Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
of

SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
Shippensburg, Pennsylvania

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 5-8, 2009

The Members of the Team:

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AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT:

President/CEO:

      Dr. William Ruud
      President
      Shippensburg University

Chief Academic Officer:

      Dr. Barbara Lyman
      Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
      Shippensburg University

Council of Trustees (campus):

      B. Michael Schaul
      Chair
      Council of Trustees

Chancellor of System:

      Dr. John C. Cavanaugh
      Chancellor
      Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education

Chair, Board of Governors (system):

      Kenneth M. Jarin
      Chair
      Board of Governors, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education

I.   Context and Nature of the Visit

Institutional Overview.

Initial Accreditation:	1939
Last Reaffirmed:	1999
Control:	Public
Affiliation:	Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education
Institution Type:	Master's I

Scope of Institution at Time of Visit.

Degrees Offered:	Certificate/Diploma, Baccalaureate, Masters
Branch Campuses:	None
Additional Locations:	Dixon University Center, Harrisburg, PA; Lincoln Intermediate Unit 12, New Oxford, PA; South Western High School, Hanover, PA

Self-Study Design.

Comprehensive, with three special emphases: leadership transition, assessment of student learning, and strategic planning.

II.   Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Eligibility Requirements

Based on a review of the self-study, interviews, the certification statement supplied by the institution and other institutional documents, the team affirms that Shippensburg University continues to meet the eligibility requirements in *Characteristics of Excellence*.

III.   Compliance with Federal Requirements

Based on review of the self-study, certification by Shippensburg University, and interviews, the team affirms that the institution's Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits. Additionally, the team is unaware of any problematic issues relative to state regulatory requirements.

IV.   Evaluation Overview

Shippensburg University's most notable challenge during this past ten years was caused by a dramatic turnover in leadership. A massive number of retirements were triggered by a state-wide early retirement incentive plan that occurred at the same time a presidential search was cancelled and then delayed by more than a year. As a result, more than 40% of the executive and middle management positions were filled by interims. The potential for chaos was high, but campus personnel responded appropriately to the challenge, and most students were unaware of the extent of the turnover. Given this recent history, it is no wonder that along with assessment of learning and strategic planning, leadership transition was one of the three special emphases selected by the campus.

As primarily a residential campus, Shippensburg has paid attention to student support systems and has aggressive plans for investing in residence halls and other out-of-classroom facilities. In the academic arena, the University has the highest 4-year graduation rate among campuses in the system, and is highly rated in other system-wide student performance indicators. Cultural offerings have been greatly expanded with the recent opening of a new performing arts center, and regional economic development is a campus priority.

Budgets were reduced recently, but the campus has effectively managed the downturn and is well positioned. Strong enrollment demand helped mask a portion of the budget reductions; however, the campus is fully aware of an upcoming state-wide decline in the number of high school graduates, and is identifying selected areas for planned enrollment growth.

As one of the largest employers in the region, Shippensburg has been blessed to recruit and retain high quality faculty and staff, who are extremely loyal to the campus and dedicated to ensuring students receive a quality education, both in and outside the classroom. Further evidence of academic quality is demonstrated by the numerous program accreditations achieved in various disciplines, and the exemplary set of assessment of learning measures that have been designed and implemented.

The self-study identified several areas for improvement, and the team concurs with the campus findings: assessments, while strong, should be more uniform throughout the campus; succession planning for leadership positions should be strengthened; a new 5-year strategic plan should be prepared; and recruitment and retention of a more diverse faculty and student body should be a higher priority. As a result, the team made two recommendations in the areas of recruiting a more diverse faculty and improving retention rates of under-represented students that should be addressed in Shippensburg's next Periodic Report.

Overall, Shippensburg knows its mission and is performing in an exemplary manner. It is an institution of integrity, and a place of significant student learning.

V.   Compliance with Accreditation Standards

Standard 1: Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

Shippensburg University has a Mission Statement that "clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and explains whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish." For years the Mission Statement primarily emphasized teaching effectiveness, faculty scholarship, and service to the surrounding community. In 2005, it was revised to reflect a more student-oriented focus and a commitment to personal development of each student through in-class and out-of-class experiences. The Mission Statement says Shippensburg University "is a comprehensive University offering bachelor's and master's degree programs" and "serves the educational, social, and cultural needs of students primarily from south central Pennsylvania." It appears the campus community fully supports this Mission Statement, which has been endorsed by the campus' Council of Trustees and the state-wide Board of Governors. The team concurs the statement provides an accurate representation of the university.

