



Self-Study

2000-2010

Prepared for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1866, Towson University (TU) is the second-largest public university in the University System of Maryland (USM) which has eleven campuses and one research institute. The *U.S. News and World Report's 2010 America's Best Colleges* ranks Towson eighth among the top public master's universities in the north. The university offers a wide range of baccalaureate programs as well as graduate programs at both the master's and applied doctoral levels to its more than 21,000 students on the main campus, off-campus and international locations. Faithful to its history and mission, Towson defines itself as a comprehensive, metropolitan, liberal arts university with a strong commitment to teaching and providing an inclusive learning environment that welcomes students of different backgrounds and prepares them for success in a diverse world.

Towson University is an institution in the midst of positive transformative change. In 2003, the university recruited a new president who assembled a fresh senior leadership team. By 2005, the university revised its mission statement and, with heightened emphasis on metropolitan engagement and “telling and selling” the Towson story, implemented a strategic plan titled *Towson University 2010: Mapping the Future*. The campus selected a new set of peer institutions that match its current profile and placed greater emphasis on its fundraising activities including external grants and contracts focusing on applied research. Forward-looking in its vision and direction, Towson is well positioned for a long period of continuing success.

Two variables have influenced Towson University's plans to meet its mission and vision in recent years: the economy and leadership changes within the Provost's Office. Prior to Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, state higher education appropriations for Towson were as high as \$91.8 million. They were reduced to \$89.2 million by the end of the fiscal year. Reductions in state appropriations for FY 2010, followed by midyear budget cuts totaling \$3.1 million and the return of \$7.2 million from the fund balance, have resulted in a hiring freeze and reductions in travel and operating budgets. Furthermore, Maryland has implemented a furlough plan for all state employees, including university faculty and staff. Strategic and enrollment planning have been successful to date and Towson plans to continue its efforts to reduce expenditures and address its strategic initiatives without significant negative impact. Fortunately, nonrecurring state appropriations have allowed the university to shift funding sources on the short-term basis.

Managed growth in student enrollment has been the hallmark of Towson University's planning since 2003. Designated as one of the University System of Maryland growth campuses, Towson grew by 3,989 students from 17,788 in fall 2003 to 21,177 in fall 2009. During those years, high school grade point averages and SAT profiles of entering freshman classes remained strong, retention rates continued high, and graduation rates increased. The percent of minority students also rose each year and the achievement gap between African American and White students virtually disappeared. The current recession has had an impact on enrollment growth. The USM directed all institutions to hold 2009-10 annual full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment to within 1.5 percent of the FY 2008-09 annual FTE enrollment. Similar limitations have been imposed for FY 2010-11. As of fall 2009, Towson had 1,545 full and part-time faculty members of which 622 are tenured or on tenure-track. The university embraces the ideals of the teacher-scholar model, and actively recruits and rewards faculty members who hold a commitment to excellence in teaching, pursue either primary and/or applied scholarship, and engage the campus,

profession, and local and regional community to promote both civic engagement and economic vitality. Towson's enrollment plan is to grow to 25,000 students on the main campus and add 3,000 students enrolled in online program delivery, off-campus locations, and international programs by 2018.

The response to increasing student enrollment is readily apparent. Capital construction is visible across the campus, faculty recruitment has increased significantly, and new curricular offerings and courses have been introduced at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Despite enrollment growth, Towson continues to maintain its longstanding and unwavering commitment to small classes that offer students more individualized learning experiences.

METHODOLOGY

The Middle States *Self-Study* Steering Committee, which was appointed by President Robert L. Caret on the recommendation of the Provost's Office, was convened in December 2007. Its 39 members represent the six divisions of the university, including the Department of Athletics, and eight colleges. The Steering Committee is led by two co-chairs, a department chair and the associate dean, both from the College of Liberal Arts. Two undergraduate students, who represented the Student Government Association, and one graduate student served on the committee as well.

The Steering Committee elected to use the Comprehensive Model for the *Self-Study* and identified enrollment growth as the defining issue since Towson has been designated as one of several growth campuses by the University System of Maryland. The Steering Committee divided itself into eight sections that align with the Comprehensive Model that includes 14 "standards of excellence". To reflect the importance of teaching in the university's mission, the steering committee made one change to the model. Standard 12, *General Education*, was moved to group six, which includes Standard 11, *Educational Offerings*.

During the spring and summer of 2008, the Steering Committee created the *Self-Study Design* to serve as a roadmap for the *Self-Study* itself. The eight sections developed charge questions that align with the fundamental elements for each of the standards. The *Design* was submitted to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) in early fall. It was approved in November 2008, which marked the beginning of the Steering Committee's work on the *Self-Study*.

The research and analysis required for the *Self-Study* was the task of the Steering Committee with support from 21 working groups whose membership also had campus-wide representation. The associate provost and the co-chairs sought recommendations and appointed the members of the working groups of which over 150 faculty members, administrators, staff, and students served. The working groups were divided among the eight Steering Committee sections, with each of the sections taking responsibility and providing oversight for either one or two standards.

The task of the working groups was to respond to the charge questions listed in the *Self-Study Design*. A common template was used to report results per charge question. The research process included the collection of electronic surveys, face-to-face interviews, analysis of publicly

accessible information on the Towson and USM websites, gathering and analysis of data such as syllabi and mission statements from departments and units across the campus, and collection and review of many university documents.

By June 2009, completed templates were gathered by the Steering Committees and transformed into comprehensive narratives supported by extensive documentation. The draft of the *Self-Study* based on the collected narratives was written by the co-chairs, in consultation with the steering committee. The *Self-Study Draft* was reviewed by the Office of the President and the Provost's Council. It will be submitted to MSCHE in January 2011 for review.

The *Self-Study* process was designed to engage the campus community at every level. The Provost's 2009 January Conference focused on the *Self-Study* and the reaccreditation process. Over 325 faculty members, staff, and administrators attended the conference which included presentations by the president, provost, one of the *Self-Study* co-chairs, and a member of the MSCHE Board. Conference participants were invited to join group discussions led by members of the steering committee. The discussions were documented.

To enhance the visibility and transparency of the *Self-Study* process, a Middle States website was created. A link can be found on the Towson University homepage. Furthermore, the Provost's Office purchased and distributed t-shirts, writing pads, and other materials with the logo "Ask Me about Middle States." These were widely distributed across the campus. Consistent with the tradition of shared governance, the co-chairs also reported on the *Self-Study* process to the University Council of Chairs and the President's Council. Every effort was made to ensure that the Middle States reaccreditation process engaged the campus as a whole and offered opportunities for comments and recommendations from all members of the community. The *Self-Study* was released to the campus community for comments in October 2009 and again, as revised, in October 2010.

The Towson University *Self-Study* is the result of collaborative work across all campus units. The findings and recommendations are reported in eight chapters that reflect the collective desire of the community to develop a deeper understanding of Towson that has the potential to lead to self improvement. The appendices to each chapter list all pertinent documents and data analyzed in the *Self-Study*, including the names of steering committee and working group members. The appendices also include relevant supporting tables and other additional materials that provide details about the university's policies and practices. Appendix 9 contains a comprehensive spreadsheet that lists all the documents gathered to align with the fundamental elements of each standard. Depending on the source, documents are available via hyperlinks, URL links, in a SharePoint electronic depository, in hard copy, or on exhibit in the Middle States Team Room located in the Towson Room in the Albert S. Cook Library.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Self-Study* is an extensive, in-depth examination of Towson University in light of the 14 standards that comprise the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's *Characteristics of Excellence*. It represents the work of the entire Towson community through committees, working groups, campus-wide conferences, surveys, interviews, and conversations. Looking back in order to look ahead, the *Self-Study* is a gauge of how far Towson has come, and how much farther it has the potential to go in pursuit of academic excellence, community engagement, and global outreach.

In spring 2009, Towson University requested that the MSCHE delay the campus visit of the reaccreditation team by several months in order to complete the approval process of the university's complex substantive change request for multiple off-site locations. On September 24, 2010, President Caret was informed in a letter that the request for substantive changes was approved. In the interest of internal coherence and consistency, the majority of the data in this *Self-Study* reflect the state of the university as of November 2009, the date the draft of the *Self-Study* was originally delivered to the university's president.

In the intervening months between the finalization of the draft of the *Self-Study* and the formal approval of the substantive changes, Towson has moved forward in several significant areas including leadership, mission, strategic planning, and curriculum:

- Building on *TU 2010: Mapping the Future*, the new university-wide strategic plan, *Towson University 2016: Building Within – Reaching Out (TU 2016)* was developed collaboratively over the past year under the leadership of the president.¹ It expands the themes to include Academic Achievement, Student Experience, Engagement and Success, Partnerships Philosophy, Resources for Success, and Telling and Selling Our Story. President Caret introduced the basic outline of *TU 2016* in his *2010 President's Fall Address to the Campus Community*.
- One of the outcomes of the strategic planning process is a new mission statement that reflects Towson's current values and expectations.² It was supported by the University Senate on October 2010 and has been forwarded to the Board of Regents of the University System of Maryland and to the Maryland Higher Education Commission for approval.
- The new provost, who was appointed in August 2009, reviewed the Division of Academic Affairs and developed several initiatives, including the creation of an *Academic Strategic Plan* closely aligned with *Towson University 2016*. Collaborating with faculty, deans and associate deans, the Provost's Office developed and submitted this plan to the University Senate which reviewed and endorsed it October 2010. The *Academic Strategic Plan* will

¹Hard copy of the *TU 2016* brochure is in document archive, under Standard 1.

² Appendix 1: Document 1.3 *Proposed Mission Statement* (as of November 11, 2010).

inform the strategic plans of each of the colleges, as well as of those of all the academic departments across the university as they are developed.

- With the emphasis on academic excellence and student learning at the core of Towson's mission, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning is being created. Housed in Cook Library, it will be closely aligned with the Center for Instructional Advancement and Technology and will help to manifest Towson's commitment to students and faculty.
- With the appointment of the new assistant vice president for the Office of Assessment in October 2009, work on the complex substantive change request has been completed³ and procedures developed with appropriate offices to ensure continued compliance. In addition, the course recertification process has been revitalized and the assessment processes associated with the new general education curriculum, the University Core, are well underway. New processes for assessment plans, assessment updates and program reviews are now in place.
- The new *Appointment, Rank and Tenure* (ART) policy, which replaces Chapter 3 of the *Faculty Handbook*, was endorsed in spring 2010 by the University Senate.⁴ Deans, department chairs, as well as college and department promotion and tenure committees are now beginning the process of aligning all the department and college policies with those outlined in the ART.

The eight chapters of the *Self-Study* have been organized as follows:

Chapter One focuses on Standard 1, *Mission and Goals*, and Standard 6, *Integrity*. Towson University's mission and strategic plan, *TU 2010*, accurately represent the university's values and goals. The vision that informed the strategic plan allowed the university to take bold steps with regard to enrollment growth, campus expansion, and productive engagement with the community. Towson places a high value on integrity. Students, faculty, and staff work in an environment where fair practices are the hallmark of how the university relates to members of its community. Through the extensive use of technology, the internet, and print media, Towson promotes the dissemination of information relevant to students, faculty, and staff as well as to community, alumni, and prospective students in a manner that is transparent and easily accessible.

Chapter Two focuses on Standard 2, *Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal* and Standard 3, *Institutional Resources*. Towson University's leadership has the vision and experience to successfully guide the institution through the current economic challenges while continuing to address institutional objectives. Towson's budget planning process and resource allocation have served the university community, particularly students, very well over the last five years. Student learning continues to focus Towson's priorities. The university's budget planning is flexible enough to adjust to a volatile economic landscape as has been demonstrated in the current recession. The unprecedented growth of its physical plant attests to the remarkable success that Towson has achieved.

Chapter Three focuses on Standard 4, *Leadership and Governance* and Standard 5, *Administration*. Under the leadership of the current president, the administration of the university

³ Appendix 7: Table 7.2b, *Locations of Off-Site Programming Effective January 2011*.

⁴ *Appointment, Rank and Tenure (ART) Policy* is in document archive, under Standard 10.

is in competent hands. The senior leadership team has demonstrated a high degree of success in meeting the goals of the university's mission and strategic plan. Towson's commitment to shared governance and accountability continues to define how the university governs itself across all units and sectors. As student enrollment has increased, a commitment to provide additional personnel to manage the expanding administrative operations of the campus is evident from the number of new hires across divisions. *TU 2010 Report Cards* constitute a visible and transparent method for evaluating and disseminating information about how strategic plan goals were met and which areas needed improvement.

Chapter Four focuses on Standard 8, *Admissions and Retention*, and Standard 9, *Student Support Services*. Towson University's enrollment services, which include Admissions, the Financial Aid Office, and the Office of the Registrar, are aligned with the university's mission and strategic plan and are on par with industry standards. Information pertaining to admissions and financial aid, as well as advising and academic programs, is readily available on the Towson website and in print materials. Keeping the information current has proven to be a challenge. A wide range of student advising and support services are available to all students, including at-risk, first generation, athletes, transfer students, and students from underrepresented populations. Towson fares well in comparative retention and graduation rates both among its peer group and nationally. Student support services are assessed differentially depending on the division and degree to which a culture of assessment has been implemented across units.

Chapter Five focuses on Standard 10, *Faculty*. Towson University has a highly qualified, credentialed, and intellectually engaged faculty committed to teaching, scholarship, and service both at Towson and in the community. Owing to recent enrollment growth, a significant number of new faculty members have been hired in the past three years, increasing the ranks of tenure-track faculty across disciplines. Towson's commitment to diversity is evident from the relatively high proportion of recently hired faculty who self-identify as belonging to underrepresented groups. Faculty members with an interest in technology-enhanced pedagogy have seen a significant increase in the number of technology classrooms and easily accessible software that serves in-class, hybrid, and online learning. Support for research has increased, in part, because of Towson's commitment to develop more opportunities for external grants and contracts.

