Institutional Self-Study Design

Submitted to the

Commission on Higher Education

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

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INTRODUCTION AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Brief History and Description of the College

The State University of New York College at Oneonta (SUNY Oneonta) was founded in 1889 as a normal school with approximately 200 students. The College continued to serve its primary mission of training teachers for some 60 years, establishing a three-year Education program in 1923 and awarding its first Bachelor of Education degrees in 1942. In 1948, the College became a charter member of the State University of New York (SUNY), and the first graduate degrees in Education were offered in the same year to address the need for advanced training for New York State’s teachers.

In 1962, the College became a multipurpose institution with the addition of a Liberal Arts Division and the introduction of programs in the arts and sciences. The first non-teaching bachelor’s degrees were awarded in 1964 and, in that same year, the Cooperstown Graduate Program in History Museum Studies was established in a public/private partnership between the College and the New York State Historical Association.

The College is now one of sixty-four SUNY campuses and one of thirteen comprehensive colleges within the SUNY system. A predominately undergraduate and residential institution, SUNY Oneonta serves almost 5,800 full-time students and continues to be distinguished by its blend of liberal arts and professional programs. In 2008, Dr. Nancy Kleniewski was appointed as SUNY Oneonta’s seventh President and the first woman to lead the College.

The College’s 250-acre main campus overlooks the scenic Susquehanna River Valley in the central southern tier of New York. On Otsego Lake in nearby Cooperstown, the College maintains a complex housing the Cooperstown Graduate Program in History Museum Studies and the Biological Field Station. Due to its geographic location – with the City of Oneonta located at least 60 miles from the larger upstate cities of Albany, Binghamton, and Utica – SUNY Oneonta plays a critical role in the Central New York region, providing significant educational, cultural, and economic opportunities for its students and employees, the City of Oneonta, and the surrounding communities in the rural region. Indeed, the College considers public service a fundamental part of its mission, a commitment that was recognized in December 2010 when the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching selected SUNY Oneonta for its Community Engagement Classification.

College Mission

As described in more detail below, over the past two years SUNY Oneonta has revised its Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals as part of a new strategic planning process, and adopted the following new Mission Statement in April 2010:

“The SUNY College at Oneonta unites excellence in teaching, scholarship, civic engagement, and stewardship to create a student-centered learning community.”
As a part of the State University of New York, SUNY Oneonta not only establishes its own strategic directions but also seeks to align its planning goals and objectives with SUNY’s strategic planning process. In 2009, newly-appointed SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher initiated an extremely ambitious planning process that, ultimately, will span four phases. In Phase I, the Chancellor visited all 64 SUNY campuses for the purpose of meeting with members of the campus and local communities, congressional and legislative representatives, and members of the SUNY Board of Trustees. During Phase II, SUNY sponsored eight “Statewide Conversations” at regional locations across the State in order to maximize outreach and participation by faculty, staff, students, and other key stakeholders. Teams of distinguished experts from within and outside SUNY formed work groups and in Spring 2010, based on input and feedback received from the statewide conversations, completed reports summarizing SUNY’s strengths, capabilities and key challenges, and recommended initiatives by which SUNY could meet those challenges. In April 2010 SUNY’s Strategic Plan, “The Power of SUNY,” was officially launched (i.e., Phase III), and Phase IV encompasses the actual implementation of the plan. Significantly, SUNY’s Strategic Plan states that “implementation must be integrated with the strategic plans developed by each of SUNY’s 64 campuses.” Another important component of implementation includes the development of benchmarks and performance indicators that SUNY System Administration will use to monitor progress on all 64 campuses. These measures were recently revealed and explained to campuses, and can be reviewed at http://www.suny.edu/powerofsuny/reportcard.

SUNY’s Strategic Plan includes six “big ideas” or themes:

- SUNY and the Entrepreneurial Century
- SUNY and the Seamless Education Pipeline
- SUNY and a Healthier New York
- SUNY and an Energy-Smart New York
- SUNY and the Vibrant Community
- SUNY and the World

At SUNY Oneonta, in August 2009 President Kleniewski convened the Strategic Planning and Resource Council (SPARC), comprised of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members, and charged this group to develop a new strategic planning document to define and guide the College’s future, taking into account past planning at the College as well as SUNY’s ongoing strategic planning efforts. Three task forces, which included members from SPARC, were also formed in order to carry out in-depth review and analysis of three important issues. The Governing Ideas Task Force was charged to develop Mission, Values, and Vision statements, while the Institutional Distinctiveness Task Force had responsibility for establishing criteria and procedures that would be useful in identifying the College’s unique programs and services. The third group, the Organizational Structure Task Force, was charged to examine SUNY Oneonta’s alignment of existing functions and recommend alternatives as appropriate for new alignments that would improve efficiencies and coordination of programs and services. Throughout the 2009-10 academic year, SPARC and the three task forces provided frequent communications to the campus community regarding their deliberations and held public forums.
on a regular basis in order to receive feedback and input from faculty, staff, and students. Most of the materials developed during this time are available at http://www.oneonta.edu/sparc/. In April 2010 President Kleniewski and SPARC presented the document “Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan 2010” to the College Senate for its final approval. This planning document, which can be reviewed in full at http://www.oneonta.edu/mvsp/, delineates the following six overarching goals to guide planning and action over a five-year period.

- **Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship**
  
  *Goal*: Promote a learning-centered environment that facilitates excellence in teaching, research, and creative activity.

- **Student Engagement**
  
  *Goal*: Engage students as active participants in their cognitive, personal, and professional growth by promoting opportunities with articulated learning outcomes.

- **Global Connectedness**
  
  *Goal*: Promote increased cultural understanding, immersion, and inclusion by enhancing opportunities for greater interaction in the global arena.

