**Report to the**
**Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students**

**of**

THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

**Pittsburgh, PA 15260**

**By**

**An Evaluation Team representing the**
**Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

**Prepared after study of the institution's Self-Study report**
**and a visit to the campus on April 11-14, 2012**

**The Members of the Team:**

John Sexton, President, New York University,
70 Washington Square South, New York, New York   10012. **Chair**

Nicholas H. Allen, Provost Emeritus and Collegiate Professor, University of Maryland,
University College, MD 1616 English Place, Crofton, MD   21114

Arthur T. Johnson, Provost Emeritus; Professor of Political Science,
University of Maryland, Baltimore County, 26 Old Granary Court, Catonsville, MD   21228

Michael Ryan, Director of University Accreditation and Assessment,
State University of New York at Buffalo, 563 B Capen Hall, Buffalo, NY   14360

<u>Generalist</u> <u>Evaluators</u>
Brian J. Byrne, Vice President for Lincoln Center,
Fordham University, 113 West 60th Street, New York, NY   10023

Charles Caramello, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School,
University of Maryland, College Park, 2125 Lee Building, College Park, MD   20742

I.        **Context and Nature of the Visit**

The University of Pittsburgh, now celebrating its 225<sup>th</sup> year, was founded in 1787, and is a state-related public research university comprised of five campuses located throughout Western Pennsylvania. In addition to the main campus in the city of Pittsburgh, additional campuses are located in Johnstown (established in 1923), Bradford, Greensburg, and Titusville (all three established in 1963). Titusville is a two-year college, while Bradford, Greensburg, and Johnstown are four-year undergraduate colleges. Private until 1966, when it became state-related, the University now enrolls approximately 36,000 students offering certificate,  associate's, baccalaureate, master's, first professional, and doctoral programs.

Besides the campuses mentioned above, the University has Middle States-classified Additional Locations in Aliquippa, Butler, Homestead, Monroeville, and Mt. Lebanon, PA, and overseas in Prague, Czech Republic and Sao Paulo, Brazil. Visits were made by Team members to the Bradford and Greensburg campuses and to the Alleghany Intermediate Unit in Homestead.

Distance education programs are offered by the University on the graduate level: MEd's in English and Communications, in Elementary Education, and in Mathematics Education, MSN's in Clinical Nurse Leader and in Administration, Master of Library and Information Science, Doctorate of Nursing Practice, a Graduate Gerontology Certificate, and a Certificate in Management Essentials.

The University of Pittsburgh has been accredited since 1921. It chose a selected topics approach as the model for its current Self-Study, which focused on Assessment and Continuous Improvement.  The topic was chosen, as the Self-Study states, because it provided "the University with the opportunity to look in depth at a strategy to which it has been deeply committed for some time." The process was led by a 20-member steering committee composed of faculty, senior administrators, staff, and students. Two working groups were formed which had additional participation, one focusing on Using Assessment to Improve the Student Experience and a second on Using Assessment to Improve Institutional Effectiveness; a third group worked on developing the document roadmap used to demonstrate those Middle States standards not covered by the Self-Study. During the self-study process, meetings were held with a variety of University groups and organizations, and a draft of the Self-Study was shared with the various University constituencies. The final document was made available to the entire University community through a website. In November 2011, the University was visited for a day by two document reviewers and in April 2012 by a four-person Team for three days to confirm the contents of its Self-Study. Through its Self-Study, the University has demonstrated compliance with the 14 accreditation standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

II.        **Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation**

Based on the Self-Study, interviews, the certification statement supplied by the institution, and other institutional documents, the Team affirms that the institution continues to meet the requirements of affiliation as described in Middle States' *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*.

**III.    Compliance with Federal Requirements; Issues Relative to state Regulatory or Other Accrediting Agency Requirements**

Based on a review of the Self-Study, certification by the institution and other institutional documents, and interviews, the Team affirms that the institution's Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits. In addition, the Team affirms the institution's compliance with relevant requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008.

