiment expressed in the Self Study that *“Although formal processes have not existed or have been uneven, BUA has been small and nimble enough to notice problems and to address them.”* There are few secrets in this tight community, and so the lack of a formal evaluation process does not preclude a general understanding and amelioration of problem areas.

While BUA does not meet the letter of other NEASC indicators for this standard, such as having a longitudinal portfolio of student achievement (other than the transcript) or exit interviews for departing students, the small school size and careful deliberation on student strengths and weaknesses during faculty meetings establishes an understanding of how each student is developing and how they are faring. Every student is discussed in depth biannually, and a weekly student support group discusses any student who is struggling with any aspect of the program.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee supports the rating of P2 for BUA in the area of evaluation and assessment. While student evaluation and assessment provides rich feedback to these constituents, the faculty evaluation system does not serve the intentions for which it was created. The school can function without the evaluation system in place because of its small size, but the Visiting Committee agrees that a structured and intentionally periodic process will help advance the school.

Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends BUA for:

1. The collective time that the faculty devote to understanding their students through individual interactions and faculty meeting discussions
2. The mechanism of bi-weekly reports to help struggling students
3. The institution of advisor comments to provide parents with a more complete picture of their child's experience

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee endorses the recommendation that the BUA *“create a structure to support curricular evaluation and an improved mechanism for turning reflection on BUA's curriculum into action.”*
2. The Visiting Committee endorses the recommendation that BUA *“identify and put in place a process of faculty evaluation which is formal, structured, supportive, and consistently applied to all BUA faculty.”*

STANDARD 12: HEALTH AND SAFETY

The school is a safe and healthy place for students and faculty.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Observations

BUA is in a unique position; they have the ability to take advantage of the resources available at BU. While this is a huge benefit, in some ways, it has also prevented them from doing some of the due diligence necessary to ensure that they have addressed some of the very basic/practical needs of the school when it comes to health and safety.

There have been many improvements since 2006. They include:

1. Making the Art Wing handicapped accessible
2. ID card access system
3. Creation of the Director of Operations and Special Projects position
4. Full-time School Counselor

The Visiting Committee agrees that despite these improvements, there are several areas of weakness. They include:

1. **In-School access and care for sick students, and lack of a medical trainer for athletics**--This currently places the burden on the School Counselor to be responsible for the physical and mental health of the BUA community. The Committee recommends hiring a part-time trainer or using BU resources in this department as well.
2. **Supervision and tracking of students**--Since the completion of the Self-Study, there has been considerable progress in the tracking of students. They are now a part of the BU notification system which allows the BUA community to receive alerts about incidents on campus and a mechanism to track students when issues arise. There is still work to be done in the area of supervision. Unsupervised time in the Gym and getting students to leave the building at the end of the day still need to be addressed.
3. **Communication**--BUA needs more clarity on safety procedures including adult roles in emergencies and the proper reporting/documentation of emergencies.

In addition, the Committee would like to note the following:

1. Security--the door between the SAO and the BUA academic building is often propped open out of convenience. This is a concern because it leaves BUA exposed on the back side of the building, an area that is not always supervised, and is not equipped with cameras. This is an opportunity for BU students and/or strangers to enter the building unnoticed.
2. Training--Faculty should be trained in CPR, AED and Epi-pen administration. All coaches should be required to have CPR training as well. The Committee also recommends that the school explore the addition of an AED for the main building, closer to academic classes.

3. Labs--The Committee noticed that the proper precautions are not currently being taken in the Science Labs to ensure student safety. The Visiting Team realizes that spaces at BUA are at a premium and many spaces serve multiple purposes. Study halls, Class Meetings, Clubs etc. are often held in these spaces. For that reason, burners need to be secured, and experiments should be set up only when in use in order to prevent injury.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee agrees with the Self-Study rating of P2.

Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends BUA on the following:

1. Participation in BU's extensive programs in Facilities, Police, Emergency Planning, Situation Alerts, Disability Services.
2. Enhanced building safety with its 2016 card system for entry.
3. Improvements since 2006 in accessibility, including the installation of an elevator to the third floor (now the Arts Wing).
4. Strong commitment to supporting student social and emotional health through the work of the School Counselor.

