Periodic Review Report

Presented by:
The Pennsylvania State University

June 2010

Graham B. Spanier
President

Date of Most Recent Decennial Evaluation Team Visit:
April 10-13, 2005
FOREWORD

PREPARATION OF THE PERIODIC REVIEW REPORT

In March 2009, Blannie E. Bowen, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the University’s Accreditation Liaison Officer with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and Angela Linse, Executive Director and Associate Dean, Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence, attended the Periodic Review Report (PRR) Workshop held by the Commission in Philadelphia. After that workshop, Dr. Bowen consulted with Louise Sandmeyer, Executive Director, Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment, and Michael Dooris, Director of Planning Research and Assessment. Following that consultation, Dr. Bowen met with Rodney Erickson, Executive Vice President and Provost, to discuss the process and to create the PRR Steering Committee. Provost Erickson asked Vice Provost Bowen to chair our Committee.

Our 15-member Steering Committee includes faculty members, senior administrators, and staff from central offices as well as administrative and academic units throughout the University. There is also faculty and administrative representation on the Committee from locations other than University Park.

The Committee initially met in June 2009 to review the timeline and process, distribute pertinent materials to each Committee member, and review Committee member expectations. Also at that initial meeting, subcommittees and working groups were assigned for various sections of the Report. The Committee met again in October 2009 to receive updates from the subcommittees and discuss the flow and format of the report as well as the appendices and companion documents. In December 2009, various materials were received from the subcommittees and an initial draft of the report was compiled.

This first draft was distributed to the Steering Committee members for their careful review and suggestions in January 2010, followed by a meeting in early February 2010 to discuss the submitted suggestions. Revisions and further Committee input was solicited, and a revised draft was distributed to the Committee in early March 2010. After receiving final feedback from the Committee, we then proceeded to have the document reviewed by the President, Executive Vice President and Provost, President’s Council, and leadership of our Board of Trustees. Revisions suggested by these groups were shared with the Committee and incorporated into our final report.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

University Overview

Penn State was chartered in 1855 at the urging of the Pennsylvania State Agricultural Society as a publicly-supported agricultural college (then named the Farmers’ High School). Designated in 1863 as the state’s land-grant institution under the Morrill Land-Grant Act (1862), the University (then named Agricultural College of Pennsylvania) was created with a three-part mission of teaching, research, and public service. Since that early history and eventual name change in 1953 to The Pennsylvania State University, that mission has continued and strengthened through to the current leadership of President Graham B. Spanier, who was appointed as the 16th president of the University on September 1, 1995.

Penn State is one of four universities in the Commonwealth that are considered “state-related” (along with the University of Pittsburgh, Temple University, and Lincoln University). While not state-owned or state-operated, these institutions receive a state appropriation. Our 32-member Board of Trustees includes four ex officio representatives of the Commonwealth and six gubernatorial appointees.

While Penn State’s largest campus is located at University Park in the geographical center of the Commonwealth in State College, the University is comprised of 24 campuses throughout the Commonwealth (note that the Pennsylvania College of Technology is independently accredited through MSCHE). This multi-campus structure provides convenient access to programs and services throughout the Commonwealth, reflecting our spirit and dedication to the tenets of the land-grant mission. All Penn State campuses report through a single President and adhere to a common mission:

Mission

*Penn State is a multi-campus public research university that educates students from Pennsylvania, the nation and the world, and improves the well being and health of individuals and communities through integrated programs of teaching, research, and service.*

*Our instructional mission includes undergraduate, graduate, professional, and continuing education offered through both resident instruction and online delivery. Our educational programs are enriched by the cutting edge knowledge, diversity, and creativity of our faculty, students, and staff.*

*Our research, scholarship, and creative activity promote human and economic development, global understanding, and progress in professional practice through the expansion of knowledge and its applications in the natural and applied sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and the professions.*

*As Pennsylvania’s land-grant university, we provide unparalleled access and public service to support the citizens of the Commonwealth. We engage in collaborative activities with industrial, educational, and agricultural partners here and abroad to generate, disseminate, integrate, and apply knowledge that is valuable to society.*
As you read about the initiatives and programs that we have undertaken in support of the standards and recommendations, it will be evident that our initiatives are also aligned with the spirit of the University’s vision: Penn State will be a global university, committed to excellence, with a passion for creating knowledge and educating students to be leaders for a better tomorrow. In addition to the University’s mission and vision, the Penn State Principles (http://www.psu.edu/ur/pdf/principles.pdf) are designed to support and contribute to the values and rich history of Penn State.

The Penn State Fact Book (http://www.budget.psu.edu/factbook/) provides significant data about all aspects of the University; and, in particular, “Facts about Students” (http://www.budget.psu.edu/FactBook/StudentDynamic/StudentTableofContents.aspx) provides a platform for reviewing enrollment data looking at various factors including campus locations, part-time/full-time enrollment status, race/ethnicity, etc.

Almost half of the current student enrollment is at University Park, which is also the administrative hub for the University and home for 12 academic units that each fall under the leadership of a dean: Agricultural Sciences, Arts and Architecture, Business, Communications, Earth and Mineral Sciences, Education, Engineering, Health and Human Development, Information Sciences and Technology, Liberal Arts, Nursing, and Science. Nineteen campuses fall under the leadership of the Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses: Abington, Altoona, Beaver, Berks, Brandywine, DuBois, Erie, Fayette, Greater Allegheny, Harrisburg, Hazleton, Lehigh Valley, Mont Alto, New Kensington, Schuylkill, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, Worthington Scranton and York. Five of these campuses (Abington, Altoona, Berks, Erie and Harrisburg) have stand-alone college status, with the remaining 14 comprising the University College. In addition, the University also has four campuses with unique, professional education missions: Penn State Great Valley supports the needs of working adults through graduate professional studies; located in Williamsport, the Pennsylvania College of Technology offers certificate, associate, and baccalaureate degree studies with a strong focus on technology; the College of Medicine at The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center (located in Hershey) delivers medical education; and, The Dickinson School of Law (with a dual-campus arrangement at University Park and Carlisle) focuses on legal education. In 1998, Penn State’s World Campus was launched, and it now provides distance education programs to students in all 50 states, more than 40 countries, and on all 7 continents.

**Major Institutional Changes and Developments Since the 2005 Institutional Self-Study**

In 2005, Penn State’s Board of Trustees approved a plan designed to streamline administrative functions and gain efficiencies throughout Penn State’s multi-campus structure. The plan consolidated what had been three senior administrative positions into two new areas of responsibility, re-aligned Penn State’s campuses, changed titles for the senior campus executives, and eliminated administrative overlaps through policy and structural changes. The position of Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses was created with 19 campuses reporting to that position. This position also functions as dean for the University College. The position of Dean of the Commonwealth College was eliminated. Under the campus realignment, the leaders of each campus assumed the title of chancellor. This reorganization created an environment that
balanced central oversight with individual campus autonomy. In 2008, the Board of Trustees was briefed on the progress and outcomes of the restructuring. The expected efficiencies and streamlining have been successful and include a balanced budget for the Commonwealth Campus structure as of July 1, 2008.

The 2005 restructuring also created the position of Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education, combining the responsibilities of the Vice Provost and Dean for Enrollment Management and Administration with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and International Programs, giving appropriate stature to Penn State’s commitment to undergraduate education and our commitment to being a student-centered University. The Office of International Programs (now called the Office of Global Programs) reported through the Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education until 2007, at which time the leadership of the Office of International Programs was elevated to a Vice Provost position, reporting directly to the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Also in 2005, the state released $25 million to the Cumberland County Redevelopment Authority for use in expanding and renovating the Carlisle campus of the Law School, thus firming the long-term commitment to the dual-campus structure of the Law School, the nation’s only ABA-approved unified two-location law school. University Park’s Lewis Katz Building was completed in 2008. This innovative and student-centered building for the students, faculty, and staff of the Law School completes the interconnections of the dual-campus structure. In December 2008, the building was named “Project of the Year” in the higher education/research facility category from the Mid-Atlantic Construction magazine. Built and designed to meet LEED standards, Carlisle’s Lewis Katz Hall was completed in 2009. Lewis Katz Hall features a green roof, local and recycled building materials, significant natural light to reduce the need for artificial lighting, and a library completely interconnected with the University Park campus.

Recognizing the commitment and importance of information technology and the growth and research development of the School of Information Sciences and Technology, the School was elevated to college status in 2006 as the College of Information Sciences and Technology.

Significant changes occurred at some of our campuses. The McKeesport campus of the University was officially renamed Penn State Greater Allegheny in 2006 to provide a sense of regional presence, reinforce its position as the only Penn State location in Allegheny County, and provide a sense of connection to the 22,000 alumni living in that county (the largest concentration of alumni residing in any one county in the nation). The Delaware County campus was renamed Penn State Brandywine in 2007 to reinforce the presence of a high-quality campus and to distinguish it from other institutions in the Delaware County area. In summer 2009, Penn State Lehigh Valley was relocated from Fogelsville to Center Valley. Lehigh Valley is the third largest population area in the Commonwealth and the second fastest growth area in the Northeast with a projected population increase of 22% by 2030. The percentage of high school graduates in the area served by the campus is expected to increase 16.5% between 2004 and 2016.

The University Park campus continues to adapt to the changing needs of students. The School of International Affairs was established on July 1, 2007, offering a professional master’s degree in International Affairs with several specialty concentrations. The School is housed
administratively within the Dickinson School of Law. Effective July 1, 2008, the School of Nursing was made an independent academic unit with a dean providing leadership. The School will continue to maintain a strong connection with its original academic home, the College of Health and Human Development, as well as the Penn State College of Medicine and the Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

In 2007, recognizing the importance of the University’s commitment to our world citizenship, the leadership of the Office of International Programs was elevated to that of Vice Provost, having a direct reporting line to the Executive Vice President and Provost. In 2009, that office was officially renamed the Office of Global Programs, recognizing the importance and commitment to the broad context of our world citizenship and responsibilities.

During the 2009-10 academic year, Penn State significantly felt the impact of the state’s longest budget impasse in the Commonwealth’s history, including the possibility of unprecedented proposed cuts to the University’s state appropriation (such as a possible $61 million proposed cut by the governor in June 2009). With the uncertainty of the appropriation continuing, our Board of Trustees was placed in the unfortunate situation of needing to approve tuition rates. In July 2009, the Board approved various contingency rates based on whether the budget would be enacted by certain pivotal benchmark dates. Starting in July 2009, the University covered this shortfall through reserves and made great efforts to ensure that our students were not adversely affected by this challenge. The University covered about $28 million in Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) tuition grants so that 18,000 students from low and moderate income households could continue with their education. A welcome event happened on December 17, 2009 – appropriations for Penn State and the Commonwealth’s three other state-related institutions were agreed to and approved by the Legislature, and signed into law by Governor Rendell.

In response to the needs of parents and families of our student population, and with the goal of continual student development and success in the forefront, the University is planning a new Parents Program. Housed in the Division of Student Affairs, the program is in collaboration with the Office of Undergraduate Education as well as University Development. This unique program will act as a centralized point for communications with parents and families so that all those involved in a student’s educational development are not only given timely information but also have a sense of engagement and support as all parties strive to foster student success.

Based upon a recommendation from an external peer review team, on January 22, 2010, the Board of Trustees approved the appointment of Cynthia Baldwin, a former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice, to serve as the University’s first full-time, in-house general counsel and chief legal officer.

On November 20, 2007, the University Strategic Planning Council was created and charged by President Graham Spanier to develop the University’s strategic plan for the years 2009-10 through 2013-14. The Council, chaired by Executive Vice President and Provost Rodney Erickson, was specifically asked to consider the broader context and environment in which the University will operate in the future. This planning process, which is part of a long tradition of strategic planning at Penn State, is both top down and bottom up, occurring across departments,
academic colleges, and administrative units. Throughout this PRR, references and linkages to this important plan, *Priorities for Excellence: The Penn State Strategic Plan 2009-10 through 2013-14*, will be highlighted.

On September 7, 2007, the Board of Trustees announced the reappointment of Penn State President Spanier for another five-year term. In announcing that reappointment, Trustee Chair James Broadhurst cited President Spanier’s efforts in “... enhancing the culture in a student-centered environment.”

**Abstract of the Highlights of the PRR**

Penn State embraced the opportunity provided by the 2005 Self-Study to solidify and reaffirm its commitment to University-wide assessment. (At that time, we were doing well, but knew that we could do better – and we have.) We have made great strides in developing a more systematic assessment process and coordinating these efforts University-wide. This PRR highlights some of the activities and changes that have had the most significant impacts. We are confident that we have made significant strides in continuing on our path of excellence in accordance with the intent and spirit of the Middle States standards.

We will review our assessment plan and its connection to University planning. Our most significant activities to address our goals will be viewed through an institutional level, general education programmatic level, cocurricular program perspective, academic program perspective, and a course-level view. The integration and support of undergraduate education, both in and outside of the classroom, will reflect a shared responsibility and shared commitment to success throughout all levels of the University. And, the integration of our offerings will illustrate that while much of the initial effort was in establishing procedures to strengthen our curricular coherence, later efforts show a commitment to facilitating those important connections. Our report will also focus on individual and collective efforts to address our 2005 Self Study recommendations while highlighting the supportive planning efforts and offerings that have contributed to our success in meeting those recommendations.