Chapter Six focuses on Standard 11, *Educational Offering* and Standard 12, *General Education*. In keeping with its mission, Towson University is committed to providing students with learning opportunities that expand their knowledge base, develop competencies and skills to assure their success in the workplace, while preparing them to be lifelong learners. Educational offerings include a wide range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary majors and minors at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, a general education curriculum for undergraduates, and abundant professional/clinical experiences. A new general education curriculum, the University Core, will be implemented in fall 2011. Although not explicitly stated in Towson's mission or in *TU 2010*, student learning outcomes are embedded in the overwhelming majority of departmental and program descriptions and/or missions. The new draft mission statement includes specific student learning outcomes.

Chapter Seven focuses on Standard 13, *Related Educational Activities*. Towson University is committed to provide all learners with opportunities to increase their knowledge base and to

offer services that support student learning at every level. Through a wide array of support services, alternative learning modalities, and programming for non-matriculated students, Towson promotes educational opportunities that increase the economic and social well-being of individuals and the community. Enrollment growth has been a powerful force behind the growth of online and off-campus location programming.

Chapter Eight focuses on Standard 7, *Institutional Assessment* and Standard 14, *Assessment of Student Learning*. Towson University is committed to developing a culture of assessment across all divisions and units. The hire of a new assistant vice president for the Office of Assessment in October 2009 during a hiring freeze attests to the institution's commitment, providing leadership for further development of the institution's assessment processes. The *TU 2010 Report Cards* instituted by the current president have been very effective in tracking progress, creating a system of accountability and monitoring the implementation of improvements. In fall 2009, there was no integrated systematic campus-wide assessment plan. On the academic side, the long vacancy in the leadership of the Office of Assessment and changes in the leadership in the Division of Academic Affairs over the past six to seven years frustrated efforts to develop a coherent assessment plan that includes regularly published reports and track improvement in practices based on the data gathered in reports. However, in fall 2010, the program assessment process was revised, including required planning documents for programs not in compliance with assessment requirements.

The Division of Student Affairs has strong assessment plans in place to assess the work of the division, per se, and of student learning. The Department of Athletics provides annual reports to track the status and implementation of their practices. However, assessment of student satisfaction and student learning is not being systematically conducted within the other nonacademic divisions of the university. The University Assessment Council is effective in reviewing assessment reports to the degree that they are submitted.

CHAPTER 1
Standard 1: Mission and Goals
Standard 6: Integrity

As an institution of higher learning, Towson University has a mission statement that clearly articulates its commitment to student learning and its role as a metropolitan university in the life of the community. Reflecting the values that have been foundational throughout its history, Towson's mission acknowledges its importance to the culture of the region and its responsibility to educate the citizens and leaders of the future. The mission informs every aspect of planning, decision making, and practices across all units of the university. Towson's mission is aligned with the mission and goals of the University System of Maryland.

Towson University Mission

Towson has both a *Summary Mission Statement* as well as more detailed statements about the university, such as *Institutional Identity* and *Institutional Capabilities*, which elaborate on the mission itself. The *Summary Mission* states:

Towson University, as the State's Metropolitan University, focuses on providing highly developed educational experiences and community service through a broad range of intellectual opportunities to a diverse student body at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. The academic programs and services offered through the university provide a core quality environment for students to acquire the intellectual and social preparation to achieve their potential as contributing leaders and citizens of the workforce and a complex global society. Faculty, students, and staff serve the region through research and professional outreach that specifically responds to the state's socioeconomic and cultural needs and aspirations.

Metropolitan universities such as Towson serve broad cross-sections of society in large, complex, urban, and suburban settings. By definition, as Maryland's Metropolitan University, Towson serves a diverse population through its academic programs, as well as through its community and business outreach that contribute to economic development and social progress. Through partnerships, mutual problem solving, applied scholarship, internships, service learning, and the like, Towson University has established strong linkages with the surrounding community and region.

The university's current mission statement was formally approved by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) in February 2006, following its development as a part of the Towson's most recent strategic planning process. The mission statement is currently under review and revision; it will be sent to the USM in November 2010 and then to MHEC in spring 2011 for approval. It is widely publicized and is easily accessible on the university website, in Appendix A of the undergraduate catalog, and on the first page of Chapter 1 of the Faculty Handbook. President Caret frequently discusses the mission. Speaking to the incoming students during the August 2007 new student convocation, he said, "*Towson has a special mission to serve a diverse urban and metropolitan population through economic development, social progress, and business and community outreach. Because of this special role, our students have many opportunities to apply classroom learning to real life situations in the community.*"

The values and ideals reflected in the university's mission inform all academic and nonacademic units. Reviews of the mission and/or descriptive statements of all eight colleges confirm that each one includes the goals of student learning and intellectual development. For example, the College of Health Profession's mission states that "*Graduates will exhibit the highest ethical principles and professional behaviors in the application of knowledge and critical thinking, the proficient use of skills, the effective use of communication and the meaningful use of technology within disciplinary and interdisciplinary settings.*" The mission of the College of Business and Economics "*is to prepare students for success in business and the larger community through its unique combination of experiential learning, applied research, and community outreach; to support high-quality faculty who are actively engaged in teaching and scholarship; and to promote the economic, educational, and societal advancement of Maryland.*"

Beyond the professional colleges, emphasis on student learning is also noted. The mission of the College of Liberal Arts, the largest of the colleges, is to provide "*a foundation for the intellectual and cultural life of the University through its contributions to a liberal arts education for all students. Emphasizing excellence in teaching and learning, the College offers challenging curricula in diverse majors, disciplines, and interdisciplinary programs. CLA strives to impart a spirit of curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking; to promote integrity and tolerance; and to encourage students and faculty to be engaged and informed citizens. CLA is committed to improving our communities, our societies and the world.*" Similarly, Albert S. Cook Library's mission also emphasizes student learning, intellectual development, support of research, and effective use of technology. It states, "*The university library provides major educational, cultural and information services and resources to the University. Our mission is to support the University's academic programs; facilitate student and faculty learning and research; and provide users with lifelong skills in identifying, locating, evaluating and applying information.*"

Among the nonacademic divisions, support for the academic mission is also evident. For example, the Student Affairs' mission states that "*The Division of Student Affairs strives to create transformative learning experiences that are pivotal in students' education and identity development by engaging students in a broad range of programs, services, and opportunities that support the student in acquiring essential skills to thrive as emerging citizens and leaders*" The Department of Athletics likewise places emphasis on student learning and intellectual development. Its mission is to "*...contribute to the University's commitment to excellence...by: providing intercollegiate sports programs that strengthen educational and developmental experiences for student-athletes....*" The Division of University Advancement also notes the centrality of educational outcomes in its mission which states "*...The division advances Towson University's interests by developing the financial resources necessary to support academic programs to respond to Maryland's educational and work force needs....*"

An analysis of the mission statements across the eight colleges and divisions reveals that most colleges and many academic departments have formal mission statements, and that the majority of units within divisions that have such statements post them on the university's website.⁵

⁵Appendix 1: Table 1.1, *Location and Content Analysis of College and Library Missions*, Table 1.2, *Location and Content Analysis of Department and Undergraduate Program Mission Statements*, and Table 1.3, *Location and Content Analysis of Graduate Program Mission Statements*.

However, college and department mission statements are not routinely listed in the *undergraduate* or *graduate catalogs*. The same pattern is evident in the analysis of mission statements for various campus support services.⁶ Mission statements for both academic and campus support units and graduate programs, as well as descriptive statements for units or programs that have no mission statement, were examined to determine their alignment with the university's mission. Four themes emerged: quality and highly developed learning and intellectual opportunities, community service and learning outside the classroom, preparation for ethical citizenship and workforce participation, and applied research that benefits the state. Most mission or descriptive statements among academic units or programs contained reference to two or more of these themes. Towson's mission statement provides general language about learning outcomes. These expectations are embedded in the college and program documentation as discussed in Chapter 6. Likewise, a majority of support organizations referred to supporting the educational mission, and/or providing support to the outreach and workforce development mission of the university. In short, there is evidence of alignment of mission and/or descriptive statements among units with Towson's mission.

Towson University Strategic Plan

Towson's mission is deeply embedded in the strategic plan: *Towson University 2010: Mapping the Future (TU 2010)*, which advances the goals of student learning, diversity, community service, and high level of intellectual engagement. The university community was involved in the planning process which began in spring 2003. Open forums and focus groups with representatives from a wide range of campus constituencies provided opportunities for many individuals to express their views about the university's future priorities and goals. In addition, advisory groups and the presidential transition advisory team as well as President Caret worked together to craft *TU 2010*, which was unveiled in fall 2004. A similar campus-wide program was employed in the development of the new strategic plan, *Towson University 2016: Building Within – Reaching Out (TU 2016)*.⁷

In keeping with its mission⁸ and identity as Maryland's Metropolitan University with potential for significant future growth, nine guiding principles form the foundation from which the major themes of *TU 2010* emerged. They include: (1) Create and Serve; (2) An Engine of Change; (3) Responsible Growth; (4) Strength Within; (5) An Institution of Unlimited Boundaries; (6) A Timeless Experience; (7) A Sharing Partner; (8) Diverse and Inclusive; and (9) Able to Meet the Future. The five themes that comprise the strategic plan are: Enrollment Management, Growth and Mix; Student Experience and Success; Partnerships Philosophy; Resources for Success; and Telling and Selling the Story. Threaded through the entire document is Towson's commitment to student learning and its assessment. *TU 2010* was designed to empower the university to be responsive to the changing social and economic realities in Maryland and beyond. Flexibility and adaptability are among its hallmarks, as is a commitment to growth and change.

Information about the mission, *TU 2010*, and the progress toward achieving the goals laid out in the strategic plan have been made available to the Towson community in multiple ways. For

⁶Appendix 1: Table 1.4, *Location and Content Analysis of Campus Support Division and Unit Mission Statements*.

⁷Hard copy of the *TU 2016* brochure is in the document archive, under Standard 1.

⁸An abbreviated version of the university's mission statement is posted on the Towson website. A fully expanded version can be found under Appendix 1: Document 1.2, *Towson University Mission Statement*.

example, the December 2, 2004 issue of *The Towerlight*, the student newspaper, published a lengthy article detailing the vision and goals of *TU 2010*. Copies of the strategic plan were widely distributed and could be found in most university offices across the campus. President Caret also encouraged each member of the Towson community to carry a wallet-sized copy of *TU 2010*. The president routinely charged the entire university community with implementing the strategic plan goals, which have been integrated into presentations at many of the prospective and admitted student events. Each university division's progress toward achieving *TU 2010* milestones has been tracked, documented, and evaluated. Summaries of achievements with letter grades assigned for performance were published in *TU 2010 Report Cards*. These documents were widely distributed across the campus in hard copy and published on the university's website.

Furthermore, President Caret has discussed *TU 2010* in each of his annual fall addresses given to faculty, staff and students starting in 2004. On September 9, 2008, for example, he said: "*We took our strategic plan, Towson University 2010: Mapping the Future and have turned that plan into action at an astonishing rate. 2010 is close, but we still have two years of work and opportunity ahead of us. Already we have nearly "Aced" our 2010 Plan report card. We have a tracking system that had so much in motion I had to tell the VPs, no more. No more milestones, we have enough! Focus on the goals and action items....*"

Conversations about a new strategic plan, *Towson University 2016*, began in spring 2009. The formal campus-wide launch of the planning process occurred on January 15, 2010 at the Provost's Annual January Conference. The planning process was similar to the one that was used to craft *TU 2010*. Multiple focus groups and forums, advisory boards and other groups advised the university president and his team. President Caret announced the basic components of the new strategic plan in his 2010 Fall Address to the Campus Community, and the completed plan was presented on November 8, 2010. The new plan emphasizes academic excellence, maturation and integration rather than new initiatives. The key elements delineated in the mission statement guided the formulation of the new plan. The current strategic plan will be used as a base for further development and, while no significant changes are anticipated to the mission or broad themes, there are new goals and activities to move the university forward. The Office of Assessment will play a key role in the next plan in the monitoring of the student learning outcomes articulated in the new mission statement in a formal institution-wide assessment plan.

The relationship between institutional planning and the allocation of resources, with the university's mission and strategic plan, will be fully documented, analyzed and evaluated in Chapter 2, which addresses Standards 2 and 3. In brief, there is considerable evidence that Towson is committed to a decision-making process that is aligned with its mission and strategic plan. The *President's Capital Budget Testimony to the Maryland General Assembly (2006, 2007, and 2008)* clearly demonstrates how resource allocation is guided by Towson's core values. In addition to an increase in faculty hiring, several noteworthy examples of resource allocation include:⁹

- Construction of the College of Liberal Arts Building, the first new academic building on the main campus in 20 years;

⁹ *Mission Interview Notes* and *Planning Renewal Interview Notes - Chief of Staff Zaleski* are in document archive, under Standard 1.

- Expansion of the Center for the Arts Building;
- Implementation of the Go Green Program which addresses the impact of climate change;
- Enrollment growth leading to increase in per student funding;
- Expansion of student housing through public-private partnerships; and
- Addition of a new Division of Student Affairs position: special assistant to the vice president for Civic Engagement.

To fulfill its commitment to offer “a broad range of intellectual opportunities to a diverse student body,” several initiatives have been developed and funded, including:

- *Reflective Process for Diversity*, a presidential, university-wide initiative geared toward establishing centers of responsibility for diversity across the institution. Each unit in each division and/or department has been instructed to submit a diversity plan with measurable outcomes.
- New staff positions and programming focused on particular student populations, including Latino, Asian Pacific Islander, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT).
- Expansion of the training opportunities for faculty and staff related to diversity through the Office of Human Resources, and for students through the Center for Student Diversity.
- *Library Residency Program*, the first of its kind in the State of Maryland, designed to provide new librarians from underrepresented populations with two years of professional academic library experience while enhancing the diversity of the faculty.