- **Diversity**
  
  *Goal*: Demonstrate a strong and public commitment to a diverse and inclusive campus community by continuing to implement the Strategic Action Plan on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

- **Community Partnership**
  
  *Goal*: Create and enhance partnerships that are mutually beneficial to the campus and community.

- **Sustainability**
  
  *Goal*: Promote individual and collective responsibility for the continued well-being of the College, community, and environment by encouraging educational initiatives, environmental protections, and fiscal responsibility.

Over the summer of 2010, the President’s Cabinet prepared for the implementation of the Strategic Plan, with a key consideration being alignment between the campus plan and “The Power of SUNY.” As part of this process, the Cabinet constructed a cross-walk between these documents highlighting these alignments, and the establishment of priorities for implementing Oneonta’s plan was strongly influenced by areas of congruence between the two planning documents. In addition, the Cabinet assigned responsibility for carrying out the different strategic planning initiatives, relying as much as possible on existing campus structures and functions so as to avoid having to form special committees. Significantly, the Cabinet decided that the College needed to make a fiscal commitment to the implementation of the Strategic Plan in order to assure success, and designated $375,000 for the first year of implementation and $250,000 annually for subsequent years.
During the 2010-11 academic year, the President’s Cabinet formed and charged the Strategic Plan Council (SPC) to provide oversight for the implementation phase of the College’s Strategic Plan. This group, comprised of faculty, staff, administrators, and students and including some former SPARC members, has four primary functions: 1) to provide frequent updates to the campus regarding the implementation of the Strategic Plan as well as opportunities for the campus to offer input into the process; 2) to serve as liaisons to the different groups that have responsibility for implementing the planning initiatives, focusing in particular on resources these groups need to effectively meet their charge; 3) to report back to the President’s Cabinet on the implementation process, including information on resource needs as reported by the implementation groups; and 4) to identify institution-wide performance indicators and benchmarks for each planning goal that the President’s Cabinet uses to evaluate overall progress on the College’s goals and objectives. The SPC meets on a regular basis and formed sub-groups, one of which is charged to identify institutional performance indicators, making sure that there is overlap between these measures and those to be used by SUNY System Administration in monitoring progress toward its Strategic Plan goals.

PREPARING FOR THE SELF STUDY

Preparations for SUNY Oneonta’s self-study process began in Fall 2010, when President Kleniewski appointed Dr. Anuradhaa Shastri, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology, Counseling, and Special Education, and Dr. Patricia Francis, Associate Provost for Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness, to co-chair the Middle States Steering Committee. While attending the Self-Study Institute held in Philadelphia in November 2010, Dr. Shastri and Dr. Francis met and conferred with Dr. Mary Ellen Petrisko, SUNY Oneonta’s Middle States staff liaison. They then prepared a preliminary rationale proposing the self-study model to be used, relying heavily on existing planning documents, as well as a timeline for conducting the self study, and submitted these materials to the President’s Cabinet for review and approval. Their specific recommendation was that SUNY Oneonta adopt the Comprehensive Self-Study Model with Special Emphases on Teaching, Learning and Scholarship; Engagement; and Shared Stewardship.

Early in January 2011, Dr. Shastri and Dr. Francis met with the Cabinet to discuss the self-study proposal and timetable as well as Steering Committee membership. Shortly after that meeting, the Cabinet approved the self-study proposal with minor revisions, and President Kleniewski appointed the remaining members of the Steering Committee. That group met formally for the first time on February 18, 2011, and has met weekly either as a full committee or in sub-groups throughout the Spring 2011 semester. Steering Committee members received the following materials prior to the first meeting in order to familiarize them with the process: 1) Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education; 2) Self Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report; 3) a recent sample self-study design from a similar institution; and 4) the self-study proposal and timetable approved by the President’s Cabinet.

At the initial Steering Committee meeting Dr. Shastri and Dr. Francis provided a detailed summary of what they had learned at the Self-Study Institute and laid out the major duties and responsibilities of the committee. The group’s primary immediate task was to organize for the self study and develop a schedule and plan for completing the Self-Study Design. In addition,
members spent considerable time studying the structure and content of good questions to guide the working groups that will conduct the research and report on the topics identified as the subjects of the self study. In order to help assure the quality of these questions, Steering Committee members participated in two norming sessions so that there was a common understanding of the appropriate structure and phrasing for questions. Small teams of Steering Committee members then worked among themselves to develop questions for 2-3 standards, with all questions brought back to the larger group for review, revision, and approval.

In Spring 2011 the College established a Middle States Reaccreditation website (www.oneonta.edu/middlestates), which will be used throughout the self study to: provide updates; solicit input from the campus community on the College’s reaccreditation efforts; and to post relevant materials as they are produced. Early in the Fall 2011 semester, President Kleniewski will formally announce the kick-off of the Middle States process to the campus; her office will provide frequent e-mail communications during the self study in order to assure that faculty and staff are aware of important developments and milestones.

**NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE SELF STUDY**

During the next two years, SUNY Oneonta will use the MSCHE self-study process as an opportunity to review and evaluate its educational, co-curricular, and administrative programs and services as well as its institutional culture. Special attention will be paid to existing evidence that supports the extent to which the College is achieving its goals, fulfilling its mission, and meeting the MSCHE standards. The College will utilize the Comprehensive Self-Study Model with Special Emphasis on Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; Engagement; and Shared Stewardship to organize this evaluation, not only to obtain a sense of its current status but also to provide direction for the coming years.

The MSCHE document entitled *Self Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report* indicates that the Comprehensive Self-Study Model with Special Emphasis is appropriate when a college wishes to focus on issues “of particular interest to the institution.” The three areas of emphasis selected for this self study are highly consistent with SUNY Oneonta’s past, and vital to its future. Over the past two years the College has revised its Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals as part of a new strategic planning process, and its newly-adopted Mission Statement is stated as follows:

“The SUNY College at Oneonta unites excellence in teaching, scholarship, civic engagement, and stewardship to create a student-centered learning community.”