Penn State has a rich history of comprehensive strategic planning and is committed to ensuring the interconnections with our mission and goals, objectives, institutional assessment and evaluation, and resource allocation. Those organized and sustained efforts will be viewed through a University as well as unit-level perspective, giving rich examples to illustrate how we have applied that commitment to improve the learning environment for Penn State students.

Our goal is to “tell our story” of Penn State’s continuation on the path toward excellence, consistent with our history and long-standing commitment to undergraduate education and the tenets of the Middle States standards.
Certification Statement:  
Compliance with MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation and  
Federal Title IV Requirements  
(Effective October 1, 2009)

An institution seeking initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation must affirm by completing this certification statement that it meets or continues to meet established MSCHE requirements of affiliation and federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including relevant requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 such as those on distance education and transfer of credit.

The signed statement must be attached to the executive summary of the institution’s self-study report.

If it is not possible to certify compliance with all such requirements, the institution must attach specific details in a separate memorandum.

The Pennsylvania State University  
(Name of Institution)

is seeking (Check one):  ___ Initial Accreditation  X Reaffirmation of Accreditation

The undersigned hereby certify that the institution meets all established requirements of affiliation of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including relevant requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 such as those on distance education and transfer of credit, and that it has complied with the MSCHE policy, “Related Entities.”

___ Exceptions are noted in the attached memorandum (Check if applicable)

[Signature]  
(Chief Executive Officer)  
5/10/10  
(Date)

[Signature]  
(Chair, Board of Trustees or Directors)  
5/10/10  
(Date)
Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA)

Penn State Student Verification Process for Distance Education Students

The World Campus conscientiously works to ensure that the student who registers for a course is the one who participates in and completes the course. We do this by ensuring that each distance education student has a unique User ID and password. The following procedures are followed to ensure that this occurs.

Every first-time student is sent an Access Account document electronically through e-mail or asked to access the form at the World Campus website. He/she is asked to read the document, sign it, and return it to our Adult Learner Enrollment Services office.

The Access Account document that the student signs indicate that he/she is agreeing to abide by Penn State’s Policy AD20 and the EDUCOM statement, which is on page 8 or can be found at http://guru.psu.edu/policies/ad20.html.

Upon registration for his/her first course, and having a signed statement on file, the student receives a unique User ID and password. In order to be kept secure, the User ID is e-mailed to the student, and the password is sent to the student via surface mail.

Per University policy (AD20), it is the responsibility of all students to “safeguard passwords and/or other sensitive information related to their own accounts or network access. Such information must not be transmitted to, shared with, or divulged to others.”

Each time a student logs into the Learning Management System (to access his/her course), he/she must go through WebAccess, Penn State’s secure login system, and use his/her unique User ID and password.

The User ID and password are part of the student record, so the student who is participating in the course will receive the academic credit for the course on his/her University transcript. In addition, the World Campus is upgrading its system for proctoring exams at a distance. For many years (even prior to the World Campus), Penn State used a proctoring system to ensure that the individual taking the exam was the same person as the student. We are now in the process of upgrading this system through the adoption of the Kryterion testing system. This system uses computer-mounted cameras to video the individual taking the exam so that it can be verified that the person taking the exam online is indeed the student. In addition, this system uses a keystroke verification system as a backup to the video to ensure that the individual is indeed the student.
ACCESS ACCOUNT ACCEPTANCE AND AUTHORIZATION STATEMENT

Computer access accounts are assigned to students registered in World Campus courses requiring a Penn State Access Account and to any faculty or staff member upon request. This Access Account is a unique identification code and password combination that enables you to connect to Penn State computer systems and courses (e.g., online University Libraries resources, your course Web site, and the online registration system).

To affirm that you agree to use your Penn State Access Account in accordance with University policies and, if you are a student, to comply with federal aid guidelines that require a signature on file for charges that are not applied to all students, you must read the following section, provide the requested information, and return this acceptance statement to the World Campus at the above address. To provide you with a user ID and password, we must have this signed statement on file prior to completing your registration process.

ACCESS ACCOUNT ACCEPTANCE STATEMENT

By signing this acceptance statement, I agree to abide by the conditions set forth in Penn State’s Policy AD20 and the EDUCOM statement (guru.psu.edu/policies/ad20.html) on using software and network resources. I understand that access to the network and other informational services is a privilege and not a right. Violation of policy or law may result in suspension of network access or other information service privileges, disciplinary action, and legal proceedings.

Computer programs and computer networks have made possession of copyrighted material such as computer programs, music files, and videos easier than ever. In many cases, this is in violation of state and federal laws, and University policy. The University takes such violations very seriously.

If I own a personal computer, I will remove and keep off all material that I do not have the right to possess while it is connected to the University's networks. If I use a University-owned computer of any kind, I will not place such material on it at any time. This includes storing such material on personal Web space, and in the form of programs or files that I maintain on any University-owned computer resources. I understand that the University may disconnect my machine and suspend other access (e.g., personal Web space, Penn State Access Account) while determining whether I possess such material.

I also understand that access will not be restored until such time as I have clearly shown to the satisfaction of the University that either I have the right to possess the material or it has been removed permanently from my machine. Additionally, the University retains the right to search and/or seize, for investigative purposes, any personal hardware or systems connected to University computer and network resources if there is cause to suspect that such hardware or systems were used either in violation of federal, state, or local law, or in violation of the terms and conditions set forth in University policies governing computer and network usage. Restoration will be at the sole discretion of the University.

In addition, I will not engage in unauthorized copying, transmission, distribution, and/or downloading of such works in violation of federal and state civil or criminal law. I understand that my ultimate responsibility is to ensure that the copyright holder has granted permission to make or distribute the copy in question.

I understand that penalties for possession of copyrighted material that I am not entitled to include discontinuance of network access, expulsion from the University for students, and termination of employment for employees. In addition, I understand that I may also be charged with offenses under state and federal law that includes penalties of up to ten years imprisonment and significant fines if found guilty.

Name (please PRINT): ___________________________ Penn State ID or SSN:* ___________________________

Signed by: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Access Account user ID (please PRINT): ___________________________

(if you do not currently have a Penn State Access Account, please leave blank)

Program or course: ___________________________

(if you do not currently have a Penn State Access Account, please leave blank)

*The Social Security number (SSN) you provide for enrollment purposes, or when requesting specific services, will be used by the University to verify your identity for official record keeping and reporting. If you choose not to supply your SSN, certain services—such as transcripts, enrollment verification, tax reporting, and financial aid—may not be available to you, and Penn State cannot guarantee a complete academic record for you. Your SSN will be stored in a central system and used only as a primary source to identify you within the Penn State system; the Penn State ID will be used as the primary identifier.
Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA)

Penn State Student Credit Transfer Policies

Policies and Rules for Undergraduate Students, specifically “Acquisition of Credit” (reference 42-00) at [http://senate.psu.edu/policies/index.html](http://senate.psu.edu/policies/index.html), contain the policies for transfer scenarios.

The Undergraduate Admissions Office follows the above policies, set forth by the Faculty Senate of the University. All transfer of credit policies and processes are available on the Undergraduate Admissions website ([http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/](http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/)), and thus are easily available to all prospective and current Penn State students.

The following links are resources for students to learn about the transfer of credit protocols and requirements:

Transferring of Credits to Penn State from Advanced Placement (AP) Tests: [http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/ap/](http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/ap/)

Transfer of Credits to Penn State from Another College or University: [http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/transfer](http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/transfer)

Transfer Course Evaluation Guide: [http://admissions.psu.edu/my_admissions/tas/](http://admissions.psu.edu/my_admissions/tas/)

Transfer of Credits from the College-Level Exam Program (CLEP): [http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/clep/](http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/clep/)

Transfer of Credits to Penn State from DSST Program: [http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/dsst/](http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/dsst/)

Transfer of Credits to Penn State from International Baccalaureate (IB) Exams: [http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/ib/](http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/ib/)

Transferring of Credit from Military Experience: [http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/military/](http://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/military/)
INSTITUTION’S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS TEAM REPORT AND INSTITUTIONAL SELF-STUDY

As this section is reviewed, please refer to the significant organizational changes since the 2005 Self Study, as identified in the Executive Summary. In particular, some references in Self-Recommendations A, B, C, and D refer to offices and positions that have been re-structured since the 2005 Self Study:

In 2005, the position of Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education was created, combining the responsibilities of the Vice Provost and Dean for Enrollment Management and Administration with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and International Programs.

In 2007, the leadership of the Office of International Programs was elevated to that of Vice Provost, having a direct reporting line to the Executive Vice President and Provost. In 2009, that office was officially renamed the Office of Global Programs.

2005 Middle States Accreditation Team Recommendation: *Taking into consideration the team’s suggestion, the Institution should develop a comprehensive and integrated assessment plan, drawing in large part on the various assessment resources it already has in place.*

**Developing the Assessment Plan**

In 2005-06, the University, through its Coordinating Committee on University Assessment (CCUA), developed a plan to assess student learning: *The Pennsylvania State University Assessment Plan for Student Learning*. The plan was communicated to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education on March 29, 2006 ([http://www.psu.edu/vpaa/pdfs/assessment%20plan.pdf](http://www.psu.edu/vpaa/pdfs/assessment%20plan.pdf)). The plan includes a set of principles which guided the development of the plan and reflected the University’s practices. The guiding principles are organized in four areas: *value*, which speaks to the purpose of assessment to improve and assist with decision-making; *focus and ownership*, which articulates where responsibility for assessment lies and how it is supported; *methodology*, which acknowledges the variety of valid approaches for assessing student learning; and, *application*, which indicates how results are used and shared throughout the University.

The majority of the assessment plan specifies the areas of activity, defined as spheres of assessment. The spheres—institutional, general education program, cocurricular programs, academic programs and courses — each have particular assessment activities and processes which received attention during the development of the plan, and which we are now implementing. In some areas the maturity of assessment practices or support for assessment led to greater strides than were achieved in other areas that lacked a structure to support assessment.
In those latter instances, the level of activity focused on developing procedures and establishing support mechanisms.

From the outset, the University-level assessment plan was recognized as a dynamic plan – one that would be able to evolve as it was implemented and the individual units developed local plans around a University framework and timeline. After writing the Assessment Plan, the CCUA membership rotated and its focus shifted to identifying and prioritizing the University’s assessment needs and building capacity to conduct assessment, providing input on cocurricular assessment, and co-sponsoring a variety of assessment activities.

The CCUA featured a broad membership and included members from the faculty, governance representatives, colleges and campuses, and ex officio members from a variety of administrative areas. Leadership and coordination of the CCUA was provided through the Office of Undergraduate Education. The strength of the committee has been in its ability to focus attention on particular initiatives, such as events to enable sharing of best assessment practices, providing feedback on assessment plans, and accessing resources to support assessment. Members of the CCUA also reviewed and recommended use of institution-wide assessments that can be used to support General Education, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA).

Critical to the sustainability of assessment practices within all units has been establishing clear expectations, establishing responsibility for assessment at various levels within the University, and providing centralized support and coordination. Expectations and responsibilities have been reinforced via the University’s strategic planning process that incorporates assessment as part of unit planning.

A standing committee of the Administrative Council on Undergraduate Education (ACUE) will recommend criteria and establish milestones against which to measure progress. The ACUE will continue to work from, and update, the University Assessment plan, emphasizing the need for faculty involvement, and broadly communicating about resources and support available for assessment. Also, a recently self-formed community of practice – the Penn State Institutional Research Group – is sharing data analysis resources and expertise. The goal is to promote collaboration and to better inform decision-making on topics that cross organizational silos. These topics certainly include assessment; the work of the Institutional Research Interest Group should be connected to the direction taken by the ACUE. The Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence (Schreyer Institute) will continue to serve as a clearinghouse for assessment resources and consulting, and will also continue to maintain records of assessment activities throughout the University.

**Connection to University Planning**

Assessment planning has been integrated with Penn State’s well-established strategic planning process, with a long history of strategic planning that engages all units, links goals to resources, and monitors success through established indicators. The current plan, *Priorities for Excellence: The Penn State Strategic Plan 2009-10 through 2013-14* (http://strategicplan.psu.edu/);
Executive Summary [http://strategicplan.psu.edu/ExecutiveSummarypub.pdf], was developed through a systematic and deliberative process led by the University Strategic Planning Council ([http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/strategic_planning/uspc/index.html). The process included participation from administrators, faculty, staff, students, and members of the Board of Trustees. Unit-level planning is recognized as an important element in the entire process and enables planning and resource allocation to cascade through all parts of the organization. The principles at the unit level are similar to those employed in University-level planning, i.e., unit-level planning occurs through participative processes, is informed by performance indicators, and includes broad communication with stakeholders. Another important feature of long-term strategic planning is implementation and evaluation. At Penn State, the Strategic Plan Implementation Matrix, [http://strategicplan.psu.edu/StrategyImplementationMatrix.pdf], is the tool which identifies responsibility, actions required, projected start date, impacts of strategies, and selected measures of performance. Progress is monitored and reported to the Board of Trustees, President’s Council, the Academic Leadership Council, the Faculty Senate, and other key stakeholders on a regular basis.

