

The Acadia Advantage Renewal

Report to the President of
Acadia University

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*of the Presidential Commission
on Renewing the Acadia Advantage
Acadia University*

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Hartman has been an active author, and presenter at industry conferences. He previously served as treasurer and 2003 Chair of the EDUCAUSE Board of Directors, and currently serves as chair of the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI) Advisory Committee. He also serves on the Florida Digital Divide Council, the Microsoft Higher Education Advisory Group, is secretary of the Seminars on Academic Computing Coordinating Board, and Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of Florida LambdaRail.

Hartman has been an information technology consultant to both public and private sector organizations, and has been active in the development of statewide education and research networks in Illinois and Florida. He has served and held offices on numerous state, regional, and national IT committees in areas including public broadcasting, distributed learning, and networking.

Hartman graduated from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, with bachelor's and master's degrees in Journalism and Communications, and received his doctorate from the University of Central Florida.

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Sandra Hodder is currently the Director of Learning Technologies at the Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. During her career she has been a computer programmer, an IT project leader, an industry trainer and for 13 years a professor in Sheridan's School of Computing & Information Management; teaching and coordinating the Computer Programmer and Systems Analyst programs. When the decision was made in 1998 to introduce laptops in the classroom, Sandra became the project manager for laptop computing at Sheridan, chairing internal committees which provide support and training for faculty and students and operational teams that design and retrofit classrooms and introduce new technologies such as wireless. The laptop computing initiative has grown to include 35 of Sheridan's programs and an amazing 5000 students now use laptops to enhance their learning experiences. Her current role spans Faculty Development for new and established faculty as well as the Learning Management System. Sandra chairs the WebCTVista Steering team, the Secure Testing with Technology team, is a member of the Academic Computing Committee and she works with IT and Academic schools to support technology changes to the teaching and learning environment.

Acadia Advantage Renewal
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Introduction

In 1996, Acadia University pioneered the use of mobile computing technology in a post-secondary educational environment. This academic initiative integrated the use of notebook computers into the undergraduate curriculum and by the year 2000 all full-time, undergraduate Acadia students were taking part in what was called “The Acadia Advantage.” In October 2006, the President of Acadia University, Dr. Gail Dinter-Gottlieb, established a commission to review the Acadia Advantage learning environment ten years after inception. The mandate of the commission was to review how well the current Advantage program meets the needs of students, faculty, and staff and to examine how the role of technology in the postsecondary environment has changed at Acadia in the last decade. The commission was asked to recommend changes and enhancements to the Advantage that would benefit the entire university community and ensure its sustainability.

The commission began the process by inviting submissions from the university community and reviewing existing documentation on the Advantage. Over a three-day period the group conducted a series of meetings with faculty, students, and staff to hear their views and learn of their experiences with the Advantage – both positive and negative. The commission reviewed all operations at Acadia University that support the Advantage and reviewed best practices for the provision of technology at other universities. Submissions were also sought from alumni through a questionnaire that was distributed electronically and included in the fall issue of the Alumni Bulletin. The process was designed to be as consultative as possible and all those interviewed spoke thoughtfully and sometimes passionately about how to preserve, enhance, and poise the Acadia Advantage for the future.

The current Acadia Advantage

What is the Acadia Advantage? Part of the commission’s goal was to take from every meeting a sense of what each group thought the Acadia Advantage is and the value it brings. This question sparked considerable dialogue both with those interviewed and within the commission. It became clear that the “advantage” is not about a notebook computer or its rental. It is about providing personal empowerment and opportunity for faculty, students, and staff. It is about teaching, learning, and researching in an advanced, supportive, enriched, and safe environment. It is about gaining knowledge and attitude to be able to use technology appropriately on a day to day basis to promote one’s career and enhance their life income and enable them to be lifelong learners. The Acadia Advantage

is part of the very fabric of Acadia University – it is, as some said, “the ether.” Being a part of the Acadia community ensures access to leading edge technology, modern and relevant software, and the technical support that will enhance both educational and personal experiences. Pursuing an education or a career at Acadia is definitely viewed as an advantage although it was clear that the Acadia Advantage is envisioned to be in need of change as it has not evolved to meet the needs of the Acadia community. Our community emphasized the need to more deeply understand the Acadia Advantage program’s accomplishments and outcomes and more clearly and effectively promote and celebrate them.

