

2016 Self Study Report: The University of Maryland, College Park Submitted to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Executive Summary

Institutional overview

The University of Maryland, College Park (referred to throughout the report as UMD), is a public research university; the flagship campus of the University System of Maryland; the 1862 Land Grant institution in the state; and, as of 2014, a member of the Big Ten Conference and Academic Alliance. It is a member of the Association of American Universities, an organization composed of the leading research universities in the United States and Canada. As a land-grant institution, the university shares its research, educational, cultural, and technological strengths with the Maryland citizenry and other constituencies. Its collaborations with state, federal, private and non-profit partners promote economic development and improve quality of life. As a Carnegie Doctoral University (classified as Highest Research Activity), the university ranks among the best public research universities in the United States, and strives for excellence in all of its activities, including academics, the performing arts, community engagement, and intercollegiate athletics. One of the most significant and transformational changes since the last accreditation review has been the creation of a strategic partnership with the University of Maryland, Baltimore, called MPowering the State (or MPower), which has greatly expanded research and educational opportunities in an array of fields from bioscience and engineering to law, public health, and agriculture. As of 2016, this partnership between the two institutions has been codified into Maryland state law as the “Strategic Partnership known as The University of Maryland.” Other similarly creative partnerships have enabled UMD to continue to grow despite a decade of shrinking federal funding. This has been a period of innovation and entrepreneurship at UMD.

Process leading to the Self Study; a culture of self-analysis

The Middle States review and the opportunity for reflection provided by the self study process have played an important role in the larger strategic planning process at UMD. The last Self Study took place in 2007 and was a catalyst for a campus-wide initiative that resulted in the development of the 2008 strategic plan, entitled *Transforming Maryland: Higher Expectations*. This strategic plan served as the context for UMD's 2012 Periodic Review Report and now, eight years later, continues to provide fundamental benchmarks against which the university strives for continued institutional improvement. In 2015, President Loh created the Flagship 2020 Commission, which divided into four workgroups and an overarching faculty oversight board. These groups sought to identify opportunities for new revenue generation; for innovation and efficiencies in administration, research, and education; for revising and rationalizing the budget

model; and, finally, for revising—but not rewriting—the seminal 2008 strategic plan. The resulting document, *Equal to the Best: 2016 Strategic Plan Update*, was approved by the University Senate in April. The report containing the synthesized findings and recommendations of the Flagship 2020 Commission was finalized in late September and the Administrative Modernization Team is operationalizing these recommendations in an effort to streamline processes and redirect recouped funds toward the mission of UMD. The span of time between the 2007 Middle States review and this review has been a decade of tremendous growth at UMD and the institution has been rigorous in conducting self analyses and strategic planning. MSCHE reviews have been a driver in this process.

The initial draft of the self-study was made available to the entire university community for comment and review in September 2016. Feedback was collected and incorporated into the final version.

Organization of the Self-Study

This self-study is organized around the 2014 MSCHE Standards for Accreditation:

Standard I: Mission and Goals

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

Standard IV: Support of the Student Learning Experience

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

Standard VII: Governance and Leadership

In preparing for the 2016 Middle States Accreditation Review, seven working groups were established to address each of the seven standards. Each working group was supported by the participation, advice, and assistance of many individuals from across the university community, and constituents represented a diverse cross section of campus stakeholders. Each of the seven working groups carried out a comprehensive review of university documents, policies, procedures, informal practices, and current activities that spoke to their particular standard. Relevant documents and materials were gathered together by each group (many of which are hyperlinked throughout the report and appear in the appendices) and a report was developed from these supporting materials to demonstrate compliance with the standard for which they were responsible. Each standard is addressed in its own chapter in the comprehensive self-study report, and associated criteria are attended to in detail. Each chapter concludes with a statement that assesses whether or not the standard and associated criteria have been met. In all cases, the working groups concluded that the criteria have been met. However, the working groups also identified a number of areas for improvement.