During the recent strategic planning cycle, the University identified expanded learning outcomes assessment as a strategy toward achieving the goal of enhancing student success. The University called specific attention to the strategy by prompting each academic unit to develop and articulate a process for assessing student learning. Thus, the University’s Assessment Plan for Student Learning provided an important framework to guide actions and activities directly related to learning outcomes assessment. To gauge our progress in meeting this goal the University identified two measures:

- Percentage of academic programs with specified learning objectives.
- Percentage of academic programs with a formal assessment plan.

Both are included in the University’s Strategic Plan Implementation Matrix. The Schreyer Institute is responsible for collecting the information and assisting academic units in their efforts to meet the expectation. To date, over 90% of our undergraduate programs have stated learning objectives and the remainder are in progress. The learning objectives are in the process of being widely disseminated within departments as well as to the broader University community. Data are currently being collected on the status of assessment plans.

2005 Self-Recommendation A: **Assessment has to become a goal of all units so that they can understand the needs of those whom they serve and the success of their efforts. Therefore, the assessment needs identified in all of the challenges of the Self-Study should be addressed by the relevant units and appropriate assessment procedures implemented. At the same time, the Office of Undergraduate Education and International Programs and its Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence should take the lead in building on the various assessment activities in the University to develop and implement a systematic, integrated, university-level assessment plan.**
A systematic, integrated and University-level assessment plan, designed and guided by the Coordinating Committee on University Assessment (CCUA) with broad representation, strengthened the assessment efforts across the University by:

- providing ongoing dialogue to ensure sharing of effective assessment practices;
- enabling thoughtful consideration and administration of University-wide assessments;
- ensuring that responsibilities are positioned appropriately and actions are pursued with expectations for specific deliverables; and,
- maintaining focus on challenges and strategic directions.

Evidence of the effectiveness of the plan is illustrated by examining the progress made in each sphere of assessment, and by reviewing the progress in addressing recommendations specified in our 2005 Self Study. Beginning with the spheres of assessment, this report section will elaborate on the most significant progress or activities to address the goals in each sphere: academic programs and course-level, general education program, cocurricular programs, and institutional level.

**Academic Programs and Course-Level**

Since our 2005 Self Study, considerable effort has been directed toward helping each program establish learning outcome assessment practices that can be maintained and used to identify opportunities for program enhancement. The process has involved developing the capacity across the University, through workshops and seminars for faculty and academic leaders, and providing resources and tools to assist in the development of learning objectives. Also, budget executives were asked to include several key elements in their unit-specific strategic plans. Academic units were asked to include a discussion of progress and initiatives related to learning outcomes. In particular, these plans were to include information regarding academic assessment and how efforts to review programs will be accomplished, especially for those fields not subject to national accreditation reviews.

As evidence of the effort to foster outcomes assessment at the program level, the Schreyer Institute has been tracking the progress of academic programs in developing explicitly defined learning outcomes. The current percentage most comparable to that reported for 2004 is the percentage of respondents with written outcomes, with the 2005 Self Study reporting 68% (based on a 52% survey response rate). In 2009, 92% of Penn State’s undergraduate degree programs had written program goals, objectives, or outcomes, based on a response rate of 82%. The Schreyer Institute surveyed 148 undergraduate degree programs responsible for conducting degree program assessment (including 14 programs that are collaborating on program assessment across multiple campuses). Of the 148 programs surveyed, 123 responded. Of the 123 programs responding, 10 programs reported that they were still “in progress,” but 113 provided copies of written documents or links to posted information. The most significant difference is not the increased percentage, impressive as it is, but that the information is accessible to faculty, students, and other constituents of these programs. See Appendix A (or http://assess.psu.edu/GoalExamples/) for examples.
Progress toward each program having defined learning outcomes and each program having an assessment plan has been achieved through specific activities, institutional support, and a commitment on the part of academic leaders. Initially, the Coordinating Committee on University Assessment (CCUA) provided significant direction and planning of events that would engage faculty and staff involved in curricular and cocurricular activities. A listing of the specific events with the focus on assessment of student learning that have been conducted since fall 2006 is available at http://assess.psu.edu/Events/Past/. Additional and directed support to individual departments has been provided by the Office of Undergraduate Education and the professional staff of the Schreyer Institute (See Appendix B).

Establishment of a website (http://assess.psu.edu/), which includes resources and examples, supports the University goal of making assessment an important and visible part of its ongoing practices. Resources that demonstrate the comprehensive nature of the support available at that site include:

http://assess.psu.edu/ProgramAssess/ which provides resources and a step-by-step process to create a program assessment plan;

http://assess.psu.edu/Resources1/ which links to a host of internal and external resources to assist with everything from Connecting Program Goals with Courses or to Existing Evidence, or publications on assessment related topics;

http://assess.psu.edu/files/Assessment_Record_Example.pdf and http://assess.psu.edu/files/Assessment_Record_Template.pdf which provide a model of an assessment plan or a report on assessment progress that programs may adopt or adapt [while the assessment plan matrix provided in Appendix H (referenced later in this report) made sense to many faculty, social science and humanities faculty asked for an alternative – this example was developed by the Schreyer Institute to help faculty visualize how the text would read, it is not a real plan from a program]; and,

http://assess.psu.edu/GoalExamples/ which offers a collection of goals for a variety of programs at Penn State.

Equally important to establishing a culture of assessment has been developing a recognized network of individuals who share responsibility for the development of plans, collect and communicate data and results, and facilitate the assessment efforts within the college, department, or campus. A network of individuals (http://assess.psu.edu/Facilitators/) has been identified with the assistance and support of the associate deans and campus academic officers. Even though the majority of information has been specific to the creation and communication of assessment plans, there is recognition that individual perspectives and accounts of how assessment is used can be quite valuable to others who are beginning to use or develop assessment plans. Several of the faculty and administrators that have been involved have shared their stories via an online Assessment Showcase (http://assess.psu.edu/Stories/).

The next steps toward meeting the goals in the Academic Programs and Course Level spheres from The Pennsylvania State University Assessment Plan for Student Learning (Appendix C)
include ensuring assessment plans are developed for all academic programs. For example, a number of degree programs are offered at multiple Commonwealth campuses. Under the leadership of the Office of the Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses, 14 degree programs offered at multiple campuses are collaborating to develop shared assessment plans. These programs are informally referred to as “shared-degree programs,” and include: administration of justice; American studies; applied psychology; business; communications; childhood and early adolescent education; English; human development and family studies; integrative arts; letters, arts, and sciences; occupational therapy; physical therapy; psychology; and, radiological sciences. Each shared-degree program has a lead campus and a designated assessment facilitator (see http://assess.psu.edu/files/SharedDegreePrograms_AssessmentLeads.pdf).

**General Education Program**

In 1996, the Faculty Senate appointed a Special Committee on General Education to assess the General Education program, analyze other general education models, and recommend changes. Since then, individual components of Penn State’s General Education have undergone review and modifications, primarily to hone what was already believed to be a valuable program. When conducting our 2005 Self Study, and subsequently when developing the University plan to assess student learning, two topics emerged that were recognized as opportunities worthy of attention. One dealt with developing a better understanding of the effectiveness of the current curriculum to achieve the broad outcomes of the current General Education program. The other focused on understanding the effectiveness and breadth of implementation of particular initiatives: First-Year Seminar and Writing Across the Curriculum. Each of these areas will be discussed to provide an update on the status of the assessment plan relevant to the General Education program sphere.

**General Education Outcomes – Blueprint for foundational knowledge and skills**

The General Education program at Penn State is designed to enable students to meet nine learning outcomes (http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/general_education.cfm).

It is expected that students will meet these outcomes through courses designated as fulfilling speaking, writing, and quantification skill development, and courses designated as fulfilling knowledge domains in arts, health and physical activities, humanities, natural sciences, and social and behavioral sciences. Within each knowledge domain or skill area, specific outcomes have been identified which further refine the expectations.

Because the General Education program is legislated by the Faculty Senate and implemented by departments where the discipline or courses are housed, the responsibility for meeting the University expectations is a shared responsibility. The shared nature of general education presents an ongoing challenge for developing assessment of the General Education program, thus multiple approaches have been pursued since our 2005 Self Study. Resource material has been organized and made accessible by the Schreyer Institute to assist faculty members in their efforts
to define course goals and align the course with General Education outcomes (http://assess.psu.edu/GenEdAssessment/).

**Baseline Data on Student Experience in General Education Courses**

In order to understand the extent to which General Education courses meet the expected outcomes, baseline data have recently been collected to understand student perceptions and expectations relevant to acquiring knowledge and developing skills. The Office of Undergraduate Education conducted surveys of students in representative, and typically large-enrollment, General Education courses in each of the skills and knowledge domains. The goal of the surveys was to determine students' perceptions as to the degree to which a specific course would/did meet students' and the Faculty Senate's expectations for General Education student learning. Each survey had six questions: one regarding class standing, one for the reason for enrollment (required for the major, general education, or not required in any way), and four that explored the degree to which courses met the goals for each skill or knowledge domain as established by the Faculty Senate. Data were collected at the beginning and end of the Fall 2009 semester about whether students perceive the courses as meeting specific goals delineated in the original Senate legislation.

Some results of the survey can be generalized across knowledge and skill domains. In the summary that follows, “favorable” means that students responded “agree” or “strongly agree” to questions about the course meeting general education goals:

- Students generally have favorable views of their courses.
- Students generally have more favorable views of their courses at the start of the semester.
- First-year students have more favorable views than older students.
- Student perceptions are not governed by class size.
- Students who take general education courses to fulfill requirements within their major are more likely to have favorable views of their courses than students who take the same courses to fulfill general education requirements.

This survey was intended to provide a benchmark of students’ perceptions and will be very useful if, and when, changes occur regarding the nature of general education course enrollment, advising, or teaching, at which time repeating this survey with this benchmark data may prove very useful.

**Writing Across the Curriculum Initiative**

The expectation of standing committees of the Faculty Senate is that they provide informational reports as well as recommend Senate legislation. In the case of the Faculty Senate's Committee on Undergraduate Education, annual Informational Reports on grade distributions are presented, and recommendations on academic policy are discussed and presented. This committee also conducts periodic reviews to determine the level of compliance with respect to relevant previous
Senate legislation. Currently, the committee is writing an Informational Report on Writing Across the Curriculum to explore its implementation in each of the colleges. As part of this effort, the committee is evaluating course syllabi from both writing-intensive and non-writing-intensive courses, and interviewing faculty members on the availability and use of resources necessary to support the requirement with the goal of tracking changes in the process over the 20 years since the Writing Across the Curriculum policy was adopted.

**First-Year Engagement Plan**

As noted in our 2005 Self Study and reiterated by the visiting evaluation team, the First-Year Seminar program was recognized as valuable but without a clear means of understanding its effectiveness. Following our 2005 Self Study, various committees were charged to make recommendations regarding the First-Year Seminar. On April 29, 2008, the Faculty Senate approved legislation to reshape the first-year experience, based on the report from the Ad Hoc Committee on First-Year Seminars presented via the Faculty Senate’s Undergraduate Education Committee. The committee’s recommendations included an expectation that all colleges and campuses were required to develop engaged activities that would comprise a meaningful first-year experience. Each college and campus was charged with developing a First-Year Engagement program (those at University Park had to include a First-Year Seminar) and include, as part of the program, an assessment plan for determining the effectiveness in meeting the following goals and objectives.

Goals:

- To engage students in learning and orient them to the scholarly community from the outset of their undergraduate studies in a way that will bridge to later experiences in their chosen majors, and
- To facilitate students’ adjustment to the high expectations, demanding workload, increased liberties, and other aspects of the transition to college life.

Objectives:

- To introduce students to University study,
- To introduce students to Penn State as an academic community, including fields of study and areas of interest available to students,
- To acquaint students with the learning tools and resources available at Penn State,
- To provide an opportunity for students to develop relationships with full-time faculty and other students in an academic area of interest to them, and
- To introduce students to their responsibilities as part of the University community.

First-year engagement plans were submitted in Spring 2009 to the Office of Undergraduate Education. A Joint Senate/Administrative Review Committee of the First-Year Engagement plans was formed and charged with reviewing the First-Year Engagement plans. The reviews were completed in time for implementation in Fall 2009. Thirty-one plans, representing each campus and college, are available at [http://senate.psu.edu/FYE/plans.htm](http://senate.psu.edu/FYE/plans.htm). The public nature of the plans facilitates sharing of best practices. The expectation is that the First-Year Engagement experience is being assessed by the unit offering the program and that the assessment results will
be shared with the Faculty Senate for their future assessment of the effectiveness of the program. The assessment reports for First-Year Engagement are due in 2013-14 and will be reviewed by a similar Joint Senate/Administrative Review Committee.

**Cocurricular Programs**

Since our 2005 Self Study, the Division of Student Affairs directed attention to defining cocurricular learning outcomes and connecting those outcomes to particular programs within the domain defined as cocurricular. For the list of intended cocurricular learning outcomes, refer to Appendix D. These outcomes are intentionally broad and comprehensive for application across the University. More specific outcomes are being generated for individual programs and services that map to the cocurricular outcomes. In addition, the first-year competencies (also included in Appendix D) continue to inform new student programs and the first-year engagement efforts.