**IV.    Evaluation Overview**

The University of Pittsburgh is an outstanding university with an extraordinarily talented and beloved leadership team. The connection between the University's claim to genuine excellence and the stature of its leadership is deep; and its importance cannot be overstated. This connection is appreciated in general throughout the University community and is seen as vital in the particular context of assessment, the principal focus of its Self Study.

Over the past 15 years, the University of Pittsburgh's reputation as a world class research university has been advancing steadily. By any measure, this reputational advance reflects reality. From the undergraduate education it provides to the research it produces to the external awards and honors its faculty and students earn, the University can be proud of where it stands. Moreover, there is a justified (though given our cynical times, still remarkable) sense of pride in these achievements in every sector of the University community, from faculty (even faculty in units that have not been favored with major investments of resources) to students (many of whom have done both undergraduate and graduate studies at the University because, as many stated, of their "love" for the school). There seems to be an ethos of appreciation which evokes humility in those of us who come to observe it. And, frankly, the choice of assessment as the topic of the Self Study is yet another indicator of institutional strength: there is a genuine and evolving "culture of assessment" at the University; and the willingness to invite careful assessment of that culture by a team of visitors is itself a proof of that proposition.

Of course, there are many ways to construct a system of assessment and myriad ways to use it. The University of Pittsburgh wisely has decentralized the manner in which assessment is done, thereby allowing units to develop methods of assessment suitable to their context while insisting nonetheless that the measures developed be rigorous, meaningful and tied to goals. Thus, rather than having a separate office of assessment, each unit is responsible for assessing outcomes and progress toward its stated goals; the evidence produced in the unit is then evaluated through documented reporting processes and the linking of planning, assessment, and budgeting -- in other words, the assessment has consequences that matter. This decentralized approach has generated an impressive sense of ownership of the process, even among those who initially were skeptical about it; at the same time, the evaluative process ensures its use to further institutional goals.

An important lodestar for the University of Pittsburgh has been an unwavering commitment to excellence. An example is the way in which the University has developed initiatives in distance learning. Many universities, too often drawn by fashion or the promise of revenue, rushed to establish such programs as soon as they became technologically feasible; Pittsburgh chose to take a more measured approach. In 2001, the University created

its first distance learning program (in Library Science) and only after that program had succeeded did the University, in 2007, create additional programs (though it did permit individual courses to be developed before that). When it did permit new programs, it did so through a rigorous process, consistent with its organizational culture and values (with development by individual units and departments, approval through a centralized mechanism, and branding within the centralized Pitt Online structure). In all of this, quality was and is the top priority. As the University's system of assessment becomes more robust, commitment to excellence must remain a constant feature.

As advanced as its system of assessment is, the University of Pittsburgh is not a prisoner of the numbers produced. In the evolution of data into information into knowledge, the University administers its system with a careful injection of wisdom. It would be fair to characterize the University's approach as self-consciously reflective, evidence-based strategic and tactical decision making. The information produced in the assessment process is evidence used by decision makers in setting the University and unit goals, but it is not the sole basis for the decisions made. Here, the widespread confidence reposed in those who must balance the evidence produced by assessment with other (often more difficult to quantify) factors of equal (or even greater) importance is essential to the community's acceptance of the decisions made. It is important that this confidence be maintained as the years go on and assessment, now meaningfully integrated into the process of shaping curricula and courses within units and departments, increasingly is used for allocative decisions among units and departments. The admiration and respect for the senior leadership, especially for the Chancellor, which now exists at the University will be difficult to replicate when new leadership arrives; however, with attention to combining a collectively developed set of norms and diligent, transparent communication, there is every reason to expect that the successes of today will be sustained.