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee concurs that BUA needs to *"improve mechanisms for communication of emergency procedures to faculty, staff, students, and parents."*
2. The Visiting Committee concurs with BUA that they need to *"review, evaluate, and improve policies on attendance tracking, building closing and departure policies, monitoring visitors to the building, supervision of less monitored spaces such as the Sargent Gym and the Arts Wing, and identifying if students are in the building or on campus in an emergency."*
3. The Visiting Committee concurs that *"BUA needs access to a health professional, or to BU's Student Health Services, for BUA students."*
4. The Visiting Committee concurs that BUA needs to work toward CPR and AED certification for all faculty, staff, administrators, and coaches.
5. The Visiting Committee recommends BUA address the following:
 - Security of entrances to the school, especially the door between the SAO and BUA academic building, which is often propped open.
 - Safety and supervision in Science labs, with special focus on securing burners and removing experiment set- ups when not in use.
 - Improvement of procedures in the Athletic Department to guard and monitor student health at athletic contests.

STANDARD 13: COMMUNICATION

The school maintains effective systems of external and internal communication and record keeping that inform all constituents and facilitate participation where appropriate.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Observations

Boston University Academy was starting from scratch on this Standard. As they report: *"The committee did not find evidence that a Standard for 'Communication' was included in the 2006 accreditation reports, so a prior document with this exact focus was not available for comparison."* Nonetheless, the school found that its communication was effective internally and externally. The Visiting Committee agrees with this evaluation. The informal, day-to-day lines of internal communication are healthy and open, and where the more formal and external lines of communication needed improvement, Boston University Academy has already taken effective steps. No wonder, then, that *"In the 2016 multi-constituent survey, parents reported a high level of overall satisfaction with communications at BUA."*

In regards to the most practical aspects of this Standard, Boston University Academy fully adheres to Boston University and Massachusetts Student Records policies on record-keeping and makes its Student and Faculty Handbooks readily available, along with other important documents.

Internally, BUA's new Head of School impresses students, faculty, parents, and visitors as an accessible, personable leader. As one teacher put it, "Ari's a real mensch, a human being. You can talk to him." To that end, as the Self-Study reports, *"the Head of School holds regular office hours that are open to students, faculty, staff, and parents. During these times, individuals are encouraged to express their concerns and interests directly to the Head of School."*

Externally, BUA has also taken practical steps to keep parents informed. *"In Fall 2015, BUA identified its advising program as an area in need of improvement. A working group of teachers and administrators was established to evaluate the program and discuss potential ways to strengthen the advisor/advisee relationship and quality of the overall advising experience. This resulted in changes to the program in 2016-17, which emphasized consistency of advising and more communication with parents."*

BUA faces one communication challenge most high schools do not. Their 11th and 12th grade students are largely taught by Boston University professors in BU courses. This means that *"FERPA restrictions prevent parents from communicating with BU professors and officials."* However, a BUA administrator has been designated as the University Liaison and stays current on BUA student performance in BU courses and passes along progress reports to the parents. So far the reviews of this approach have been good.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

Communication appears to be a strong point for Boston University Academy. The Visiting Committee discovered no problems, endorses the Self-Study's strengths, and is impressed with the school's personal and practical approach to the Standard. Its P1 rating is well-deserved.

Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends Boston University Academy for the strengths the school itself lists in its Self- Study:

1. *“Extensive protocols in place for student record retention and safe storage.”*
2. *“Improved communication between the school and its alumni, parents, and students.”*
3. *“Actively seeking input and feedback from multiple constituencies.”*
4. *“Working to enhance the student-advisor relationship and promote improved advisor communication with parents.”*

In addition, the Visiting Committee commends Boston University Academy for:

1. Openness and accessibility. Since the school is small, communication is relatively easy, but Boston University Academy's administration goes out of its way to be available to students and parents. Here the Head of School sets the example personally, with his engaging, enthusiastic manner, and practically, with his regularly-scheduled office hours. A visitor to the school notices that the administrators' doors are physically and figuratively open. Since both administrators and faculty have so many hats to wear, they are interacting with the students to a remarkable degree.
2. Recognizing that the parents needed better communication with their children's advisor and more information about their children's progress in Boston University courses. The school is addressing both these issues. The advising program is being improved and a member of the administration is now acting as a liaison between BU faculty and BUA parents.