In order to build capacity among staff for developing learning outcomes and assessing the impact of programs and services, a professional development module and resource has also been developed on “improving educational programming.” This module, which was recently updated, is designed to assist staff in focusing their educational programming efforts on intended learning outcomes and assessment. The module includes a review of foundational student affairs documents such as The Student Learning Imperative (from ACPA, 1996) and Learning Reconsidered (from NASPA and ACPA, 2004) and the various Penn State learning outcomes. It continues with a description of Bloom’s Taxonomy, a guide to writing learning outcomes, and an overview of assessment.

**Cocurricular Certificate Programs – Operationalizing the cocurricular learning outcomes**

Student Affairs has implemented the cocurricular learning outcomes through the design of cocurricular certificate programs (www.edge.psu.edu). Each of these certificates operationalizes the general cocurricular outcomes and designs a more intentional curriculum for students to achieve greater educational and developmental gains. In addition, these certificates assist the University by providing opportunities for all students to meet these focused educational opportunities across all campuses.

The *Career Planning* certificate provides students with a series of online and face-to-face learning modules advancing them through self-awareness, career exploration, self-marketing, and developing a career path. The assessment data (See Appendix E) provide evidence that the certificate is enhancing the career development of students.

The *Multicultural Competency* certificate, which is in a pilot stage, addresses a broad definition of diversity and includes concepts such as privilege and power, isms, prejudice and discrimination, and social justice. Assessment data are incomplete at this time.
Other certificates are either in development or in initial planning. These include certificates on health and wellness, leadership, and service learning. In addition, a robust learning module on sexual assault awareness has also been created and is being used for first-year students.

**Curricular and Co-curricular Linkage – Surveys to understand elements of academic programming**

Our Student Affairs Research and Assessment office, housed in the Division of Students Affairs, has played an important role in collecting longitudinal data on student perceptions regarding a wide variety of topics. Particular surveys have been directed at getting feedback and monitoring progress for initiatives that span the University. For example, Penn State Pulse surveys gather feedback on student issues, expectations, and satisfaction, and provide an effective tool for Student Affairs to maintain a student-centered focus while gathering critical information on a variety of topics and issues. A few of those surveys that relate to academic goals are described below.

The *Newspaper Readership Assessment* has been part of the successful Newspaper Readership program at Penn State. The assessment of this program was enhanced in 2005 to include a focus on learning outcomes associated with newspaper readership. The summary of the most recent assessment can be found at [http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/pulse/155-Newspaper.pdf](http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/pulse/155-Newspaper.pdf).

Similarly, the efforts to assess the *First-Year Experience Program* have been part of the slate of Penn State Pulse surveys. Under the leadership of the Division of Student Affairs, in spring of 2006, a longitudinal study of first-year students was completed. This effort included the New Student Survey in September, the First-Year Experience survey in August, and variables from the student database. The more recent assessment (as a standalone survey) was completed in the spring of 2008 and the summary of this survey can be found by visiting [http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/pulse/156-FYE.pdf](http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/pulse/156-FYE.pdf).

Revised in 2007, the *Penn State Student Satisfaction Survey* enriches the data collected on students’ out-of-class engagement. This survey is administered on all undergraduate campuses and is scheduled to be repeated in spring of 2010. The summary report and frequencies can be found by visiting [http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/satisfaction.shtml](http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/satisfaction.shtml).

**Institutional Level**

The University's *Framework to Foster Diversity* is an example of an evolution of assessment at an institutional level. The *Framework* identified particular strategic indicators out of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) as well as information from other sources of institutional-level data. Also, assessment within University Libraries has been used to better meet the needs of students and programs with the goal of enhancing excellence and success for our students. The examples listed below provide strong evidence of the integration that the University is striving to achieve.
Framework to Foster Diversity – Evolution of assessment

The commitment of the University to assessment is evident in the strategic planning process. There is a pervasive understanding that all new initiatives will have an expectation of assessment, complete with defined actions, expected outcomes, and performance indicators. Complementing Penn State’s strategic planning process, that emphasizes linking goals to performance measures, is our approach to diversity strategic planning. By way of illustration, the Framework (http://www.equity.psu.edu/Framework/index.asp) demonstrates how University goals link to curricular and cocurricular goals, and University-level data collection and utilization. Thus multiple elements within the institutional level sphere will be addressed.

Since the implementation of its initial Framework to Foster Diversity in 1998, Penn State has made considerable strides toward building a truly diverse, inclusive, and equitable institution and in establishing an infrastructure to facilitate effective diversity planning, implementation, and reporting processes.

The Framework to Foster Diversity 2010-15 lays out seven challenges in four topic areas:

- **Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**
  Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity
  Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- **Representation - Access and Success**
  Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body
  Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- **Education and Scholarship**
  Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum That Fosters United States and International Cultural Competencies

- **Institutional Viability and Vitality**
  Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management
  Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

Accountability is delegated to units and executives throughout the University, with a requirement that midpoint and final unit updates report on progress of implementation of the units’ respective diversity strategic plans. And again, consistent with the University’s approach to strategic planning, the Framework outlines a matrix of goals and action items and the requirement that each unit include performance indicators that relate to unit strategies and goals.

Of the seven challenges, Challenge 5 (Developing a Curriculum that Fosters United States and International Cultural Competencies) is relevant to the University’s assessment plan for learning outcomes, and Challenge 2 (Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate) is relevant to the experiences of the students. The University identified targeted areas for improvement, e.g., enhance opportunities for learning via courses with multicultural content, and expand out-of-class experiences with service learning projects and study abroad programs. The manner in
which each unit (each University Park college, every campus, Student Affairs, World Campus, Undergraduate Education, etc.) addresses these challenges is defined by the goals the unit sets, actions which the unit pursues, and outcomes the unit expects to realize. In addition to the indicators for achievement that the unit identifies, institutional-level strategic indicators are suggested which enable cross unit comparison and sharing of best practices. One such strategic indicator makes reference to the results of the NSSE. Utilizing selected NSSE results takes full advantage of the University’s effort to coordinate the administration of key common surveys and data sets. See http://www.equity.psu.edu/framework/indicators/challenge_2.asp for an indication of how the results are used at the institutional level.

**National Survey of Student Engagement – Using institutional data to establish a baseline and monitor progress**

In 2008, Penn State joined more than 700 other colleges and universities that participated in the NSSE survey. Although several of Penn State’s campuses and colleges have administered the NSSE in the past, the University embarked on a more systematic approach to participation via a partnership between the offices of Undergraduate Education, Commonwealth Campuses, and Student Affairs. The decision to participate arose from a number of needs including providing strategic indicators, supplying initial measures of student centeredness, providing data to inform initiatives related to the first-year experience, and assisting the University with its assessment plan for the Middle States accreditation process.

In spring 2008, ten campuses (Abington, Altoona, Berks, Brandywine, Erie, Fayette, Harrisburg, University Park, Worthington Scranton, and York) administered the NSSE. Because the survey focuses on seniors, nine small campuses were not included based on the low number of graduating seniors on these campuses. At University Park, the sample required by the NSSE was doubled in order to allow for analysis at the college level. The plan includes re-administering the survey in 2011 in order to measure change over time, especially where the data support strategic initiatives. The student response rate was 51% of those surveyed at University Park and an average of 39% at the campuses. Approximately 4,900 University Park students and 3,501 Commonwealth campus students responded to the survey.

Penn State’s participation in the NSSE, which was coordinated by Student Affairs Research and Assessment, included the assistance of an advisory board for the survey administration and a steering committee to assist in the dissemination of data. Participation on these committees included members from the Office of Institutional Planning and Assessment, the College of Engineering, the College of Education, Undergraduate Education, the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence, Penn State Abington, Penn State Altoona, Penn State Berks, Penn State Fayette, and Penn State York.

Each participating campus and each University Park college received individual reports including means and frequencies for first-year students and seniors and a summary of findings for the five composite scores. In addition, each report contains comparisons to three groups. For the campuses (including University Park), they compare first to the other Penn State participating campuses. For the colleges, their first comparison is to the other Big 10 institutions that
participated in 2008. The other two comparison groups were selected by each unit. All units also have access to various resources to assist them with interpreting the data, as well as the raw data files to conduct additional analyses. They have also been provided with a “dashboard” to view their results based on the composite scores and how they compare to their respective groups (See Appendix F for a sample of the dashboard summary).

This initiative illustrates a comprehensive and integrated approach to pursuing and assessing institutional goals. It further demonstrates that a culture of assessment is being instilled through coordinated and institutionally supported activities.

**University Libraries**

The University Libraries has embraced assessment to better understand the needs of the students, programs, and community that rely upon that critical unit to enhance the excellence and success of our students.

As each academic year begins, open houses are held for new and first-year students at many campus locations to introduce the University Libraries in a positive, friendly environment. These programs annually attract more than 5,000 students who report that they find these open houses beneficial and that they increase their comfort level in using the vast resources of the University Libraries. Student assessment of the 2009 Open House held at University Park found that a record setting 96% agreed that the Open House helped them to learn more about the many resources and physical spaces of the University Libraries.

In 2007, the department of Library Learning Services was founded at University Park and charged with establishing programs and initiatives to reach out to first-year students and other special groups. Library Learning Services has developed programs such as the University Libraries’ Open House, the Undergraduate Research Exhibition, Information Literacy Award, Alternate Reality Games, Digital Literacy Contest, International Student Essay Contest and other exciting events and projects designed to engage students with the University Libraries in both curricular and cocurricular activities.

A variety of assessment activities has informed University Libraries’ instructional efforts. University Libraries has participated three times in LibQual, developed by the Association of Research Libraries, to assess how students and faculty perceive the quality of our collections and services. University Libraries’ Marketing Steering Team has implemented enhanced and innovative means of reaching students to inform them about collections and services. This group has used assessment activities to inform their efforts, including conducting focus groups of international students, World Campus students, and adult learners.

An increased emphasis on collaborative spaces and group studies, supported by collaborative technologies, encourages student interaction and supports the team learning concept. University Libraries is moving toward dynamic, flexible, student-centered learning environments called “knowledge commons” or “information commons” at many locations. Student assessment has found that students want everything to be “easy, fast and convenient” and that they want the
Libraries to be warm and welcoming. Therefore, University Libraries is re-envisioning existing spaces based on the needs of the students, requiring that the traditional concept of a library be viewed in a more flexible way in order to create a one-stop location library, technical, tutoring, and media services, all geared toward our undergraduate population. At University Park, the multi-phase Knowledge Commons is already well underway. The first phase, completed in fall 2009, includes a new Map Library, group study room, and classroom/collaborative learning spaces. In addition to this University Park initiative, Berks, Harrisburg, Wilkes-Barre and York campuses have implemented the Knowledge Commons/Information Commons concept. In addition, Penn State Brandywine is currently poised to proceed with a feasibility study. This renewed focus and investment in our physical environment, or “the library as space,” is not only critical to student learning, but also to student recruitment.

Further emphasis on the importance of assessment to the University Libraries is found through the Library Assessment and Metrics Council, created to provide leadership for assessment, metrics, and data gathering activities across the University Libraries in promoting assessment.

2005 Self-Recommendation B: The Faculty Senate, the Offices of Undergraduate Education and International Programs, and Student Affairs should work together with the various offices responsible for delivering services related to teaching and learning to ensure that there is integrated information for faculty and students concerning opportunities and support of undergraduate education both in and outside of the classroom.

Shared Responsibility and Shared Commitment to Success

The University has made significant progress toward integrating activities and support of offices and functions that enhance student success. The priority areas since our 2005 Self Study have involved restructuring support for international opportunities, enhancing testing support, and refining academic support and career support via the learning centers and Career Services, respectively. The examples shared below reflect these focus areas and demonstrate the progress made by joining forces or strengthening connections.

Several new avenues for enhancing academic support have become available in the past several years, organized centrally through the Office of Undergraduate Education and the Office of Global Programs and implemented at the institution, college, department and individual level. This new initiative, Penn State Learning, reflects a re-missioning of the former University Learning Centers with the goal of enabling students to break down structural and perceptual barriers to the robust learning that is needed to achieve deep and lasting academic success. Peer study groups are encouraged and supported in many disciplines, and faculty Scholars in Residence work to build bridges among the academic departments and between students and faculty members overall.
In September 2008, Penn State opened its new computer-based Testing Center, a collaboration of the Office of Undergraduate Education and Information Technology Services. Staff in the e-Testing Lab of the Testing Center work with instructional consultants to help faculty adapt and improve testing and evaluation in Penn State courses. For example, faculty members of the Innovative Testing Committee are working with partners from the Department of Mathematics and the Office of Undergraduate Education in exploring the use of computer-adaptive testing in the freshman testing and placement examination, with the goal of enabling students to address specific conceptual weaknesses without needing to enroll in additional math courses that may delay declaration of a major or graduation.