Institutional overview

Although Acadia University has a first-rate reputation, applications to the University have fallen over the last three years and enrolment is below desired levels. It is perceived that part of the decline is due to prospective students and their families not understanding Acadia’s value proposition – Acadia is simply viewed as the Canadian university with the highest tuition. Some members of the community believe that the university’s marketing messages do not adequately convey what the Acadia Advantage is and the added value it brings to post-secondary education. Many feel that we need to formulate and articulate a sharper and more understandable definition of the Acadia Advantage so it can be properly shared with Acadia’s stakeholders - the Advantage has to be demonstrative. The advantage needs to be enhanced, celebrated, and promoted. It is time to take it to the next level.

Student experience

The students communicated that academic use of notebook computers and technology is highly variable across courses and programs. It was generally felt that strong faculty leadership is key to making the Acadia Advantage a true advantage. All of the students communicated that the notebook computer was an integral part of everyday life and that their educational and social lives are intertwined. The majority of students feel that the “advantage” would be enhanced significantly if there were greater flexibility in the choice and quality of the notebook computer provided, if they could keep the notebook computers 12 months of the year, and if they could own the notebook computer upon graduation. At the present time, there is no sense of ownership of the notebook computers and it is believed that this results in increased misuse. Some students expressed the desire to use their own notebook computers (according to the 2006 Alloy College Explorer Study, about one-half of students have their own notebook computer prior to enrolling in university) and thus have a reduction in tuition. However, the fact that all students and faculty have the same notebook computer was also seen as an equalizer. The current notebook computers, although meeting all academic needs, do not meet the personal needs of some students (i.e., for games, music, videos, etc.). Students also expressed a desire for ubiquitous wireless. Most students sought for a reduction in tuition and wanted to know how much of their tuition funds the Acadia Advantage programme. Further, the continual decline of computer prices over the past several years has increasingly led students and their parents to question how much they are paying to rent a notebook

computer they might be able to purchase at a nominal cost. The commission also heard from the graduate students that their participation in the Acadia Advantage program was unwarranted for two reasons: many already had notebook computers prior to arrival at Acadia and secondly, the nature of their program work (largely research) did not offer them the same perceived benefit that it might an undergraduate.

Faculty experience

The Acadia Institute for Teaching and Technology (AITT) estimates that about 20% of faculty members are advanced users. All faculty members who participated in this review indicated a dependence on the technology infrastructure for research and teaching. Most felt their courses were a quality notch ahead of other Canadian universities offering the same programs of study. Many faculty members cited AITT facilitation and support as an essential enabler of the transformation of their classes through the effective use of technology.

There was a strong faculty preference for continuing to provide students and faculty members with a single notebook computer model. Numerous faculty comments expressed concern that it would be difficult or impossible to provide the expected high level of support for more than one model of computer. The availability of uniform personal productivity applications was seen as very important to teaching and research in that it enables the exchange of information across all disciplines. Although the commission received numerous student comments praising the capabilities enabled by ACME, the overwhelming response from faculty members was that ACME must be upgraded or replaced.

There was a concern that tenure and promotion processes do not place sufficient weight on the pedagogical use of technology and as a result, while the University promotes the integration of technology, the faculty reward system has not valued it. Some faculty felt that this sent a very inconsistent message, especially to young faculty, and that more rewards and incentives were needed to encourage and foster innovation. It was generally felt that there is minimal emphasis on the scholarship of teaching and learning and recognition or celebration of teaching excellence. Faculty members generally felt that Acadia has an excellent technical support structure and this is essential to allowing them to focus on pedagogy – and support a culture of risk taking. Faculty also observed that virtual office hours and communicating with students 24/7 had become the norm. The current Acadia Advantage has, in general, served the Acadia faculty well. The faculty rely on the infrastructure, the technology, the support services, and the ability to communicate with all students on an even playing field.

Computing Services

There is no Chief Information Officer at Acadia and no operational plan for computing. Faculty and staff members commented that Acadia's data network and primary online services are robust and reliable; however, there is no strategy for greening and much of the hardware is believed to be approaching the end of its useful life. Computing Services

responds to numerous requests but has no policy for what is consistent with the direction of Acadia Advantage or the University in general. There has not been sufficient ongoing development of the course management system and it now lacks needed capabilities (estimated that it meets 20% of faculty needs). The computer network and support systems are the backbone of the Acadia Advantage program and must be stable and reliable for the Advantage program, as well as the institution, to succeed.

