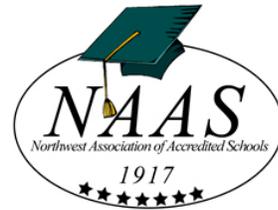


**The Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Northern Utah Academy for Math  
Engineering and Science  
2750 N. University Park Blvd  
Layton, Utah 84041**

**March 23, 2009**



**Utah State Office of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
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**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Northern Utah Academy for Math  
Engineering and Science  
2750 North University Park Blvd.  
Layton, Utah 84041**

**March 23, 2009**

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

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## **FOREWORD**

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 23, 2009, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Northern Utah Academy for Math, Engineering and Science (NUAMES) is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Robert Stillwell is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at NUAMES School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at NUAMES School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent  
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12/30/2008

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**An Early College High School**

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**NORTHERN UTAH ACADEMY FOR MATH, ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE  
(NUAMES)**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The Northern Utah Academy for Math, Engineering and Science, an Early College Charter High School, in partnership with Weber State University, is in the business of producing future college graduates in fields of Math, Engineering and Science.

**BELIEF STATEMENTS**

- Students learn best when expectations for achievement are clearly communicated.
- Students have different learning styles and need to be provided a variety of instructional approaches.
- All students are capable of demonstrating responsibility and accountability.
- Learning extends beyond the classroom and is a life-long process
- All students deserve multiple opportunities for success.
- Our only success is the success of our students.

**DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)**

1. Effective Communication-Students can communicate, understand and interpret ideas and information using written, oral and visual media.
2. Life-Long Learning-Students establish and carry out goals to continue their education beyond high school.
3. System Thinking-Students understand roles within complex systems and how they function.

Date of Visit: March 23, 2009

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Stephen Jolley, Principal, Itineris Early College High School, Visiting Team  
Chairperson

Janice Combe, Accreditation Consultant, Northwest Association of Accredited  
Schools and Utah State Office of Education

Ted Lovato, Accreditation Consultant, Northwest Association of Accredited  
Schools and Utah State Office of Education

John Taggart, Title I Specialist, Tooele School District

## VISITING TEAM REPORT

### NORTHERN UTAH ACADEMY FOR MATH, ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

#### CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Northern Utah Academy for Math, Engineering, and Science (NUAMES) is a public charter high school emphasizing math, engineering, and science. The school opened in fall of 2004 with ninth and tenth grade students, then adding a new ninth grade class each year until 2006. In 2007-08, the school changed its grade configuration to 10-12, dropping the ninth grade. NUAMES is an Early College High School designed using the Early College Initiative ideology funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The model puts students in a learning environment located on or near a college campus with curriculum that is sequential and focused. The model also defines the optimum size of a school as less than 500. NUAMES serves students in Weber, Ogden, and Davis School Districts. NUAMES partners with Weber State University, sharing facilities on Weber State University's Davis Campus and the delivery of concurrent/dual enrollment courses for college credit.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

The school's analysis of its profile revealed several items that were not on the radar screen of the organization: (1) The importance of communication with all stakeholders of the variety of opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities at NUAMES and/or their boundary school. (2) The importance of a consistent administrative presence in the college facility. (3) The necessity to expand the amount and variety of data collected in the analysis of the school organization.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The Visiting Team would suggest a much more detailed portrait of the school organization and the students it serves. For example, it would be useful to know the number of students participating in activities at the boundary school, the number of students involved in NUAMES-supported clubs, the number of students in each subgroup and their ability to access Weber State University courses, the impact of programs in use (Woodrow Wilson Reading Grant), data from School Trust Lands, student achievement data since Weber State University's ED1105 course implementation, longitudinal data over past five years (including ethnicity, gender, and the number eligible for free and reduced-price meals), college credit accumulation, etc. Some of the suggested information

may have been in the self-study, but it was not clearly used effectively to define the organization and the students it serves.

- c) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The Visiting Team found the self-study to be an accurate reflection of the school's current status; however, the analysis leading to the determination of strengths and limitations in many cases was cursory at best. The analysis was not necessarily connected to specific data or indicators that would allow the team to validate the conclusions reached; it was difficult to follow the line of thinking from the data to the conclusions without asking some more questions as to how these conclusions were arrived at.

**Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- Which students are succeeding, and why?
- Impact of moving facilities from students, parents, faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees
- Outcome of change in grade configuration
- Effect of changing governance from district to state

**CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS  
(NAAS) TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS**

**Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs):**

- a) *To what degree were the school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs developed and/or revised collaboratively by the school community to define a compelling purpose and vision for the school and to support student achievement?*

The Visiting Team determined that the mission statement was re-written by the Board of Trustees with little faculty, staff, or student input. In addition, the faculty and staff wrote the belief statements for the most part. Finally, the DRSLs appear to have come from a more collaborative process involving students, parents, and faculty. In conclusion, it would appear as if the school has three driving documents that should complement each other, but in reality all seem to be going in somewhat different directions. The Visiting Team would recommend working

to align the three documents to create more laser-like focus on the vision of the school and the students it serves.

- b) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's DRSLs?*

The Visiting Team concluded that the mission statement seems to be out of alignment with the belief statements and DRSLs. However, there does appear to be some alignment between the belief statements and the DRSLs in a few instances. The mission statement seems to limit its scope to the students graduating from college, yet in reality not every student will graduate from college. The mission statement focuses on a process of a student's academic development that is outside of the public school's control—specifically, the two or three years after the student graduates from high school. It would seem more suitable to focus on exactly how to prepare all students for college success, as this could be a process on which the school organization can have a definite impact.

- c) *Describe the indicators (measures) that have been developed to assess the school's progress in assessing the DRSLs.*

The Visiting Team determined that the indicators identified to measure progress toward the DRSLs were adequate, but lacked the specificity of clearly showing where students are and where the school would like to see all students in the end. NUAMES needs to develop a rubric for each indicator to put a fine point on what progress and success look like so all stakeholders can articulate what is expected.

- d) *To what extent do the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs guide the procedures, policies and decisions of the school, and appear evident in the culture of the school?*

The Visiting Team observed a commitment to the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs, by all stakeholders in terms of procedures, policies, and decisions. The culture of the school is definitely about students and their success. The school has undergone several significant changes over the last two years—dropping ninth grade, moving to one campus, and changing locations completely—yet the culture of the school and its identity are well intact. Whatever the mission, beliefs, and DRSLs lack, evidence of their influence was observed by the Visiting Team in the day-to-day practices of the school organization.

### **Curriculum:**

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards, the Utah Core Curriculum, reflecting the Utah Life Skills: A Guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success?*

The staff at NUAMES is committed to working together to provide a curriculum with clearly defined standards. Staff members are reflective in their practices and instructional methods. The Utah Core and the Utah Life Skills is interwoven into the academic and social curriculum. Systems Thinking and Life-Long Learning are two of the school's DRSLs, and part of its plan for continual improvement. These both align well with the Utah Life Skills Curriculum. The administration and faculty are regularly involved in professional development that ensures the curriculum is clearly linked to the Utah State Core and Utah Life Skills program.

- b) *To what extent does the curriculum engage **all** students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills?*

The Visiting Team was very impressed with the way students at NUAMES are actively engaged in lifelong learning. They are individually involved in problem solving, inquiry, and higher-order thinking skills. The students are constantly challenged to think beyond. They are engaged in setting goals each month, processing through the goals, and evaluating the goals. The students at NUAMES are bright and independent thinkers, so the faculty and the curriculum need to challenge these students. The school has thus far been successful in doing so, and the students feel they are able to expand their thinking.

Students expressed the belief that small class size has given them the opportunity to participate more freely in discussion, inquiry, and explore other options.

- c) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's DRSLs?*

The staff at NUAMES has actively involved in the development of the DRSLs; as a result, staff members are all committed to adapting the curriculum and instruction to meet the indicators of the DRSLs. They have incorporated effective communication, lifelong learning, and systems thinking into their daily instruction. They use a monthly journal to help the students reflect on their progress in these and other areas.

- d) *How does the staff use assessments to drive curriculum to ensure that **all** students can reach the intended learning outcomes?*

Students are evaluated in a variety of ways at NUAMES. Teachers use standardized tests, as well as observation, classroom discussions, and written work. The written work is in the form of homework, research papers, and self-evaluations. Assessment data has been used to form several new programs at NUAMES. One is the study skills class, with three to five students enrolled. Another is "zero-period," which is held twice each term. This is an opportunity for students to meet with their individual teachers. Math assessments were evaluated and a math lab developed to help bridge the achievement gap for students who are underachieving in math.