Recommendations

1. In its Self-Study Boston University Academy emphasizes that the school's sense of its mission remains unclear. This central issue affects nearly every Standard, including Communication. All members of the school community seem eager for a deep, thorough, and ongoing conversation about the nature and future of the school's mission. The Visiting Committee recommends that the school plan the meetings and set aside the considerable time it will take to establish a clear, widely-shared sense of mission. This, in turn, will allow Boston University Academy to better communicate and market its unique identity to external audiences, especially prospective applicant families and (as the school launches a fund-raising campaign) potential donors.
2. The Visiting Committee endorses the BUA Self-Study recommendation that the school *“continue to assess the quality, timeliness, volume, and delivery method of information received by parents in order to improve communications from the school both in student-specific and more general communication.”*
3. The Visiting Committee endorses the BUA Self-Study recommendation that the school *“consider ways to ensure consistency of timeliness, tone and quality in feedback from teachers to students and parents.”*
4. The Visiting Committee endorses the BUA Self-Study recommendation that the school *“continue to use the BUA master academic calendar in conjunction with the BU long-term planning process, to enhance both the school's ability - and that of all affected constituencies - to plan and be informed.”*
5. The Visiting Committee endorses the BUA Self-Study recommendation that the school *“strive to keep contact information for both students and their parents current to improve the efficacy and efficiency of communications from the school.”*

STANDARD 14: INFRASTRUCTURE

There are adequate resources (personnel, finances, facilities, equipment, and materials) to provide for the overall institutional needs of the school.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Observations

"Boston University Academy students are well-served with BUA's facilities and through its connections to Boston University (BU)." The BU resources available to students provide additional breadth and depth to the student experience at BUA. BUA has worked diligently to facilitate access to BU resources.

The Visiting Committee observed the financial responsibility and resourcefulness of BUA administrative staff and faculty. It is clear that administrators wear multiple hats and clearly have a "roll- up-your-sleeves approach." The potential exists for burnout at the administrative team level; one individual describing it as "at the level of burning muscle not fat." Recent administrative staff additions and staff re-positioning have helped to build depth and cover necessary responsibilities, but significant workload without adequate support is straining this productive team.

Accounting and auditing procedures have been in transition at BUA since the Self-Study was completed. BU has provided temporary financial resource support to BUA, though currently ongoing resource support still requires funding. Other financial resource challenges include accommodating fluctuating enrollment levels, faculty salaries, and health care services support. The Visiting Committee believes that the ability to access resources to support higher enrollment, accommodate student access to healthcare services on the BU campus, and provide ongoing financial oversight are necessary.

The Visiting Committee agrees with the assessment of BUA's excellent insurance coverage under BU's policies. In terms of facility maintenance, the Visiting Committee observed the issues relative to building temperature control but realizes that BUA facilities, especially those involving major repair or replacement, fall under the University replacement schedule.

BUA's fundraising is a significant accomplishment since the 2006 NEASC accreditation. Annual fund and endowment resources have shown significant momentum and preparations are underway for a 25th anniversary campaign.

The recently created position, Director of Operations and Special Projects, interfaces regularly with IS&T to problem solve solutions to their information collection and reporting needs. One of the areas not supported is the coordination of academic technology. There appears to be no short-term availability of BU resources to focus on academic technology support for BUA.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee recommends a P2 rating for this standard. BUA's access to BU resources is a strength across many areas. However, in some areas, such as IS&T, there appears to be no short-term availability to focus on academic technology support. BU's budget and planning process, with a focus on "impact" and "scale," has presented challenges to BUA to fund certain areas of its operation, including providing health services for BUA students and ongoing access to financial oversight. The tenacity of BUA staff and the success of BUA fundraising have allowed BUA to continue its excellence in supporting BUA students and addressing key initiatives. With the upcoming 25th anniversary campaign and *"deepening culture of philanthropic*

support,” growth in fundraising dollars at both the annual fund and endowment level will allow BUA to solidify this support and increase its ability to serve its students.

Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends BUA for the following:

1. The significant depth and expertise across a broad spectrum of services provided by BU, including academic, legal, technology, finance, and insurance, etc. BUA administration have been receptive and resourceful in working with known BU support services and investigating access to other services as needs arise.
2. The physical resources provided by BU, which significantly enhance BUA's student experience across a number of areas and *“would not normally be available to a school of its size.”*
3. *“A recent successful campaign resulting in vastly improved facilities for BUA's Visual and Performing Arts programs.”*
4. *“A deepening culture of philanthropic support and an increasingly generous alumni body provide a strong foundation from which to begin BUA's 25th anniversary celebration.”*
5. The tenacity of BUA administration and willingness to “wear many hats,” a quality that has allowed BUA to sustain its focus on strategic goals while balancing day-to-day responsibilities with lean financial resources.