The greatest challenge to the University of Pittsburgh – no matter how talented its leadership or how robust its system of assessment – is external. While the University has been advancing, state support has been diminishing at an alarming rate. In 2001, the Commonwealth provided approximately 16% of the University's annual budget; in 2011, it was less than 10%. In response to these cuts, the University already has made operational efficiency a priority; and it has undertaken budget cuts, redesign of benefits, efficiencies, productivity increases, and the imposition of University-wide salary freezes. To the outside observer, these cuts were beyond bone to marrow. Nonetheless, notwithstanding this decade of diminishing state support, the governor on March 8, 2011, proposed $100 million in additional state aid cuts, more than half of the University's state support. After dialogue with the legislature in the state budget process, the proposed cut was reduced by $40 million. We would be remiss if we did not note the following: that excellence, once lost, is difficult to regain; that excellence at even a great university is fragile and sometimes evaporates quickly; that, in the decades ahead, great cities and states will depend increasingly upon the existence of great universities within them (the University today is a wonderful example of this synergy); and that reducing public support for the University of Pittsburgh and institutions like it is singularly shortsighted, even if judged in narrow economic terms (the maxim "penny wise and pound foolish" comes to mind).

Suffice it to say that, as it has been buffeted by these budget cuts, the University of Pittsburgh has been served well by its culture of assessment. The evidence produced will be useful in demonstrating the worthiness of the University as it seeks support; it has armed unit heads and faculties with information that will allow them to continue improving an already excellent research and teaching enterprise (several impressive examples of such positive

changes already exist); and it provides evidence to inform the difficult choices ahead (choices that will not be between the good and the bad, but rather between the truly outstanding and the very good). Though the use at Pittsburgh of the evidence produced by assessment for this kind of decision is relatively new and not yet fully mature, there is a clear and laudable commitment to such a process.

Thus, though it is certain that the University of Pittsburgh will face challenges in the years ahead, there is every reason to believe that the University, if given the chance, is positioned well to maintain and advance its special place in American higher education.

## V.   Compliance with Accreditation Standards

### A.  STANDARDS ADDRESSED SUBSTANTIVELY WITHIN THE SELECTED TOPICS

#### Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution meets this standard

**Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, students, staff, administrators, and others, the Team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

The University of Pittsburgh has a twenty-year history of institutional planning, budgeting, and assessment that has gained for it a reputation for effective management, stability, and growth during a time of decreasing state support. The Team confirmed the Self-Study's report that the University's planning goals have guided its resource allocation decisions based on a formal system of assessment during this period.

The Self-Study and interviewees attribute the University's progress and accomplishments over the past two decades in large part to its focus on planning and the evolution of a culture of assessment to support decision-making. The University is demonstrating that assessment can effectively support institutional improvement in a large, complex research university. Assessment is used to pursue institutional effectiveness, to support student learning, and improve the overall student experience. The University uses a decentralized approach that emphasizes accountability of unit heads to the next higher level culminating with the Provost, Chancellor, and Board of Trustees.

Based on this twenty-year history and many examples of how assessment has been used to support the student experience and overall institutional effectiveness, the Self-Study asserts that a culture of assessment exists at the University of Pittsburgh.  The Team commends the University's assessment efforts and agrees that a culture of assessment is evolving and is supported by the campus.

The Team found impressive leadership coming from the University's administrators, especially at the Provost level, using assessment to inform and guide the University's planning, resource allocation, and academic functions. This strong support continues with the current Provost, who was appointed just over a year ago. The Board of Trustees is regularly informed about the progress of assessment activities by the

Chancellor and Provost and uses that information to understand institutional activities and performance. The Team was impressed by the Board's commitment to the institution and to the concept of continuous improvement through assessment. Board members clearly understood that assessment is not an end in itself but a tool to improve institutional effectiveness.

There has been a continuous and open dialog with academic units in recent years about institutional goals and assessment. This represents on-going actions to encourage, recognize, and value efforts to assess institutional effectiveness and to improve programs and services. Positive administrative responses to recommendations from study groups and other University constituencies were cited in the Self-Study and confirmed by the Team during its visit. Such participation increases the likelihood that campus groups will be knowledgeable about institutional goals, aware of the purpose of assessment in support of those goals, and come to value and support assessment processes. The Team was impressed with the level of understanding of and commitment to assessment that interviewees demonstrated. Such an informed and knowledgeable campus will likely embrace and sustain assessment as it moves forward.