The team also agrees with the appropriateness of the four central goals stated in the Mission Statement: (1) serving the educational, social and cultural needs of students, (2) developing students' intellectual, personal and social capabilities, (3) providing programs that complement the academic mission, and (4) investing cooperatively in the future of the region. These four goals will help focus the upcoming campus-wide 5-year strategic planning initiative.

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

Based on a review of the self-study, the reading of various institutional documents, and interviews with members of the campus community, the team found evidence of considerable on-going planning and allocation decisions that reflect strategic planning goals.

The campus uses its campus-wide Planning and Budget Council, the President's Cabinet, the executive management team, the University Forum, and a host of others to review, discuss, deliberate, and prioritize choices for the allocation of resources in a manner consistent with the academic mission and institutional goals of the university.

The Planning and Budget Council, which consists of 12 members who are broadly representative of the entire university, plays a major role in the overall allocation of resources, and works effectively with the President, the Cabinet, the University Forum, and others to ensure decisions are made on the basis of campus-wide priorities. The team found wide-spread agreement that budget allocations have generally been made in a consistent fashion, and that the campus decision-making process has responded appropriately to the recent budget challenges created by declining state support. Also, as stated in a self-study recommendation (4.1), the campus appropriately intends to "(c)ontinue to promote transparency in the process of allocating resources by sharing budget projections with the entire campus community."

The university is nearing the last year of a five-year strategic plan, and is preparing to develop a new plan, which will reflect the shared vision being generated by its new university President. The Facilities Master Plan was recently updated, and the campus has appropriately noted that as it completes Academic Master Plan, it will be necessary to align these two planning documents. Once alignment is completed, a campus-wide 5-year Strategic Plan will be prepared. Two key topics have generated considerable discussion on campus--future enrollment growth and the addition of an Engineering program—and will be addressed as part of the plan.

Suggestion:

The 5-year Strategic Plan should fully address the resource implications of planned future student enrollment growth and the proposed Engineering program that would complement Shippensburg's existing strengths in the sciences and mathematics. It will be especially important to secure new facilities, equipment, and faculty as part of the Engineering approval process.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

Overall, the campus appears well maintained. There is some variability in the quality of the facilities, but the campus is well aware of those in need of repair or replacement and has assessment mechanisms in place to evaluate its needs. All campus buildings meet the minimum ADA requirements for reasonable accommodation as defined by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Act 504. However, several facilities are not fully ADA compliant, but if a student requires an accommodation for a class, the class is moved to an ADA compliant room or building. The team also noted that several construction and/or renovation projects have been recently completed, are underway, or are planned.

The campus appears to manage its funds well, as no audit issues were specified in the audit reports nor did any surface during the visit. Shippensburg's fiscal resources appear adequate to accomplish its educational mission, particularly in light of current economic conditions. There is

concern on campus, however, that continued reductions in appropriations, in combination with restrictions on tuition rate increases, will result in non-personnel funds shrinking to unacceptably low levels. Ways in which the University has begun to respond to this fiscal threat includes the implementation of a "soft freeze" on vacant positions as well as a reduction in student help.

The relationship between the University and the Shippensburg Foundation is a good one. The Foundation, which consistently raises more external funds than any other campus within the system, fully understands its mission to support the University. The team commends the Foundation on its outstanding performance in securing external funds to support the University.

Overall, staffing levels appear adequate. The university has encountered some minor difficulty hiring faculty in certain areas of expertise because salaries are not competitive. This issue is not particularly controllable by the campus as collective bargaining contracts do not allow for differentiation of salary structures among multiple disciplines.

The implementation of the technology fee has proven very helpful with regard to technical resources on campus. The technical resources appear adequate for the campus and other than the failed system-wide implementation of a Student Information System, no particular issues of concern arose during the visit.

Suggestion:

As a new student information system is anticipated to be implemented soon, the University must be mindful of the additional workload demands to be encountered by functional users as well as technical support staff during such a massive undertaking.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

The campus encountered a period of significant leadership transition caused by the initial failed search for a new president combined with a massive turnover resulting from a state retirement incentive. Based upon written documents and interviews, it appears the campus was able to maintain both forward momentum and a collegial atmosphere during this awkward period of transition. The team commends the faculty, staff, and administrators for keeping everything together, for making progress despite an unprecedented leadership transition, and for ensuring students were unaffected by the transition.