**Instruction:**

- a) *To what extent do teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to enhance student learning?*

It is apparent to the Visiting Team that the NUAMES faculty uses a wide variety of instructional strategies to enhance student learning. Some of the strategies observed were direct instruction, paired learning, class discussion, lab work, problem-solving tasks, and oral reports. Some students are involved in actual engineering design and are producing real-life products. Students were actively engaged in learning strategies. Students expressed their appreciation for the many different types of learning experiences. Due to the small class size, teachers are able to use a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of their students. Adaptation of the curriculum through different learning strategies is important to the NUAMES faculty.

- b) *To what extent have the school and the staff developed strategies for instruction that build the capacity for explicitly teaching the identified DRSL in every classroom?*

The faculty and staff of NUAMES have identified the specific indicators they believe must be taught to their students in order for them to embrace the DRSLs they have identified. In doing this, each teacher has embedded these skills into his/her curriculum and uses instructional strategies to engage their students. The educational program at NUAMES is of a high quality. Students are able to understand their role as life-long learners. The faculty continually relates the learning and the content to real-life growth and success.

- c) *To what extent is the school's professional development program guided by identified instructional needs, and how does it provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies that support student learning?*

NUAMES has been continually involved in professional development. The school has a strong relationship with Weber State University, and has been actively participated with the university in professional development. Several faculty members have had the opportunity to attend national workshops in science, engineering, and math. During the summer months, the faculty has specific workshop to provide professional development in the areas of collaboration, instructional strategies, curriculum development. The faculty and staff are aware of their continued need for professional development to integrate their curricula in order to provide their students with the opportunity to inter-connect their learning from one subject to another and to daily life.

- d) *To what extent are teachers proficient in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective on their own practices?*

The Visiting Team found the NUAMES faculty to be of the highest quality. Many of them have over 30 years' experience in education. Several wonderful retired teachers are now employed with NUAMES. It was obvious to the Visiting Team that they were knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and well liked by the students. During the visit, students had a great deal of praise for the faculty and their caring and dedicated attitudes. Students feel that the faculty cared about them personally. They expressed over and over the opinion that "the faculty is here to help guide each student's education."

- e) *To what extent does the school effectively implement a well-defined plan for the integration of technology into its curriculum, instruction, and assessments?*

NUAMES uses technology as the core of the educational curriculum. The technology comes in many forms—not only on the NUAMES Davis campus but also at Weber State University. Students have the opportunity to explore technology in science, math, engineering, drafting design, and classroom curriculum. Technology is used regularly in instruction, exploration, and assessment. For example, in the Math Department, all students are required to have a TI 83/84 calculator, but the school has provided a set of TI iNspire (CAS) calculators for additional exploration.

**Assessment:**

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments with performance standards based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

The staff appears to have developed classroom assessments with clearly articulated expectations. During the observation of a botany class, the teacher administered a test consisting of a journal article that students needed to read, understand, and restate in an organized manner. Several times during the observation of a discussion in an Intermediate Algebra lesson, the teacher and various students referred to an upcoming assessment as expectations were referenced and student concerns with solving various types of problems were addressed. During an observed lesson in Engineering, the teacher again clearly explained the expectations and had them aligned to the student's work and referenced them to an upcoming assessment. However, according to the focus group survey results, parents feel the assessments and the communication of expectations could be strengthened.

- b) *To what extent does the school have a process to fairly and equitably assess school-wide and individual progress in achieving academic expectations?*

From the observations conducted and the data contained in the self-study, it would appear that each department does an effective job of equitably analyzing individual student progress, then using State testing instruments to assess school-wide progress.

- c) *To what extent does the professional staff use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its academic expectations?*

According to the self-study, NUAMES has involved its Community Council in assessing student data and defining effective plans to address perceived areas of weakness. The school began a school-wide literacy plan with the support of Weber State University staff that resulted in 70 percent of students achieving higher on a retest. After an analysis of student math proficiency scores, the school identified concerns in the area of geometry and provided additional resources to help reduce class sizes and provide support to students. This evidence suggests the school has been attentive to student achievement and in helping all students learn. However, additional evidence demonstrating an increased level of involvement from more staff members in the data discussions could strengthen this aspect of the self-study and the school.