Three administrators play a key role in integrating elements of the diversity initiative across all units: the special assistant to the president for Diversity and Equal Opportunity, the assistant vice president of Student Affairs for Diversity, and on the academic side, the director of the Institute for Academic Diversity and Inclusion.¹⁰ The integration of diversity into curricular and co-curricular offerings will be considered in Chapter 6, which addresses Standards 11 and 12.

Integrity

Ethical standards guide Towson’s leadership and shape the policies and practices which pertain to all members of the community. The university’s policies on academic freedom are found in the *Faculty Handbook*, and are consistent with the American Association of University Professors’ (AAUP) definition. The policies support an open student/faculty learning environment and allow for honest dialogues both in and out of the classroom, thus enhancing student learning. They also provide clear procedures for handling grievances related to academic freedom. The policies are designed to maintain the university’s autonomy from unreasonable influence by outside governing bodies and special interest groups, give faculty members freedom to discuss all subject matter reasonably related to the course, and encourage students to engage in honest inquiry and expression. There have been no complaints based on a violation of academic freedom since the 1999 *Self-Study*.

The university’s policies (TU policies) regarding intellectual property as well as faculty and student academic integrity are aligned with those of the University System of Maryland (USM policies). Policies and procedures regarding allegations of scholarly misconduct are found in Chapter 9 of the *Faculty Handbook*. There have been no reported allegations of scholarly

¹⁰This position was folded into the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity and the Diversity Action Committee.

misconduct since the 1999 *Self-Study*. This suggests that the university has been successful in informing the faculty about academic integrity policies and issues.

The *Student Academic Integrity Policy* states that incidents of academic dishonesty are first handled by the faculty who determine if a violation has occurred and, if so, decide on the appropriate penalty. The appeals process is outlined in the policy itself. Less than one percent of the decisions reported to the University Registrar in the past three years were referred to the Student Appeals Committee in the Office of Student Conduct and Civility, which is the final arbiter in such appeals.¹¹ The *Student Academic Integrity Policy* is very widely disseminated and is required to be referenced on all course syllabi. The efforts to educate students about academic integrity appear to be successful.

Policies on fair hiring, review and release of employees can be found in the human resources sections of the TU policies and USM policies, and in the *Faculty Handbook*. The fair hiring policies and resources for academic searches that apply to faculty and librarians are available on the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) website. The chair of each tenure-track or senior faculty search committee receives a copy of the *Faculty and Librarian Hiring Procedures* to ensure that standard protocols are followed. ODEO also tracks fair hiring practices across all campus units. Regular training sessions are available to all university supervisors and managers through the Office of Human Resources. The Fair Practices Officer and the Office of Human Resources are available to employees with concerns and grievances. In 2006, the ODEO initiated and began monitoring the *Preventing Sexual Harassment Training* mandatory program in which every Towson employee is expected to complete an online sexual harassment tutorial.

Multiple policies and procedures exist to handle faculty, staff and student grievances which are widely available on the Office of Human Resources website, in the *Faculty Handbook*, as well as in the undergraduate catalog and graduate catalog. Faculty grievances are also addressed by the Grievance Subcommittee of the University Senate. Grievance procedures are designed to foster a fair, collaborative, and impartial educational and working environment. Ordinarily, students may grieve or appeal decisions related to their classroom experience by addressing their concerns to the department chair and then to the dean or associate dean of the particular college. Staff may grieve or appeal decisions to a designated staff member in the Office of Human Resources.

As reported in the *Employer/Employee Relations Annual Reports*,¹² over the past few years, in spite of the university's organizational growth and restructuring, the total number of official employee grievances declined from 17 in 2006 to two as of the end of April 2009. According to the Fair Practices Officer, complaints based on discrimination have remained consistently low during recent years, with four filed in 2006, two in 2007, four in 2008, and none by the end of April 2009. At this point, these complaints are not disaggregated by type and are reported to the assistant to the president for Diversity and Equal Opportunity.

Students have a voice in all matters affecting their campus experience primarily through the Student Government Association (SGA). SGA officers meet regularly with university administrators, particularly those in the Division of Student Affairs, as well as with the provost

¹¹Appendix 1: Table 1.5, *Reported Student Academic Integrity Violations by Semester and Year*.

¹²*Employer/Employee Relation Annual Report Grievances 2006 to 2009* in the document archive, under Standard 6.

and president. Students selected by the SGA serve on the University Senate, as well as on nine of the University Senate's 19 standing committees. Students serve on representative bodies such as the University Residence Government, Black Student Union, and Council of Student Leaders. Undergraduate and graduate students served on the Middle States Steering Committee and as members of working groups.

Owing to Towson's commitment to shared governance, faculty members have an impact on the decision-making processes through their departments and colleges, as well as through the University Senate, the Council of Chairs, and AAUP. In addition, faculty, students and staff serve on numerous college-wide and campus-wide committees. Further discussion about shared governance is found in Chapter 3 which focuses on Standard 4, *Leadership and Governance*.

Communications and Transparency

Building strong relationships through open and accurate communication is among Towson's priorities. Key constituencies include: faculty, staff, students, prospective students, the community, business leaders, accrediting agencies, state and federal regulatory bodies, and the University System of Maryland. Towson's more than 14,000 page website was revised and released on February 1, 2006. The current version is well organized and easy to navigate. A wide range of modalities provides access to pertinent information to all constituencies, main campus and off-campus as appropriate. These include: printed material, the website, and electronic materials such as *the Daily Digest* and *the Insider*.¹³ Students and staff from off-campus locations connect with the campus primarily through electronic options. The university is in the process of updating and reorganizing those pages dealing with policies and procedures to ensure access by all constituents.

The *undergraduate catalog* and *graduate catalog* are published annually. Prior to fall 2009, admitted first-year and transfer students received a printed copy of the catalog. In fall 2009, Towson piloted a green initiative and did not print catalogs for campus-wide distribution. Although the catalog was provided on compact disks and the university website, the pilot proved to be ineffective and print copies were provided in response to student concerns. With the exception of the academic integrity policy, the catalog lists all the policies and practices that guide students toward academic success. The responsibility of annually updating the catalog falls to the Department of University Relations in consultation with department chairs, program directors and the Registrar. Policies affecting students that pertain to student life, including the *Student Code of Conduct*, can be found on the Division of Student Affairs website. With regard to information that is geared to prospective students, University Marketing tracks the feedback they receive from surveys distributed to prospective students.

The Office of Institutional Research publishes a *Data Journal* at the end of each semester which provides the most current information about enrollment, majors, credit hour production, student/faculty ratios and faculty course data. A brief version, the *Fact Guide*, is widely distributed across all campus units. Information regarding graduation, retention, certification and licensing pass rates, and other outcomes is also found on the Office of Institutional Research website. The above average graduation and retention rates at Towson indicate that an adequate

¹³Examples of University Relations and University Marketing brochures are available in the Middle States document room.

number of courses are offered to assure students a timely completion of their degree programs. An in-depth analysis and assessment of these data are found in Chapter 4 which addresses Standard 8, *Admissions and Retention*.

The Division of Student Affairs offers print, electronic, and video presentations about campus life that serve the campus population as well as prospective students and the community. Student Affairs also conducts student satisfaction surveys and uses results to improve practices. Information pertaining to campus safety is available on the University Police website. To track student satisfaction, particularly that of prospective students, University Marketing implements multiple surveys, including a *Campus Visit Survey*, *Open House Survey*, *Admitted Students Survey*, *Destination Towson Survey*, and *To-Do List Survey*.¹⁴ The results of these surveys are utilized to gauge the effectiveness of programs and potentially improve recruitment practices.

Summary of Findings

- Towson University's mission and strategic plan, *TU 2010*, accurately represent the university's values and goals. *Towson University 2016: Building Within – Reaching Out* will mature and refine *TU 2010*.
- The community's involvement in the development of *TU 2010*, and now *TU 2016*, provides a positive model for how to engage the community in the planning process.
- *TU 2010* allowed the university to take bold steps with regard to enrollment growth, campus expansion, and productive engagement with the community; *TU 2016* will continue the process.
- Students, faculty, and staff work in an environment that places a high value on integrity where fair practices are the hallmark of how Towson relates to members of its community.
- Through the extensive use of technology, the internet, and print media, Towson promotes the dissemination of information relevant to students, faculty, and staff as well as to community, alumni, and prospective students in a manner that is transparent and easily accessible.

Recommendations

- That Towson University includes in its mission statement a student-learning focus that establishes assessable learning goals across the curriculum and co-curricular offerings.
- That in the new strategic plan, Towson articulates the learning outcomes embedded in the previous strategic plan into assessable outcomes that measure student learning and engagement across all units and divisions of the university.
- That Towson continues to monitor and assess access to updated information about policies, practices, and procedures by students, faculty, and staff.
- That Towson improves tracking of the type and volume of complaints about discrimination and/or sexual harassment on an annual basis and that complaints are reported to the Diversity Coordinating Council.

¹⁴Examples available in *Recruitment Undergraduate Satisfaction Surveys* binder in the Middle States document room, under Standard 6.

CHAPTER 2

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

Standard 3: *Institutional Resources*

Growth was the major theme in the evolution of Towson University over the past ten years, and, in all likelihood, will continue to be so over the next ten depending on state budget allocations and needs. An examination of Standards 2 and 3 is critical to assessing how well positioned Towson is for continued expansion. The *Self-Study* presents a timely opportunity to review and assess the effectiveness of *TU 2010* according to the rubrics defined in Standards 2 and 3. It also provides an opportunity to consider the possibilities for the future, particularly as discussion of the next strategic plan is getting underway. The success of the next phase of Towson's growth and evolution as a metropolitan comprehensive university will depend on thoughtful planning and judicious resource allocation. Towson's mission and strategic plan, have guided key decision making over the past four years. The budget, planning, and renewal processes are purposeful, intentional, and committed to raising the institutional profile, while simultaneously keeping student learning in focus.

Baseline Budget and Expenditures

Growth demands the identification of baseline standards required to meet the objectives described in the mission. The funding sources needed to sustain operations at public universities like Towson mainly come from the following sources: tuition, the state, auxiliary operations, self-support programs, grants and contracts, scholarships and donations. Overall, the FY 2009 operational budget for Towson was just under 365 million dollars.¹⁵ Just over 25 percent of the revenue came from state appropriations, 37 percent from tuition and fees, just under 25 percent from auxiliary operations, and the remainder from other sources.¹⁶

While state appropriations per student full-time equivalent (FTE) broke the \$5,000 barrier and reached \$5,532, Towson remains next to the bottom among USM institutions.¹⁷ However, since 2005, total revenue increased by over \$94 million, or about 35 percent from a base of approximately \$270 million, to over \$364 million in 2009.¹⁸

University budget data reveal the breakdown of expenditures for FY 2009 in order of amount as follows: just over 92 million or 28 percent on direct instruction, about 89 million or another 28 percent on auxiliary services, over 37 million or 11 percent on institutional support, nearly 34 million or 10 percent for academic support, over 24 million or about 7 percent for student financial aid and fellowships, over 15 million or 5 percent on student services, and about one percent or around 3.7 million on research and public service. In addition, just under 33 million was spent on physical plant and related expenditures.¹⁹

¹⁵Appendix 2: Figure 2.1, *Revenues FY 2009* and Table 2.1, *Towson University Revenue by Source FY 2006-10*. Also, *Operating Budget and Plan TU FY 2008, 2009, and 2010* in document archive, under Standard 3.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Appendix 2: Table 2.2, *FY 2009 Estimated General Funds per FTE Student University System of Maryland*.

¹⁸Appendix 2: Table 2.1, *Towson University Revenue by Source FY 2006-10*.

¹⁹Appendix 2: Figure 2. 2, *Unrestricted Expense Comparison by Program FY 2009*.

The budgets designated for capital construction and improvement are funded based on the type of use. Academic, administrative, and support facilities are part of the capital budget submitted to the USM and funded by bonds issued and paid for by the state. Auxiliary facilities including housing, dining, and parking are part of System funded construction with bonds issued by the USM and paid for by user fees or student fees.

Budgetary Process

Over the past six years, the budget and resource allocation process at Towson has been systematized and expanded to include input from all of the major divisions of the university. A core group consisting of the president and vice presidents (VPs) creates the budget and meets quarterly to assess the effectiveness of resource allocations. The core group meets periodically to assess the use of funds as related to these goals, action items, and milestones that are part of *TU 2010*; the VPs report back on uses of allocations and on progress achieved. In general, the *TU 2010* tracking process, which at times had several hundred separate milestones, tracked effectiveness on a monthly basis, with the VPs responsible for securing input on resource needs from their divisions.

The process is clearly structured, transparent, and follows a regular timetable:

- November: President distributes an operating plan guidance letter to divisional VPs stating general and specific guidelines for the upcoming fiscal year.²⁰
- November-January: Divisions prepare a consolidated resource allocation plan based on department budget plans. Departmental plans, including new initiatives, are submitted to VPs who prioritize new initiatives and submit them to the University Budget Office (UBO). Each annual divisional operating plan includes budget reallocations, requests for new resources, personnel changes, position reallocations, and requests for new positions.
- January: UBO completes tuition and fee modeling based on enrollment and USM guidelines.
- February-March: Formal internal budget hearings with the president and VPs are held with each division presenting its resource planning and allocation submission.
- April: External budget decisions are finalized by the Maryland General Assembly and USM. The campus is notified of any changes that may impact internal allocations.
- April-May: President authorizes the final budget plan and sends final *Budget and Operating Plan Guidance Letters* to VPs. The *Operating Budget and Plan* is published.
- June: UBO loads detailed departmental budgets to the automated PeopleSoft financial system for the FY 1 July start.
- June: Divisional budget officers are notified by the UBO that their approved budgets are available. The notification is made prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year.
- September: The budget for the upcoming fiscal year is submitted by the UBO to the USM.