Shippensburg has a clear system of shared governance that is inclusive, transparent, and appropriate. The University Forum, the unions, the Cabinet, the Council of Trustees, and others are integral parts of a well-defined governance process. Further, the team commends the University for the deliberate and meaningful way students are involved in the governance

process. Shortly after his arrival, President Ruud's expanded the President's Cabinet membership, pushed decisions down to the appropriate level, and curtailed the well established practice of successful end-runs. These changes have been well received by the campus community.

The campus has gone about reviewing succession planning to avoid future periods of massive transition. The team endorses the self-study recommendation (5.3) to implement a continuity planning approach for key mid- and upper-level positions.

Suggestion:

As the campus designs and implements a continuity planning strategy, ensure campus auxiliary organizations are fully included in the plan.

Standard 5: Administration

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

Shippensburg's administrative leadership appears to have the knowledge and expertise appropriate to support the mission of the University. Though the University experienced significant turnover in recent years at both the executive and mid-level management levels, when asked about the transition, much of the administrative division reacted as though it had been a "non-event."

There is adequate information, an appropriate decision-making system, and the clear lines of authority necessary to support the work of the administration. Information appears to be freely shared, and no issues surfaced regarding lack of communication during the visit. Importantly, there appears to be a collegial, collaborative, and trusting environment that exists between unions and management. There is also a culture of transparency in decision-making, most notably in budget development, and one self-study recommendation (5.7) would promote even greater transparency in decision making.

Suggestion:

Consider providing new members of the campus-wide Planning and Budget Council with an extensive orientation program to ensure they are adequately prepared to fulfill their responsibilities.

Standard 6: Integrity

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

Based on the review of the self-study, other institutional documents and interviews with faculty, staff, and students, Shippensburg maintains an atmosphere of transparency and adherence to ethical standards, and supports an environment of intellectual and academic freedom. Its website lists virtually all of the key policy and procedural documents, while Article 2 of the negotiated bargaining agreement supports the faculty's entitlement to freedom in research, publication, and teaching. Discussions with faculty supported the self-study finding of a campus atmosphere of acceptance and support. The campus climate survey helps ensure a high standard of integrity, and the team is encouraged by the campus' willingness to periodically repeat this survey.

The system-wide policy on "Intellectual Property" clearly states ownership rights of employees producing intellectual materials. System and campus policies and procedures concerning academic integrity are readily available in the student handbook, and this information is provided voluntarily on most syllabi throughout the curricula. The campus also has a document entitled "Misconduct of Research," which can be found on the Provost's website.

Documents such as catalogs and handbooks are available in print and on the web, and are appropriate and accurate representations of what is offered on campus. Further, participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability provides an accurate website snapshot of important information, such as student enrollment, retention, and graduation rate data.

Openness and clarity of communication from the public relations office even includes a "rumor reporting system" where anyone can ask about a rumor and receive a clear, truthful answer. The system for reporting crime and other important statistics is fully operational. Overall, a climate of transparency and collegiality exists throughout the university, and includes students, faculty, staff, and the administration.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and finding:

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, administrators, and others, the team was able to verify the existence of an Institutional Assessment approach that ensures a culture of evidence exists at Shippensburg:

- At the university-level, for a number of years, the campus has routinely collected data from four sources: (1) CIRP for incoming students, (2) Noel-Levitz Satisfaction Inventory, (3) a locally-developed alumni satisfaction survey, and (4) the National Survey of Student Engagement for freshmen and senior data. Each survey is conducted on a four-year rotating basis to ensure one set of survey results each year.

- Administrative units conduct 5-year program reviews that concentrate on seven key areas: leadership; information and analysis; planning; use of human resources; process management and development; performance results; and stakeholder satisfaction.
- Academic departments conduct 5-year program reviews that specifically include a section on department assessment efforts, and how the results are used to inform decisions. While there is some unevenness across the university, every department has been using an assessment approach to evaluate effectiveness of student learning.
- Discipline accreditation has been sought wherever possible, such that programs in Business (AACSB), Education (NCATE), Social Work (CSWE), and Computer Science (ABET) satisfy nationally-defined assessment requirements.
- A procedure for assessing all elements of the General Education program has been developed and implemented.
- Assessment has also been used to inform and revise the delivery of distance education offerings.

The team was able to identify numerous instances where assessment activities helped generate appropriate corrective actions. One area of concern identified in the self-study was the unevenness of communicating successes. As a result, the team strongly endorses self-study recommendation (4.4) to communicate University-wide assessment results beyond the venues of the University Forum and the College Councils.