Summary of Recommendations

A number of recommendations emerged from the efforts of the working groups. The Middle States Steering Committee reviewed them and consolidated them into those that relate to multiple standards or to the campus as a whole, that are actionable, that are tied to the strategic priorities identified through the work of the Flagship 2020 commission, and that could have the most immediate impact for continued improvement of the university. The Steering Committee settled on eleven recommendations, which are summarized in tabular form at the end of the report. Each recommendation is tied to the standard (or standards) to which it speaks. The recommendations are to:

1- Develop a "policy on policies and procedures" that explains how policies are created and revised and that calls for regular reviews of existing policies and procedures.

This recommendation emerged primarily from Standard II. While many policies and procedures are reviewed periodically on an ad hoc basis, it is recommended that policies and procedures be reviewed more regularly. For example, the Provost's office took the initiative of updating the promotion and tenure policies and procedures through the work of a joint Provost/Senate task force and subsequent passage by the Senate. These recent revisions of the policy also require that each unit's promotion and tenure criteria be reviewed no less frequently than once every five years. Similar strategies could be implemented more widely across the campus as a mechanism for continuous improvement.

2- Improve methods to disseminate and increase awareness of important policies and procedures among all of its constituencies.

This recommendation emerged from several working groups, but most generally from the work related to Standards II and III. In relation to Standard II, the university's policies and procedures are, indeed, firmly grounded in a philosophy of ethics and integrity. The university maintains a Web site with relevant policies for faculty, staff, and students, which are readily accessible to the campus. However, handbooks, catalogs, and student-facing and faculty-facing Web sites do not always keep up with changes as they occur. For new policies or major revisions, community members could benefit from summary guidelines and/or "frequently asked questions". This is particularly important for student-facing sites with curriculum changes and academic guidelines. A means of improvement could be the implementation of an integrated customer relationship management (CRM) system that could allow for a more automated update process.

3- Strengthen the university's efforts to hire and retain underrepresented minority faculty.

This recommendation, which emerged from the work related to Standard II, is essentially a reaffirmation of a goal clearly articulated in the 2016 Strategic Plan Update, calling for continued efforts to diversify the professoriate. While the university is already engaged

in a number of strategies, significant progress will require a sustained and focused effort, and a commitment of resources, over a long period of time.

4- *Continue to integrate and clarify the roles of tenure track faculty, professional track faculty, and librarians, and develop strategies to redress salary compression.*

As discussed in Standard II, during the last several years the university has undertaken an effort to more fully integrate instructors and research scholars who are not among the tenured/tenure-track ranks into the fabric of the university. A number of important steps have already been accomplished, such as improvements in the clarity and regularization of titles, standardization of appointments, and creation of paths for career advancement. However, the policies and procedures for professional track faculty (those not on the tenure track) around salary adjustments, workload, professional development, and participation in the university's shared governance process, still lag those for tenured/tenure-track faculty, for permanent status faculty (librarians), and for staff. This recommendation recognizes the need for continued progress.

5- *Develop a coordinated approach to assessing the impact of programs and services supporting educational excellence.*

A central focus of the university's strategic plan, both in the 2008 plan and the 2016 update, is educational excellence, with a call for the university to provide a central infrastructure to support this part of its mission. A number of new programs and initiatives have been put in place in support of this effort over the last five years, both within the Division of Academic Affairs and within the Division of Student Affairs. Individual programs have various ways of assessing impact, and some are new enough that assessment is only beginning. As discussed in Standards III and IV, this is a recommendation to develop common and coordinated assessment strategies, wherever possible.

6- *Develop a more intentional and collaborative approach to student success that is inclusive of faculty, advising (colleges), and programs within the Division of Student Affairs.*

As with recommendation 5, this is a call for enhanced collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs on the delivery of services broadly connected to student support. Strategies could include implementation of common advising software; streamlined and sharable records for student advising; coordinated communication with other support services such as the Health Center, the Counseling Center, and Resident Life; and implementation of data analytics tools to better assess the student experience.

