Summary of Focus Group Meetings, February 17 and 18, 2010

Goal 1: *Provide a curriculum and other learning experiences that creatively address the changing needs of a diverse, technologically based, global society.*

At these focus group meetings, participants discussed Shippensburg University's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats relating to its ability to meet Academic Affairs Goal 1 (stated above).

Strengths of Shippensburg University related to achieving Academic Affairs Goal 1:

- High-quality education at a low cost.
- Classes taught by professors, not by graduate students.
- Faculty work closely with students, particularly with undergraduate research.
- The curriculum offers students a breadth of opportunities.
- Technology funding allows for the University and its programs to remain current.
- Professional masters programs are accredited and inexpensive.
- Positive accreditation and assessment from Middle States.
- Funding available for faculty to attend conferences.
- Undergraduates afforded a strong liberal arts curriculum and highly respected professional programs.

Weaknesses of Shippensburg University related to achieving Academic Affairs Goal 1:

- The 4-4 teaching load and escalating class sizes prevents faculty from fulfilling the institutional mission.
- Lack of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity.
- Americanist focus of curriculum.
- Understaffed academic support services.
- Institutional barriers makes change difficult and prevents cross-college collaboration.
- Students' lack of academic preparation for college study.
- Faculty lack release time for directing student research.
- Lack of a first-year experience.
- General education has remained unchanged for 26 years.

Opportunities in the external environment of Shippensburg University relevant to Academic Affairs Goal 1:

- The University should use the current economy as a means of recruiting better students.
- Proximity of the eastern seaboard.
- Obtaining grants by pairing with other institutions.
- Outreach (via videoconferencing, for example) to Harrisburg Tech, Letterkenny Army Depot, Green Center of Central PA, and others.
- Improved utilization of Marine Science Consortium
- Professional doctorates.

Threats in the external environment of Shippensburg University relevant to Academic Affairs Goal 1:

- PASSHE control of the budget gives the University less control over projects and costs.
- Conflict between the University and PASSHE.

- Lack of state funding.
- Students' growing inability to meet the demands of college study.
- Budget pressures that encourage the further reliance upon adjunct faculty.
- Competing institutions that require less work from their students.