Further, the results of the most recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) indicate low participation of first-year students in the area of "Enriching Educational Experiences," which measures student involvement in co-curricular activities, community service, learning communities, diversity experiences, and related programs. The team encourages the University to consider designing such programs, through collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs, to promote greater involvement of students in campus life.

Overall, the team commends Shippensburg on the comprehensive approach it has implemented to ensure Institutional Assessment is part of the campus' fabric.

Suggestion:

The campus should review how it evaluates and uses data from the four annual university-wide surveys, such as NSSE, and make the adjustments necessary to ensure the results are used in a timely and appropriate manner to inform campus decisions.

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and finding:

Examination of materials provided by the University and interviews conducted during the site visit made it clear to the team that Shippensburg has developed admissions policies and procedures that enable it to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission. The team found evidence that the University is actively gathering data that will assist decision-makers in improving services so student retention rates can be improved. The University has also engaged in a thoughtful analysis of the changing demographics of Pennsylvania and has initiated recruitment strategies that are responsive to these changes.

The team commends Shippensburg for having the highest 4-year graduation rate within the system, and for the thoughtful and intentional manner in which it has identified students who may be at risk. The individuals in Academic Programs and Services are clearly committed to providing assistance to these students. The team found considerable evidence of thoughtful and continuous assessment of the results of placement exams and developmental education. The one area of concern was a significant gap of nearly 30% in the achievement of under-represented students versus other students, as measured by both retention and graduation rates.

Recommendation:

The team fully endorses the recommendation in the self-study (7.8) that calls upon the University to determine how to retain greater number of students from under-represented populations, and further recommends more effective identification of barriers which may contribute to these higher attrition rates, careful assessment of the needs of these students, the setting of measurable retention goals, and more effective coordination of these retention efforts.

Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and finding:

The team found evidence that the University has created programs and services designed to support students' academic achievement, contribute to their personal growth, encourage healthy lifestyles, and develop a sense of community on the campus. In addition, there was considerable evidence that the faculty and staff at Shippensburg consistently demonstrate a deep sense of commitment to students and their success.

The team commends: (1) the University for improving the quality of its facilities for students, including renovation of the dining hall, the proposed addition to the student union, and the upcoming new residence halls; (2) the Advisor Development and Resource Team for its efforts to develop initiatives to improve academic advising, including the advising excellence departmental award program, lunch-time workshops, and the development of electronic resources for advisors, and (3) student support services for the overall set of initiatives and best practices designed to prevent alcohol and drug abuse.

Suggestion:

Enrollment growth has placed a strain on some student services. The team endorses the recommendations (7.6 and 7.7) in the self-study regarding the importance of assessing the need for additional staffing in certain student service operations.

Standard 10: Faculty

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and finding:

Full-time faculty members appear to be strong teachers who are very student-oriented. They are near the top of the system in percentage of faculty with terminal degrees, effectively support the academic program offerings, and assure continuity and coherence of the institution's programs.

Students were complimentary of faculty, including the quality of in-class teaching and their willingness to work with students outside of class. During the team visit, numerous collaborations of joint student/faculty research were on display at the annual "Student Research Showcase."

Faculty actively participate in strategic planning, curriculum planning, and university governance through a number of venues, including department and university-wide committees, the University Forum, and the unions, to name a few.

The University routinely evaluates faculty on the basis of their contributions to teaching, service and research. The principal avenues for faculty evaluations are described in Articles 12, 14, 15 and 16 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and in the Shippensburg University Statement of Promotion Policies and Procedures. A limited number of faculty members expressed confusion over the policies and procedures for promotion to full professor, but overall the visiting team ascertained that the faculty evaluation processes are generally understood by faculty and are consistently and fairly followed.

Adequate faculty development resources for research, training, and travel are provided through the Center for Faculty Excellence in Scholarship and Teaching, the University Research and Scholarship Program, the Provost and Academic Deans, and the system's Professional Development Fund. The team was favorably impressed with the clear processes employed to allocate these funding streams and to link professional development funds to deserving faculty projects.

Faculty recruitment processes and strategies have enabled the University to fill approximately 77% of its faculty vacancies annually, and to insure the integrity of the hiring process through the Office of Social Equity. The University has recognized possible impediments to its ability to respond to the increased competition for highly skilled faculty members in the Report of Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Searches, and is addressing these issues. Diversity of the faculty has

remained relatively flat for the past five years, and needs to be carefully reviewed in the very near future.