The approach of this self study therefore allows Oneonta to assess its accomplishments in three mission-critical areas and to benefit from the advice and recommendations that emerge as part of the self-study process – from both the campus community and the MSCHE evaluators – and help the College move forward most effectively within the context of its mission and goals.
Special Emphases

A fundamental intention for the Middle States self-study process from the outset has been to coordinate that process with SUNY Oneonta’s other major initiatives, in particular the College’s new strategic plan. Such an approach not only maximizes efficiencies, it also reinforces to the campus community that the priorities identified in the strategic plan are real and ongoing, and that they will not be supplanted by newer emphases.

Oneonta’s new Mission Statement and its strategic planning initiative clearly focus on three fundamental elements: excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarship; excellence in civic or community engagement; and excellence in stewardship. Although each of these elements has been associated with specific performance indicators in the higher education literature, it is reasonable to suggest that mechanisms for evaluating them are still evolving. By emphasizing these elements in the MSCHE self study, Oneonta hopes to add to this developing understanding, which requires the identification of meaningful and useful assessment strategies and measures. This process will not only assist in the self study, it will also help the College track its effectiveness in meeting its strategic planning goals and objectives. The resulting data will help inform practices and guide improvement in areas the college community agrees are most important.

Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

Established in 1889 as a state normal school with the sole mission of training teachers, SUNY Oneonta has maintained its excellent reputation for a strong commitment to teaching and learning, and Oneonta faculty members have been especially successful advancing learning through their own research and creative activities. Corroboration for this statement comes from a wide variety of sources that will be emphasized in the self-study document, and include: unusually low student-faculty ratios (i.e., 18 to 1), especially for a public institution; extremely high ratings on the SUNY Student Opinion Survey (SOS) on items such as class size, faculty availability and involvement with faculty outside the classroom; admissions data attesting to the institution’s high demand and, at the same time, steadily increasing student selectivity; a rigorous assessment program for student learning, for both general education and academic majors; performance by Oneonta students on national tests of student learning, notably the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA); and the College’s remarkable ascent in institutional position in national ranking systems, including *U.S. News & World Report* and *Kiplinger’s*. Specific to this last point, *U.S. News & World Report*, in its inaugural ranking of “schools with a strong commitment to teaching” in August 2010, ranked SUNY Oneonta third among regional master’s institutions in the north.

The recent strategic planning process provided the campus community with the opportunity to examine the College’s teaching, learning, and scholarship agendas in some detail, a process that will be continued and deepened through the self study. In particular, the self study will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of Oneonta’s efforts to achieve excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarship in relation to the goals, objectives, and indicators in the new strategic plan.
Engagement

One conclusion of the recent strategic planning process was that, in virtually every area examined, SUNY Oneonta provides a highly engaging community for students, with respect to both the academic and extra-curricular realms. Evidence in support of this statement includes extensive and growing involvement of SUNY Oneonta students in research activity with faculty mentors; student responses on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which consistently demonstrate that the College provides multiple opportunities for significant levels of student engagement, compared to other SUNY as well as national peer institutions; very high ratings on the SUNY Student Opinion Survey (SOS) on items such as college social activities and cultural programs; and the extent to which the College had contributed to the development of their leadership skills.

High levels of engagement – by students, faculty, and staff – are also evident when involvement in community service is examined. Indeed, the concept of “learning through service” has long been one of the educational cornerstones at SUNY Oneonta, as supported by: extensive student participation in volunteerism and service learning, as coordinated by the College’s Center for Social Responsibility and Community; very high ratings by students on both the Student Opinion Survey (SOS) and NSSE regarding the extent to which Oneonta has provided them opportunities to become involved in community-based projects; the significant role of the institution’s Center for Economic and Community Development in enhancing the quality of life in the greater Oneonta community; and the extensive, documented service and scholarship provided by Oneonta faculty and staff members in the City of Oneonta and the larger region.

The College’s civic contributions have been recognized in a number of ways, including its regular inclusion on the Higher Education Commission Service Honor Roll by the Corporation for National and Community Service. As mentioned earlier, SUNY Oneonta was one of 115 colleges and universities selected in December 2010 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching for its Community Engagement Classification.

SUNY Oneonta’s current strategic planning process certainly reaffirmed the centrality of excellence in civic or community engagement to Oneonta’s mission and institutional identity. As part of the MSCHE self study, the College will continue its study of this area and expand its review to include student engagement because of the strong associations between this factor and effective educational practices (e.g., Kuh, 2007).

Shared Stewardship

Compared to the themes of Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship and Engagement, the theme of Shared Stewardship may, on the surface, appear less focused and perhaps even vague in nature. As a result of preparing for the MSCHE self study, however, SUNY Oneonta is convinced that evaluation of and improvements in this area are at least as important as for the other two special emphases. In fact, such evaluation and improvements may be necessary in order to make advances in the other two areas of emphasis.
Operationally, the College’s focus on this emphasis area relies on three core meanings that are inherent in the term “stewardship”: providing care or service, taking responsibility, and managing resources effectively. In addition, the College was guided by a 2003 issue of *Innovative Higher Education*, which was dedicated exclusively to the concept of stewardship in colleges and universities. According to an article by Gillespie in that issue, to be a steward is to “have the responsibility of taking care of something on behalf of another” (p. 147). The article goes on to explore the assumption that all members of a campus community are in fact stewards, and that acceptance of that assumption by the community provides all its members – faculty, staff, and administrators – with a sense of common purpose and responsibility. Further, it leads all community members to determine how they can best be “good stewards” for the institution, which requires them to focus on providing quality service to their constituents (primarily students), establishing effective collaborative working relationships across the institution and with its many partners in the region, and using resources thoughtfully.