Resource Allocation Process

The arrival of the new university president in 2003 brought several changes to the institution, including a formal budget planning process and increased input from stakeholders regarding the allocation of resources. The Resource Planning and Advisory Committee (RPAC) of the University Senate was initiated in academic year (AY) 2002-03. RPAC is comprised of 16

²⁰Recent example of the “operating plan guidance letter” located at the front of *Budget Submission Request FY 2010* hard copy binder in the Middle States document room, under Standard 2.

voting members including a faculty member from each college (except for the Honors College and the College of Graduate Studies and Research), and Cook Library; a representative from each division, including an academic dean; the chair of the University Senate, the president of the AAUP, two students and the university president's chief of staff. The group meets monthly during the academic year, with additional meetings during the April-May budget season.²¹ In its consultative capacity, RPAC supports the university by reviewing, advising, and recommending with regard to annual funding priorities and tuition fees, modification to the 10-year capital plan, changes to fiscal policy, and funding priorities in the event of a fiscal crisis.²²

In the spirit of shared governance, RPAC's meetings with the administrative leadership promote an awareness of short- and longer-term influences on budgetary priorities. They provide a mechanism for expanding the budget process and incorporating suggestions from operational managers and faculty. During the annual budget and resource allocation process, RPAC also makes formal recommendations. *TU 2010* has driven budget and planning priorities since its implementation in 2005. Despite leadership changes in the past five years in the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Administration and Finance/CFO, the core process of planning and implementing the budget has remained constant. Initiatives to enhance the use of data to drive decision making emerged as a result of the university's enhanced planning process. For example, the Delaware Study data to benchmark funding of academic units, the use of data sources to compare Towson's performance with that of peer institutions, and the experiment with zero-based budgeting all contributed to a reexamination of resource allocation. Each of these initiatives involved all campus units in the planning and implementation process.

TU 2010 and the Budget Planning Process

The mission, philosophy, and priorities set forth in *TU 2010* have had a direct and powerful impact on budget planning. The Office of the President, President's Council, and the Provost's Council assessed the progress toward achieving the 23 goals and 86 action items on a quarterly basis with more formal reviews semiannually at the president's retreats. *System Tracking Reports* were issued to assess progress.²³ Vice presidents were responsible for achieving assigned goals. Quarterly reviews include an examination of 2010 milestones attained, summary reports, and the identification of missed milestones and new dates for achieving them.

In the *President's Fall Address to the Campus Community* given at the beginning of each academic year, the president reports on the degree to which the *TU 2010* goals are being met, specifies the priorities for the year, and details new or changed priorities from one year to the next. Typically, the changes reflect new priorities established by the USM, the state general assembly and governor, and market conditions. Insofar as Towson is designated as one of the USM growth campuses, changes in priorities are inevitable as was the allocation of resources to meet *TU 2010* goals.

The annual budget planning process has taken into account *TU 2010* priorities and associated costs. Changing priorities were supported through a set-aside of funds for start-ups and one-time

²¹*RPAC Agendas, Membership and Minutes and RPAC Annual Reports* from 2005 forward in the document archive, under Standard 2.

²²*Operating Budget and Plan FY 2009*, (Sept. 2008), p. 42, in document archive, under Standard 3.

²³Sample of *TU 2010 Tracking Report* in document archive, under Standard 2.

initiatives. Requests for these funds were made through the vice presidents and reviewed by the president or his designees.²⁴ Once implemented, decisions were evaluated in relation to goals established in *TU 2010* to assure accountability. There have been a number of 2010 funded initiatives. For example, Campus Recreation Services received start-up funds for the construction of the adventure pursuits low ropes course in the Glen, a forested area on the campus.

Integrated Planning System

Towson has embraced many integrated planning principles as enrollment has increased. Renewal/replacement and facility planning is integrated with institutional goals and objectives, as well as with capital budgets and operating budgets, all of which link back to the primary objective of student learning. The campus master plan and facility building programs are examples of an inclusive, participatory, and integrated planning process, which empowers end users, operational service providers, and external stakeholders to provide the input. Resources for growth and program opportunities are evaluated throughout the year and culminate in annual operating requests. Faculty and support staff resource requests associated with growth are assessed by departments, colleges, and the Provost's Office and generally allocated on an annual basis. Facility and support resources are allocated on an annual basis with additional resources provided on an as-needed basis.

Transparency of Resource Allocation

To assess the transparency of the resource allocation process and its community-wide dissemination, a survey was distributed to key budget and planning participants including vice presidents, the Director of Athletics, associate/assistant vice presidents, deans, and unit directors.²⁵

The results of the survey yielded numerous insights about the budget process:

- Substantial efforts have been made to link resource allocation decisions to *TU 2010* which is widely publicized and available on the university's website.
- The performance of the president, vice presidents, and other senior staff is measured against very specific strategic goals. Corrective actions are taken if strategic goals are not met.
- Performance assessment has an impact on how the university is operating on both the macro and micro levels. Vice presidents represent the interests of their divisions in seeking funding for various initiatives, and they in turn are responsible for communicating decisions to key supervisors in their areas.
- In general, the budget process is seen as open and fair. Descending down the organizational ladder, transparency decreases, less information is disseminated, and dissatisfaction appears to increase, as does the perception there are fewer opportunities for staff participation in the process.
- There is significant satisfaction with the capital budget process. The Space Committee engages in an open and data-driven evaluation of the capital needs on the main campus. The facilities staff is perceived to be competent. The underfunding of renewal and replacement of equipment force Towson to make difficult choices. Despite the effort to increase resources, current and future needs remain daunting.

²⁴Sample of 2010 *Initiative Funding Call Letter* is in document archive, under Standard 2.

²⁵Results of individual *Budget Process Interviews with University VPs* in document archive, under Standard 2.

- The *TU 2010 Report Cards*, *USM Dashboard Indicators*, and *Managing for Results* are examples of Towson's efforts to measure performance and progress internally in relation to other USM institutions and to our institutional peers. Although these tools are valuable for communication purposes, they are not meant to serve as assessment documents.
- Periodic assessments are conducted to evaluate how the budget is constructed from year to year. Several years ago, RPAC advocated for changing the internal budget process to a zero based approach which was implemented by the vice president for Administration and Finance/CFO for FY 2008 and FY 2009. Owing to the current recession and its impact on the state's general funds and mandated furloughs, the budget process was changed back to an incremental model starting with FY 2010.
- In the FY 2009 internal budget, the vice president for Administration and Finance/CFO set aside a one million dollar contingency for potential budget reductions. This proactive decision benefitted the university. Funding reductions had less of an impact.
- In spring 2009, Towson designed the USM-mandated furlough policy to be fair and equitable across all pay grades and divisions/units. The implementation was well communicated.²⁶ The degree of transparency that was part of the planning in spring 2009 was not as visible in fall 2009 furloughs, although the policy for FY 2009-10 remained fair and equitable.

Allocation of Resources for Institutional Renewal and Sustainability

Planning and resource allocation demonstrate a commitment to institutional renewal, particularly in the two areas that support student learning and faculty productivity: facilities renewal and technology renewal. The USM Board of Regents goal, approved December 2005, sets the expenditures policy on renewal and replacement at two percent of building replacement value. If a campus failed to spend that amount, expenditures were increased annually 0.2 percent of building replacement value. In FY 2006 and FY 2007, Towson exceeded the two percent goal. That percentage decreased in FY 2008 because building replacement value increased. Nonetheless, Towson continues to increase its budget for renewal and replacement as funds are available to meet the two percent goal.

Appropriate and up-to-date technology for all classrooms is vital to the support of the teaching/learning infrastructure. Discussions on the best way to ensure a continual renewal cycle have been going on for years. Finding the funding has been a challenge. Recently, a consistent stream of funding for classroom and lab technology initiatives has been recommended through the realignment of a portion of the student technology fees. *OTS Seven Point Classroom and Lab Renewal Plan* addressed the issue and has been implemented.²⁷

The Computer Trade-Up Program, an initiative funded centrally and administered by Office of Technology Services (OTS), also supports technology renewal. Each full-time faculty and staff member's primary work computer is replaced once every three to four years. The program only covers a subset of the overall campus computer upgrade needs; however, it is an important initiative and demonstrates a commitment to renewal.

Staff turnover and retention are among the unresolved budget issues that confront OTS and challenge institutional sustainability. Enrollment growth, the new College of Liberal Arts

²⁶ *Furlough Policy for FY 2008-09 and FY 2009-10* in document archive, under Standard 2.

²⁷ *OTS Seven Point Classroom Technology Plan* in document archive, under Standard 2.

Building, and the expanding technology needs across campus, including Cook Library, are placing a burden on OTS. Staffing issues are even more vexing owing to the budget cuts and hiring freezes that are imposed on Towson from the USM and the state.

Planning for Growth at Main Campus and Off-Campus Locations

Strategic planning and the corresponding enrollment planning have had a significant impact on the resource allocation process. The areas of greatest impact include: increasing the number of faculty, new capital budget projects, such as the new College of Liberal Arts Building, increasing the number of online or hybrid courses, and targeting growth at off-campus locations, particularly future expansion at the Harford County site. Monitoring enrollment growth and the corresponding institutional impact will require additional funding as changing enrollment will require additional staff and facility support. To identify and address the needs of off-campus programming, the Provost's Office created the Off-Campus Program Committee in the fall of 2008 to review each location, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for each. The committee met bimonthly and reviewed each campus. While the planning and vision for the Harford campus seems to be well underway, there is a consensus that clarification of purpose is needed for the other campuses.²⁸

The university has developed a coherent message aimed at the Towson community and the public about the goals and resources needed to support growth. Towson has involved the public in the planning process by creating town hall meetings and by working with faculty, staff, security, and students to develop 'good neighbor' policies.

Facilities Planning staff have been pro-active in creating regular focus groups and presentations about proposed and new construction, parking, and safety. During new construction or renovation projects, updates to the campus community are provided. Faculty, staff, and the public are invited to meet to exchange points of view. For example, in early 2009 at a public meeting about the construction of the new basketball arena, neighboring Rodgers Forge community leaders vigorously opposed the proposed location of the new facility. After several subsequent meetings, Towson agreed to relocate the new arena for which funding and plans were confirmed in late November 2009.

Differential Resource Allocation among Colleges and Departments

To understand and assess the impact of growth on resource allocation with regard to faculty hiring and academic program development, an in-depth analysis of resource documents by college and department was undertaken. The budget analysis of the academic departmental budget data from FY 2005-09 shows that while student credit hours have increased 21.27 percent, operating revenues have increased 34.5 percent. Additionally, there has been only a 15.03 percent increase in all categories of full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty.²⁹ However, there is wide disparity in faculty hiring across colleges and among departments within colleges. Other key related findings include:

²⁸*Regional Off-Campus Student Services Needs Assessment Survey and Summary* are in document archive, under Standard 2.

²⁹*Credit Hours by College – Fall, Five-Year Trends; Faculty Demographics by Tenure Status – Five-Year Trends.* Also, *Operating End-of-Year Rollup Budgets Academic Affairs FY 2005-09* in document archive, under Standard 3.

- Number of full-time faculty in all categories has grown slower than student credit hour production.
- Growth of overall operating budgets has not kept pace with the growth of student credit hours particularly at the academic department level.
- Disparities exist in the growth of operating budgets of departments given the differences in course delivery and credit hour production.

Comparison Resource Allocation across All Units and with Peer Institutions

Budget data were collected for Towson and its performance peers.³⁰ The financial resources across all units were compared for FY 2006 and FY 2007 with eight out of the eleven peers in FY 2008. The findings include:

- Towson's resources per student (graduate and undergraduate) increased significantly from FY 2006 to FY 2008 and was only slightly less than the mean and median among peer institutions in FY 2008 (TU: \$16,104/Full-time equivalent (FTE); mean: \$16,773 and median \$16,595).
- Towson's funding for instruction was below the mean and median from FY 2006 to FY 2008. However, Towson increased the allocation for instruction during that time period while most peers decreased the percentage of their funding for this area.
- Expenditures for research vary widely among peers, and Towson's is far below the mean and median. At Towson, research funding decreased in FY 2007, but increased by 5.9 percent in FY 2008.
- Towson leads in expenditures for academic support services and is above the mean and median for public services.
- Student services support fell behind in FY 2007, but increased in FY 2008 when peer institutions decreased their allocations.
- Towson funding for institutional support is above the average of its peers. However, Towson decreased the allocation in FY 2008 aligning it more closely with its peers.
- Towson's financial aid funding is below the mean and median among its peers. It increased significantly from \$388/FTE in FY 2007 to \$544/FTE in FY 2008.

Growth and the Challenge to Human Resources

Rapid enrollment growth over the recent years has increased the need for additional faculty and staff and the costs associated with recruitment and other related activities. As of fall 2008, there was a total of 3,230 full- and part-time faculty and staff.³¹ Faculty is recruited through the Provost's Office on the recommendation of department chairs and deans. Staff is recruited through the Office of Human Resources on the recommendation of unit supervisors. Impact of growth on human resources includes:

- Increased number of faculty recruitments, including both new and replacement searches. In FY 2008, the cost of conducting full-time faculty searches was approximately \$250,000. The Provost's Budget Office allocates a maximum \$3,500 per search.
- The market conditions of offering competitive salaries for faculty and staff. This has led to salary compression particularly among assistant professors.

³⁰*Unrestricted Expenditures by Peer Group* in document archive, under Standard 3.

³¹*Data Journal Fall 2008*, p.12 in document archive, under Standard 7. To view reports 2003 forward, see [Data Journals](#).

- Increased budgets for faculty start-up funds which vary widely across colleges.
- Increased need for staff to cover student support areas such as the Health Center, Counseling Center, Career Center, and dining facilities.
- Increased demand for support in human resources including recruitment, benefits and leave, training/development and employee/employer relations.

Growth of and challenge to technology and library resources are discussed in Chapter 6.