Undergraduate research remains a thriving and growing endeavor across Penn State. Students at all campuses and in all colleges are encouraged and supported to work with faculty members as part of their educational experience. WISER (Women in Science and Engineering Research), MURE (Minority Undergraduate Research Experience) and FURP (Freshman Undergraduate Research Program) target students in the STEM disciplines and place over 100 students annually into faculty-led research groups. The annual Undergraduate Exhibition at University Park, which features all academic disciplines including performance, brings together up to 150 student presentations. In addition to this University Park initiative, many other college, discipline, and campus undergraduate fairs and exhibitions are conducted throughout the University community. At Penn State New Kensington, Certificates of Excellence for both poster and oral presentation categories are awarded. At Penn State Abington, the Abington College Undergraduate Research Activities (ACURA) program concludes each spring semester with a poster fair for undergraduate research to be exhibited and highlighted. The annual Undergraduate Student Research and Creative Accomplishment Conference at Penn State Erie attracts participation from other Commonwealth campuses as well as other colleges and universities in western Pennsylvania. These formal programs and examples reflect only a small fraction of the students who are engaged in research and creative activities at University Park and across the other Penn State campuses.

The University Office of Global Programs is developing several Global Engagement Nodes (GENs) that will provide academic, research and logistical support for faculty members and students to broaden their horizons through international education. GENs in Africa and China have widespread support among the faculty, with courses offered annually in each area. The GENs offer an attractive, less expensive, integrated alternative to traditional study abroad programs, particularly in the STEM fields.

Sponsored by the Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education and the Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses, a design team of students, faculty and staff was charged with creation of an effective retention tool that was both student-centered and convenient for faculty and students. The design team wanted to identify "actionable intelligence" that identified at-risk students early in the semester, encouraged use of existing resources, and used Eckerson's process of analytics to achieve early intervention (capture, report, predict, and act). This new system, the Early Progress Report (EPR), is an online system designed to support students by alerting them early in the semester if they are not making satisfactory progress in their classes. Under this system, which complies with University Faculty Senate legislation mandating replacement of the dated paper mid-semester reporting system that had been in place since 1992, students receive
notification between the third and sixth week of the semester, thus allowing an opportunity to increase their possibility of success. Students receiving EPRs are encouraged to meet first with their course instructors and then their academic advisor, with the early delivery of these reports allowing an opportunity for reversal of such problems as absenteeism, missed assignments, and low test scores. In addition, this online platform provides helpful links to such resources as learning centers, tutoring services, and peer counseling services; and, assessment and monitoring capabilities are also built into the EPR system. Two pilot studies of the system were completed in fall 2008. In fall 2009, the first full implementation of EPR covered 29 colleges and campuses; at University Park, evaluations were completed for 53% of eligible students, and at the campuses, evaluations were completed for 72% of eligible students. These participation rates are impressive for the initial rollout of such a large project in a setting as complex and diverse as Penn State. The EPR design team will continue, with the expectation that this already-successful program will continue to become even stronger and more effective.

The Office of Career Services at University Park offers a wide range of career planning and counseling services, as well as sponsoring Career Fairs for both internships and full-time employment in disciplines across the institution. Over 400 prospective employers registered for the 2009 Fall Career Days, and well over 200 institutions came to recruit in the areas of graduate and professional education (including law and medicine). The Office of Career Services maintains strong working relationships with the colleges at University Park and at the Commonwealth campuses, many sponsoring their own internship, professional and graduate opportunity events.

On November 27, 2007, Living the Vision of a Student-Centered University, a full-day conference, was offered to Penn State faculty and staff. Part of that developmental offering included a session on Defining and Measuring Student-Centeredness which included dialogue and information on student engagement, feedback and assessment.

The importance of shared responsibility and shared success reaches throughout the University, including our Board of Trustees. On January 23, 2009, an informational report on Penn State’s participation in the 2008 National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) was presented, with our Vice President for Student Affairs leading a panel discussion that included the use of such data by colleges and campuses at the University. And, prior to the September 2009 meeting of the Board of Trustees’ Committee on Educational Policy, information was shared on our performance in Undergraduate Education, including the measures we use to evaluate our programs and how we assess learning outcomes.

**2005 Self-Recommendation C:** *The Office of Undergraduate Education and International Programs and the Faculty Senate should continue to study the degree of integration of offerings at all locations and they should develop procedures to assure curricular coherence and avoid “curricular drift” of courses offered at multiple locations.*

The University has made substantial progress to address this recommendation identified by our 2005 Self Study. Much of the initial effort was in establishing or modifying procedures to
strengthen the University’s efforts for curricular coherence. Later efforts and those that are ongoing are to facilitate connections by those within the same disciplinary field. The four significant activities described below demonstrate this progression from establishing procedures, to developing technology support, and to creating a culture that supports a shared vision of curricular content within each disciplinary area.

**Establishing Procedures: The Prospectus Process - Communications to assist program changes**

The Academic Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual (AAPPM) includes the procedures for implementing academic policies. Housed at http://www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/, this document has significant portions that are under the responsibility of the Office of Undergraduate Education, with involvement by the Administrative Council for Undergraduate Education (ACUE), a body that is comprised of associate deans for undergraduate education, campus academic officers, Faculty Senate representatives, and members of undergraduate education offices. AAPPM procedures are routinely reviewed and revised to reflect current practices and to implement procedures relevant to Faculty Senate legislation. In 2005-06, procedures for communicating the intention to develop new academic programs were strengthened with the creation of a prospectus review that would initiate the conversation among academic units and faculty. In part, this effort was to provide a more systematic means for colleges and campuses to inform and initiate conversation throughout the University when they were seeking modification to a program, termination of a program, and creation of new programs. In these references, program refers to undergraduate majors and minors.

The newly formed prospectus process has been in place for several years. Prospectuses are submitted by the associate dean or campus academic officer to the Office of Undergraduate Education. A slate of prospectuses (usually about 5 or 6) appears on the monthly ACUE agenda for consideration. Following discussion, a memo is sent to the associate dean who submitted the prospectus with information about next steps. A program proposal is developed, consultation is sought, and review by appropriate college/campus committees is conducted before the approved final program proposal is submitted to the Faculty Senate. The prospectus process, overseen by the Office of Undergraduate Education, provides a mechanism for the colleges and campuses to be more effective and efficient regarding actions and deliberations related to academic programs and to assure better coherence among academic programs and curriculum.

**Developing Technology Support: Course Submission and Consultation System (CSCS) - Technical support to support curricula review**

The Course Submission and Consultation System (CSCS) was a major initiative of the Faculty Senate and a high priority of the Senate Committee on Curricular Affairs (SCCA) through the time of its implementation in the 2007-08 academic year.

CSCS is an electronic course proposal submission system designed to facilitate the consultation, review, and approval process. The CSCS can be accessed through ANGEL, the University’s
course management system. The CSCS facilitates consultation both in the initial phase of course development as well as in the formal approval process. Facility for peer consultation within a unit, college, or discipline in the course development process is incorporated into the CSCS. Consultation groups can be created and updated as necessary. Formal consultation groups can also be created and would include, as necessary, the Administrative Council on Undergraduate Education (ACUE) deans, directors of academic affairs (DAAs) at campuses, and other key administrators.

Several advantages are realized with the CSCS. First, the approval process in the SCCA is expedited because of the immediate availability of the proposal to the members and the efficiency of reviewing all proposals in a standard format. Second, the uniformity of the CSCS platform ensures that course proposals are not missing key elements that previously may have delayed proposal approvals. Third, the course description and all other elements of the proposal are available electronically to the entire geographically dispersed Penn State community, thus promoting continual efforts for integration across the University. This enables curricular integration and facilitates teaching of courses at new locations.

**Creating a Culture with a Shared Vision: Uniform Course Abbreviation Project** – Legislation implementation to assist course description coherence

The Uniform Course Abbreviation (UCA) subcommittee of the SCCA was charged with implementing the April 26, 2005 “Uniformity of Course Abbreviations (UCA) within Disciplines” Senate legislation, aimed at removing redundant (mostly campus specific) course abbreviations from University courses. To accomplish this task, disciplinary teams (ANGEL groups) with representatives from affected colleges were established to achieve the goals of the legislation. Over 200 faculty members, organized in 48 teams, participated in the effort to consolidate location-specific course abbreviations and courses with identical or similar content. Several proposals were reviewed and approved by the SCCA in 2006, and by January 2007 twenty-three proposals were approved, resulting in 785 course changes and 80 course drops.

**Creating a Culture with a Shared Vision: Disciplinary Communities** – Infrastructure to support discipline-based faculty communications

The genesis for the establishment of formalized disciplinary communities was a Faculty Senate discussion that recognized the need for intentional efforts to connect our geographically dispersed University, particularly with regard to curricular matters. With the Faculty Senate guiding the direction, the Office of Undergraduate Education provided oversight via the Schreyer Institute, which worked with Information Technology Services to develop an online tool to facilitate the disciplinary community project. This secure site, accessible by University faculty, has been created (see [https://facultycommunities.psu.edu/](https://facultycommunities.psu.edu/)) and became fully operational in February 2010.

The Intra-University Relations Committee of the Faculty Senate proposed creation of Disciplinary Communities at Penn State in its April 25, 2006, Informational Report. The term
disciplinary community refers to a collective group that practices a particular branch of learning or body of knowledge. Some disciplines already have functioning communities that promote communication and collaboration among Penn State faculty in the discipline at different locations. In April 2007, the Administrative Council on Undergraduate Education (ACUE) confirmed the need to establish and encourage disciplinary communities across University locations.

Subsequently, in August 2007, the Vice President for Undergraduate Education and the Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses charged the Disciplinary Communities Implementation Team to establish processes and tools to help disciplinary communities organize. The team then presented recommendations to the Faculty Senate. The team’s report articulated the role of the disciplinary community: to assist with curricular coordination and integration, curricular consultation and review of courses and degree programs, content coordination of courses across multiple locations and instructors, development of instructor qualification guidelines, review of course credit transfers, and articulation agreements. The team also developed an initial list of disciplines, lists of faculty in each discipline, and outlined essential and optional functions for the communities. The Faculty Communities hub, a secure site that permits faculty with similar academic and instructional interests to interact and share materials, was launched in March 2010. This platform allows faculty to search for, join, create and unsubscribe from a community. At the time the hub was launched, it included over 5,000 faculty distributed across more than 215 communities. The term Faculty Communities was used for this platform (rather than Disciplinary Communities), as some faculty members were interpreting the term “disciplinary” using the punitive form, i.e., student or faculty misconduct.

Specific information and reference include the following:

AAPPM (P1, P3, P6) at http://www.psu.edu/oue/aapppm/;

Faculty Senate Agenda March 14, 2006, Appendix I; Uniform Course Abbreviation http://www senate.psu.edu/agenda/2005-2006/mar14-06agn/appi.pdf;

Faculty Senate Legislation Agenda, April 25, 2006, Appendix H, and Faculty Senate Agenda, January 30, 2007, Appendix A, ACUE AAPPM P12 http://www.psu.edu/oue/aapppm/P-12.html;

Faculty Senate Agenda April 25, 2006, Appendix II http://www.senate.psu.edu/record/042506_CORRECTEDcopy.pdf; and,

2005 Self-Recommendation D: In response to changing demographics and their implications, the offices of Enrollment Management and Administration, Undergraduate Education and International Programs, and the Vice President for Outreach, working with our campus college deans, should develop a plan for greater involvement of adult learners at Penn State.

Since our 2005 Self Study, the University has pursued several paths to address the needs of adult learners and strengthen programs and communication to that population. The areas receiving significant attention include:

- Creating Visible Leadership within Penn State for Serving the Adult Learner
- Communicating Educational Opportunities to Adult Audiences
- Expanding Support in the Student Services Areas
- Establishing Cocurricular Experiences

For the first time, a senior administrator was identified to serve as the University’s official adult learner advocate. The importance and stature of this position was to create a focus for adult learner support and activities, with the Vice President for Outreach serving in this role beginning in 2005.

Several offices, as well as the Commission for Adult Learners and Faculty Senate committees, have been involved to increase awareness, coordinate and leverage support, and expand opportunities. The number of undergraduate adult learners at University Park and the 19 Commonwealth Campuses decreased from 2005 to 2008, which was in contrast with the national trend of increasing numbers of adult learners seeking degrees or additional credentials, or retraining for new career opportunities. An early effort involved a marketing campaign in northeast Pennsylvania, which was also used by all campuses. Our current (2009-10) numbers show that the University’s adult learner population increased for the second year in a row after ten years in decline. We have 14,284 adults (undergraduates) enrolled for 2009-10 compared to 13,190 in 2007-08. This is an increase of over a thousand adult students, with most of the increase in the World Campus, although the Commonwealth campus adult learner population increased as well.

A notable accomplishment was in 2007-08, when the Penn State for Adult Learners website, It Shows, was launched. The website portal http://www.outreach.psu.edu/adult-learners/ is organized to improve opportunities for adults, strengthen organizations across Pennsylvania, and provide easy access to information. The site enables visitors to explore majors, learn about financial aid and scholarships for adult learners and review information on applying and having earned credits from elsewhere transfer to a degree program at Penn State. Consistent with the goal of making information accessible to adult learners, we have changed our internal auditing systems; beginning in 2008, the University can more easily identify the adult learner status of students.