At the institutional level, SUNY Oneonta has consistently demonstrated itself to be a “good steward,” an observation that is supported by: the community engagement findings described above; its relatively secure fiscal position despite years of funding cuts and New York State’s perennially uncertain budget climate; and the overall success experienced by the institution in the past decade. A focus on this theme in the MSCHE self study – and in particular “shared” stewardship, which inherently invokes the idea of collaboration for the common good – will allow the College to explore its own administrative, governance, and communication processes and procedures more deeply and to make improvements where appropriate.

Structurally, SUNY Oneonta’s self-study process will address the fourteen MSCHE standards as organized into the six topic areas listed below:

1. Planning and Resource Allocation (Standards 1, 2, and 3)
2. Leadership, Collaboration, and Institutional Integrity (Standards 4, 5, and 6)
3. Student Recruitment and Retention (Standards 8 and 9)
4. Faculty and Academic Programs (Standards 10, 11, and 12)
5. Related Educational Activities (Standard 13)
6. Assessment of Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness (Standards 7 and 14)

**INTENDED OUTCOMES OF THE SELF STUDY**

The intended outcomes of the self study for SUNY Oneonta are as follows:

1. To carry out a constructive process and produce a useful document that not only satisfies the Commission on Higher Education but also guides institutional planning and action over the next five years.

2. To energize the campus community by providing the opportunity to participate in the self-study process and deepen members’ understanding of the value of re-accreditation as a vehicle for self-examination and improvement.
3. To coordinate all major planning initiatives at the College in order to minimize the potential for redundancies and conflicting initiatives and to increase efficiencies.

4. To emphasize and reaffirm the importance of teaching, learning, and scholarship, engagement, and shared stewardship to the future of the College.

5. To evaluate the extent to which the College is fulfilling its mission at the present time and to develop recommendations for improving the quality and effectiveness of the institution’s programs and services as appropriate.

**STRUCTURE OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS**

SUNY Oneonta’s Middle States Steering Committee is co-chaired by Dr. Anuradhaa Shastri, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology, Counseling, and Special Education, and Dr. Patricia Francis, Associate Provost for Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness. Dr. Shastri has served as the campus Assessment Coordinator since 2006, was an Evaluation Associate for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in 2010, and was an evaluation team member for Middle States in Spring 2011. Dr. Francis has extensive Middle States experience, having served on numerous evaluation teams and recently chairing a team. She has also been a reviewer for Periodic Review Reports, and served as Steering Committee co-chair for two different decennial Middle States reaccreditations at another SUNY campus.

Remaining Steering Committee members are as follows:

- Ms. Colleen Clarke, Undergraduate Student Member
- Dr. Constant Goutziers, Professor of Mathematics
- Mr. Timothy Hayes, Director, Center for Economic and Community Development
- Dr. Jeanne Miller, Associate Vice President for Student Development
- Ms. Sharon Paoletti, Agency Program Aide, Budget Office
- Dr. William Proulx, Associate Professor of Foods/Nutrition

Structurally, the Steering Committee co-chairs will lead the Steering Committee and the self-study review process. The Steering Committee has responsibility for developing the Self-Study Design and for guiding the entire self-study process, particularly through its oversight of the working groups to be formed to research and report on the focal issues of the self study. More specifically, Steering Committee members will serve a liaison function to the working groups, and will have overall responsibility for reviewing and responding to the groups’ reports.

Membership on the working groups will be determined through a consultative process between the Steering Committee and the President’s Cabinet. Special care will be taken to select working group members who have expertise and interest in the issues to be researched, but it will be important to draw working group members from the entire campus community in order to assure an inclusive and participatory process. Working groups will vary in size depending on the number of standards assigned to each and the complexity of their tasks. Each working group will include at least one student member, as appointed by the College’s Student Association.
Working group members (including the group’s chair) will be appointed and charged by President Kleniewski very early in the Fall 2011 semester.

**CHARGES TO THE WORKING GROUPS**

**Formation and Organization of Groups**

The fourteen MSCHE accreditation standards have been grouped into six topic areas to facilitate the self-study process, and the work of the self-study will be carried out by six working groups as assisted by a Steering Committee liaison (see Table 1). Working group members will represent a broad range of constituencies across the institution, and each group will be charged to address probing and forward-looking research questions developed by the Steering Committee. Working groups will be expected to examine existing data and documentation in order to respond to these questions, generate new data when needed, analyze evidence, and prepare preliminary and final drafts of reports. Wherever possible, working groups will include members who already serve on relevant existing committees in attempt to help assure knowledge and expertise with respect to issues of interest and to reduce redundancy of effort. As one example, the Working Group on Faculty and Academic Programs will include members of the College Senate’s Committee on Instruction, which was already charged to examine the feasibility of a Center for Faculty Excellence.

As necessary, the College’s Office of Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness will provide assistance to working groups with respect to data collection (e.g., survey administration) and analysis. In addition, the Steering Committee will provide working groups with templates to guide the development of their reports to assure integration of the fundamental elements outlined in the MSCHE *Characteristics of Excellence* and consistency in reports.