Campus Master Plan and Enrollment Growth

In 2003, the USM designated Towson as one of its growth institutions. In response, Towson developed a 10-year campus master plan.³² The plan supports the university's mission by addressing the physical resource needs of the entire campus and in accordance with policy and good practice, is updated every five years or more frequently if needed. The updates provide a periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning and the adequacy of resource allocation as Towson strives to maintain and expand its physical plant. The new Towson master plan was approved by the USM Board of Regents in the summer of 2009.³³ The university engaged in a participatory and inclusionary process that involves both main campus and off-campus constituents to solicit input pertaining to the plan's goals and objectives. Feedback on proposed recommendations was solicited as part of the development and finalization of the plan.

The importance of the master planning effort for student learning is critical. Enrollment growth has had a negative impact on the availability of teaching spaces and space for critical student support services. The master plan lays out an orderly progression for adding teaching, research, and student support facilities that meet industry standards. The replacement or renovation of older, poorly functional spaces to suit current needs is a major part of capital planning. Master planning allows for the consolidation of academic programs which, over time, had become scattered across the campus. Greater spatial coherence creates a stronger learning environment for students, provides a more opportune context for faculty collaboration and faculty-student interaction.

Part of the Towson master plan was the consolidation of all the performance and fine arts programs into one building. By moving the Dance Department from Burdick Hall to the expanded Center for the Arts Building, the Dance Department was able to share performance, instruction, and support spaces with other College of Fine Arts and Communication (COFAC) departments. The vacated and renovated spaces in Burdick Hall provided the College of Health Professions (CHP) with an additional laboratory for the Nursing Department, an additional classroom for Nursing and Allied Health, and additional office spaces for Nursing, Allied Health, Health Science, the Office of Collaborative Programs, and Admissions Coordinators for Nursing and the CHP.

The College of Liberal Arts (CLA) Building project is currently in Phase Two of construction. Phase One opened in July 2009 with four departments moving into their new quarters in August. The new building will provide much needed space for the CLA to consolidate all departments into one building rather than remain in the overcrowded Linthicum Hall, and the Psychology

³² *Master Plan Executive Summary 2003 – A Vision for TU* in document archive, under Standard 2.

³³ *Master Plan Report 2009* in document archive, under Standard 2.

Building. As a result, CLA will gain functional and operational efficiencies. The vacated space in Linthicum Hall will be used as university surge space in the short term; eventually it will be demolished as part of the Smith Hall project to expand laboratory and classroom spaces for the natural sciences in the Fisher College of Science and Mathematics (FCSM). The vacant space in the Psychology Building will allow the College of Education (COE) to consolidate their operation into one complex rather than being in both Stephens Annex and Hawkins Hall.

Planning Ahead

As *TU 2010* comes to an end, implementation of the next strategic plan is underway. The core initiatives will include the enhancement of student learning opportunities through programs in areas such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), education, and the health professions, as well as the development of more applied research and doctoral programs. The process of involving the community in discussions about the next strategic plan began at the Provost's 2010 January Conference. Institutional resources were requested at the vice presidential level based on discussions and recommendations for funding priority initiatives and specific projects.³⁴ The plan was formally introduced in the *President's 2010 Fall Address to the Campus Community*. As with *TU 2010*, the new plan will require qualitative and measurable outcomes in all areas such as academic affairs, student support services, athletics, grants and contracts, applied research, development of off-campus locations, online course offerings, expansion of the trimester plan, and fundraising. The focus of *TU 2016* will be on academic excellence, maturation and steady development at a time of slower growth.

Summary of Findings

- Towson University's leadership has the vision and experience to successfully guide the institution through this time of rapid enrollment growth.
- Towson's budget planning process and resource allocation has served the university community, particularly students, very well over the last five years.
- Student learning continues to focus Towson's priorities.
- Towson's budget planning is flexible enough to adjust to a volatile economic landscape as has been demonstrated in the current recession.
- The unprecedented growth of Towson's physical plant, with the new College of Liberal Arts Building as the signature structure, attests to the remarkable success that Towson has achieved.

Recommendations

- That Towson makes explicit how the budget process aligns with student learning objectives.
- That Towson increases the transparency of the budget process. Although analysis and communication are excellent at the level of the President's Council, more attention could be paid to making information available on the division, college, and department levels, and to the university community in general.

³⁴ *Planning Renewal Interview Notes - Chief of Staff Zaleski* in document archive, under Standard 1.

- That Towson makes the November *Budget Operating Plan Guidance Letter* available to the deans of the eight colleges through the Provost's Office.
- That Towson reviews the timing of the decision-making process for strategic special project funds. The short time between January, when funds are appropriated, and May, when projects are to be implemented, puts undue constraints on the process.
- That Towson continues to improving student services at off-campus sites.
- That Towson extends support for new programs beyond the initial allocation of funds. One-time expenditures must be accompanied by long-term commitment of maintenance and support for fiscal, human, technology and library resources.
- That Towson engages in a thorough analysis and assessment of disparities in operating budgets across departments.
- That Towson increases budget allocations for instruction and research, including faculty start-up funds, as well as encourage additional incentives for writing and receiving grant funding to better align with peer institutions.
- That Towson closely analyzes needs to reallocate resources, including faculty positions, to more efficiently meet the needs and demands of the university's changing academic landscape.

CHAPTER 3

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

Standard 5: Administration

Towson University depends on strong leadership, and a highly functional operational structure to align the day-to-day work of the university with the mission and TU 2010. Guided by the policies and practices that are the outcomes of shared governance, Towson strives to create a learning environment for students and work environment for faculty and staff that reflects its commitment to maintaining institutional integrity.

Board of Regents and the University System of Maryland

Towson University is one of eleven universities and one research institute that together constitute the University System of Maryland (USM).³⁵ The governor-appointed 17 member Board of Regents has ultimate authority over all aspects of the operations of USM institutions. Policies developed by the Board of Regents and implemented at the USM level pertain to all member institutions. The USM offices are located in Adelphi, Maryland. The Office of the Chancellor is responsible for implementing Board of Regents policies and for representing the interests of all member institutions to state legislators, vendors, regulatory bodies, future employers, and the public. By promoting collaborative projects and joint ventures, greater effectiveness and efficiency with regard to student learning across member institutions is achieved.

Administrative Leadership

The leadership of Towson University is very experienced and highly qualified. Members of the senior administration, including the president, vice presidents (VPs), deans and directors of divisions and major units, are appropriately credentialed to serve with distinction in the positions they occupy. Since 2003, the university has been led by President Robert L. Caret. President Caret returned to Towson after serving eight years as president of a major regional urban university in California. Prior to his first presidency, Dr. Caret served as a dean and provost at Towson. Dr. Caret holds a Ph.D. in organic chemistry. He began his academic career at Towson as a lecturer and rose to the rank of full professor. In returning to Towson, President Caret brought considerable experience to a campus on the verge of new capital construction as well as enrollment growth. Furthermore, as past president and current treasurer of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, Dr. Caret is uniquely positioned to be a spokesperson for Towson as a metropolitan university.

The USM Board of Regents appoints the president of each institution. Each president serves as the chief executive officer of the institution and is responsible and accountable to the Board of Regents for the discipline and successful conduct of the institution. The president is responsible for the day to day operations of the campus including: 1) institutional mission, goals, priorities, and a set of peer institutions; 2) development of new academic programs and curtailment or elimination of existing programs; 3) formulation of operating and capital budget requests; 4) personnel actions, including creating any position within existing funds available to the university; 5) establishment of admission standards; 6) setting tuition and fees; 7) administering financial aid; 8) entering into contracts and cooperative agreements; 9) authority to accept gifts and grants and maintain and manage endowment income; 10) authority to recommend change in

³⁵ A second research institute, University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute, was defunded on June 30, 2010.

the name or status of the institution; 11) regulation and administration of athletic and student activities; 12) oversight of affirmative action and equal employment opportunities; 13) establishment of organizations for the administration of campus alumni affairs; 14) responsibility for all academic matters; 15) authority to establish an institutional board; 16) establishment of traffic regulations for the campus; and 17) any other duties assigned by the Board.

Three presidents served Towson between 2000 and 2003. Stable leadership under President Caret over the past six years has benefited the university. Major changes in personnel have occurred at the senior level of administration.³⁶ A vice president of Administration and Finance, a vice president of Student Affairs, and a director of Athletics were recruited. The first two have been in place over three years; a new director of Athletics was appointed in October 2010. As noted earlier, a new provost and vice president for Academic Affairs was appointed in August 2009. The College of Extended Programs was replaced with the Division of Economic and Community Outreach (DECO), of which a vice president was appointed. Among the senior staff, only the vice president of University Advancement has served under other Towson presidents. In general, these changes in leadership have served the university well. Enrollment growth spurred the development of new strategic initiatives that are meeting with a significant degree of success. In addition, the recently approved performance and aspirational peer group affirms Towson's standing among public comprehensive universities.

Organizational Structure

Towson University is organized into five administrative divisions: Academic Affairs, Administration and Finance, Student Affairs, University Advancement, and Economic and Community Outreach.³⁷ Each division is headed by a vice president who reports directly to the president. In addition, the Department of Athletics is a stand-alone department whose director also reports to the university president. The Division of Economic and Community Outreach (DECO) is the newest division. It was established in 2004 as part of a presidential initiative. The assistant to the president for Diversity and Equal Opportunity also reports directly to the president. How the work of the university is carried out within a shared governance model will be discussed in the section on *Leadership and Governance* in this chapter.

Academic Affairs

The provost and vice president of the Division of Academic Affairs are responsible for academic programs and services offered through eight colleges: College of Business and Economics; College of Education; College of Fine Arts and Communication; College of Health Professions; College of Liberal Arts; Jess and Mildred Fisher College of Science and Mathematics; Honors College; and College of Graduate Studies and Research. Cook Library, Institutional Research, Assessment, International Programs, Study Abroad, and Enrollment Management also fall under Academic Affairs.

³⁶For senior leadership level as of fall 2009, see Appendix 3: Table 3.1, *Presidents' Council by Years*, Table 3.2, *Provost's Council by Years*, and Table 3.3, *Thumbnail Sketches of University Vice Presidents*.

³⁷ Appendix 3: Organizational Charts 3.1 – 3.11 outline administrative structures of the Office of the President, the five university divisions, Department of Athletics, and the College of Graduate Studies and Research as of fall 2009.

Administration and Finance

The Division of Administration and Finance provides essential services to support the university's primary academic mission. Units under the auspices of Administration and Finance include: Auxiliary Services, which oversees the University Store, Parking and Transportation Services, University Child Care, and Events and Conference Services; as well as Facilities Management; Fiscal Planning and Services; Office of Human Resources; Management Advisory and Compliance Services, which addresses risk assessment and loss reduction; Office of Technology Services; and the University Police, which has been the recipient of the Maryland Governor's Crime Prevention Award for 24 consecutive years.

Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs provides support programs and services to enhance student learning and development. A wide range of services and organizations come under the auspices of Student Affairs, organized into the following clusters: (1) Student Development Programs and Services (Career Center; Counseling Center; Disability Support Services; Dowell Health Center; Student Conduct and Civility Education); (2) Center for Student Diversity (African American Cultural Center; Students Achieve Goals through Education (SAGE); Campus Ministries; Towson Hillel; LGBT Student Development; Women's Center) ; (3) Housing & Residence Life; (4) Campus Life (Campus Recreation Services; Fraternity and Sorority Life; Leadership and Community Service; New Student Programs; Off-Campus Student Services (Commuter Information); Student Activities). Additional programs include Civic Engagement and the Testing Services Center. Detailed descriptions of most of these departments and services are found in Chapter 4.

University Advancement

The Division of University Advancement supports and sustains the university primarily through building strong bonds with external corporations, organizations, and individuals. Units include: Development, Alumni Relations, University Marketing, University Relations and the Design Center. The popular university radio station, WTMD 89.7 FM, well known in the Baltimore area, also falls under this division.

Economic and Community Outreach (DECO)

DECO expands Towson's academic and intellectual resources into the corporate and professional communities by building partnerships and strategic relationships with the public and private sectors. Core units within DECO include: Homeland Security Academy, Center for Geographic Information Sciences, Regional Economic Studies Institute, Applied Economics, RESI-Information Systems Solutions, Center for Applied Information Technology, Extended Education and Online Learning, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, TowsonGlobal Business Incubator, the EDA University Center, and numerous other economic workforce and partnership entities.

Athletics

The Department of Athletics proudly contributes to Towson's reputation primarily through building strong programs both athletically and academically. Units specifically serving Athletics include: Academic Support, Business Services, Compliance, Equipment, Team Support, Video

Services, Student Services, Sports Medicine, Strength and Conditioning, Corporate Sales, Development, Marketing, and Media Relations.

Administrative Staffing

As student enrollment has increased, administrative units across the campus have faced the growing challenge of delivering services. Between fall 2005 and fall 2009, student enrollment grew by approximately 18 percent.³⁸ During the same five year period, the total full-time exempt and nonexempt staff (excluding faculty and contracted employment such as food services) increased by about 11 percent (from 1,169 to 1,299). The number of exempt part-time employees increased 33 percent (from 121 to 161), while the nonexempt part-time category decreased 30 percent (from 100 to 70). To summarize, for FY 2009, Towson University employed 1,531 full- and part-time exempt and nonexempt administrative employees, faculty excluded, with an overall five-year growth of about 10 percent.³⁹

Units that have experienced the greatest headcount increase in exempt full-time employees in order from highest to lowest are: Enrollment Management⁴⁰, Office of Technology Services, DECO, Fiscal Planning and Services, Athletics, and Advancement. The College of Health Professions and Fisher College of Science and Mathematics have experienced growth in full-time exempt staff, but with two exceptions, these are grant-funded or are conversion of faculty positions into administrative staff positions. Most other units, including colleges and support units with relatively fewer personnel have either stayed level or experienced increases of one or two employees. Headcount growth in part-time exempt personnel is most apparent in Athletics, DECO, Auxiliary Services, and Student Affairs, as well as in the College of Education. In the College of Health Professions, the headcount growth in part-time exempt personnel is entirely from grant funding.⁴¹

Units that have experienced the greatest headcount increase of full-time nonexempt employees, including administrative assistants, are: Auxiliary Services, Enrollment Management, Facilities, Student Affairs, and in the College of Education on the Academic Affairs side. Units experiencing small declines in the headcount of full-time nonexempt personnel include: DECO, Athletics, International Programs, Provost's Office, and College of Business and Economics. Most of the colleges have experienced full-time nonexempt employee growth of one or two employees. Fisher College of Science and Mathematics currently has the largest staff. In contrast, 22 of 25 units analyzed experienced a decrease in staff in the part-time nonexempt category.⁴²

The comprehensive analysis of administrative staff positions across the campus demonstrates that the increase in student enrollment has been accompanied by a related growth in

³⁸ Appendix 4: Table 4.6, *Enrollment, Past 10 Years*.