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee recommends that BUA continue to work with BU to provide additional financial resources. The BU budget and planning cycle, intended to support a large university, appears to limit key resources to support BUA. Areas of concern noted in this evaluation include:
 - Access to healthcare services for BUA students
 - Ongoing access to financial oversight to ensure that appropriate financial controls remain in place
 - Competitive faculty salaries to ensure the ongoing excellence of BUA teaching
 - Additional staffing resources to support a stretched administration team and to accommodate fluctuating enrollment levels
 - Greater support for routine building maintenance, climate control, FFE replacement, and ongoing capital improvements
2. The Visiting Committee endorses the recommendation with BUA that, *“as donor engagement and support continues to grow, and as the school moves into a comprehensive fundraising initiative, ensure adequate human and financial capacity to maximize philanthropic giving, both within the Academy and by partnering with and fully utilizing BU's Development and Alumni Relations office.”*
3. The Visiting Committee endorses the recommendation with BUA to *“build on the strong foundation to begin BUA's 25th anniversary celebration and comprehensive campaign, including significant commitment to enhancing the school's endowment.”*
4. The Visiting Committee endorses the recommendation with BUA to continue to work with BU IS&T to *“improve information technology structures both in the areas of day-to-day help-desk support and professional development for educational technology.”*

STANDARD 15: THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The school is fully committed to institutional improvement and to the process of accreditation. The school completed an inclusive self-study, conducted in a spirit of full disclosure and following Association guidelines; responds to Commission recommendations and the requirement to meet all standards; and participates fully in the peer review process, hosting a visiting committee and sending personnel to serve on visiting committees to other institutions.

Visiting Team's Assessment

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Observations

It is no understatement that BUA approached the Self-Study process "*with characteristic intensity.*" Every individual the Visiting Team encountered at the school was engaged in and knowledgeable about the accreditation process: this included students, parents, faculty, staff, Advisory Board members, and administrators. Boston University administrators were less involved in the Self-Study process but responsive and available to the Visiting Team. Inquiry into Standard 2 (Governance) was complicated by a lack of access to Trustees and Overseers. Team members were able to meet with one Trustee who also serves as Chair of the Boston University Board of Overseers because this individual, additionally, serves on the BUA Head of School Advisory Board, and the team wishes to extend special gratitude for her attention and time.

Team members noted a positive intention to leverage the accreditation process in the service of strategic planning as BUA approaches its 25th anniversary. The several Self-Study sub-committees, in most instances, adopted rigorous and data-driven processes for evaluation of their policies, programs, and planning. They struck an admirable balance between pride and affirmation, on one hand, and on the other hand a willingness to define areas of weakness and consider opportunities for growth. The school's process was attentive to NEASC policies and procedures and took the additional step of employing a reputable external consultant to gather data and inform the discovery process. The Head of School and the administrative team gave careful thought to their hopes and goals for the process, and they were clear and forthcoming with the Site Team in articulating these hopes and goals. Indeed they were committed to transparency and collaboration at every stage of the Self-Study and Site Visit.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team concurs with BUA's recommendation of a P1 rating for Standard 15.

The Site Visit was effectively coordinated, attentive to detail, responsive to the Team's needs and requests for information and documentation, and characterized by a high level of transparency. There is clear evidence of a plan for using the process and the Commission's determinations to improve and grow. Finally, BUA was a welcoming, gracious, and generous host.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends BUA for the following:

1. A school culture of collaboration and transparency that extended to the Self-Study and Site Visit processes;
2. A school culture of kindness that was evident in the community's gracious welcome and hospitality to the Visiting Team;
3. A school culture of evidence and data-driven planning that informed all aspects of the Self-Study and Site Visit.

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Team concurs with BUA's intention to "[share] *the Visiting Team's recommendations with constituents.*"
2. In recognizing the enormous talent and dedication of the BUA faculty, staff, and administration, qualities that are eminently worthy of sharing with the broader independent school community, the Visiting Team encourages BUA faculty, staff, and administration to participate in NEASC Site Visits to other schools.

SELF-STUDY PART II: REFLECTION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Part II asks the school to draw together what it has learned from its self-study and prioritize these ideas into a thoughtful, reflective, creative summary of the school's most significant concerns, hopes, and dreams for the future. This may include both action items and discussion items.

Observations

In Part II of its Self-Study, BUA aptly summarizes the overarching strengths and the most critical areas for improvement at the school. BUA is, in every way, a school that works for its students, and it is also a school run by adults who think and strive continuously to make the student experience better. That combination, in the view of the Visiting Committee, bodes very well for BUA's future.

The Visiting Committee concurs that BUA enjoys a healthy, vibrant partnership with BU; the school's students seem very much at home taking university classes, interacting with their college student peers, and moving through the often heavy traffic within BU's halls. The Visiting Committee also believes, as BUA does, that building upon this partnership should be an ongoing priority for the school.