The foundation, therefore, clearly exists for advancing a culture of assessment as described in *Characteristics of Excellence* (Standard 7).

Planning and goal setting have become institutionalized to guide resource allocation and other management decisions. Planning is consistently informed by assessment (quantitative and qualitative data) and was insightfully defined by one interviewee as reflective evaluation influenced by evidence. The University's planning activities have allowed it to effectively manage significant budget reductions by the Commonwealth in recent years while continuing to pursue its priorities.

The Team observed the benefits of planning in real time, as the University coped with a series of bomb threats during the Team's visit. Staff, from the Chancellor to the football coach, reassured students evacuated from their residence halls late at night; shelters were prepared in case of such evacuations in keeping with earlier planning exercises; the Team was moved from one threatened building to a back-up site for meetings already prepared in case it was necessary. Without advanced emergency planning, the University could not have functioned as well as it was doing as the semester was coming to a close. Student acknowledgement of the University's concern for their well-being was evident to the Team in several different forms.

The strategy of decentralizing assessment responsibilities gives academic departments and other units the responsibility for collecting and using data and making decisions based on those data. Alignment with institutional goals and accountability thereby can be adapted to department needs; regional campuses can set goals according to their local needs and environment; and accredited programs have the flexibility to meet the requirements of their accrediting bodies. The Team believes that this strategy is a significant reason for the acceptance of assessment as an effective tool for achieving institutional effectiveness by academic departments and other units across the campus.

Academic goals drive planning (including capital planning) and the resource allocation process. Interviewees provided numerous examples of this fact. However, the Self-Study did not explicitly address, and the examples used failed to fully demonstrate how it is assessing each of its seven long range academic goals. The Team's understanding of the University would have benefitted from more explicit discussion of

how these goals have been used in the Planning and Budgeting System (PBS) and in providing systematic feedback to academic departments. Interviews with administration officials and especially with student leaders were helpful to the Team in gaining this understanding.

Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes takes place in many instances. However, according to the Self-Study and interviewees, it has been nearly ten years since the last comprehensive review of the University's Planning and Budgeting System.  In keeping with Middle States' Fundamental Element 2.6, the University may wish to conduct a comprehensive review of PBS in the near future to confirm the effectiveness of its processes and to identify areas that may need modification.

Different academic units are at different stages of developing their assessment strategies and processes. Academic review of programs is entering its second cycle. The results of this new cycle, in the face of increasing budget constraints, will be a test of the commitment of academic units to the process.  It is an opportunity to demonstrate that assessment can be of value in difficult times.

The discussion of challenges to assessment and recommendations about assessment in the Self-Study are primarily fiscal. This discussion could have been more substantive and could have included non-budgetary issues.  Discussion of how to sustain the impressive assessment efforts currently in place is an important part of the continuous improvement process.

The University will face challenges with regard to assessment as the budget becomes more restricted. One role of assessment is to help decision-makers choose between options and to make other difficult decisions. This means that some worthy options will not be supported in times of scarce resources. The Team found that there may be some confusion about the role that department assessment reports, department annual reports and program reviews play in institutional decision-making. Some units may not be receiving timely feedback regarding assessment reports.  It is critical that administrators clearly inform the campus of the process used to make such decisions and the role that assessment information will play in planning and decision-making. In order to maintain the commitment to and faith in the University's planning, resource allocation, and assessment activities, the administration must be responsive to the assessment work of the departments and provide feedback to them in a timely manner. If this does not happen, skepticism may grow, faculty and staff may doubt the value of assessment, and support for assessment may wane.

The University has taken steps to advance its benchmarking by making use of Academic Analytics, Student Experience in the Research University (SERU), and post-graduation surveys. The data produced by these tools are used, or will be used, to help departments with their assessments and benchmarking. This suggests the seriousness with which the University is attempting to develop metrics beyond the readily available and traditional measures. The University might be even more creative and bold in developing new metrics for assessment and benchmarking and move even further than it already has beyond traditional assessment measures. For example, the University might explore corporate training assessment tools, search for practices found useful in other nations, and exploit the expertise and creativity of its own faculty. If successful, this will make the University even more of a national leader in using assessment to support institutional

effectiveness and may contribute to the national discussion of higher education effectiveness.