³⁹ Appendix 3: Table 3.4, *Total Full-Time, Part-Time and Nonexempt Staff (including Chairs) 2005-09*. Exempt staff is by definition not eligible for overtime; while nonexempt staff is eligible for overtime.

⁴⁰ The Enrollment Management unit includes the Office of the Registrar, Financial Aid Office, Admissions, and International Admissions.

⁴¹ Appendix 3: Table 3.5, *Total Full-Time Staff (including Chairs), 2005-09*, Table 3.6, *Total Nonexempt Full-time Staff, 2005-09*, to Table 3.7, *Total Exempt Part-Time Staff, 2005-09*, and Table 3.8, *Total Nonexempt Part-Time Staff, 2005-09*.

⁴² Ibid.

administrative personnel. As the data indicate, to keep up with student enrollment and program growth, Towson is committed to expanding the administrative sectors that deliver critical support for teaching and learning. While administrative growth continues to lag behind an overall increase in student enrollment, the data show a commitment to hiring full-time nonexempt support staff critical for management of campus operations.

Periodic Performance Review

The Board of Regents has established two methods for evaluating a university president: (1) annually, the Office of the Chancellor evaluates the performance of each constituent institution president and discusses with the designated committee of the Board of Regents the results of that evaluation and consequent recommendations for compensation, and (2) the Board of Regents *Policy on the Five-Year Review of USM Presidents* is instituted by the Office of the Chancellor, and this review is expected to highlight major accomplishments, offer constructive suggestions for improvement, and provide guidance about the president's continuation of service. In spring 2009, President Caret underwent his first five-year review. At the *2009 President's Fall Address to the Campus Community*, Dr. Caret reported that the results of the review were positive.

Internally, the university president requires each of the vice presidents and other direct reports to submit annual comprehensive performance reports that measure how well divisional goals were achieved. President Caret meets with each vice president during the spring evaluation period to review outcomes and provide feedback. In addition, on a monthly basis, the president identifies and assigns three major administrative tasks to the vice presidents and the Director of Athletics. The goals are based on an analysis of each division's performance on the *TU 2010 Report Cards*. The vice presidents provide a monthly update to track the progress on these assigned tasks. All senior administrators are evaluated annually by their respective superiors. The evaluations are embedded within the yearly operational protocols and are not published.⁴³

The Performance Management Process (PMP)⁴⁴ is the annual evaluation tool used by the USM, and applies to all regular administrative and classified employees. Vice presidents and the Director of Athletics follow the PMP to assess the work of their direct reports, including deans, department chairs, and program directors. A similar process is followed by supervisors at all levels of the university.

Assessment Processes within Units

Chapter 8 which covers Standard 7, *Institutional Assessment*, offers a more in-depth analysis of assessment across divisions and units. This chapter offers an overview of the assessment processes and procedures by division and department.

Academic Affairs

All individuals within the Division of Academic Affairs undergo a rigorous annual performance review as required by the university. The review process involves an assessment of performance as well as goal-setting for the next year. The performance of Academic Affairs as a division is tracked through the information the Provost's Office provides for the *TU 2010 Report Cards* which track how well divisions are meeting the established milestones. However, the assessment

⁴³ *Survey Results on Administrative Practices with Division Heads* in document archive, under Standard 5.

⁴⁴ See USM Policy 211.0 VII-5.20: *Policy on the Performance Evaluation Program* for a detailed discussion.

of practices, procedures, and outcomes within specific units that comprise Academic Affairs are either uneven or nonexistent.

With regard to off-campus locations, both within Maryland and internationally, program evaluation is predominantly the responsibility of the department chair and/or the dean of the college in which the program originates.⁴⁵ A more extensive discussion is found in Chapter 7, Standard 13, *Related Educational Activities*

Student Affairs

Outcomes and practices are reviewed in a variety of ways, including a biannual modified 360 degree feedback process for divisional leaders, reviews and assessments from the Student Affairs Leadership Team, Student Affairs Council, and Student Affairs Directors. Two annual strategic and divisional planning retreats increase divisional communication and feedback as does the posting of meeting minutes. Assessment and evaluation have led to divisional reorganization, the implementation of a new budget process, additional positions in key areas, and the implementation of a staff development program.

DECO

The vice president receives from each director monthly reports that focus on new business, administrative changes, and academic integration efforts. The annual director's retreat allows for discussion of strategic planning, budgets, and goals and objectives for the coming year. Bimonthly meetings are held with directors to review their progress on meeting annual goals and implementing recommendations.

Athletics

The review process is informed by the strategic planning process and includes an annual report to the Board of Regents. The department is results oriented, thus, internal reviews occur on a process by process basis to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Administration and Finance

Division goals are strongly linked to the university's 2010 strategic plan, *TU 2010*, with ongoing review and dialog related to activity in each area of responsibility. The review process is based on the information provided by the directors to the vice president. Results are published in an annual report that summarizes the division's activities. The division conducts a retreat in February to review how well goals were met over the past year and to develop strategic goals and priorities for the coming year.

Division of Advancement

Each director in the Division of Advancement sets annual goals and objectives to align with the benchmarks set in *TU 2010*. The primary goal is to raise Towson's public profile, which serves to increase philanthropic support for the university. Directors submit end-of-year reports to the division's vice president and set the next year's goals.

⁴⁵ Appendix 7: Table 7.2b, *Locations of Off-Site Programming Effective January 2011*.

External Assessment Processes

Towson University is evaluated by numerous external and internal agencies. External evaluations of the university are conducted by the Board of Regents. The Board of Visitors is a service and advisory organization that focuses on community relations, fundraising, and providing assistance to the university president. The board consists of 24 to 36 members appointed to four-year terms by the president, who has the authority to terminate a board member at any time for any reason. Annually, the chair of the Board of Visitors submits a letter to the Governor of Maryland sharing the accomplishments of the university for the past year.

The Board of Regents reviews annual reports from areas and programs including Intercollegiate Athletics, Retention and Graduation Rates; Institutional Budget; Financial Aid; Campus Crime Reports; Enrollment Projections, SAT Profile, Transfer Student Enrollment and Success, Extramural Funding, Faculty Workload, as well as Racial and Gender Distribution of Faculty and compares the outcomes with those reported by other USM institutions. Results and recommendations are shared with the president and /or with the unit or program supervisor.⁴⁶ Assessment of administrative practices at Towson also occurs through the decennial Middle States Reaccreditation process which includes both extensive *Self-Study* as well as a peer evaluation.

Several degree-granting programs such as those in the College of Business and Economics, the College of Education, the College of Health Professions, and the College of Fine Arts and Communication are assessed by state or national accrediting agencies on a regular cycle.⁴⁷ Towson University is the only USM institution with Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation for both its business administration and accounting programs. AACSB is the premier accrediting agency for baccalaureate, masters and doctoral degree programs in business administration and accounting. This accreditation is the highest distinction that business schools can receive. The Towson University Professional Education Unit is fully accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Moreover, the university's Nursing program is approved by the Maryland Board of Nursing and accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.

Shared Governance

Shared governance is highly valued and deeply embedded in Towson's long history and tradition. The culture of self governance at Towson is aligned with the *Policy on Shared Governance*, which, as a mandate of the Board of Regents, pertains to all the USM institutions. According to the policy, each institution must have one or more shared governance bodies for faculty, staff, and students at the campus level, in which at least 75 percent of the voting members are elected by their constituencies. The 75 percent rule does not apply to subunits such as colleges, departments, and off-campus locations. At the level of these subunits, the policy only requires that the institutional president can demonstrate that shared governance principles and practices are appropriately implemented and that other administrators follow those principles and practices in subunit deliberations. As defined by the 75 percent rule, at the USM level, the shared governance bodies consist of the Council of University System Faculty, Council of University

⁴⁶The Board of Regents reviews the reports, sends them to the university president, who then shares them with the division/department leaders who file the reports.

⁴⁷ Appendix 8: Table 8.1 (see Column 5), *Assessment Inventory by Academic Program across the University*.

System Staff, and University System of Maryland Student Council. Each plays a role in the governance of Maryland's educational institutions.

The Council of University System Faculty (CUSF) advises the chancellor of the USM and the Board of Regents on matters pertaining to faculty, curricula and programs, as well as student learning. CUSF is comprised of faculty and librarians from all 12 USM affiliated institutions. The number of faculty representatives from each university who serve on CUSF is determined by the overall number of full-time instructional faculty on each campus. Towson University currently has three CUSF representatives, who are elected to three-year terms. In addition, Towson has had a leadership role in CUSF, including a recent past president and continuous representation on the CUSF Executive Committee.

Issues that CUSF addressed during the previous two academic years that have had an impact on Towson include: the recent textbook affordability policy; the state contribution for faculty to the ORP retirement plan; the Regents Faculty Awards to recognize distinguished faculty; Student Research Day in Annapolis to honor top student research efforts relevant to Maryland; a resolution on awarding merit pay; input on the state furlough policy and its impact on the faculty; the USM STEM initiative; the state call for campus cultural diversity plans; campus efforts related to *Closing the Achievement Gap*; ⁴⁸ and program duplication among state colleges and universities.

The Council of University System Staff (CUSS) facilitates the Board of Regents Awards for staff, a statewide program which accepts nominees from the USM institutions. CUSS meets monthly and consists of two representatives from all 12 USM institutions. This year, CUSS met multiple times with the USM chancellor to partner with the USM in keeping staff informed about current budget decreases and furlough implementation. A CUSS representative attends all Board of Regents meetings and works closely with the special assistant for staff to the USM chancellor.

The cornerstone of shared governance at Towson University is the University Senate, which is comprised of 20 elected faculty members, including one librarian, up to six student members, six nonvoting administrators, and the president of the Towson American Association of University Professors (ex officio). Its 19 subcommittees develop and recommend university policies and procedures. The University Senate also serves in an advisory capacity to the president. Its governance structure is described in the *Senate's Constitution*. As members, faculty play key roles in making policy recommendations that affect student learning outcomes. According to its constitution, the University Senate makes recommendations in the following areas: admission standards, degree requirements, new academic program assessment, changes in existing academic programs, long-range academic planning, evaluation of faculty appointments, promotion and tenure, salary recommendations, and intercollegiate competition.

Some of the major issues that the University Senate has discussed in recent years include: the role of faculty in the drop/add process and whether or not faculty determine who gets in their classes; the decision and process for making Towson a smoke-free campus implemented August 2010; and proposed changes to the Promotion, Tenure, Review, and Merit section of the *Faculty*

⁴⁸ See *TU's Closing the Achievement Gap Report October 2009* and *Pathways to Success...Closing the Achievement Gap*, in document archive, under Standard 2.

Handbook brought forward by the University Promotion, Tenure Reappointment and Merit (UPTRM) Committee.⁴⁹ The University Senate recently received the report of the General Education Review Committee which recommended changes to the current general education requirements to reflect the learning objectives and assessment methodologies consistent with current views on undergraduate education. The new University Core will be implemented in fall 2011.

Although the Council of Chairs (COC) is not an officially recognized part of the shared governance structure, as an ad hoc organization it serves a very important role in the overall governance of Towson. The COC is frequently approached by senior administrators who seek advice or recommendations on academic matters. Ordinarily, the COC convenes once a month, with the university provost frequently attending and meeting with the co-chairs monthly as well. On the university level, shared governance is exemplified by how Towson has worked collaboratively to achieve the *TU 2010* objectives. As discussed in greater detail in Chapters 1 and 2, the mission and strategic plan set the goals and objectives for every aspect of Towson's work, from developing learning opportunities for students to budgets and resource allocation. Working together with deans and other supervisory staff, vice presidents are ultimately responsible for gathering, monitoring, analyzing, and reporting the progress on every milestone on a monthly basis to the Office of the President. Progress and implementation of recommendations is tracked by project management software that includes timelines and deadlines. Meeting the goals of *TU 2010* is among the measures considered when the Board of Regents evaluates Towson's senior leadership. The next strategic plan in its entirety, *TU 2016*, was formally unveiled in November 2010.

Furthermore, the shared governance model informs the decision-making process at the presidential level. The President's Council⁵⁰ plays a key role in university deliberations. Ordinarily meeting on a biweekly basis, the President's Council is charged with providing accurate and updated information to the Office of the President and with serving as a resource to support the decision-making process. By working collaboratively with the members of the President's Council, President Caret has the requisite resources to be well informed. Ultimately, decisions are his sole responsibility. Once a decision is made, it is shared with the President's Council. The university president either announces the result to the community or asks that the vice presidents make the announcement by division.

Shared governance also characterizes the decision-making process at the vice presidential level. Vice presidents use different models of shared governance depending on their individual management styles and divisional organization. However, the elements common to all include staff meetings, retreats, monthly or annual reports, and similar opportunities to garner needed information and stay current. On the academic side, the provost meets once or twice a month with the Provost's Council.⁵¹ Shared governance is also modeled by the semimonthly Deans' Council meetings that are attended by both the provost and the associate provost.