User Support Centre

The User Support Centre (USC) provides consulting on software and hardware issues to the entire university campus. It also provides training support for faculty, students, and staff. This unit has a full-time staff of 18 and services over 4000 notebooks and 500-600 desktop computers. The USC is generally viewed as providing excellent service (although some students commented on the lack of service culture within USC) and is seen as indispensable to the Acadia Advantage initiative. Faculty, students, and staff are willing to take risks with technology because they know that they can depend on the USC to solve technological challenges and repair or replace malfunctioned hardware quickly. Some concern was raised about the wide selection of software purchased and the associated cost. However, of the \$312,000 that was spent on software last year, \$226,000, or 72%, was for the Microsoft Campus Agreement. The commission felt that the perception that the software costs are excessive is merely a perception – the total amount of other software products is actually quite reasonable.

Acadia Institute for Teaching and Technology

The Acadia Institute for Teaching and Technology (AITT) is an instructional technology support unit that was established in 1996 as a component of the Acadia Advantage initiative. The majority of the AITT's budget is allocated to salaries that will be exhausted at the end of the current fiscal year. The AITT sees itself as a teaching and learning centre and although their mandate is to support faculty, they reported that out of 313 projects completed approximately 50% were non-academic in nature. If the resources had not been applied to non academic projects, would there have been a corresponding increase in pedagogical projects? Is there more demand for their skills in pedagogy than they can accommodate? Although it was the commission's finding that the AITT provides excellent support for faculty projects and has facilitated several high-level course transformations, most faculty members do not regard AITT as a source of pedagogical leadership. It is possible that this is one of the factors that has led to the unevenness in adoption and use of technology across programs. Consistent faculty comments support that the AITT is essential for the success of pedagogical enhancements incorporating information technology. The AITT's submission to the commission reported the following services to the university community:

- one-on-one consultation with faculty on best practices of technology use;
- in-class training for students to support course related activities;
- professional development opportunities for faculty in area of teaching and learning;

- pedagogical workshops (i.e., Workshop on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning);
- research support;
- teacher training programs for over 1700 teachers, focusing on the integration of IT into curriculum;
- support for Acadia's LMS (Learning Management System);
- supporting for the university's Web site and related web properties;

The AITT is currently completing an evaluation of the ACME learning management system.

Acadia Advantage – the next five years

The Acadia Advantage is a strong component of the current Acadia brand. Students and their parents recognize that Acadia has a technologically enhanced environment; however, a full appreciation of the program's features and strengths comes only after attending the university for one or two years.. Acadia graduates report finding increased opportunities for employment and leadership roles resulting from their high level of familiarity with and sophistication in using information technology.

As noted previously, the pedagogical use of computers varies widely across the curriculum with Science being the heaviest users and Arts and Professional Studies incorporating computers less intensively. Faculty members expressed the need to have confidence that software they use in their courses will work on all platforms that exist on campus. The standardization that has been introduced through the Acadia Advantage gives them this confidence.

Student use of technology for personal and social purposes has increased significantly over the last 10 years. Students require computers for communication and recreation (games, music, movies), as well as for their academic work. In fact, because students use the technology so frequently, it becomes part of their identity. Many of them come to Acadia with computers that have greater capabilities than the models the University is providing.

Many students and some faculty members indicated the desire to have more than one notebook computer option. The commission supports the objective of student choice but believes that it should be implemented in a manner that is compatible with the core technology infrastructure and support services that faculty members and students have come to depend upon.

Recommendation 1: *Acadia provide a choice in model of notebook to students. Initially this should be in the form of two models within the same product line. The base level model should have all functions necessary for the academic program needs at Acadia and should provide the opportunity for students, at their own expense, to purchase upgrades and peripherals. These should be made available at the Acadia bookstore*

along with cases and other items that enable students to personalize their computers. The more advanced model should accommodate the high-end features needed for advanced academic work, as well as multimedia.

When Acadia Advantage was introduced in 1996, computers were not integral components of students' lives. Throughout the consultation, commission members heard that students felt they should own the computers, be able to use them over the summer months, and take them with them when they leave the University. Again, this supports the notion that students' identities are tied to the notebook computers. Moving to student ownership of the notebook computers will also increase the value students will feel they receive from participating in the Acadia Advantage program.