The Visiting Committee also sees a school clearly focused on improving the student experience, despite numerous challenges in this area. BUA boasts a committed, caring group of adults who do their utmost on behalf of their students; that is most assuredly to the good. The very strong classroom experience is complemented by a wide array of opportunities for students outside the academic realm, from a wide array of clubs to sports and activities, including Robotics. Yet, if BUA is to continue to serve its students and to compete effectively vis a vis Boston's best area schools, committing more resources to supporting students academically and emotionally is essential.

In the view of the Visiting Committee, BUA has rightly prioritized the five areas of the school in need of improvement.

Conclusions

The Visiting Committee's view of BUA agrees completely with the school's self-assessment in Part II of the Self-Study: *"Now approaching its twenty-fifth anniversary, Boston University Academy is a school where talented students can immerse themselves in learning, as well as a place in which each student can be known as an individual with a unique set of talents, needs, and goals. The teaching faculty and the Leadership and Administrative Team work together to ensure that each BUA student is known, cared for, taught well, and advised thoughtfully. BUA is an institutionally stronger, academically richer, and more supportive school than it was at the time of its last NEASC accreditation, and the school is well-positioned to embark on a new decade of teaching, supporting, and inspiring an exceptional group of students."*

Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends BUA for:

1. Its thoughtful reflection on its Self-Study, along with its process for review and consensus on key areas for further improvement
2. Its keen perception of BUA's key strengths: the school's outstanding student body [and] the group of *dynamic and erudite* teachers who engage and challenge them, complemented by access to a world-class research university
3. Its efforts to improve the student experience and the institutional vitality of the school, moving BUA from "*a no-frills intellectual experience . . . [to]an increasingly supportive and well-rounded high school.*"
4. Its improvements to Visual and Performing Arts, including an "*Arts Wing contain[ing] a visual arts studio (2012), a music room with a high-quality recording studio (2014), and a Black-Box Theater (2015).*"
5. Its recent fundraising success and its continued efforts to maintain this momentum to support its strategic goals.

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee recommends that BUA, in reviewing its mission statement, develop a process that is as inclusive of faculty participation as possible. While the Visiting Committee understands that final decision about any change to the school's mission rests with the Head of School, the Provost, and the President of the University, an inclusive process will contribute to a sense of shared understanding in the community and common purpose among the faculty, staff, and administration.

MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Major Commendations

The Visiting Committees wishes to cite the following major commendations to recognize BUA for:

1. Its careful, thoughtful approach to the accreditation process, from its detailed and thorough Self-Study to its gracious hosting of the Visiting Committee;
2. Its *"talented students who are passionate about learning and who share the joy of inquiry,"* and its *"vibrant school culture . . . that prepares students for and supports them during an early college experience at BU";*
3. Its faculty and staff, for their depth of knowledge and dedication to their students, reflected in superb, engaging teaching, both in and out of the classroom;
4. Its senior administrative team, for their data-informed management, spirit of collegiality, and forward-thinking optimism.
5. Its efforts to improve the student experience and the institutional vitality of the school, notably reflected in recent improvements to Visual and Performing Arts, moving BUA from *"a no-frills intellectual experience . . . [to]an increasingly supportive and well-rounded high school";*
6. Its energized engagement with alumni, parents, and friends to build awareness and support for BUA's strategic goals.

Major Recommendations

1. The Visiting Committee cites the following, which BUA identified as an issue for further discussion, as a major recommendation: *"Evaluate and revise as needed BUA's mission statement and supporting statements, including the role of a classical curriculum, as recommended by the 2006 NEASC visiting team."*
2. The Visiting Committee cites the following, which BUA identified as an issue for further discussion, as a major recommendation: *"Support the BUA faculty with a consistent and thoughtful evaluation process, professional development, and compensation that is more competitive in the Boston-area marketplace."*
3. The Visiting Committee cites the following, which BUA identified as an issue for further discussion, as a major recommendation: *"Commit the needed resources and attention to make progress on the school's strategic goals involving diversity, equity, and inclusion."*
4. The Visiting Committee cites the following, which BUA identified as an issue for further discussion, as a major recommendation: *"Continue to improve support for student learning with due attention to social-emotional wellness, including exploring whether access to Boston University's Student Health Center would improve care for students."*
5. The Visiting Committee cites the following, which BUA identified as an issue for further discussion, as a major recommendation: *"Evaluate and ensure adequate human and financial resources to underpin academic and social-emotional support of students as well as admission, constituent relations, and fundraising."*