⁴⁹The new *Appointment, Rank and Tenure Policy* is in the document archive, under Standard 10. It will replace Chapter 3 of the *Faculty Handbook* and will be implemented in June 2011.

⁵⁰Appendix 3: Table 3.1, *President's Council by Years*.

⁵¹Appendix 3: Table 3.2, *Provost's Council by Years*.

Similarly on the deans' level, decisions are the result of consultation and collaboration. Each college has both a leadership or chairs' council and a college council that serve advisory roles. Each academic college has a constitution and bylaws that outline how the college is governed.⁵² Generally, constitutions and bylaws must be approved by two-thirds of the members of a college council, and changes to the constitution are approved in the same way and then ratified by a majority of the members of the college. The University Senate supersedes all college councils. Each college's constitution must be approved by the University Senate. Ordinarily, deans meet semimonthly with chairs and monthly with college councils. Minutes are available through the deans' offices.

Matters that concern student learning outcomes, including curricular and academic standards, course design, and program development, are the responsibility of faculty, department chairs, and program directors in consultation with deans. Elected faculty who serve on each of the college curriculum committees, as well as on the University Curriculum Committee, Course Approval Reporting Committee, General Education Reporting Committee, or the Graduate Studies Committee review and determine appropriateness of course and program proposals. In addition, the Academic Standards Committee considers appeals related to curricula matters.

The Division of Student Affairs assures that students are well represented in the governance of Towson. The Student Government Association (SGA), the Graduate Student Association (GSA), the University Residence Government (URG) and the Student Diversity Council (recently renamed the Council of Student Leaders) represent all major student groups and colleges on campus, and, therefore, provide a venue for students to voice their opinions. Student representatives serve on college committees and on the Faculty Senate. A governor-appointed student is a member of the Board of Regents.

The SGA represents all students in planning, organizing, and directing the student organizations and programs on campus. The SGA also participates in the governance of the university by appointing students to sit on college-wide and university-wide committees, including the Middle States Steering Committee. The SGA's governance structure is described in its *constitution*. Each year, the SGA develops a legislative agenda that outlines issues and priorities. Recently, top priorities have included keeping tuition low, challenging the high cost of textbooks, the containment of student debt from student loans, and increasing state funding levels in response to enrollment.

The GSA represents the interests of graduate students. Its governance structure is described in its *constitution and bylaws*. Recently, the GSA has focused on career preparation and job placement. While the university is experiencing a period of growth, the GSA has also been concerned with maintaining the culture of closeness at Towson and a small school feeling. Among the key initiatives promoted by the GSA is the creation of programming that includes lectures and presentation from visiting scholars. Funding for student research and expanding professional development remain high on the list of initiatives.

The University Residence Government (URG) serves as the representative governing body and voice of the Towson University residents. Its governance structure is likewise described in its

⁵²*College Constitutions* in document archive, under Standard 4.

constitution. The organization is committed to creating events that connect residents with each other, and to supporting projects that have a positive impact on the lives of dorm residents.

Under the auspices of the vice president of Administration and Finance, the Towson University Staff Council (TUSC) provides staff with the opportunities to participate in shared governance, by having a voice in policy development and implementation. TUSC is composed of 21 elected members who serve three-year terms and represent all divisions and job categories. TUSC offers comments and feedback on issues that have an impact on staff, including budget, furlough, staff performance review and other issues such as parking and environmental initiatives. TUSC is represented on the USM Council of University System Staff. The council meets monthly, while subcommittees meet when necessary. These include, but are not limited to Board of Regents Awards, Brown Bag Lunch, Events, Communications/Public Relations, Human Relations, Police, and Staff Development Day. The TUSC gives feedback and comments on all policies that effect staff before implementation and serves in a liaison capacity on all staff-related campus issues.

Each fall, TUSC sponsors the Staff Development Day which is an all-day conference with break-out sessions, and a networking luncheon. In 2008, as many as 380 staff attended the luncheon, which featured a keynote address by astronaut Don Thomas. TUSC sponsors monthly informational brown bag lunches highlighting Towson staff. Topics include landscaping and wellness among others. These lunches are open to staff, faculty, and students. In 2009, TUSC worked with the staff in the Office of the President to solicit nominations for state staff awards. The result was a 200 percent increase in nominations. Towson University staff won two of the six statewide awards in 2009.

Conflict of Interest Policy

Conflict of interest issues are defined by the Maryland Public Ethics Law, by the USM Policy on Conflicts of Interest in Research or Development, and in Chapters 3 and 9 of the Faculty Handbook. Activities that may constitute conflicts of interest are proscribed, but exemptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis. Avoiding activities that may give the appearance of a conflict of interest and disclosing potential conflicts is strongly encouraged, if not required, in all policy documents. It is evident that existing oversight at all levels of institutional governance has been balanced and effective. The infrequency of allegations of conflicts of interest on the one hand, and of complaints that the restrictions are unduly onerous on the other hand, suggests that oversight in this realm has been effective.

Summary of Findings

- Under the leadership of the current president, the administration of the university is in competent hands. The senior leadership team has demonstrated a high degree of success in meeting the goals of the university's mission and strategic plan, *TU 2010*.
- Towson's commitment to shared governance and to accountability continues to define how Towson governs itself.
- As student enrollment has increased, a commitment to provide additional personnel to manage the expanding administrative operations of the campus is evident from the number of new hires across divisions. However, Academic Affairs has not experienced the same level of staff increases as the other divisions within the university.

- Towson's *2010 Report Cards* constituted a visible and transparent method for evaluating and disseminating information about how *TU 2010* goals were met and which areas needed improvement.

Recommendations

- That Towson underscores the importance of identifying and locating complete and accurate data sets, documents, reports, and reviews vital to the university's governance, operations, and history.
- That Towson creates a living documents archive to support ongoing policy and organizational oversight as well as assessment.
- That Towson develops a comprehensive plan to assess and improve administrative accountability in all units for purposes of improvement.
- That the University Senate establishes a subcommittee on shared governance, in accord with the *USM Policy on Shared Governance*, charged with regularly reviewing governance body constitutions and bylaws, articulating the role and procedures of each shared governance body on campus, receiving and archiving committee minutes and annual reports, and updating all governance committee websites with all appropriate documentation.
- That the University Senate establishes term limits for its members in order to create an environment that allows for wider opportunity for faculty to participate in shared governance at Towson University.

CHAPTER 4

Standard 8: Admissions and Retention

Standard 9: Student Support Services

Towson University has been successful in attracting and retaining quality students owing to effective planning, thoughtful resource allocation, and competent staffing. Location is a contributing factor insofar as Baltimore provides students with extensive co-curricular and internship opportunities that expand their learning experiences into the diverse and vibrant community. Growth has allowed Towson to develop new enrollment strategies that have raised the university's profile and reputation among other public comprehensive universities.

Who are Towson Students?

According to the Office of Institutional Research *Fact Sheet*, in fall 2009 a total of 21,177 (headcount) students attended Towson. Of these, 17,148 were undergraduate and 4,029 were graduate students. The overwhelming majority of students were from Maryland (83 percent undergraduate; 90.5 graduate). The student body is predominately white (67.2 percent). Among other self-reported ethnicities are African Americans (12.4 percent); Asians (3.7 percent); Latinos (2.6 percent); Native Americans (0.5 percent) and foreign nationals (3.8 percent). In addition, 9.7 percent of the students did not designate their ethnic background. In line with national trends, combining undergraduate and graduate enrollments, 62.64 percent are women and 37.4 percent are men.

In fall 2009, Towson welcomed 2,405 freshmen and 1,539 transfer students. The average GPA of the fall freshman class was 3.55 and their combined SAT scores range was from 1520 to 1730.⁵³ Students living on campus numbered 4,334, which represents 25 percent of the overall undergraduate population of 17,148 students.

Enrollment Management

Enrollment Management, under the aegis of the Provost's Office, is headed by the senior associate vice president for Enrollment Management who oversees the Undergraduate Admissions, International Undergraduate Admissions, the Office of the Registrar, and the Financial Aid Office. The Office of Admissions, headed by the assistant vice president and director of Admissions,⁵⁴ is responsible for the admittance of all undergraduate populations, including freshmen, transfer, non-degree, and teacher certification program students. Domestic and international graduate admissions are processed through the College of Graduate Studies and Research. Admissions-related services, such as financial aid, are handled by separate offices.

Towson University's enrollment goals are aligned with the institutional mission, *TU 2010*, and the *Enrollment Management Plan*.⁵⁵ Although Towson does not specifically target underrepresented populations, it does address their interests in a variety of ways. For instance, as an indication of the university's commitment to a diverse student body, the Admissions Office recruits, accepts, and offers scholarships to the top 10 percent of graduates from Baltimore City

⁵³ Data provided by Institutional Research.

⁵⁴ In summer 2009, the title was changed from director of admissions and a new administrator was hired.

⁵⁵ *Enrollment Management Plan/Goals* in document archive, under Standard 2.

and Baltimore County public high schools. It also recruits international students from over 100 nations, and hosted the campus's second Hispanic Youth Symposium in 2009.

Prospective student information is gathered based on campus tour reservations, completed information cards, or purchased lists. The Recruitment Plus software is utilized to track prospective students and merges their information into the marketing communication flow. Once part of this flow, a prospective student starts receiving emails, WebEx, chat, and event invitations dedicated to both freshmen and transfer populations.

Admissions Policies in Relation to the University System of Maryland (USM)

As a member of the USM, Towson is responsible for following the academic and student policies outlined by the USM. These policies map out the minimum freshmen and transfer requirements for admission, as well as detail specific requirements relating to transferring courses from both in-state and out-of-state colleges. Each USM institution is expected to maintain detailed standards relating to all aspects of the university experience from academic integrity to minimum requirements for degree completion.

Admissions Standards, Policies, and Practices

Undergraduate freshman admission is primarily determined by a combination of the student's high school GPA and standardized test scores. Supplemental information such as counselor recommendations and optional essays are also considered. The high school GPA is considered to be a stronger predictor of academic success and on-time graduation than SAT scores. Students with lower high school GPAs graduate at lower rates regardless of their SAT scores. Similarly, students with stronger high school GPAs graduate at higher rates regardless of their SAT scores. Therefore, the GPA is given more weight in the decision process.⁵⁶ During the first weeks of an admissions processing cycle, an admissions decision grid is created, mapping out GPA and SAT/ACT test score ranges. Admissions determinations are made based on whether a student falls within a decision grid cell determined to be within the acceptable range with respect to the likelihood of graduation. The policies and procedures for undergraduate admissions guide the admissions process.⁵⁷

Undergraduate transfer and second bachelor admission is based primarily on the overall grade point average of the student's previous college transcripts, although a student must have a minimum GPA of a 2.0 to be considered for admission. Undergraduate non-degree students are viewed as a visiting population. Provided that they have graduated from high school at least two years prior to seeking admission, visiting students are permitted to enroll on a space available basis. Students seeking undergraduate teacher certification receive advisement from the relevant academic department, and their admission and enrollment are processed upon the completion of advisement.

⁵⁶*Pathway for Success at TU...Closing the Achievement Gap*, p. 4, Chart 9. File is in document archive, under Standard 2.

⁵⁷Admission procedures, policies and application forms for freshman, transfer, international, honors college, second bachelors, non-degree and overseas program students in document archive, under Standard 8.

Freshman Admissions

For the most recent application cycle (2009), Towson received almost 16,000 freshman applications, with the majority submitted to start the fall term. For the fall 2009 semester, approximately 9,700 students were offered admission of which about 2,400 returned signed contracts and were enrolled.⁵⁸

Transfer Admissions

For the 2009 application cycle, Towson received transfer applications from nearly 4,200 prospective degree-seeking transfer students from both two-year and four-year colleges and universities. Approximately 3,000 students were offered admission for spring or fall 2009, and slightly more than 1,500 enrolled. Transfer policies and procedures can be found on the Admissions website and in the undergraduate catalog.⁵⁹

Admissions' encourages admitted transfer students to follow the To-Do List found on the Admissions website to assure proper completion of the transfer process. Courses are evaluated based on both where the student attended and the program of study selected at Towson. For example, owing to articulation agreements among USM institutions, students transferring within the system are advantaged. They can find admissions procedures and general education requirements at ARTSYS, the Maryland transfer portal. ARTSYS contains an extensive inventory of prescreened courses for all two-year and four-year colleges in Maryland and the equivalent course, if it exists, at Towson.

Students admitted from institutions outside the USM system have their courses evaluated by the Transfer Office in Admissions. Courses are transferred as consistently as possible based on parameters determined by the relevant academic departments. The Office of Admissions periodically meets with academic department representatives to evaluate how courses are transferred, and makes adjustments to improve the process and minimize the student's time to degree completion.

International Admissions

International Admissions operates separately from the Office of Admissions, and processes students with J-1, J-2, F-1, or F-2 visa types. The office typically evaluates individual transfer credit in-house and occasionally refers students to professional foreign credential evaluation services. There are course-by-course articulation agreements established with colleges and universities in the Bahamas, China, Denmark, Korea, Malaysia, Panama and Vietnam. Otherwise, the process for admitting students is the same as the Office of Admissions.⁶⁰

Honors College Admissions

Students seeking a unique and challenging academic experience may choose to apply to the Honors College. The Honors College curriculum includes courses from academic departments across the campus. The low faculty/student ratios in the Honors Seminars promote enriched classroom discussions. Current enrollment in the Honors College is approximately 750 students, and admission is limited to those with the strongest academic credentials. To be considered for

⁵⁸Appendix 4: Table 4.1, *Application Data – Undergraduate Admissions*.

⁵⁹Ibid. Also, *Undergraduate Catalogs* in document archive, under Standard 6.

⁶⁰Appendix 4: Table 4.2, *Enrollment Data – Undergraduate Admissions*.

the program, students interested in the Honors College must fill out the *Honors College application*. The deadline for submission is February 1 of each year and scholarships are available to select incoming students. Additional benefits for Honors College students include preferential class registration times and select housing arrangements. For the fall 2009 term, the Honors College received over 770 applications.