Recommendation 2: *Acadia move, as soon as possible, to a model where students own their own notebook computers. In the interim, it is important that students have as much flexibility as possible. This would include maintaining possession of their computers during the summer months.*

Students provided much feedback about the cost of Acadia Advantage. They do not understand the current model through which Acadia Advantage costs are included in tuition, and they desire more information regarding the specific costs of the notebook computer and associated support. Students indicated that they want total transparency in tuition numbers. Based on the assumption that students will in time own the computers when they come to Acadia, it will meet students' needs to have their educational costs clearly outlined. Using the current tuition of slightly more than \$8,000, the commission recommends that tuition be reduced and that an Acadia Advantage enhancement fee be introduced. The latter will be easily explained as the technologically enhanced environment where notebook computers are used in the classroom, in extracurricular activities, for communication, and for recreation. Further, a computer purchase fee should be included as a yearly expense. This would include the computer, software and insurance. It is further recommended that other aspects of the Acadia education that are contained in tuition be separately identified (for example, Activity and Wellness). This "unbundling" of the Acadia tuition would result in four or more components: tuition, Acadia Advantage enhancement fee, computer purchase fee and activity and wellness fee providing students with greater clarity. The commission recognizes that all university tuitions and fees in Nova Scotia, including Acadia's, are subject to the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Provincial government and recommends Acadia seeks endorsement from the Province of Nova Scotia prior to implementing any changes in its fee structure.

Recommendation 3: *Acadia move to a fee structure that explicitly outlines the various elements that are currently included in tuition.*

The reduction in tuition that has been recommended will reduce the educational fees that can be claimed by students in their financial aid applications. The commission noted that the needs-based bursary program at Acadia has been underutilized. There is an

opportunity to allocate a portion of this program to assist students who do not receive maximum student loan because of the tuition reduction.

Recommendation 4: *Acadia utilize its financial assistance program to provide funds to students who are not able to access maximum student aid because of the reduction in Acadia tuition.*

The commission noted that the Acadia Advantage infrastructure has remained relatively unchanged over the last decade. While faculty and student use of technology have advanced, the infrastructure has not been modernized in a manner to provide them with the tools to keep them at the leading edge. As the University moves forward with Acadia Advantage, it is important that the infrastructure be upgraded to support innovation. One aspect that has impact on nearly every student and faculty member is the Courseware Management System. The current system, ACME, has evolved slowly over time and does not have the breadth of features common to commercial course management systems such as WebCT or Blackboard. It is recommended that Acadia purchase a system rather than developing one in house. A system that has been developed for widespread use will be better supported and advanced than a system that is developed and supported at Acadia.

Recommendation 5: *Acadia acquire and implement a Courseware Management System as soon as possible.*

Acadia has introduced wireless network access to the campus over the last few years, but it is not available in all locations on campus. Wireless enables the enhanced communication that is expected on the Acadia campus and should be available to all users throughout all academic buildings and residence halls. Ubiquitous wireless network access will increase the utility and value of the Acadia Advantage.

Recommendation 6: *Acadia make wireless network access available in all campus locations.*

As students become more proficient with the use of their notebook computers, they will increasingly become creators of content in multiple electronic formats. The availability of an e-portfolio system would assist students with developing their learning objectives and enable faculty members to more effectively track their progress. Components of the portfolios can be accessed by faculty and staff to assist with student development and assessment. In addition to using portfolios for focused progression, students can use them for self-reflection and peer review. Because of its emphasis on learning, the Learning Commons is a natural place for the development of a portfolio program. Beyond its academic value, an electronic portfolio that could be shared with prospective employers would facilitate students' entry into the workplace or, alternatively, their progression into graduate study.

Recommendation 7: *Acadia explore the possibility of introducing an electronic portfolio system to enhance the student learning experience and to enable more authentic assessment of student work.*

The e-mail storage capacity provided to students is regarded as inadequate, especially given the trend toward exchanging information by attaching files to e-mail messages. In order to encourage students to use Acadia's e-mail function, it is important that they have the ability to store messages. One possibility may be to explore using an external electronic mail service such as those being provided to educational institutions at no cost (with up to two gigabytes of storage per user) by Microsoft and Google.

Recommendation 8: *Acadia expand the amount of storage available for student e-mail messages and attachments. Alternatively, explore the option of an outsourced e-mail provider.*

Computing Services is responsible for supporting the technical infrastructure that is the foundation of the Acadia Advantage program, as well as other critical functions of Acadia University. All technological enhancements are enabled by this department. As the Acadia Advantage program evolves, it is imperative that the structure that supports the program be modernized, robust, and reliable. Further, the development of information technology resources and services must be closely aligned with Acadia's mission and goals. The most apparent needs in Computing Services are leadership and planning. With so much of its brand resting on technology, Acadia needs effective and visionary technology leadership.