Support services are an important component in any program. Recognizing that an adult learner audience may require services tailored in a different manner than those for a traditional-age audience, new hires that have more experience with, and knowledge of, adult learner needs have
been pursued in various facets of the University. In particular, career development positions (Academic Outreach) have been established, the number of advisors in the World Campus Advising and Learner Success unit has expanded; and, a financial aid staff member, in cooperation with the Office of Student Aid, has been added. Improving access by increasing financial aid has also received attention. The University was successful in receiving funding from the Osher Foundation to support adult learner scholarships, with a possibility of receiving an endowment in the future. In the last two years, the overall scholarship funds distributed to our adult learners grew by over $200,000.

Additional forms of student support have focused on career development opportunities, offering courses in local communities, offering online orientation, and putting in motion the creation of a video-based learning network across campuses to offer an adult learner oriented degree in concert with the World Campus. The number of programs available through World Campus either in blended or online formats continues to expand, thereby increasing access to an ever-increasing number of programs. The bachelor’s degree in Organizational Leadership (OLEAD) is an example of a program specifically designed to meet the personal and business needs of our returning adult learners. OLEAD provides students with flexibility by offering a combination of residence education in combination with online and distance learning opportunities.

In 1998 when the University launched the Penn State World Campus, there was clearly a specific focus on delivering educational offerings to meet the diverse educational needs of a diverse group of learners throughout the world. The World Campus continues its dedication to serving adults, with a large majority of its students (about 85%) being adult learners. The University’s continued support of the World Campus in this role, and its efforts to integrate the World Campus into the core of the University structure, are indicative of the University’s continued and growing commitment to our adult learner population.

Creating a culture that involves and engages adult learners requires providing opportunities to meet, learn, and socialize outside the academic experience. Successful efforts to address these needs include creating, with a $1 million endowment, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, which was established at three campuses—University Park, York and Mont Alto—to provide access to non-credit learning experiences for adults. For degree seeking students, World Campus accommodated adult learners at the All University Day to enjoy the camaraderie of a Penn State football game and the College of Arts and Architecture video-streamed a production of Romeo and Juliet to World Campus students.

The Faculty Senate will receive an advisory and consultative report from the Senate’s Committee on Outreach during 2009-10 focusing on adult learners. The importance of attracting and enrolling adult learners was reinforced via a Strategic Implementation Team that was charged with developing a focused action plan to increase adult learner enrollments across the University. Action steps from the Team’s report, submitted in February 2010, currently are under consideration. And, recognizing the supportive environment that is critical for this important student population, the Commission for Adult Learners has charged the following committees to pursue particular activities to strengthen support for adult learners.
• **Faculty Engagement Committee**, which developed an appendix focusing on adult student issues to be added to the online faculty handbook. The committee is working on a faculty survey on attitudes towards adult learners in the classroom to be completed in 2009-10.

• **Hendrick Best Practices Conference Planning Committee**, an annual initiative with planning and organizing of the spring 2010 conference to increase adult student and faculty participation from all Penn State campuses is currently underway.

• **Prior Learning Assessment Committee**, which is conducting a review of University procedures for assessing transfer credit, prior training and experience of adult learner applicants. This committee will provide recommendations to increase the transparency of Penn State for adult learner prospects through University websites.

Although progress has been made, additional work is required to provide a more integrated, University-wide approach to serving adults and to increase enrollments. These efforts will combine to advance the University in meeting its goal to increase access and success for adult learners.

**2005 Recommendation E: All units should review carefully the Self-Study and develop specific action plans to meet the challenges presented that are specific to their area of oversight.**

The individual and collective efforts of faculty and staff, organized by academic or administrative units, to address particular challenges are evident in the existing reporting and planning processes of the University, which appear throughout this report. The University has a deeply-rooted culture of planning, goal setting, and data-based decision making. As a result, academic and administrative units, faculty governance and special committees have benefited from the University’s efforts to develop tools to support planning efforts and to participate in sharing effective approaches and organizing action plans.

In the year following the accreditation review, the University initiated several events—panel sessions, workshops, presentations—featuring topics that would assist units in meeting the challenges identified in our 2005 Self Study as well as other strategic planning activities. Continuing their support, the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment and the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence (Schreyer Institute) provided venues for discussion, focused attention, and sharing of best practices. Some highlights that reflect the attention given the challenges identified in our 2005 Self Study include:

The Quality Advocates Network, sponsored by the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment, hosted several sessions directly related to the topics emerging from our 2005 Self Study. These presentations are typically attended by 50-100 faculty, staff and administrators, with real-time electronic linkages to multiple campuses. (See [http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/advocates/index.htm](http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/advocates/index.htm) and [http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/advocates/archive.html](http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/advocates/archive.html)) for a complete list of topics and summaries.
• May 16, 2006 “Assessment of Student Learning: A Dialogue”
• October 20, 2006 “Enriching the Student Experience”
• November 15, 2006 “Access and Affordability: The Path to a Bachelor's Degree”
• February 5, 2007 “Retention of At-Risk Students”
• December 3, 2007 “Using Data to Inform Strategic Planning”
• December 3, 2008 “Outcomes Assessment: More than a Plan”
• February 13, 2009 “Globalizing Penn State”
• April 6, 2009 “Enhancing Student Success”
• October 9, 2009 “What is Student Success?”
• November 13, 2009 “Connecting Policy and Practice to Student Success”
• December 4, 2009 “Who is Responsible for Student Success?”

Quality Teams, sponsored by the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment, have been in place since 1991 to assist units in pursuing a wide range of challenges and thus make an impact on the quality of Penn State’s academic and administrative processes. A few of the more than 100 teams since 2006, and those particularly relevant to our 2005 Self Study challenges include: First-Year Engagement, Electronic Student Aid Award Notification, Student Success Committee, Schuylkill Campus Diversity, Entrance to Major Re-engineering, Smeal Student Quality Teams, Continuing and Distance Education Strategic Performance Indicators, Career Services Certificate. (http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/database/index.htm)

Assessment conferences, sponsored by the Schreyer Institute and developed with input from the Coordinating Committee on University Assessment, provided several opportunities for faculty and administrators to explore assessment of student learning. Key events included (http://www.assess.psu.edu/Events/Past/):

• November 28, 2006 “Creating Effective Processes to Assess Student Learning: A Seminar for Academic Program Leaders”
• April 5, 2007 “Assessing Programs for Internal Improvement and External Accountability”
• September 25, 2007 “Assessment Workshop Series: Academic Program Assessment”
• January 8, 2009 “From Here to Implementation: Putting Your Assessment Plan to Work”
• May 11, 2009 “Assessment at Penn State: Sharing and Creating Assessment Stories” (University Park)
• May 13, 2009 “Assessment at Penn State: Sharing and Creating Assessment Stories” (Berks)

In the “Organized and Sustained Processes to Assess Institutional Effectiveness and Student Learning” section of this report, several illustrative examples will demonstrate the effectiveness of this collection of University resources, and the culture of assessment they help to support—all for the expressed purpose of improving and enhancing the educational experiences of students.
MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Penn State continues to experience the challenging times faced by institutions throughout the country. The downturn in the economy has presented higher education with significant challenges in an environment that continues to experience increases in operating costs and continual reductions in state appropriations. Despite these challenges, we remain committed and dedicated to our trajectory of excellence.

While times are indeed difficult, Penn State has been very proactive and thus far avoided some of the drastic measures that other institutions have implemented. Some of our recent actions have included budgetary reductions and reallocations, exploration and adoption of efficiency gains, and for the first time in Penn State’s modern history, foregoing salary increases for the 2009-10 academic year. Although we scrutinize all vacancies, we have thus far avoided firm hiring freezes. All of our administrative areas continue to assess their workforce demands, including making decisions on re-filling vacancies and in some cases unit-specific layoff situations. Throughout these challenges, we have avoided large-scale layoffs and mandatory furloughs. In addition, we have avoided mid-year tuition increases and we have continued to meet our financial obligations without the need for liquidation of endowment assets or additional loans. [Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]

Priorities for Excellence: The Penn State Strategic Plan 2009-10 through 2013-14 builds upon the theme of excellence across the University and includes seven goals, each with accompanying strategies identified to position us in those efforts:

- Enhance student success.
- Advance academic excellence and research prominence.
- Realize Penn State’s potential as a global university.
- Maintain access and affordability and enhance diversity.
- Serve the people of the Commonwealth and beyond.
- Use technology to expand access and opportunities.
- Control costs and generate additional efficiencies.

Providing access to higher education is a strong commitment, yet poses challenges and accompanying opportunities. The University has made significant efforts to increase accessibility, including our campus-based tuition differentials which have provided a level of attractiveness (and affordability) for our prospective students, especially those students who benefit (both from an access and affordability standpoint) by attending a Commonwealth campus. While accessibility continues to be a priority, this is obviously coupled with financial obstacles for low-income and certain nontraditional student populations, including first-generation students who would have otherwise not been able to pursue higher education. While the University has continued to seek and implement additional funding for need-based financial aid, such as funding matching Trustee Scholarships for high-achieving, high-need students, the gap between available aid resources and students’ needs continues to grow, thus providing continual challenges of access and affordability. [Standards 2, 3, 8, 9, 11]
In response to economic realities, some of the University’s construction projects will not proceed as expeditiously as planned; however, we do have sufficient liquidity to continue through on the projects that are currently in the construction phase. One such example is the Millennium Science Complex at University Park which brings together the Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences and the Materials Research Institute, thereby continuing the University’s pursuit of excellence as a world leader in materials and life sciences. [Standards 1, 3]

Demographic trends within the Commonwealth pose special challenges, yet they also provide exciting opportunities. Our traditional pool of college-bound young adults is decreasing while our international and minority populations continue to grow. This trend means that as a land-grant institution, we must meet the needs and expectations of changing student demographics. The opportunities resulting from this reality will better position the University to achieve our diversity goals as detailed in A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State. Since 1998, the Framework (which is under the leadership of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity) has been a continuous and parallel planning effort to our strategic planning process. Our changing demography, when viewed through the lens of our geographically dispersed campus structure, creates a myriad of competitive forces on an international, national, Commonwealth, and regional perspective. For example, our urban campuses offer very different demographics from some of our more rural campuses; western campuses differ in some regards from eastern campuses; and, each campus reflects its own regional culture, history, and student expectations. Guided by overarching principles, set forth in the Penn State Principles and A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State, the University continues to seek a flexible, responsive, and respectful approach to these differences, to test our progress regularly, and to make the needed changes. [Standards 8, 9, 11]

Continual assessment of student learning outcomes is critical to ensuring that we are on an appropriate path for both residential and online learning models. Partnerships with Penn State stakeholders, including entities such as the Administrative Council on Undergraduate Education (ACUE) and the University Faculty Senate, are crucial to build upon our already-identified successes and thus position us for continual success. We must continue to ensure that our expected outcomes are well-defined with appropriate student awareness. [Standards 1, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14]

Measuring the effectiveness of the University’s programs and services offers an important opportunity for collaboration across the various campuses and units. Inherent challenges in doing so exist, particularly given the size and complexity of both Penn State and its student population. It is increasingly necessary, however, to assess the impact of our activities, and in no area is this more critical than student learning, both in the classroom and beyond. We have the opportunity to form a new collaboration involving several existing efforts designed to measure student learning activities and outcomes. The offices of Planning and Institutional Assessment, Student Affairs Research and Assessment, the Office of the University Registrar and other units within Undergraduate Education offer elements of a comprehensive approach to the evaluation of our students’ progress and the University’s success meeting expectations and student needs. Bringing these resources together around common themes related to data generation and other evaluative measures on student success will expand our understanding and improve our outcomes. The National Survey of Student Engagement has been used by Penn State in recent
years, but there may be other instruments that also present useful opportunities to collect the systematic data required to make wise choices about our priorities and the resources we apply to the student experience. In a time of general resource constraints, assessment is an area requiring the allocation of more support, not less, and Penn State will continue to allocate resources to these tasks with their central importance in mind. [Standards 7, 14]

Rigorous program reviews will be explored as we balance our need for continuous examination of our pursuit of excellence with the realities of financial constraints. Consequently, a strategic thrust calls for strengthening and fostering our strongest and most effective academic programs and administrative units, re-directing resources from weaker programs and units, exploring the reduction of duplications where feasible, and generating greater short-term and long-term efficiencies. The Academic Program and Administrative Services Review Core Council was charged in October 2009 to provide analyses of programs, examine available resources, identify efficiencies, and determine how to maintain the University’s excellence in the face of increased fiscal challenges and decreased state revenue. Chaired by Executive Vice President and Provost Rodney Erickson, this group must identify $10 million in permanent cost savings and non-tuition revenue sources in each of the coming years. [Standards 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13]

The era of bifurcated student experience, where academic learning occurs in isolation from student development outside the classroom, is increasingly anachronistic. Research has made clear the inextricable relationships among student learning experiences regardless of where they occur. The challenge is to collaboratively bring together the many curricular and cocurricular experiences of Penn State students so that each builds on the other and opportunities for learning permeate the student experience we offer. With that aim in mind, Penn State’s many activities, including those provided by Undergraduate Education, Student Affairs, campuses and colleges, and Outreach, must engage in new efforts to blend student learning into a seamless, holistic experience. Expanding service learning possibilities, enriching intellectual activities in student living environments, creating more opportunities for internships, externships, and study abroad – all these efforts and more will be required. The challenge is to maintain the relevance of the residential experience in the University, particularly given the cost of attendance. Doing so requires renewed commitment to the idea that student learning can occur in many contexts. We must optimize our students’ opportunity to advance the fundamental purpose that brings them here – the opportunity to learn and grow – by bringing together in constructive partnerships the resources focused on their academic achievement and the resources directed toward their personal enrichment. [Standards 11, 13]

With the continued growth of the University’s World Campus, as well as other online learning opportunities, we continue to ensure that the delivery of all educational offerings and services be consistent in quality and scope throughout the University’s multi-campus system. [Standards 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14]

The University continues to strive to realize our potential as a global university and address challenges and opportunities inherent in this goal. We have an increasing number of students who are interested in education abroad, yet are faced with the realities of a global recession. Therefore, finding financial resources (student aid, affordable housing, etc.) for both short-term
and semester-based global experiences remains a priority in order to expand opportunities for education abroad. [Standards 9, 11, 12, 13, 14]

Penn State is committed to our land-grant mission and our continual pursuit of excellence while simultaneously upholding the high standards and expectations of our students, faculty, staff, students, citizens of the Commonwealth, and our global partners.
ENROLLMENT AND FINANCE TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

Enrollment Overview

For almost 80 years, Penn State has embraced an organizational approach built around multiple campuses across the Commonwealth. Penn State’s 24-campus structure enables each campus to deliver an array of degree programs, many targeted to meet the needs of local communities. Undergraduate students may complete the first two years of a Penn State education at any of 20 campuses, allowing them to remain at or near home before determining a specific degree and campus for graduation. There are opportunities for location-bound students to complete some Penn State degree programs at their campus of initial enrollment, while others may change to a different campus within the University’s 2+2 model. Each year, about 4,000 undergraduates transition from a campus to University Park.