The team commends the Center for Excellence in Scholarship & Teaching for the comprehensive orientation program it provides to new faculty members. This program consists of a three-day intensive orientation session at the beginning of the academic year, periodic workshops on specified topics, and monthly supplemental workshops on topics of interest to new faculty members.

Recommendation:

The Middle States team notes that data on the number and percentage of minority faculty members demonstrates insufficient diversity among the faculty, and recommends the identification and pursuit of more proactive approaches to expanding the ethnic diversity of faculty pools.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and finding:

The Self-Study, institutional documents, and numerous interviews demonstrate this standard is fully met. Undergraduate and graduate educational offerings display rich academic content, are intellectually rigorous, have well articulated learning objectives and outcomes, and demonstrate clearly stated student expectations. Courses appear designed to make students engage in close textual reading and interpretive analysis, critical thinking and reflection, and the development of a balanced perspective. The expected learning objectives and outcomes have appropriate assessment measures, which can be used to both improve students' understanding of the subject-matter and to enhance the quality of the teaching.

Educational programs (undergraduate, graduate, professional, and certificate) number more than 75 majors, minors and interdisciplinary studies that foster "scholarship, internship, leadership and friendship." Academic programs are designed to encourage instructional collaboration, to promote both service learning and community service, and are reflective of the institution's commitment to excellence.

The campus has a standardized review and approval mechanism, which seems very appropriate and is well understood, for addition, deletion, and major changes to its educational offerings.

Standard 12: General Education

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and finding:

Shippensburg has a long-standing general education program of 48 credits that has been in effect since 1985. This program provides the necessary skills courses and breadth of curriculum expected from a general education program.

Assessment of the general education program is relatively new, but is done very well. The campus has a long history of desultory review that changed with the appointment of a General Education Coordinating Committee, which has done a commendable job over the four years of its existence. In particular, the committee, working collaboratively with the Provost, has set clear learning objectives for each general education category, has conducted an extensive survey of faculty views and experiences, has incorporated more critical thinking into the program, and has implemented a number of suggestions, including "wild card" courses, such as this fall's course on the "presidential election." There is a planned three year cycle of assessment review using clear rubrics. Within the rubrics, departments are allowed appropriate variation in assessing individual courses.

The Provost will soon be sending five of the committee members to a General Education Institute as part of the campus-wide commitment. The team commends the campus on the progress it has made, and the committee on the enthusiasm it has demonstrated towards implementing an effective assessment approach.

The campus general education program has been enriched by expansion of the campus Honors program. The team endorses the self-study comments regarding reviewing the programmatic and resource support for this program, which has helped attract an academically-stronger set of students.

Suggestion:

Given concerns expressed by some about student writing and the fact some departments have already responded with a discipline-specific advanced writing course, the team suggests the campus consider having all students receive a writing course beyond the current Writing Intensive First Year Seminar.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and finding:

The team found a strong set of related educational activities, including Developmental Education, internship programs, international and study abroad opportunities, volunteer service learning, civic engagement opportunities, cultural offerings, economic development support, and regional educational offerings.

A wide range of campus educational offerings are available at off-campus sites or through distance education. Need and satisfaction are well documented through surveys and focus groups. Distance education is guided by the campus authored distance learning policy, which contains a "non-competition" clause.

Strong programs of economic development are offered to the region. Community members were highly complimentary of the positive regional impact made by the campus' Small Business Development Center and the Center for Land Use. Additionally, the Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research, which has a unique state-wide mission, has trained more than 80% of all the probation officers within the state of Pennsylvania and has a growing, positive reputation.

The University also offers a variety of opportunities to students for volunteer, service learning, and internships, both paid and unpaid. As a member of the PA Campus Compact, best practices for internships and service learning are embedded in each academic department.   Clearly defined learning outcomes and specific assessment instruments are in place for the students, faculty, and sponsoring agencies.

While the number of international students has declined over time, faculty-led study abroad opportunities have grown, albeit at a relatively slow pace. Longer term study abroad opportunities are available, but have been used sparingly by students because of the regional nature of the campus student body and the associated higher costs with semester or annual overseas programs.

Recent completion of the 1,500 seat H. Ric Luhrs Performing Arts Center made the campus a focal point for cultural activities within the region. Faculty, staff, and community members were uniform in their praise of this new campus-based cultural resource.