- d) *To what extent does the school's professional development program allow for opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies?*

According to the school's self-study and teacher interviews, the school provided effective professional development for teachers, some of which is directly related to assessment. However, several of the departmental analyses suggest the desire and need for staff to have more and effective collaboration with their departments and with the school as a whole to support school goals.

- e) *To what extent is there organizational agreement on the use of a school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified DRSL?*

There appears to be strong school agreement on which tools to use to assess the school's DRSLs. Appropriate assessment tools have been identified for each DRSL, and in teacher interviews and interviews with administration, parents and the school's board members, there appears to be strong agreement on which tools to use to effectively assess each DRSL while at the same time recognizing that additional assessment would be welcomed and helpful.

## CHAPTER 3: NAAS SUPPORT STANDARDS

### **Leadership and Organization:**

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate that actively supports teaching and learning?*

The Visiting Team witnessed a firm commitment by the school leadership to promoting quality instruction and a supportive learning environment for all stakeholders. Conversations with students, parents, and faculty validated this as a place where serious learning takes place with the support of caring adults to assist students in reaching their potential.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative to monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness?*

The Visiting Team found the school leadership to be focused on student achievement and instructional effectiveness; however, collaboration to monitor progress was not evident. The monitoring of student progress seemed to remain the domain of each classroom teacher, dependent on standardized testing data. The administration, through the self-study process, has started to develop a much more active dialogue with stakeholders about decisions, and has always been interested in bringing to the table the latest research-based instructional and organizational tools.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and allocation and use of resources at the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment which aligns with the school goals, DRSLs, and school improvement?*

The Visiting Team commends the administration for moving the school organization through several trying years while maintaining and improving the academic integrity and culture of the school. The school leadership appears to be somewhat undervalued by the school community for the strength and vision necessary to have navigated the past three years so successfully.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the entire school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning through meaningful roles in the decision-making process?*

The Visiting Team determined school leadership to be in the early stages of cultivating these aspects of shared leadership. The difficult task is defining what successful student learning looks like so all stakeholders can agree. The

commitment and participation are present, but collaboration requires more direct involvement on the part of the administration; the shared responsibility for student learning should follow as a natural byproduct of the effort.

- e) *To what extent has the school established a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning?*

The Visiting Team did not observe a formal system through which each student was assigned an adult advocate. The Capstone project has the makings of such a formal system, but one that develops as students' interest in certain courses is piqued; therefore, it would not ensure all students access to such a connection with a faculty or staff member.

### **School Services:**

This standard is dealt with in the school's NAAS Annual Report, which requires specific responses and information regarding student support services, guidance services, health services, library information services, special education services, and family and community services.

### **Facilities and Finances:**

This standard is addressed in the school's annual report to NAAS, which requires specific responses regarding the physical plant, finances, audit of school records, advertising, etc.

## **CHAPTER 4: NAAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD**

### **Culture of Continual Improvement:**

- a) *To what extent has the school developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using Collaborating for Student Achievement, the Utah accreditation/school improvement process that is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis?*

The school's action plan revolves directly around the three DRSLs, Effective Communication, Lifelong Learning, and Systems Thinking. The three DRSLs were well thought out in a collaborative environment in order to provide NUAMES students with the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful as adults by engaging them in a rigorous high school- and university-level academic

program that will expose them to career possibilities. It is the hope of NUAMES leaders and faculty that the students can continue to grow by engaging in continued education and other positive lifelong learning opportunities.

The action plan uses the recommended rubric format to identify indicators/skills, assessments to be used, a reasonable timeline to be followed, and identifying those personnel who are responsible for the monitoring of the plan.

It was interesting to discover that the respondents to the surveys expressed that, in their opinion, this area needs more effort. Systemic efforts in the collection and use of key data will be necessary if the school is to see continual improvement. Furthermore, there seems to be a need for more parent and student involvement with the action plan.