Enrollments are managed through a combination of admissions criteria and enrollment controls at the academic major level, and in the context of limitations of space, faculty, staffing, and other resources. Over the most recent five-year period — that is, from Fall 2004 through Fall 2009 — total enrollments for all degrees, all levels, at all locations have risen from 81,664 to 94,301. This includes increases from 41,289 to 44,832 at University Park; from 31,326 to 33,540 at the Commonwealth Campuses; from about 2,000 to 7,138 for the online World Campus; and essentially steady enrollments for other academic units (Great Valley, Dickinson School of Law, College of Medicine, and the Pennsylvania College of Technology). In short, enrollments at Penn State are strong and the University has systems in place to manage these enrollments.

Finance Overview

Penn State’s total 2008-09 operating budget was $3.6 billion. Tuition and fees support 34% of the total budget; the hospital and clinic, 26%; restricted funds, 17%; state appropriation, 9%; auxiliary enterprises, 9%; other income, 5%; and federal agricultural funds, 1%. A budget impasse in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for 2009-10, and the continuing erosion of state funding support, are challenges for Penn State. For more than a decade the University has aggressively trimmed budgets, producing over $200 million in budget reallocations, and Penn State continues to make every effort to maximize the positive impact of funds received from all sources.

The operating budget is, naturally, distinct from the capital budget. Penn State’s total physical plant includes 1,642 buildings comprising 24 million square feet of space, with a plant replacement value of $3.5 billion on almost 19,000 acres across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Under its present five-year capital plan, Penn State is undergoing $769 million in planned construction and renovation of numerous academic, athletic, and auxiliary facilities on multiple campuses.
The Institutional Financial Plan

See Companion Documents.

Operating Budget Request – Fiscal Year 2010-11
Operating Budget Request – Fiscal Year 2009-10

Audited Financial Statements and Management Letters

See Companion Documents.

Year ending June 30, 2009
Also available at:

Year ending June 30, 2008
Also available at:
http://www.controller.psu.edu/Divisions/ControllersOffice/docs/FinStmts/2008FinStmts.pdf

Year ending June 30, 2007
Also available at:

Financial Information Submitted to IPEDs

See Companion Documents.

2009-10
2008-09
2007-08
**Actual Enrollments**

See Companion Documents.

Fall 1999 through Fall 2009
Also available at the following (use of the “Expand All” will provide more detailed breakdowns):

**Projected Enrollments**

See Companion Documents.
ORGANIZED AND SUSTAINED PROCESSES TO ASSESS INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING

Penn State has one of higher education’s longest and most comprehensive strategic management histories. Since 1983, the University has been committed to ongoing, annual, University-wide strategic management that connects mission and goals, objectives, institutional assessment, evaluation, and resource allocation. Planning is explicitly and systematically integrated with evaluation and resource allocation, and supports the ongoing oversight and direction needed to maintain and advance institutional quality.

University-Level Planning

At the institutional level, Penn State is guided by a University strategic plan. The current version of that plan is Priorities for Excellence: The Penn State Strategic Plan 2009-10 through 2013-14 (http://strategicplan.psu.edu/). That plan was developed through a systematic and deliberative year-long process led by the University Strategic Planning Council, chaired by the Executive Vice President and Provost. The planning process included participation from administrators, faculty, staff, students, and members of the Board of Trustees. Copies of the executive summary of that plan were sent to all of the University’s full-time faculty and staff members and is also publicly available at http://strategicplan.psu.edu/ExecutiveSummarypub.pdf.

The University also has planning mechanisms in place for other levels and for cross-functional processes. These include diversity, learning outcomes, first-year engagement, a five-year capital construction plan, long-term master plans (e.g., for University Park, the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center/Penn State College of Medicine, and other specific locations), integrated planning (which looks across and connects enrollment, staffing, and facilities planning), and unit-level strategic planning.

Unit-Level Planning

Unit-level planning enables planning and resource allocation to cascade through all parts of the organization. In combination with University-level planning, it forms the practical foundation for Penn State’s top-down/bottom-up planning approach.

At Penn State, a planning and budgeting unit is defined as an operational unit headed by a vice president or vice provost, a dean, or a campus chancellor. There are a few exceptions that relate to nomenclature, such as Intercollegiate Athletics, which is led by the Director of Intercollegiate Athletics. Every planning unit produces its own strategic plan according to guidelines promulgated at the University level, which are consistent with the University’s overall approach to strategic management.
Timing of the unit-level planning cycle assures that the unit plans precede the University plan by one year. Thus, while the current University plan covers 2009-2010 through 2013-2014, unit plans cover 2008-2009 through 2012-2013. The principles are similar: unit planning also occurs through participative processes, informed by performance indicators, and with broad communication with stakeholders. Forty-one budgetary unit strategic plans for 2008-13 are publicly available online at http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/plans/index.htm.

While University-level planning is anchored by the strategic planning process and articulated in the strategic plan for the University, the colleges and administrative units also have similar processes for strategic planning. Completed prior to the University strategic plan, the budgetary unit plans are guided by the overall goals set forth by the University.

During the most recent cycle, seven goals that build on the theme of making choices and setting priorities for excellence were established and communicated throughout the University community. The process was initiated in a June 26, 2007 memo from the Provost to the budget executives of the strategic planning units (Appendix G). In the memo, the Provost conveyed a reaffirmation to the commitment both to strategic planning and assessment, and provided guidance on the elements to be addressed by each budget executive officer.

1. An articulated vision of where you see your unit’s future in 5-10 years.
2. A discussion of specific strategies for achieving the vision.
3. (For Academic Units) A discussion of progress and initiatives in learning outcomes.
4. Strategic performance indicators appropriate to unit level goals.
5. An indication of how elements of the Framework to Foster Diversity are incorporated in the unit’s strategic plan.
6. A five-year budget recycling plan.
7. Units should identify those centrally funded, jointly funded, and/or enrollment-growth funded strategic investments that would have the greatest impact in helping to achieve the unit’s articulated vision.

A notable change from previous processes is the explicit requirement to address learning outcomes as noted in item 3, and expounded upon in the Provost’s memo with the following statement:

“Plans should include information regarding how academic assessment and efforts to review undergraduate and graduate degree programs will be accomplished, especially for those fields not subject to national accreditation reviews.”

The expectation provided an opportunity for coordination across the University, particularly by involving offices, such as the Schreyer Institute and the Division of Student Affairs, with expertise in assessment of academic programs and courses and co-curricular activities, and the Office of Undergraduate Education providing overarching leadership and coordination with the Administrative Council on Undergraduate Education (ACUE).
To facilitate the process and assist academic units to meet the learning outcomes element in their strategic plans, the Office of Undergraduate Education via the Schreyer Institute, in cooperation with the Coordinating Committee on University Assessment (CCUA), created a process to develop learning outcome assessment plans and communicated that process to ACUE (Appendix H). While the document provides guidance with well-defined steps for communicating an assessment plan of learning outcomes, significant support was also available to academic units. The Schreyer Institute and Office of Undergraduate Education, serving as consultants, met with program faculty, reviewed processes and provided feedback to ensure that the outcomes were learner-centered. They also assisted with identifying possible measurements and indicators. Assistance and consultation have been provided in support of collaborative efforts to assess programs offered at multiple campuses. These programs have many goals in common, but the geographical dispersion of the faculty requires a higher level of coordination and integration to ensure that the expected outcomes are achieved. Appendix I includes a template, and a fictitious example of an assessment record have been provided for adaptation by the programs (also referenced on page 14 as http://assess.psu.edu/files/Assessment_Record_Template.pdf and http://assess.psu.edu/files/Assessment_Record_Example.pdf).

To illustrate the progress in achieving embedded assessment practices that lead to decision-making relevant to education experiences, six examples are provided below. Additional examples are provided in Appendix J.

_Penn State Schuylkill: Addressing the Institutional Goal to Maintain Access, Affordability and Enhance Diversity - Using a strategy to build on the Framework to Foster Diversity_

Penn State Schuylkill is the University’s most racially and ethnically diverse campus, with 34% of its students being members of minority groups. This presents Penn State Schuylkill with the challenge and opportunity to build a campus community that stresses respect for, and understanding of, members of differing groups and their cultures, while simultaneously uniting community members through adherence to common values and norms stated in the Penn State Principles. As part of a campus-wide teaching theme on Diversity within Community, Penn State Schuylkill is assessing the implementation of the four Penn State Principles across all aspects of campus life. The four principles address academic integrity, social and personal responsibility, respect for the dignity of all individuals, and responsibility for one’s own academic progress.

An oversight team of faculty, staff, and students is leading efforts to collect evidence and assess effectiveness in teaching, modeling, and learning the principles. Five aspects of campus life are being reviewed and data collected in each area. The five aspects include Campus Mission and Purpose; Academics, Curriculum and Pedagogy; Co-curricular Campus Life; Community and Civic Engagement; and, Reward Structures and Incentives.

Funding has been committed to faculty course development; faculty, staff, and student development and training; and, ongoing campus programming which addresses the principles. In addition, faculty and staff are charged with identifying, in self-reports, their individual efforts that address the principles.
Penn State Erie: Addressing the Institutional Goal to Enhance Student Success - Using a strategy to expand learning outcomes assessment

Annually, the Penn State Erie administration identifies high-risk courses, i.e., those courses with low performance of students. The calculus-based introductory physics sequence has consistently exhibited a large number of D, F, and withdrawal grades. The faculty experimented with various approaches to improve outcomes, including a supplemental instruction program. These approaches were, on the whole, marginally effective. Rather than continue to attempt modest changes in the teaching-learning approach, the physics faculty at Penn State Erie decided to move from the traditional lecture-recitation-lab orientation to a completely new team-based approach called SCALE-UP (Student-Centered Activities for Large Enrollment Undergraduate Programs).

The assessment included an evaluation of student performance and also performance on a Force Concept Inventory Exam. These exams have been developed for national use and provide a means of evaluating the understanding of fundamental concepts aligned with the subject matter. The outcomes resulted in a modest improvement in the D, F, and withdrawal rate, and a very significant improvement in learning outcomes as exhibited in the scores on the Force Concept Inventory exam, increasing from 48 to 71 percent in one year. (For comparison, Harvard’s honor students scored 73 percent.)

Penn State Erie, with a University matching grant, invested nearly $225,000 in the SCALE-UP lab.

Penn State Altoona: Addressing the Institutional Goal to Realize Penn State’s Potential as a Global University – Using a strategy to expand education abroad and international scholars

In order to work towards the University’s goal of 20% of students having a significant international experience, a Task Force on International Education at Penn State Altoona was charged in 2004-05 with internationalizing the curriculum, assisting students in identifying study abroad programs, establishing a framework for faculty who wish to participate in study abroad and exchange programs, and developing student and faculty exchange programs.

The efforts of the task force increased the internationalization of the curriculum. Penn State Altoona had only sent one student to study abroad in the three years prior to 2004-05. In 2008-09, 70 Penn State Altoona students studied abroad, while the college ran four short-term programs and one summer program. Since its inception, the local study abroad program has seen 212 students travel to more than 30 countries. Ongoing assessment includes Penn State Altoona tracking the number of, and enrollments in, International and U.S. culture courses every semester as part of the Teaching Report prepared by the Office of Planning and Assessment. The Education Abroad Advisor prepares an annual report at the beginning of each fall semester to assess the effectiveness of our study abroad efforts. Both reports are shared widely within the Office of Academic Affairs.
Two types of resources that have supported this initiative include personnel and travel support for students. Based on the initial task force report, an Education Abroad Advisor was hired to assist student advising for study abroad and to work with faculty in establishing short-term, summer, and other study abroad programs. The Education Abroad Advisor applied for, and received, a grant for $42,000 over two years to support students participating in semester or year-long programs.