Recommendation 9: *Acadia move immediately to review the functions, operation, and resources of Computing Services and following the review create the appropriate leadership position for Acadia. A search for this position should be commenced as soon thereafter as possible.*

In order for Acadia to remain at the forefront of the pedagogical use of technology, the computing infrastructure must continue to be expanded and modernized. Some of Acadia's computing and networking equipment is old and in need of replacement. There is no greening strategy within Computing Services, and insufficient resources to implement one.

Recommendation 10: *The first assignment for the new leader of Computing Services should be to develop a three to five year technology plan that includes a greening strategy for computing infrastructure. The technology plan should be advanced through the institution and included in the regular budgeting process. The technology plan should also be closely aligned with the Acadia University strategic plan.*

Members of the Commission noted that *Novell* software is used as the desktop management system. *Novell* is older software with limited functionality. For example, it will not facilitate the use of MacIntosh computers on the network. While not significant in magnitude, this observation supports the need for "modernization" of Acadia's

computing environment to facilitate maximum flexibility. As Acadia responds to this increasing need for flexibility, it is important that Acadia migrate to a new system, such as Microsoft, that supports the use of multiple platforms.

Recommendation 11: *Acadia migrate from Novell as soon as possible*

Given Acadia's reputation, it should have a preferred status with a number of hardware and software vendors. The suppliers should understand the goodwill associated with their Acadia relationship and it should have value in contract negotiations. Likewise, many businesses have benefited from the advanced technical skills of the Acadia graduates they have hired over the years. One way to raise the profile of Acadia would be to create an advisory board consisting of representatives of technology companies and firms that have hired multiple Acadia graduates to be used as a resource to guide the direction of Acadia Advantage.

Recommendation 12: *Acadia establish an Acadia Advantage advisory board comprised of high ranking officers of major technological enterprises and firms that have a past record of hiring Acadia graduates.*

The Acadia Institute for Teaching and Technology (AITT) is considered by many members of faculty to be an essential component of the Acadia Advantage program. Numerous members of faculty pointed to the excellent support and facilitation that has been provided by the AITT. However, many faculty members do not recognize AITT as having a role in advancing pedagogies related to the integration of technology because the unit's leadership does not have faculty status. As the Acadia Advantage moves forward, the commission believes that it is critical that the AITT be enhanced so that it can extend its excellent services and reputation into the pedagogical use of technology. The Learning Commons provides an excellent opportunity to take the AITT to the next level. The new Centre for Learning and Teaching provides a place and a forum for pedagogical advancement at Acadia. It is envisioned that the Centre will proactively engage faculty in pedagogical discussions and will encourage a more balanced development of curriculum among the faculties. It is understood that the Centre will be led by a person with faculty credentials and expertise in the scholarship of teaching and learning. This will facilitate a more comprehensive and effective role for the AITT.

Recommendation 13: *The AITT become an integral component of the new Centre for Learning and Teaching in the Learning Commons and be appropriately funded through the Commons.*

Throughout the Commission's discussions with faculty members, there appeared to be a common concern that Acadia does not support or celebrate outstanding teaching. The commission noted that, if Acadia Advantage is to advance, faculty must be encouraged to utilize technology. This means that faculty must be recognized and rewarded for outstanding teaching. Faculty members report that the Acadia tenure and promotion process rewards scholarly productivity, but awards little value to quality teaching—with or without the use of technology. To the extent that the Acadia Advantage is about

developing an innovative and highly effective teaching and learning environment the tenure and promotion process should reward those who have excelled in their teaching.

Recommendation 14: *Acadia develop a culture that supports the innovative use of technology in all aspects of faculty development and rewards. Further, that Acadia create meaningful programs to recognize and reward faculty members who exhibit significant teaching accomplishments related to the Acadia Advantage. An example might be annual awards for excellence in teaching with a cash award or salary increment.*

The User Support Centre provides a standard of service unequalled on most University campuses. Students and faculty are confident that the technology will be available to them to when it is needed. There are no long waits for hardware repairs and software is available for most functions. Upon closer examination, it was noted that User Support provides four distinct functions: help desk, training, classroom support, and hardware support. These functions overlap with other units on campus. For example, the Library provides training and helpdesk support. Computing Services provides hardware support. Librarians, in particular, provide classroom training as needed and are experts in information literacy. It is established practice for libraries to assist with information literacy as it relates to technology. As Computing Services is reorganized, it would be a natural location for hardware support.