- b) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through an aligned and ongoing professional development plan focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

NUAMES participated in a school-wide literacy plan for its first three years. This school-wide endeavor drove professional development for those years. All teachers were trained to be teachers of reading and writing. Many staff members attended workshops in Boston, meeting teachers from 13 other early college high schools participating in the Reading Initiative. All teachers were shown exemplary reading and writing programs that were designed to prepare students for a rigorous early college curriculum. The knowledge gained has been used in the development of a school wide philosophy, which includes the DRSLs, action plan, and beliefs.

- c) *To what extent is the new/revised school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up and is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

The action plan is brief and to the point, and the self-study failed to reveal the details of how it evolved. The action plan revolves around the three DRSLs. As mentioned above, NUAMES' action plan uses the recommended rubric to identify indicators/skills, assessments, a time line, and those professional personnel responsible for the follow-up efforts of each component of the action plan.

There seems to be a lack of parental and student involvement with follow-up activities and responsibilities associated with the action plan.

- d) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

NUAMES seems to be ever-evolving, and the administrator has done a commendable job of involving key stakeholders in the vision that he has created

for the school (with much input from other leaders). The DRSLs, mission, and beliefs have evolved through a collaborative effort, and there seems to be strong ownership of the long-range vision and the action plan necessary to see the vision come to fruition. There is a feeling of significant collaboration among teachers, university personnel, parents, Board members and administrators.

With the change of administration, the Visiting Team is confident that the new site leadership will continue to work to create awareness and commitment by the staff for the process of continuous improvement. This will include the findings of the external report created by the Visiting Team.

## **CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING**

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

NUAMES does a commendable job of fostering community building and working relationships within the school and the Weber State University community. The working relationship between NUAMES and Weber State University is mutually beneficial. Weber State wants students who are prepared for the rigors of university life and are good candidates for completing a four-year degree. NUAMES thus offers a rigorous curriculum, preparing students for success in college. The partnership also assists families with the financial burden of paying for a college education and exposure to the higher education environment.

In addition, students have opportunities to become involved with school clubs and other activities that foster community building and working relationships within the school.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Besides the strong collaboration with Weber State University, NUAMES has a very cooperative relationship with surrounding school districts (Davis, Weber, Morgan and Box Elder), which benefits students greatly. Besides academic and vocational opportunities, students have liberty to participate in extracurricular activities sponsored by the Utah High School Activities Association (UHSAA).

- c) *To what extent has the school engaged the school community in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

NUAMES has an active Board of Trustees (see below) who have been kept abreast of developments and progressions of the self-study. Teachers have had a

more direct role and have attended meetings, collaborated, and developed plans for the benefit of students, not only in the academic arena but also in terms of their social development.

The school could involve more students and parents with the action plan by inviting them to be directly involved in the realization of all aspects of the plan.

- d) *How are results of school improvement identified, documented, used, and communicated to **all** stakeholders?*

From the beginning, NUAMES was chartered under the Davis, Ogden and Weber School Districts. The three superintendents and the Weber State University President have selected representatives for the NUAMES Board of Trustees. In addition, local business leaders and other stakeholders serve on the Board. These representatives are kept aware of the many issues facing NUAMES, especially in the area of continued school improvement. Faculty members, students, and parents are kept abreast of school improvement by attending meetings, reading and listening to a variety of communications, and through personal inquiry.

## **CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends the NUAMES teachers and staff for their professional and personal commitment to each student's growth—emotionally, academically and civically.
- The Visiting Team commends the NUAMES administration for its unwavering commitment to educating the whole student.
- The Visiting Team commends the NUAMES Board for their depth of understanding regarding role of each element of school governance—where one stops and another begins.
- The Visiting Team commends all stakeholders at NUAMES for the visible and systemic partnerships that exist throughout the school organization.
- The Visiting Team commends the NUAMES faculty, staff, administration, students and all stakeholders for creating and maintaining a learning environment that is safe, accepting, and academically challenging.

**Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that NUAMES develop a greater variety of data sources to measure student academic growth and guide instruction/practice.
- The Visiting Team recommends that NUAMES continue to provide professional development and continued support for collaboration between individual teachers and departments for the benefit of enhancing student learning.
- The Visiting Team recommends that NUAMES use an existing or a new institutional structure to provide a forum for students' voices in driving the overall school organization.