**College of Communications: Addressing the Institutional Goal to Enhance Student Success—Using a strategy to expand learning outcomes assessment**

Technological innovation, globalization, and social trends are leading to major changes in how news and information are produced and distributed. Both the College’s strategic plan and learning assessment outcomes highlight a need for curricular change, which the College has been pursuing over the last five years. A strategic and forward-looking plan captured unifying themes that emerged from multiple constituencies that participated in the planning process and the data collection process. Those themes are: the impact of technology; the overarching importance of ethics; the rippling effect of the ever-expanding international connections and globalization; and, the major responsibility for promoting and actively participating in democracy through teaching, research and public scholarship.

“A 21st Century Multi-media Communications Curriculum Plan” emerged which involves developing, financing, and building a multimedia center, both physical and virtual, whose two-fold purpose is to serve as a teaching facility and as a home to expanded cocurricular student media. The center will enable all five undergraduate programs to showcase student work and modernize curricula in ways that reflect the twenty-first century media environment. Resources have been shifted and new sources of support have been pursued both as a development strategy and via grant efforts to support the innovative curriculum change. The increased funding for instruction, projected modest and manageable growth, and a desire to adopt an even more student-centered philosophy are part of the College’s plans for addressing undergraduate education over the next several years.

**College of the Liberal Arts: Addressing the Institutional Goal to Enhance Student Success—Using a strategy to expand learning outcomes assessment**

The strength of a liberal arts education is that it makes students into especially effective communicators. Penn State’s College of the Liberal Arts, through its departments of English and Communication Arts and Sciences, offers substantial instruction in effective communication. The faculty members affiliated with the Center for Democratic Deliberation have taken three steps to create new opportunities to enhance student experiences: 1) the faculty constructed a new Rhetoric minor; 2) the faculty invented a new offering—Liberal Arts 101H, *Rhetoric and Civic Life*—that will give large numbers of Liberal Arts students the opportunity to improve their communication abilities in oral, written, visual, and online media; and, 3) the faculty unveiled an Excellence in Communication Certificate which includes the opportunity for students to create an online portfolio to demonstrate their proficiency—and add, subtract, and modify items for
their portfolio throughout their Penn State experience. In this way students will be encouraged to improve their abilities throughout their time at Penn State.

Assessment methods include enrollments in the minor and the Liberal Arts 101H course, and completion of an online portfolio, which will be assessed by a team of experienced faculty raters. The Excellence in Communication Certificate will also be assessed by maintaining a tally of students who attempt the certificate, those who abandon their efforts without completing it, and those who complete it successfully. The goal is to have an increasing number of students qualifying for the certificate from year to year.

The College has invested about $25,000 annually to support faculty in English and in Communication Arts and Sciences who are affiliated with the Center for Democratic Deliberation to create the rhetoric minor; to conceive of, design, and deliver LA 101H; and, to develop the Excellence in Communication Certificate. Additionally, about $10,000 has been allocated to support the director of the Certificate as well as tutoring services for students working toward the certificate’s completion. The Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence has provided $5,000 to support assessment of LA 101H. The College has also invested funds to permit LA 101H to be offered in sections capped at 20 students.

**Penn State Abington: Addressing the Institutional Goals to Maintain Access, Affordability, and Enhance Diversity – Using a strategy to position the Commonwealth Campuses for access and affordability**

For more than 15 years, students who begin their studies at Penn State Abington have transferred to local baccalaureate institutions in higher numbers than at many campuses. There is a long history of Philadelphia-based students desiring to complete their degrees in Philadelphia. Therefore, Penn State Abington has made a commitment to introduce new degree opportunities when it can be reasonably determined that introducing these opportunities will retain students. Every two years a thorough survey is conducted of first- and second-year students to get feedback on student interest. These survey results are considered with other data: national or regional popularity of programs, admissions data, job placement experience, recruitment and retention by competitor schools, current faculty qualifications, and the opportunity to enhance access, diversity, or adult learner populations. The disciplinary faculty, the Curricular Affairs Committee of the Abington College Faculty Senate, the College’s Assessment Committee, the Strategic Planning Committee, and the College academic leadership make the decision what programs to pursue.

For new programs, resources will be reallocated as needed based on the enrollments and other income to be generated from the program. Assessment measures include: enrollment data, retention data, student satisfaction surveys, internship and job placement, employer satisfaction, and the production of credit hours.
LINKED INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING PROCESSES

Linking Planning, Evaluation, and Resource Allocation

The following sections mostly pertain to how planning, evaluation and resource allocation operate at the University level. As already noted, complementary mechanisms operate for unit-level and cross-unit process planning. The University’s strategic plan itself, Priorities for Excellence, provides the framework of strategies and actions to achieve the University’s goals. The only way the University will have the resources to make future investments is to selectively reprogram how we deploy those resources. We have ongoing processes in place, described in more detail below, to link planning, evaluation, and resource allocation. The scope of the effort is well established, University-wide, data informed, and deliberative, and places in the forefront the idea that choices are critical to Penn State’s ongoing pursuit of institutional excellence.

Vision, Mission, Goals, and Strategies

The University-level strategic plan places Penn State’s vision, mission, and values in the context of the external environment (the economic turmoil of recent years, shifting demographics, rising costs of operation, a changing competitive landscape, reductions in state appropriations, pressures for accountability, and the like). The plan recognizes that these pressures will clearly necessitate changes and reallocations as necessary, and that the University must continue to find ways to evolve and improve while becoming more efficient and effective. After 18 years of internal budget reductions and reallocations, Penn State is an efficient university. Much of the “low-hanging” cost savings have been achieved. With more than 575 degree programs and over 100 research centers and institutes, it is increasingly important for Penn State to think and act deliberately about how to structure its mix of offerings at acceptable and sustainable levels of quality, cost, and demand. Some strategic initiatives will result in making resources available for other institutional uses, some are cost neutral, and some strategies will certainly require exploring new sources of funding as the economy improves and the University makes resources available as a result of funding choices and reallocations. All choices in resource allocation will follow the strategic planning priorities that correspond to our vision, mission and goals.

In short, the emphasis is on making choices and setting priorities for excellence. The University-level plan presents seven goals that build on that theme:

- Enhance student success.
- Advance academic excellence and research prominence.
- Realize Penn State’s potential as a global research university.
- Maintain access and affordability and enhance diversity.
- Serve the people of the Commonwealth and beyond.
- Use technology to expand access and opportunities.
- Control costs and generate additional efficiencies.
The plan describes specific practical strategies for achieving these goals, keyed to recognition that success will require collaboration among administrators, faculty, staff, and students from academic and administrative units across Penn State.

**Measurement and Implementation**

Penn State recognizes that attention to implementation and evaluation is part of successful, long-term strategic management. This is operationalized through several concrete tools.

**Strategic Plan Implementation Matrix**

A matrix in the University-level strategic plan identifies prospective leaders responsible for pursuing the actions required to implement the strategies associated with each goal, the projected start date for various strategies, a general indication of the prospective fiscal impacts of strategies, and selected measures of performance. Progress is to be monitored and reported to the Board of Trustees, President’s Council, the Academic Leadership Council, the Faculty Senate, and other key stakeholders on a regular basis (at least yearly). The implementation matrix is available online at [http://strategicplan.psu.edu/StrategyImplementationMatrix.pdf](http://strategicplan.psu.edu/StrategyImplementationMatrix.pdf).

**Strategic Performance Indicators**

Measuring progress toward goals is not new for Penn State. Since 1998, the University has tracked and published a set of strategic performance indicators in a companion document to each University-level strategic plan. In addition, planning units (such as colleges and campuses) also have established, and annually tracked, their own indicators. Those unit-level indicators are part of the unit strategic plans which, as already noted, are available online at [http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/plans/index.htm](http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/plans/index.htm).

The most recent set of University-level indicators is available online at [http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/indicators/indicators2008.pdf](http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/indicators/indicators2008.pdf).

**Academic and Administrative Review**

A key implementation step flowing from Penn State’s current University-level plan is something never before undertaken at Penn State – namely, formal, University-wide review of all academic programs and administrative services with an eye toward possible elimination or reconfiguration. The Executive Vice President and Provost along with the Senior Vice President for Finance and Business/Treasurer have joint leadership responsibility for this process, which began in early fall 2009 and has continued actively throughout the 2009-10 academic year.
**Academic Program Review**

The purpose of the academic review process is to conduct efficient, effective, and focused reviews of academic degree programs, extend the system of review to research centers and institutes, and support creative and realistic examination of University degree programs and their academic units. The goals are to maximize academic potential, reduce redundancy, and free resources to support greater academic excellence and make new strategic investments.

First-cut screening data, applied to all academic programs, has helped identify those few in need of further, in-depth analysis. The results of the initial screening are shared with deans, chancellors, or other senior administrators, as appropriate. Information and commentary are sought from these senior academic leaders regarding the particular degree programs and/or the academic units in which they are situated in order to assess further the quality, student demand, centrality, and future viability of the program or unit to the University’s overall mission. The opportunity costs of retaining questionable degree programs and/or academic units are considered in the context of the best use of University financial and other resources.

Coordinating Committees are charged to conduct further, in-depth analysis of units or programs that are characterized by questionable levels of performance and/or quality. This analysis may include interviews with program or academic unit faculty and staff, and may include comparative data and/or expert opinion solicited from sources outside Penn State. The members of the Coordinating Committees are drawn from an established pool of knowledgeable administrators, faculty, and staff from the colleges and campuses, the Graduate School, the Office of the Vice President for Research, the Office of Undergraduate Education, and the Faculty Senate.

**Academic and Administrative Support Services Review**

The purpose of the Support Services Review Process is to review selected academic and administrative support units and programs with the goal of improving the quality of services provided, reducing costs, eliminating redundancies where possible, and ensuring the greatest possible return on University financial and other resources.

The Academic and Administrative Services Coordinating Committee coordinates thematic reviews of administrative functions that have the potential for significant improvement and that are relevant to goals in the 2009-10 through 2013-14 strategic plan. The Core Council, in collaboration with the Coordinating Committee, determines performance criteria to select the academic and administrative support services subject to review. Sample criteria include user satisfaction, scope of service provided, mission centrality of the function, funding source(s), and efficient and effective use of resources (including the potential for outsourcing).

**Planning for Diversity**

Since the implementation of its initial Framework to Foster Diversity in 1998, Penn State has made considerable strides toward building a truly diverse, inclusive, and equitable institution and
in establishing an infrastructure to facilitate effective diversity planning, implementation, and reporting processes. The University recognizes that fostering diversity must be recognized as being at the heart of our institutional viability and vitality, a core value of the academic mission, and a priority of the institution. With its Framework to Foster Diversity 2010-15, Penn State begins the next phase of achieving our diversity potential. With similarities to Penn State’s top-down/bottom up strategic planning approach, the Framework provides units with a planning structure for implementing and systematically monitoring progress toward diversity goals.

As mentioned in the “Institution’s Response to Recommendations from the Previous Team Report and Institutional Self-Study” section of this Periodic Review Report, the Framework lays out seven challenges in four areas:

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**  
Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity  
Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

**Representation - Access and Success**  
Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body Challenge  
Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

**Education and Scholarship**  
Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum That Fosters United States and International Cultural Competencies

**Institutional Viability and Vitality**  
Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management  
Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

Accountability is delegated to units and executives throughout the University, with a requirement that midpoint and final unit updates report on progress on implementation of the units’ respective diversity strategic plans. And again, in common with the University’s approach to strategic planning, the Framework outlines a matrix of goals and action items and the requirement that each unit include performance indicators that relate to unit strategies and goals. The University-level Framework also includes University-level indicators. The complete Framework to Foster Diversity 2010-15 is available online at [http://www.equity.psu.edu/Framework/index.asp](http://www.equity.psu.edu/Framework/index.asp).
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Appendix K provides a comprehensive list of the web-links cited throughout this report, in sequential order. In addition, Appendix L provides a listing of web-links based on topical areas of interest should the reviewers wish to further explore any specific areas of interest (some of these links are, of course, duplicative of those listed in Appendix K while others provide additional informational areas that may be of interest to reviewers, arranged in topical format).

As our Steering Committee met and developed our Periodic Review Report, the collaborative exercise not only reinforced our level of pride for what we have already accomplished, but it also revealed a true sense of enthusiasm for the ongoing path of our initiatives and efforts. Development of this Report revealed that institutionally we have embraced the opportunity provided by the 2005 Self-Study and re-affirmed our commitment to University-wide assessment. While we were pleased with what we had done prior to that Self-Study, we also knew that we always have opportunities for improvement. And, we hope this Report has revealed not only our successes, but the paths we are committed to continuing.

We hope that we have, as indicated at the beginning of this report, accomplished our goal to “tell our story” of our continuation on the path toward excellence, consistent with our institutional history and our long-standing commitment to undergraduate education in concert with the tenets of the Middle States standards.