**Table 1: Working Group Topic Areas, Standards, and Liaisons**

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<th>Topic Area</th>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Steering Committee Liaisons</th>
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<td>Planning and Resource Allocation</td>
<td>Standards 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>Timothy Hayes</td>
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<td>Sharon Paoletti</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Assessment of Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness</td>
<td>Standards 7 and 14</td>
<td>Patricia Francis</td>
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<td>Anuradhaa Shastri</td>
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Working Group Charges

During its deliberations on this issue, the Steering Committee decided that it would develop one charge to be given to all six working groups. When working group members receive their appointment letter from President Kleniewski, that letter will specify the topic areas and Middle States standards their group will address. Accompanying that letter will be the following materials: 1) the working group charge and research questions specific to that group; 2) Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education; 3) Self Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report; and 4) SUNY Oneonta’s Self-Study Design. As appropriate, working groups will also receive other relevant materials from Middle States (e.g., the working group studying standards 7 and 14 will receive Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness: Understanding Middle States Expectations).

The charge that the six working groups will receive is as follows:

As described in the Self-Study Design document accompanying this charge, SUNY Oneonta is adopting, for its Middle States Self Study, the Comprehensive Self-Study Model with Special Emphases on Teaching, Learning and Scholarship; Engagement; and Shared Stewardship. These three issues were selected because of their congruence with the College’s new Mission Statement and because they represent three areas of activity that have figured prominently in the College’s past and are vital to its future. This particular approach to self study, as determined by the Middle States Steering Committee and approved by the President’s Cabinet, enables SUNY Oneonta to evaluate its accomplishments in these three areas and to benefit from the advice and recommendations that emerge as part of the self-study process – from both the working groups and the MSCHE evaluators – and help the College move forward most effectively within the context of its stated mission and goals. A more thorough discussion and explanation of these three areas can be found in the Self-Study Design.

Because the College is conducting a comprehensive self study, and therefore must attend to all fourteen Middle States standards, your working group must be sure that the institution demonstrates compliance with the fundamental elements outlined under your assigned standards, as found in Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education. In addition, as appropriate, for each of your standards you should research and document how the three special emphasis areas for the self study are reflected in the College’s activities and initiatives related to that standard. To a large extent, the questions included below will provide guidance as you do your research and prepare your report. Although your working group should address all of these questions, you should not feel constrained by them, and in fact you should feel free to add questions as appropriate.

Ultimately, your working group is responsible for providing the Steering Committee with a concise, thoughtful, and candid report that accurately depicts the results of its analysis. Your conclusions should be data-driven and documented, with all supporting data clearly cited. In addition, the recommendations you make should follow logically and clearly from your analysis and conclusions. In order to assure consistency in the reports the
Steering Committee receives from the working groups, please follow the reporting template and editorial style guidelines found in the Self-Study Design.

The Steering Committee is asking that working groups prepare and submit their reports in two stages. Draft reports are due no later than March 9, 2012, at which point the Steering Committee will review these reports and request revisions as necessary. Final reports are due to the Steering Committee no later than April 13, 2012.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Planning and Resource Allocation Working Group: Standards 1, 2, and 3</th>
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1. How is evidence being collected to determine that the institution is meeting each aspect of its mission namely, excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarship, engagement, and stewardship?

2. What evidence supports the College’s approach to recruiting, developing, and retaining personnel, and how effective has this approach been in advancing important campus goals including diversity and global connectedness?

3. To what extent have college stakeholders been involved, and continue to participate, in shaping the institution? Who are these stakeholders and how has their input been incorporated into college planning?

4. What evidence exists to demonstrate that the latest mission statement and planning goals have been communicated to all areas of the College? How has institutional planning been incorporated into divisional and unit planning?

5. In what sense do the new mission statement and planning goals reflect the aspirations of a higher educational institution? What evidence indicates that these are unique, or different from those of other peer institutions?

6. What evidence shows that planning and resource allocations are mission-driven, particularly in the areas of teaching, learning, and scholarship and engagement? In what ways does shared stewardship contribute to this process?

7. How does the institution ensure that its operational planning is aligned with its core academic mission, and how effectively is it meeting its academic goals and objectives?

8. In what ways have college and SUNY-wide planning and budgeting complemented each other? What areas could improve on both sides to assure better relationships and synergy?

9. How does the College implement its planning and budget processes to guide effective decision-making and facilitate institution renewal, especially in light of the state budget uncertainties?

10. What plans exist to develop, support and enhance the campus technology and information systems in support of the academic and administrative functions at the College?

11. How well does the College secure, align and assess its financial resources to support the mission of the College and the quality initiatives in the areas of teaching, learning, and scholarship engagement, and shared stewardship?
12. How effective is the College’s long-range budget planning in assuring that institutional goals will be met, taking into account factors such as capital spending, employee salary and benefit adjustments, increased energy costs, and declining state support?

13. To what extent does long-term financial planning influence the direction and initiatives of resource cultivation (e.g. donors, state aid, grants, endowments)?

14. How is philanthropy defined and aligned with the strategic plan? In what ways does the College influence decisions regarding use of endowment funds?

15. How effectively are the processes, documents and communications that describe how resources are allocated widely distributed understood so that people can make informed judgments about the use of institutional resources?

16. How effective is the process of building and maintaining allocations to provide for student services, faculty, staff, technical and physical facilities in order to accomplish the College’s goals and objectives? To what extent is this process participatory and inclusive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership, Collaboration, and Institutional Integrity Working Group: Standards 4, 5, and 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In which ways are the College’s contacts with the community being used to enhance student learning and development?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What evidence exists that administrative leadership facilitates implementation and helps the institution adhere to its strategic plan, especially in relation to teaching, learning, and scholarship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Describe the overall impact of recent transitions in the leadership of academic affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How effectively do the various bodies of college governance such as SUNY System, the college administration, faculty and staff, students, and affiliated boards (e.g. College Foundation, OAS, College Council) work together toward common institutional goals? To what extent are these relationships similar to and different from the ideas embodied in shared stewardship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To what extent do organizational structures and campus culture encourage teamwork and sharing information vertically and horizontally given the organizational chart and shared governance systems and processes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What are the checks and balances within and between each component of college governance? What policies and procedures are in place to assure that decision-making, both within and across governance bodies, is productive, efficient, and mission-driven?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. How effective are the processes for evaluating administrators in assuring that the College’s mission is led by skilled and knowledgeable executives?