Recommendation 15: *Acadia explore reducing duplication of services and a more effective alignment of support functions and units by moving the help desk and training functions from User Support to the Library, hardware support to Computing Services and classroom support to the Centre for Learning and Teaching within the Learning Commons.*

Students are very capable and, in many cases, advanced users of technology. Yet, there are relatively few students employed in the units that support the Acadia Advantage. Increasing opportunities for technology-related employment will increase students' opportunities to learn and produce income to support their education, create opportunities for peer technology mentoring, and lower overall technology support costs to the university.

Recommendation 16: *It is recommended that students be employed in roles that support technology use on Acadia's campus. Students can be valuable resources to assist with help desk, training, faculty and student support, and course development.*

Students reported that they prefer training to be just in time. For many students, the need to solve a technology problem or learn a new skill can often occur late at night or on weekends. Other institutions have found that online technology training modules, such as those provided by Thomson NETg and Element K can be very effective in this regard.

Recommendation 17: *Acadia explore the use of software training modules delivered through the Acadia network.*

The testimonials from students and faculty throughout this consultation have been astounding. Testimonials from students, graduates and faculty members are key to understanding the empowerment and opportunity afforded by the Acadia Advantage program. Acadia's people need to tell the Acadia Advantage story, and there needs to be a systematic way of collecting testimonials from Acadia students and graduates. The commission spent considerable time on the messages surrounding Acadia Advantage, particularly messages to prospective students and their families. It is recommended that testimonials from students and faculty be captured and used to more effectively describe the Acadia Advantage. It is further recommended, that just as technology is infused through the Acadia campus, so it should be infused through all aspects of Acadia's marketing. Acadia Advantage should not be a separate message but rather a part of every university message. Presentations, marketing materials, fair booths, and the Acadia website should demonstrate the Acadia Advantage – not only through what is said but also through what is done. For example, booths at post-secondary fairs should be as high tech as possible. The web is an important tool for marketing both Acadia and the Advantage. It is suggested that it evolve to include a greater integration of the Acadia Advantage. It is recommended that students and faculty be involved in marketing whenever possible.

Recommendation 18: *Acadia develop marketing materials and messages that elevate and more clearly deliver the Acadia Advantage story through the use of personal testimonials from Acadia graduates and employers.*

The commission heard many anecdotal reports about the success of Acadia Advantage graduates but little data exists about their success beyond Acadia. In order to determine the real value of the Acadia Advantage, appropriate assessment and data collection needs to occur.

Recommendation 19: *Acadia develop measurements to assess outcomes of the Acadia Advantage. Included in this should be regular surveys of Acadia graduates, as well as current students.*

There has been relatively little change in the Acadia Advantage model over the last decade. In order to ensure that the Acadia Advantage program evolves to meet the changing needs of Acadia students and faculty, the Commission recommends that a group be formed and assigned the responsibility to review the program on a regular basis and make recommendations for improvements. Once again, the Learning Commons provides an excellent opportunity for consideration of the Acadia Advantage program. The commission understands that a Steering Committee or Board will oversee the development and operation of the Learning Commons. The Board could also serve the review function for the Acadia Advantage and employ the services of the Advisory Board described in recommendation 11.

Recommendation 20: *Acadia conduct an annual review of the Acadia Advantage and make the appropriate recommendations for change. This review function might be best placed in the Learning Commons.*

Conclusion

The Acadia community – students, faculty, staff, and alumni – highly value the Acadia Advantage. The overwhelming response to the commission was that the Advantage program is an integral component –“part of the ether”- of Acadia University. While most acknowledged that the program needs to evolve with an ever-changing learning environment, the differentiation that Acadia has achieved is of significant importance. The members of the commission hope that the recommendations contained in this report will assist Acadia to move forward with the Acadia Advantage and to ensure that the program receives regular assessment and renewal.

The members of the commission wish to thank those who participated in this review. Numerous members of the campus community took considerable time to submit thoughtful letters, provide background materials, and attend sessions with the commission.

Acadia University is recognized internationally for its innovations in education. The Acadia Advantage contributes to this reputation through the exemplary work of Acadia’s faculty and students. The recommendations contained in this report will lead to a modernization of the Acadia Advantage and are offered in the spirit of taking the program—and by extension, the University—to the next level of excellence in undergraduate education.