7- *Standardize the university's data governance practices.*

This recommendation emerged from an evaluation of Standard IV, but it relates to other standards more broadly. The University of Maryland's decentralized organizational structure creates challenges for maintaining consistency in data management and security practices. Although the university has policies and procedures in place for managing student information with the utmost care and security, the implementation of such

practices is not always standardized across data managers, stewards, and users. This includes sufficient access to data across campus to encourage evidence-based decision making. While the university has met the elements of Standard IV, criterion 3 by the organization of its data administration, improvements can be made through standardization of data governance practices at the steward, manager, and user level to mitigate procedural differences.

8- *Standardize the process of articulating desired learning outcomes, assessing outcomes, and using outcomes to inform program and curriculum changes.*

This recommendation, which has a number of elements, is discussed in detail within Standard V. The university has made great strides in developing a comprehensive strategy for developing learning outcomes for undergraduate programs and using their assessment for program improvements. There is also a robust assessment plan in place for courses that are part of the university's General Education requirements. Faculty contribute significantly to program assessment and are responsible for course reform and implementation, but there is limited recognition of the enhanced workload to faculty involved in course assessment and continual course and program improvement. At the graduate program level, the outcomes assessment review process would benefit from greater structure, a defined template, and, in some instances, a review rubric. Additionally, a more structured feedback mechanism to program faculty, and enhanced use and communication of existing best practices identified in programs that undergo specialized accreditation would be similarly beneficial.

9- *Strengthen the university's commitment to the practice of appropriately allocating resources.*

See recommendation 11.

10- *Complete the analysis of recommendations to identify new revenues and efficiencies and implement those that are deemed feasible.*

See recommendation 11.

11- *Develop a robust, centralized budget model that facilitates transparent resource allocation, accurate multi-year projections, and data driven decisions consistent with the university's strategic goals and mission.*

The context for these three recommendations is articulated in detail in Standard VI. A catalyst for the 2014 launch of the 2020 Flagship Commission was the need for a stronger and more forward-looking approach to the university's budget process, particularly in light of the changing national environment of public higher education. These recommendations are a reaffirmation that improvements in how the university leverages its resources, how efficiencies might be achieved, and how the process of setting budgets might be better linked to university strategic planning should continue to be a high priority. As noted in Standard VI, an outside consultant with a strong national reputation in higher education was engaged to review budgeting, administrative functions, and resource alignment relative to national best practices. In tandem, the Flagship 2020 Commission identified 25 ideas for possible

improvements, in efficiency, effectiveness, and revenue generation. An Administrative Modernization Team has been assembled and will be responsible for leading a long term effort to review and implement these recommendations.

As stated, this has been a period of rapid change and self-reflection at UMD, and a number of the recommendations raised by the self-study working groups echo recommendations raised by the Flagship 2020 commission and other entities and so are either in the process of being addressed or are in the sights of leadership to be addressed further down the path.

Relationship between the Self-Study and the Requirements of Affiliation

Evidence provided throughout this self-study is applicable to the Middle States Requirements of Affiliation. The relationship between a particular standard and a specific requirement is identified at the beginning of the text for each standard. The table below summarizes the relationships between the evidence presented and the specific requirement.

Requirement #	Topic	Standard/criterion in which evidence is presented
1-6, 14		see compliance report
7	Mission and goals	Standard I
8	Evaluation and communication of educational programs	Standard III (criterion 8), Standard IV (criterion 6), Standard V
9	Rigor and coherence of educational programs	Standard III, Standard V
10	Institutional planning linked to educational goals	Standard V, Standard VI
11	Documented financial resources and fiscal management	Standard VI
12	Governance	Standard VII
13	Appropriate and unconflicted governing body	Standard VII
15	Core faculty	Standard III (criterion 2)