Suggestion:

Review the Distance Learning Policies and Procedures, which have been in place since 2000, and consider eliminating or modifying the "non-competitive" clause, which seems to be unnecessarily holding distance education back.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

Shippensburg has created a vibrant culture of ongoing assessment that has wide-spread faculty support. Through the auspices of the General Education Coordinating Committee (GECC), the campus has developed a cohesive statement of learning goals in ten specific areas: critical reasoning; oral and written communication; mathematical and numerical data analysis; the natural sciences; the social sciences; diversity and history; literature and the arts; personal and professional ethics; global awareness; and information literacy. GECC has developed a

comprehensive assessment plan for General Education and related rubrics to measure the attainment of desired learning outcomes, and has established a three-year time frame for reviewing and assessing each course in General Education.

The committee has conducted assessments of learning outcomes for General Education courses, and has utilized the resulting assessment data to improve teaching, modify course content, and implement special topics courses. The team endorses the proposal of the GECC to achieve a more permanent status as a subcommittee of the University Curriculum Committee, and commends the campus on its comprehensive approach to assessment of student learning in General Education courses.

A dual approach to assess student learning in the major program has been implemented. First, Shippensburg encourages its academic programs to achieve discipline-specific accreditation, attainment of which requires learning outcomes assessment. Second, all academic programs are required to undergo a five-year review, an annual component of which is learning outcomes assessment. This process is managed by the Program Review Committee for Academic Affairs. Each academic program compiles and submits annual assessment reports, including timelines for action and revisions to assessment activities. This process is facilitated by the Academic Affairs Assessment Team, which reviews the submitted assessment reports and provides recommendations and suggestions for improving the quality of the assessment documents. The assessment reports document the attainment of desired learning outcomes, and the team was favorably impressed with the wide variety of program improvement initiatives that have been implemented by a significant number of academic programs in response to the assessment data.

While the quality of the assessment reports is still somewhat uneven between academic programs, every program is using the same approach and with careful monitoring, the process should become more uniform over time. For that reason, the team endorses two self-study recommendations: create a template for a consistent, comprehensive memo for five-year program reviews (8.3), and further standardize assessment documents to permit coordination of the use of assessment results in planning and budgeting cycles (8.4).

Suggestion:

Campus support for learning outcomes assessment should be buttressed by insuring adequate resources are devoted to the accomplishment of these commendable endeavors.

Special Emphases

Shippensburg chose to emphasize three special topics: leadership transition, assessment of academic programs (including General Education), and strategic planning. The campus chose to address each topic within the context of the standards. Below is a brief summary of the major results from the self-study.

1. **Leadership Transition.** As reflected in the team report on standard 4, the campus underwent a significant period of personnel turnover, which included the President;

several Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, and Deans; numerous Directors; and large numbers of faculty and staff. Much to its credit, the campus was able to keep everything moving forward, and students were generally unaffected by the transition. Even when difficulties arose with the initial presidential search and the campus was forced to regroup and initiate a second search, thanks to a collegial culture and a willingness to do whatever it takes to get the job done, Shippensburg kept moving forward. Since the hiring of President Ruud nearly two years ago, the vast majority of interim positions have been filled, and the campus is well poised to move forward. This period of transition has been handled with grace and professionalism, and the University is well on its way to putting this transition period behind it. The lessons learned from this period and the subsequent attention being paid to succession planning will serve the campus well.

2. **Assessment of Academic Programs.** As reflected in the team report on standard 14, the campus has made significant strides in addressing assessment of academic programs. Seeking discipline accreditation wherever possible has required selected programs to develop assessment practices that meet rigorous national standards. All other academic programs must undergo 5-year program reviews that clearly delineate assessment activities and resulting actions. Further, the General Education Coordinating Committee has begun reviewing courses for effectiveness in 10 specific learning areas. The team commends the campus for implementing such a strong and comprehensive academic program assessment initiative.

3. **Strategic Planning.** The self-study contained a plan to begin the strategic planning. Important elements of the plan have been identified, and the preparation of the Academic Master Plan will begin in earnest at the start of the fall 2009 semester. This Academic Master Plan will be coordinated with the recently completed draft of the Facilities Master Plan and will provide the basis for the subsequent 5-year strategic plan. This new plan will address a wide array of issues, including several that are being informally discussed on campus: (1) approach to planned, rational enrollment growth; (2) future academic directions, including possibility of adding Engineering, and (3) planning in an environment of declining state funding support. The team suggests that planning for modest enrollment growth include a section on the resource issues associated with growth. Further, the team found significant strengths in the Sciences and Mathematics to effectively complement the addition of Engineering. However, the team cautions that the approval of Engineering will need to be accompanied by corresponding increases in appropriate facilities, new faculty positions, and appropriate other resource support.