8. To what extent are information systems, and the databases that support these systems, accessible and used by leaders to reach institutional goals?

9. Describe major organizational changes – and the rationale for them – that have taken place at the College over the last five years. What processes are in place to make sure the impact of these changes can be adequately assessed?

10. Are the definitions of administrators’ job duties, responsibilities and lines of authority clearly defined and known, not only to those in the role but to others? How effectively do administrators deal with issues that are cross-divisional in nature?

11. How does the institution evaluate the requisite qualifications and effectiveness of college administrators, including the president? To what extent are current institutional needs and context taken into account in developing hiring criteria for administrators?

12. Describe external standards and regulations that the College must meet as well as internal policies and procedures that guide its functions. What evidence exists to demonstrate that the College meets and is held accountable for meeting these external and internal standards?

13. Does the College have effective methods to inform the college community – and the public as a member of the SUNY system – of updated factual information about the College, including reports from regulatory and accrediting bodies? Are the current stated policies guiding these processes effective, and to what extent are they monitored and evaluated?

14. How are concerns of institutional integrity promptly, appropriately and equitably addressed? How are compliance issues monitored and breaches addressed? In what ways are these issues and their responses documented and communicated to institutional stakeholders? How does the institution decide what information about itself should be shared and with whom?

15. In what ways and to what extent does the College promote sound ethical practices and respect for diversity?

16. What policies exist to assure that the College conforms to fair and impartial practices in the hiring, evaluation, promotion, and dismissal of faculty and staff? What evidence exists to demonstrate that these policies are consistently and equitably applied?

Student Recruitment and Retention: Standards 8 and 9

1. How does the College assure that it recruits and admits students whose goals and expectations are aligned with the mission of the College?
2. What factors explain the College’s increased undergraduate retention rates in recent years? What has contributed to the gains made in undergraduate admissions over the past decade (numbers of applications, student profile, etc)? How does the planning process support this momentum given the current demographic and budgetary climates?

3. How are students queried about their needs and satisfaction with the services provided by the Institution? How have changes been made in response? Please provide examples.

4. How does the institution identify at risk students and how effective and sufficient are support services for those students?

5. How do inter-collegiate athletics, intramural sports, and recreation programs integrate with the College’s mission in supporting student development?

6. What processes have been used in setting the goals for graduate student enrollment and what have been the outcomes? What changes have been made in response to these outcomes, and how effective have these changes been?

7. Describe college efforts to assess student learning in administrative units (e.g., the Computer Center, Career Services). How is this information used to make improvements in programs and services?

8. How are students informed about procedures for making complaints and/or filing grievances? What is the College’s process for responding to complaints and/or grievances?

9. What are the challenges for transfer students at the College that affect its ability to recruit these students? How are transfer students supported during the admissions process and after they arrive at the College?

10. What evidence does the College gather to determine the academic preparation of transfer students? Overall, describe existing evidence regarding the academic performance of transfer vs. native students.

Faculty and Academic Programs Working Group: Standards 10, 11 and 12

1. What is the institution doing to ensure that it is successfully hiring and retaining qualified faculty? How effectively does the institution orient, mentor, and support tenure-track, non-tenure track, and part-time faculty?

2. What professional development resources and opportunities exist for faculty? What percentage of the faculty benefit from these resources and opportunities? Is this support sufficient? How does the College ensure that decisions regarding faculty development resources are transparent and equitable?
3. What processes and procedures exist to communicate expectations for teaching, scholarship, and service?

4. How does the College promote and support excellence in teaching?

5. What are the mechanisms for awarding faculty released time from teaching, and what kinds of non-teaching activities are supported in this way? In what other ways does the College promote and support faculty involvement in scholarship activities? Evaluate the adequacy of this support in helping ensure faculty can be productive scholars.

6. How does the College promote and facilitate faculty service activities? How are service contributions recognized?

7. What processes are used to evaluate faculty teaching loads (i.e., faculty-student ratios, contact hours) across and within different academic programs? How is this information used to ensure that teaching load issues are being addressed fairly and equitably?

8. How does the College ensure that faculty performance is fairly and accurately evaluated? How are faculty evaluations used to promote the achievement of programmatic and student learning outcomes and to focus development efforts among the faculty?

9. How does the College ensure that the content and rigor of all academic programs are appropriate for its mission?

10. How is the College assessing and addressing the impact of programmatic assessment on faculty workload? What resources are provided to faculty to assess their academic programs including developing appropriate student learning outcomes, measuring the achievement of these outcomes, and refining their programs based on assessment findings? Is the support provided sufficient to allow the meaningful assessment of academic programs?

11. How does the College evaluate the impact of independent studies on faculty workload? How is this information used to ensure that faculty members are being fairly and equitably compensated for supervising independent studies?

12. Is experiential learning being used effectively to achieve the College's mission, particularly in the areas of engagement and shared stewardship? How does the College ensure that all students involved in experiential learning activities are achieving and acquiring expected knowledge and skill competencies from these experiences? Describe the adequacy of support provided by the College to faculty who offer courses that include experiential learning with respect to planning, placement, and supervision of students?

13. Describe recent interest in the development of a Center for Faculty Excellence. What factors are contributing to the perceived need for such a center, and what programs and services provided by such a structure would be most likely to benefit faculty?
14. What support does the institution provide for the development of new graduate degree programs? Are the resources provided sufficient to support adequate growth of graduate programs at the institution?

15. How effectively does the General Education program support the mission and vision of the institution, particularly in the areas of teaching and learning, engagement, and shared stewardship?