**Significant Accomplishments**

The Team commends the University for its commitment to shared governance and open dialogue with administrative and academic units as part of the planning, resource allocation, and assessment processes.

**Suggestions**

The University may wish to consider conducting a comprehensive review of the Planning and Budget System in the near future to confirm its effectiveness and identify areas that may need modification.

## Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

The institution meets this standard

**Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the Team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

Institutional and program-level goals have been developed across the University of Pittsburgh and are clearly articulated. Individual academic programs have developed student learning goals and objectives appropriate to their respective missions. Suitable modalities for assessing student attainment of learning and program outcomes have been identified and implemented and incorporate a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures. Assessment results are utilized to improve curricula, program effectiveness, student experience, and educational offerings. Evidence indicates that assessment of educational program outcomes is pervasive throughout the institution, including undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. These assessment activities are planned and ongoing. Most faculty perceive the beneficial value of assessment processes within their academic disciplines and use the results of student assessment to guide decisions regarding curriculum and pedagogy.

The Council of Deans has defined nine learning outcomes for all University of Pittsburgh undergraduate students. Each school and regional campus has defined its respective core learning outcomes that map to these institutional learning goals. The individual schools and regional campuses are responsible for assessing these general education outcomes consistent with institutional guidelines and utilize the results to improve the general education curriculum. A variety of assessment approaches are utilized including the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS), course-embedded assessment measurements, student self-assessments, student focus groups, surveys, etc.

In addition, the institution provides and assesses a rich array of educational opportunities including undergraduate research experiences, honors courses, and service learning opportunities, among others.

Student academic progress is evaluated mid-semester and a comprehensive academic review is conducted at the end of each semester. Intervention is instituted for students that are deemed at risk. The institution systematically analyzes student retention and completion data in order to identify the major factors contributing to student attrition. Various programs including academic support services, institutional engagement initiatives, out-of-classroom experiences, etc. have been instituted to improve student retention and enhance the overall educational experience of the student.

During the past several years the University of Pittsburgh has made significant progress in instilling a culture of assessment at all levels of the institution. Particularly laudable is the inculcation of the assessment of student learning outcomes across academic programs. This success has been realized in large measure due to the sustained commitment and focus of the University leadership to achieve this important objective. It is the sense of the Team that in order to maintain, and continue to advance, the progress that has been made, it will be important for the University of Pittsburgh to continue to keep this goal as an institutional focus and priority. Considerable momentum has resulted through the substantial effort that has gone into the thorough institutional self-study. Although assessment processes are now embedded, for the most part, across all academic disciplines, these accomplishments could potentially erode over time if the University fails to maintain assessment of student learning outcomes as a critical focus for the institution. A challenge for the University of Pittsburgh is to continue the process and also build upon the notable achievements that have already been realized.

**Suggestions**

The University may wish to consider:

- A possible alignment of assessment processes, including documentation of student learning outcomes, with the periodic comprehensive program review process.
- Possible inclusion of learning outcomes assessment efforts by the faculty into their dossiers for promotion and tenure.
- Continued analysis of student learning outcomes assessments that might identify critical factors or characteristics associated with student attrition or academic success.
- Expanded offerings of freshman experience or engagement courses (e.g. exploration seminars, University orientation, etc.) to foster higher retention of entering students.

## Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

The institution meets this standard.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the Team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

The University of Pittsburgh maintains an excellent web presence with respect to its institutional profile, expectations for student admissions and performance; and, on student learning outcomes, detailing policies and practices and making assessment results available to prospective students and other constituencies. It has robust enrollment management processes in place that are consistent with advancing institutional mission.

The institution assesses student success on an ongoing basis through a variety of direct and indirect measures including student academic performance, retention rate, graduation rate, and a variety of external and internal survey instruments. The institution has in place an enrollment management plan and strategy aligned with a commitment to student achievement. Student learning objectives are clearly articulated to incoming and prospective students. There is ample evidence of academic advisement and academic support programs to help students succeed and achieve their educational objectives. A variety of student enrichment and support programs for underrepresented students and at-risk student populations are available, appropriately resourced, and routinely assessed. The institution is committed to sustaining progress and advancing student retention.

## Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution meets this standard.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the Team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

The Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Dean of Students reports to the Provost but also is a member of the Chancellor's Senior Staff, ensuring attention to student affairs at the highest level. A diverse package of programs and development strategies are available to all students, undergraduate and graduate to enhance their educational experience. There is a robust program of athletics at the NCAA inter-collegiate level as well as intramural activities. Well-developed procedures exist to handle student complaints and grievances of a financial, academic or social nature. Appropriate policies are in place to protect confidential student information.

The institution performs ongoing assessment of student support services, events, and programs and utilizes the results for enhancing the entire student experience. There exists a strong collaborative partnership between the areas of Student Affairs and

Academic Affairs. Extensive opportunities exist for civic engagement, undergraduate research, and community involvement. Evidence indicates a high level of student satisfaction with academic support services and co-curricular activities. Students indicate a very high degree of institutional pride and a sense of a nurturing community.

**Significant Accomplishments**

The Team commends the University of Pittsburgh for introducing a variety of innovative programs, including the "Outside the Classroom Curriculum" and the faculty mentoring program in the residence halls.

## Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The institution meets this standard.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the Team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

The University of Pittsburgh offers a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate programs to multiple learner communities through its main campus and regional campuses and offers additional graduate distance learning through Pitt Online. There are robust Guidelines for Conducting Evaluations of Academic Programs, which mandate use of student learning outcomes assessment for program improvement. Degree programs must provide plans articulating mission, learning outcomes, assessment methods, and review ensuring use of outcomes assessment for program improvement. Syllabi must specify course objectives as performance statements detailing observable outcomes.

Academic programs have developed student learning goals and objectives appropriate to their mission. These academic units have identified and implemented suitable modalities for assessing student attainment of learning and program outcomes. Assessment results are utilized to improve curricula, program effectiveness, student experience, and educational offerings. Evidence indicates that assessment of educational program outcomes is pervasive throughout the institution (see comments under Standard 14).

## Standard 12: General Education

The institution meets this standard.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the Team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

General Education requirements, expected outcomes, and processes for assessing outcomes are clear and easily accessible. Requirements include appropriate numbers of semester hours. The General Education curriculum ensures competence in written and oral communication, in quantitative reasoning, and in use of appropriate technology. It

incorporates the study of values, ethics, and diverse viewpoints, and promulgates learning of skills appropriate to various degree objectives.

The Council of Deans has defined nine learning outcomes for all University of Pittsburgh undergraduate students. Each school and regional campus has defined its respective core learning outcomes that map to the institutional learning goals. The individual schools and regional campuses are responsible for assessing general education outcomes consistent with institutional guidelines and utilize the results to improve the general education curriculum. A variety of assessment approaches are utilized including Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS), course-embedded assessment, student self-assessments, and various student surveys (see comments under Standard 14).

## Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The institution meets this standard.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the Team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

The extended commentary on the documents, and the documents themselves, indicate mission appropriate compliance with all fundamental elements regarding basic skills, certificate programs, experiential learning opportunities, and non-credit offerings. Commentary and documents indicate compliance with ensuring appropriate standards for programs and services offered at regional campuses and through distance and distributed learning.  The University maintains several units to promote success in curricular and co-curricular activities, such as the Academic Resource Center, Outside the Classroom Curriculum, College of General Studies, and University Center for International Studies.