16. How have decisions regarding the structure and content of the institution’s General Education been made in light of the changes made to general education requirements by SUNY System Administration? How has assessment been used to strengthen and refine the General Education program?

17. How have the expected learning outcomes of General Education courses been communicated to students? How does the institution ensure that students achieve acceptable levels of competency and proficiency for each of the General Education learning outcomes by the time they graduate?

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**Related Educational Offerings Working Group: Standard 13**

1. Does the College effectively identify students who are not adequately prepared for college-level coursework? How are the procedures used to identify student preparedness for college assessed? How does the College use this information to refine and strengthen these procedures? Does the retention rate of these students mirror the retention rate of the overall student body?

2. Evaluate the adequacy of the College’s support in the form of services and courses in addressing the academic needs of students who are not prepared for college.

3. What processes and procedures exist to assure that for-credit internships and experiential learning offerings meet the institution’s academic standards?

4. How are online learning technologies chosen? Are the resources and support for online education appropriate and sufficient to ensure these courses and programs are meeting internal and external standards of excellence for online education?

5. What programs exist to recruit and retain international students and expand recruitment to geographical regions that the College has not historically targeted? How successful have these programs been at achieving their goals?

6. What support and services exist to help international students succeed at the College? Are these programs successful? Do retention rates, graduation rates, and other indicators of success mirror the overall student body?
1. What evidence exists that the procedures for institutional assessment are well integrated across the four major divisions (i.e., Academic Affairs, Student Development, Finance and Administration, and College Advancement) at SUNY Oneonta as well as across institutional, unit, and program levels of the College?

2. How, and how effectively, are the results of institutional assessment shared with constituents?

3. What are the key mechanisms for evaluating the overall performance of the College to ensure that it: a) satisfies its mission, b) remains fiscally sound; and c) can continue to provide an educational environment that promotes excellence? How can these mechanisms be improved, and are there particular areas where improvement efforts should be focused?

4. In which ways are institutional assessment results used to effectively inform the budget allocation and resource distribution processes?

5. What measures exist to inform the institution with respect to its ongoing performance in teaching, learning, and scholarship, engagement, and shared stewardship? What do these measures show?

6. What evidence exists that the student learning outcomes identified by academic and support programs reflect the special emphasis areas of teaching, learning, and scholarship, engagement, and shared stewardship?

7. How well documented, organized, and sustained is the College’s assessment process to evaluate student learning outcomes?

8. Are assessments of student learning of adequate quality? Do they yield direct evidence that is clear, tangible, convincing, and purposefully relates to the program’s key learning outcomes? Do they have results that are sufficiently accurate and truthful that they can be used with confidence to make decisions?

9. How are assessments of student learning outcomes analyzed to support programmatic changes and academic decisions?

10. How have specialized accreditation processes encouraged the implementation of the College’s assessment practices. What evidence exists that assessment contributes to overall program quality?

11. How does the faculty establish and demonstrate effective student learning goals and outcomes? What are the principal means by which faculty demonstrate the improvement of the teaching and learning process?
12. Is there sufficient evidence that the results of the assessment process are shared and discussed with appropriate constituents? If evidence does not exist, how adequate is the plan to achieve this goal?

13. In what ways are the results of the assessment of student learning being incorporated into the process of institutional assessment and effectiveness? What impact is this information having?
ORGANIZATION OF THE SELF-STUDY REPORT

SUNY Oneonta will prepare its final Self-Study Report according to the following format:

Executive Summary and Eligibility Certification Statement

I. Introduction

II. Accreditation History and the 2013 Self Study

III. Planning and Resource Allocation: Standards 1, 2, and 3

IV. Leadership, Collaboration, and Institutional Integrity: Standards 4, 5, and 6

V. Student Recruitment and Retention: Standards 8 and 9

VI. Faculty and Academic Programs: Standards 10, 11, and 12

VII. Related Educational Activities: Standard 13

VIII. Assessment of Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness: Standards 7 and 14

IX. Conclusions

X. Index of Recommendations

XI. Inventory of Supporting Documents

XII. Appendices
EDITORIAL STYLE AND FORMAT OF ALL REPORTS

Word processing program: Microsoft Word 2007 for text, tables, and figures
Microsoft Excel for spreadsheets and graphs

Fonts/Style: Times New Roman, 12 point

Headings: Heading style 1

Paragraphs: Block style, left-justified

Margins: One inch

Spacing: Single-spacing, 0 point before and after

Pages: Use page numbers, bottom centered

Length: Working group reports: 15 pages maximum
Self-Study Report: 100 pages, excluding appendices

Use of acronyms: Write title out in full first time, including acronym in parentheses; second time and thereafter, use acronym

Institution name: SUNY Oneonta

Documentation of sources: APA Style

Editing Process:

Working group reports will be compiled to produce the self-study document, following the organizational scheme included above. All reports will be carefully edited and integrated into the final report, with special emphasis placed on minimizing redundancies and any conflicting information. The Steering Committee co-chairs will conduct most of the preliminary editing, and the administrative co-chair, Dr. Francis, will serve as final editor in order to assure a single, coherent voice. Throughout the process, drafts will be provided to the Steering Committee and working groups so that these groups’ ideas are not modified in any significant way. Similarly, the campus community will have multiple opportunities to review and provide feedback on drafts of the self-study document.
WORKING GROUP REPORT TEMPLATE

- Overview of the group’s charge and the questions addressed

- Description of the process used to address questions, including connections and collaborations with other working groups and/or other college committees

- Analysis of findings and conclusions relevant to standard(s), including institutional strengths and challenges

- Analysis and conclusions of the standard relative to Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship (as appropriate)