The educational offerings at The University of Pittsburgh - Bradford and University of Pittsburg - Greensburg meet the standards for quality of instruction, academic rigor, educational effectiveness, and assessment appropriate to their mission and comparable with other institutional offerings. Each campus provides adequate and appropriate support services. Each has been successful in reaching enrollment goals, recruiting qualified students, and improving retention. Both have introduced writing programs that have had a positive impact in improving written communication skills. There exists a culture of planning and accountability.  Faculty members are readily engaged in student advisement and have a strong sense of community.  They are positive with regard to the administration and the transparency of academic planning processes, and faculty morale is very positive. Students express a strong sense of community to the campus, feel that the campus culture is intimate and caring, and appreciate campus facilities and infrastructure. the Team was impressed with the extremely positive leadership and energy that seems to pervade the culture of these unique campuses. Similarly, in a visit to the Allegheny Intermediate Unit in Homestead, the Team sensed a strong positive leadership and a commitment to using assessment to assure attainment of specific program outcomes, in this case cohort success in a new education leadership program for prospective K-12 principals.

Distance Education

Over the past decade, the University of Pittsburgh has demonstrated measured expansion into offering fully online courses, certificates, and degree programs. The University obtained approval and offered its first fully online program in 2000-01, a Master of Library and Information Science program offered through its School of Information Sciences. In the ensuing years, the University slowly added a small menu of individual undergraduate courses offered through its College of General Studies.  Current administrators describe the modest pace as a deliberate decision by the University leadership to approach the online revolution with caution and to ensure that whatever would be offered would be of high quality consistent with the "Pitt experience" in its traditional programs.

In 2007, the Dean's Council decided there was a growing need to build a small inventory of online, professional masters programs in order to move into new markets and to build the University's expertise in the online delivery format. Working with the Provost they developed a programmatic approval process for these future online programs. This process is a comprehensive one that requires justification of need, a full program description, and identification of required resources and support, course development resources, scheduling, projected enrollments and budgets, evaluation measures, and marketing plans.

Under the new process, online programs will be offered under the University's central online portal: Pitt Online. A revenue sharing formula was established in which 70% of the tuition would go to the offering school, while the remainder would be shared with the Provost's office and Central Budget. Guidelines for approval are specific. Online programs must be professional graduate programs, generate new student enrollments, fall under overall University branding, and use centrally hosted University support services. Additionally, degrees will only be offered in disciplines where academic strengths already exist; admission criteria will be the same as for on-campus programs; where possible, only full-time faculty will teach in the online program; and faculty who teach online must receive training. Online programs must be interactive in nature, and appropriate assessment measures must be used to assure student learning is the equivalent to that obtained in on-campus courses.

The University of Pittsburgh is well along in implementing the above process. The University currently lists nine certificate, masters, or post-masters programs in place, offered by the Schools of Education, Nursing, Information Sciences, and College of Business Administration.  Overall online enrollments for 2011-12 were projected at an unduplicated headcount of 5700. A number of new programs are nearing proposal stage or are in development. All online programs are offered through Pitt Online; the University's Center for Instructional Development and Distance Education provides the centralized course development support and training for faculty responsible for the particular online courses in the Schools.

The Team confirms that current online offerings are consistent with several provisions of the Mission Statement of the University to respond to the needs of the citizens of Pennsylvania "as well as to the broader needs of the nation and the world." The guidelines established in the online program approval process make especially clear that online offerings shall be of equal quality to those courses and programs on campus. Online courses and programs shall be developed by the same faculty who teach in the on-campus programs.

The University has already established impressive support systems for online students. These include access to the University Library System and its large collection of digital resources, as well as delivery of hard copy resources. The University's Computing Services and Systems Development unit (CSSD) provides 24/7 technology help services, my.pitt.edu, and student computing accounts. Online students are assigned an online academic advisor similarly to on-campus students.  Proctoring services for significant exams are delivered at testing centers within the Pitt region as well as for students outside the region and state at arranged locations.

The University evaluates its online programs in a manner similar to assessment of its on-campus programs. Schools proposing online programs must outline assessment measures in the business proposal for their online program. In addition several comparative studies have been conducted already to confirm that students in online courses have achieved the same level of learning as those in similar on-campus sections. The Office of Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching administers course specific student surveys that are forwarded to the schools for analysis. Pitt Online runs a technology and service survey of online students. For spring 2012, 94.4% of online students said they would recommend Pitt Online to others.

The Team notes the University's impressive effort to comply with individual state authorization requirements across the nation so that students in other states can legitimately enroll in the University's online programs. Those states for which authorization has not yet been obtained are clearly identified on the Pitt Online website so that prospective students from those states will know not to apply.

**Significant accomplishments**

The Team commends the University for pursuing a consistent and measured strategy for distance education that fits its institutional values and culture for decentralized administration of online programs guided by centralized direction for their quality, support, branding, and strategic fit.

The Team commends the University for its development of an exceptionally clear and comprehensive program approval process for online programs.

STANDARDS REVIEWED VIA DOCUMENTATION

Based on the review of documentation, the Team has determined that the institution meets the following standards:

**Standard 1: Mission and Goals**

The University of Pittsburgh Mission Statement, approved in 1995 after broad consultation within the University community, is clear and focused.  The mission statement outlines six broad institutional goals, support for undergraduate and graduate teaching, research, creative and scholarly activity, and engagement with external constituencies to foster the transfer of knowledge and the University's contribution to social, intellectual and economic development.  The mission goals function as the strategic plan for the institution to be realized with greater specificity in the plans of the individual schools and other units of the institution.

### Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal

The University employs a comprehensive Planning and Budget System (PBS) which incorporates into a single process both long term and short term planning based on data driven outcomes to achieve long term and short term goals of the institution and each responsibility center.  The PBS System clearly identifies each level of responsible decision making based on collegial consultation.  Annual planning and budgeting submissions are subject to candid, critical review by the appropriate authority.

### Standard 3: Institutional Resources

University financial planning begins with a "bottom up" approach in which responsibility centers submit to senior management the budget proposals.  A University planning and budget committee with broad representation develops an annual parameters budget for the institution based on anticipated revenues and expenses.  Financial results are monitored by the Board of Trustees budget committee, detailed quarterly reports and an annual independent audit supervised by the trustee audit committee.  The University has a comprehensive twelve-year facilities plan through 2018 in place and, subject to available financing, implements a portion of the plan on an annual basis.  A similar plan exists for information technology.  As a "best practice" the University has implemented key aspects of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 to insure that key financial controls are appropriately imbedded in its business operations.

### Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

Well defined governance procedures exist at the University with appropriate opportunities for input from faculty, students and Trustees as well as other public stakeholders.  Policy and procedures are codified in writing and widely available through the University website.  Shared governance is implemented through such institutions as the University Senate, including the Faculty Assembly, Senate Council and fifteen standing committees which include faculty, staff and students.  There are written conflict of interest policies for both the Board of Trustees and the faculty and staff of the University.  The Board of Trustees has a complex membership reflecting the institution's state related status.

### Standard 5: Administration

The University of Pittsburgh has strong, qualified senior staff with commitment to the institution.  The administrative structure matches functional priorities including leadership at four regional campuses.  The Offices of the Provost and of the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences provide leadership for most University functions.  Health sciences schools report to the Senior Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences.  Information systems and decision making protocols are appropriate for a complex institution.

### Standard 6: Integrity

The University of Pittsburgh has well established and widely disseminated policies ensuring fair and impartial processes regarding faculty, students, and staff, including Guidelines for Academic Integrity and Student Codes of Conduct.   The University not only has robust policies ensuring academic freedom and appropriate

intellectual property rights, but also provided case studies.   Accurate and easily accessible information is provided to students regarding requirements and to the University community regarding accreditation reports and data on quality indicators.

## Standard 10: Faculty

The University of Pittsburgh recruits appropriately prepared and qualified faculty; provides appropriate institutional support for faculty development; assesses faculty quality; disseminates policies and practices regarding faculty affairs; and recognizes faculty achievements.  It recognizes, encourages, and rewards linkages between research/scholarship, teaching, and service, and it establishes and disseminates criteria for appointment, supervision, and review of part-time and other adjunct faculty.

## VI. Summary Recommendations

None