- Analysis and conclusions of the standard relative to Engagement (as appropriate)

- Analysis and conclusions of the standard relative to Shared Stewardship (as appropriate)

- Recommendations for improvement
TIMETABLE FOR THE SELF STUDY

**Summer 2010**

- MSCHE reminds institution of the pending evaluation and invites it to the Self-Study Institute

**Fall 2010**

- President Kleniewski names Steering Committee Co-Chairs
- Co-Chairs attend Self-Study Institute in November
- Co-Chairs prepare self-study model proposal for review and approval by President’s Cabinet

**Spring 2011**

- President’s Cabinet approves self-study model proposal
- President appoints remainder of Steering Committee members and charges committee
- Steering Committee meets and prepares Self-Study Design
- MSCHE staff liaison schedules self-study preparation visit
- Steering Committee finalizes Self-Study Design draft, including charge questions for working groups
- President’s Cabinet approves Self-Study Design for submission to MSCHE (April 19)
- MSCHE staff liaison conducts self-study preparation visit (May 3)
- MSCHE staff liaison approves institution’s self-study design

**Fall 2011**

- President appoints working groups and chairs and charges groups
- Campus-wide kick-off of reaccreditation process is held
- Working groups begin research and evaluation process
- Steering Committee holds three campus meetings on self-study process (two general meetings at the beginning and the end of the semester and one as part of a regularly-scheduled College Senate meeting)

**Spring 2012**

- MSCHE selects the Evaluation Team Chair and the institution approves the selection
- Team Chair and institution select dates for team visit and for the Chair's preliminary visit
- Institution sends a copy of the Self-Study Design to the Team Chair.
- MSCHE selects evaluation team members after consulting with the institution
- Working groups submit draft reports (March 9) and Steering Committee provides feedback and revisions (April 2)
- Working groups submit final reports (April 13)
- Steering Committee holds campus meetings on self-study process (two general meetings at the beginning and the end of the semester and one as part of a regularly-scheduled College Senate meeting)

**Spring-Summer 2012**

- Steering Committee co-chairs prepares first draft of self-study report for review by President’s Cabinet and Steering Committee (mid-July)
- Steering Committee co-chairs revise draft on the basis of feedback from the President’s Cabinet and Steering Committee (end of August)

**Fall 2012**

- Steering Committee provides self-study report draft to campus community (including the College Council) for review and feedback
- Steering Committee provides draft report to Evaluation Team Chair
- Steering Committee holds three campus meetings on draft report (two general meetings at the beginning and the end of the semester and one as part of a regularly-scheduled College Senate meeting)
- Evaluation Team Chair receives revised report draft prior to preliminary campus visit
- Evaluation Team Chair makes preliminary visit
- Institution prepares final version of the self-study report

**Spring 2013**

- Institution sends final report to evaluation team and to MSCHE at least six weeks prior to team visit
- Team visit takes place
- Campus receives team report and provides institutional response

**Summer 2013**

- Committee on Evaluation Reports meets
- MSCHE issues action
INVENTORY OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Strategic Planning Documents:
- State University of New York (SUNY) Strategic Plan, http://www.suny.edu/strategicplan/
- Strategic Planning and Resource Council (SPARC), http://www.oneonta.edu/sparc/
- Memorandum of Understanding with the State University of New York, http://www.oneonta.edu/general/mou06.asp

SUNY Oneonta Web Pages (www.oneonta.edu):

Other Documentation:
- Annual Reports from each department/division
- Program Review reports and assessment documentation from each academic department
- Assessment documentation from each administrative unit
- Annual assessment reports on general education
- MSCHE Self-Study Reports and Periodic Review Reports, Evaluation Team Reports, and Institutional Responses
- Annual IPEDS Reports and Peer Comparisons
- Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) Institutional Report, 2009
- SUNY Student Opinion Survey Institutional Reports
- Self-Study and Evaluation Reports from accredited disciplines:
Graduate program accreditations:
  o Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education
  o National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

Undergraduate program accreditations:
  o American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
  o Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education
  o National Association of Schools of Music
  o National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

Middle States Commission on Higher Education Publications
(www.msche.org/publications.asp):
  • Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness: Understanding Middle States Expectations, 2005
  • Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education, 2009
  • Self Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report, 2007
  • Team Visits: Conducting and Hosting an Evaluation Visit, 2009
INFORMATION TO GUIDE SELECTION OF VISITING TEAM CHAIR/MEMBERS

SUNY Oneonta suggests that the Evaluation Team chair and team members come from institutions that meet the following characteristics:

- Offer an academic program mix that includes professional preparation programs (especially Education) as well as those in the liberal arts, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels but with greater undergraduate enrollments
- Are public institutions and part of a university system
- Place more emphasis on excellence in teaching as an evaluative criterion for faculty, followed closely by excellence in scholarship

SUNY Oneonta also requests an experienced Team Chair at the presidential level and from an aspirational peer institution or one with similar characteristics. As part of its 2006 Memorandum of Understanding with SUNY System Administration, SUNY Oneonta identified four institutions from outside New York State as aspirational peers based on criteria such as enrollment, incoming student selectivity, retention and graduate rates, and student-faculty ratio. These institutions were The College of New Jersey and three institutions from the Pennsylvania system: Bloomsburg University, Millersville University, and Shippensburg University. In 2008, SUNY Oneonta had an external consultant, Dr. Thomas Freeman, identify an updated list of aspirational peers based primarily on academic characteristics including entering student profiles and selectivity. Dr. Freeman recommended that The College of New Jersey, Millersville University, and Shippensburg University be retained as aspirational peers, eliminating Bloomsburg University. Additions included Montclair State University and Monmouth University of New Jersey, Salisbury University from Maryland, and CUNY’s Hunter College and Queens College.
REFERENCES