Admission to the Honors College is more stringent than for admission generally. The criteria for automatic Honors College admission as a freshman are a 3.7 overall high school GPA on a 4.0 un-weighted scale and a SAT combined score of 1800 or higher. Ordinarily, the minimum criteria for freshman admission are an overall high school GPA of 3.3 and a combined SAT score of 1500 or higher. The Honors College Application for fall 2010 freshmen admitted to the Honors College for fall 2008 had an average combined SAT score of 1883 and an average weighted GPA of 3.89. Transfer students who have completed 30 or more college units elsewhere are required to have a minimum college GPA of 3.5 for admission to the Honors College.⁶¹

Freshman Transition Program (FTP)

In fall 2008, Towson piloted a partnership program with the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC). The strongest applicants who are not admissible based on that particular year's admission criteria are invited to participate in the Towson/CCBC Freshman Transition Program (FTP). Since the GPA/SAT profile changes from year to year, it is difficult to give specific criteria for admission. However, as a point of reference, the average GPA for the FTP cohort for fall 2009 was a 3.3 and the middle 50 percent of the combined (three-score) SAT range was 1320 to 1470.⁶²

Transition students are admitted to CCBC and enroll in courses taught by CCBC instructors on the Towson University campus. These courses are available only for the FTP cohort group. Program participants have full use of campus services, and may live in residence facilities. FTP students are admitted for the fall semester and can transition to full degree candidacy at Towson after completing 12 credits in one semester with a GPA of 3.0 or better or after completing 24 credits in two semesters with a GPA of 2.5 or better. Students who do not meet either criterion after a year will not be offered degree status at Towson. They can choose to continue their education at CCBC or choose another institution.

This cooperative partnership between Towson and the local community college system helps Towson manage enrollment growth by taking advantage of underutilized classroom space during late afternoon or evening schedules.

Top 10 Percent Program

In fall 2005, Towson initiated a program for freshmen applicants from public high schools in either Baltimore City or Baltimore County. Known as the Top 10 Percent Program, students from schools are guaranteed admission if they are in the top 10th percentile of their graduating class and have a minimum three-score SAT total of at least 1300. Top 10 Percent students who

⁶¹ *Honors College Student Application* form in document archive, under Standard 8. Additional information was provided in a phone interview with the assistant dean of the Honors College on Sept. 2, 2009.

⁶²Data from Undergraduate Admissions, August, 2009.

could not meet the 1300 SAT threshold were invited to participate in the Top 10 Percent Dual Admit program. These students first attend a Baltimore County or City community college for two years, and then they are permitted to transfer to Towson. Scholarships are available to all Top 10 Percent participants, including those participating in the Dual Admit program.

Graduate Admission

Admissions to graduate degrees and certificates in the College of Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR) depend on specific department guidelines detailed in the *graduate catalog*, as well as program space and resources. However, in each department, the Graduate Program Director makes the final determination about who is admissible and which courses transfer from other institutions. Full admission to any graduate program requires a minimum 3.0 undergraduate GPA, though conditional admissions can be granted for the students with lower GPAs under certain conditions.⁶³ The CGSR accepts up to 50 percent of a student's prior graduate-level coursework depending on whether the courses were taken at an accredited institution, their alignment with Towson courses, specific program of study, and the grades received.

Registrar

The Office of the Registrar manages most of the administrative functions related to the student's academic record. In addition to creating and maintaining the student transcript, the Registrar manages the class schedule and academic room scheduling, updates curricula changes to courses and programs as they are approved, oversees the collection of grades, and makes changes to transcripts, such as grade changes submitted by the faculty. The office clears students for graduation, determines Latin Honors eligibility, and enforces academic policies as outlined by the Academic Standards Committee. The Registrar is also responsible for approving exceptions to published policies, such as late withdrawals or changes in course grading methods. In addition, the office processes catalog changes, manages the Credit for Prior Learning (CLEP) programs, and oversees the Degree Progress Report available in PeopleSoft. This report provides students and advisors with up-to-date data vital to degree completion, including: total units accumulated, upper level units earned, GenEd courses completed, required courses to be completed, and cumulative GPA. The report also signals when students are expected to declare a major.

Financial Aid

Financial aid and scholarships are critical to students with limited resources and to some students from historically underserved groups. The Financial Aid Office offers information about all scholarships, loans, and grants available to Towson students. Some scholarships such as the Towson University Hispanic Youth Symposium Matching Scholarship, Principal Scholarship, Commonwealth Scholarship, and the Cultural Diversity Scholarship are targeted to support particular populations. A broader range of available scholarships can be found at Scholarship Seeker which lists various funds available to students based upon academic and extracurricular interests. Financial aid counselors attend Office of Admissions and Undergraduate Marketing-sponsored events such as Open House and Destination Towson. Some participate in Admissions Chats, attend select high school nights, and give presentations at targeted schools. Others accept in-person appointments, send out mailings, and participate in WETA *College Sunday*, a television broadcast.

⁶³Full listings of *Graduate Admissions Requirements by Program* in document archive, under Standard 8.

Admissions and Marketing Services

Towson University manages information provided to prospective undergraduate, graduate, international, and non-degree students based on the collection of data in several ways, including:

- Recruitment Plus and PeopleSoft (student information management software)
- Web analytics, survey data, and software statistical data analysis
- National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC), Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA) and the College Board
- Online and written information requests
- Web-based initiatives such as virtual information sessions, social networking websites, chat programs, and high quality email campaigns
- Prospective student information requests during tours and recruitment events
- Parent and high school counselor information requests and events

The Office of Admissions and Undergraduate Marketing gather data that serve as the basis for the modification or improvement of recruitment and communication materials. They survey admitted, enrolled, and non-enrolled students to develop greater understanding of students' interests. These surveys also assess the level of satisfaction with the quality of campus tours, admissions events, the admissions process itself, and other areas of their on-campus experience. The survey data are used to develop new branding ideas, to improve methods of communication, and to modify admissions information and practices.⁶⁴

Impact of Demographic Changes on Admissions Services

In the near future, Towson University will face significant enrollment challenges owing in part to demographic changes in the Baltimore-Washington corridor. The impact of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), population expansion, and increased demand for higher education as a result of the recession and the new GI Bill will affect recruitment and retention at Towson. In September 2010, the university created a new Veterans Center to meet the needs of those transitioning from military life to the academic environment.

In response to these challenges, Towson is:

- continuing the expansion of admissions-related services to off-campus locations,
- extending online course availability,
- adding dual degree, 2+2 transfer programs and interdisciplinary programs,
- increasing marketing efforts (including online efforts) in response to the increased, competition among regional colleges and universities for the same population of students,
- expanding human, financial and software resources to meet marketing, recruitment, and processing demand by the Office of Admissions and Undergraduate Marketing,
- adding distance-learning programs that require different methods of program marketing, and
- developing programs for returning veterans.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Samples of results from these surveys are in the *Recruitment Undergraduate Satisfaction Surveys* binder available in the Middle States room.

⁶⁵These bullet points sourced from many different *Enrollment Management Plans /Goals* written between 2007 and 2010. Copies in document archive, under Standard 2.

Academic Services that Support Student Learning

Towson University is committed to offering students a comprehensive learning experience that enables each person to achieve his or her learning goals in a supportive environment. The university defines academic support services as programs that help students stay in school and succeed in their academic pursuits. In the Division of Academic Affairs, the following units and programs are designed to provide direct support services to students: The Academic Achievement Center (AAC), the Academic Advising Center, the English as a Second Language (ESOL) Writing Lab, the Intentional Advising Program, Strategies for Student Success (S3) Program, Towson Opportunities in STEM (TOPS), and the Writing Lab. The Albert S. Cook Library offers students a wide range of services to enhance their learning experience. In addition, Disability Support Services are offered through the Division of Student Affairs, Academic Support Services for Student Athletes is available through the Department of Athletics, and Student Computing Services (SCS) are offered through the Office of Technology Services.⁶⁶

Academic Advising

Towson provides academic advising for all students. Qualified professional advisers at the Academic Advising Center serve several student populations. All first-year students are assigned a First Year Experience (FYE) advisor who provides academic support, guidance, and assistance in students' transition to college; transfer students are advised through the TU CARES program. Undeclared majors continue to be advised in the Academic Advising Center. All students are required to declare a major by the time they complete 60 units of study. Email advising is available to students on a limited basis primarily to accommodate students who are off-campus either at study abroad programs or who, owing to other factors, cannot come to campus at the time advising is offered.

The mandatory Intentional Advising program serves all students. Those who have not as yet declared a major are advised through the Academic Advising Center. Those who have declared a major are advised by faculty in their major departments. The associate deans have responsibility and oversight for Intentional Advising in each college. This program was initiated in fall 2005 in response to assessment data that showed an unacceptable degree of student dissatisfaction with their advising experiences.⁶⁷ They work with department chairs to ensure that each department offers quality advising. Full-time faculty members serve as the students' advisors. A *Handbook for Undergraduate Academic Advisors* is made available to each advisor.⁶⁸ University-wide assessment of Intentional Advising is in the very early stages of development.⁶⁹ In the fall 2010, the Provost's Office authorized the creation of the Undergraduate Advising Council who membership includes the associate deans, director of the Academic Advising Center, and others.

⁶⁶Appendix 4: Table 4.3, *Thumbnail Sketches of Academic Support Programs*.

⁶⁷*National Survey of Student Engagement Summary Report 2007*, p. 2, and advising responses in 2002, 2005, 2007 and 2009 NSSE reports in document archive, under Standard 7.

⁶⁸*Handbook for Undergraduate Academic Advisors* in document archive, under Standard 9.

⁶⁹*Intentional Advising Assessment Instrument* originally developed in CLA in 2008 and revised to serve as a university-wide survey piloted in spring 2009, in document archive, under Standard 9.

Instructional Support Services

The Academic Achievement Center (AAC) employs learning specialists to provide study skills instruction, talent assessment that includes the use of the *Learning and Study Skills Inventory* and the *Gallup Strength Inventory*, and individualized academic coaching. It also offers tutoring on a first-come, first-served basis for lower level courses. During the AY 2008-09, 45 trained and certified peer tutors provided assistance to 1,581 students. AAC plays an integral part in key academic programs for at-risk or students identified as underprepared. These students are placed in developmental courses upon admission. Although AAC services are available to all students, at-risk students tend to seek support more frequently. An assessment of the AAC offerings found that there is a positive correlation between the number of hours students are tutored and the increase in their course grades.⁷⁰

Towson promotes strong writing skills and student-centered learning across the curriculum. The Writing Lab offers individual writing assistance to all undergraduate and graduate students. Comprehensive services to support writing across disciplines are offered for as many as 300 different classes each semester. Approximately 900 undergraduate and graduate international students have access to individualized tutoring through the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Lab. As is the case with the AAC and the Writing Lab, the ESOL Lab employs peer tutors, who are the first responders to international students' writing needs for all written assignments, from basic composition to doctoral dissertations.

Albert S. Cook Library is central to Towson's academic mission to support student learning. Librarians hold faculty status. By working with students or faculty, librarians encourage intellectual curiosity and support academic investigation and scholarly productivity. The library is a member of both the 16-member University of Maryland and Affiliated Universities (USMAI) Consortium of Libraries and the Baltimore Academic Library Consortium. It provides both main campus and off-campus users with online access to resources. Cook Library's new and improved website was created to be more user-friendly and easy for students to navigate. It was redesigned based on feedback received from focus groups, faculty, and staff. The library utilizes the *Libqual Assessment Tool* to determine user satisfaction. Results of the spring 2008 feedback are available on the website.⁷¹

Support Services for Distinct Populations

Academic Support Services for Student Athletes provides a comprehensive program of services to meet the needs of all athletes. These include meetings with individual athletic advisors to assist the athlete in developing appropriate learning and study strategies, departmental tutoring and AAC-trained tutors, mandatory study hall, and a laptop loan program. Athletes who are at risk are directed to specific services and resources available through other units. The academic progress of student-athletes is tracked throughout their college careers to enforce compliance with NCAA eligibility requirements.

Disability Support Services (DSS) has seen a large increase in the number of students who self-identify as requiring accommodations. On December 1 and 2 of 2008, DSS administered a

⁷⁰*Academic Achievement Center Tutoring Satisfaction Surveys* fall 2008 and spring 2009 in document archive, under Standard 9.

⁷¹*Library LibQUAL 2008 Survey* description and results in the document archive, under Standard 2.

survey to 543 students registered with DSS to assess student satisfaction with its services.⁷² Students with disabilities were satisfied overall with the assistance they received from the office. The survey revealed that 70 percent of the students use priority registration and 94 percent rated this accommodation as excellent or good. Eighty-three percent rated the assistance received from DSS as being extremely or very helpful. Although there were mixed comments regarding the overall satisfaction with DSS, the positive comments outweighed the negative comments.

The Support for Student Success (S3) program and Towson Opportunity in STEM (TOPS) are programs available to special populations. S3 is a pilot program for students identified as underprepared or at risk through a broad assessment of their academic needs. These students need additional assistance in reading, writing, and analytical skills. The S3 program is not widely recognized by many on campus, including faculty. TOPS is a grant-funded program designed to increase the number of women and underrepresented minority students from the Baltimore metropolitan area and transfer students from Baltimore City Community College who enroll in programs in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Now in its third year, the program provides academic and personal skills development, mentoring, career planning, and tutoring.⁷³

Technology Support Services

Student Computing Services (SCS) provides students with access to general-use and specialized computer workstations and software resources. An SCS Learning Center, computer labs, service desk and phone help line are available to students who need assistance. SCS uses the EDUCAUSE ECAR Technology annual survey to evaluate current student use and attitudes toward technology. Two years of data from 2007 and 2008 reveal that students spend approximately six to ten hours a week doing online activities for school.⁷⁴ In addition, more than 82 percent of students indicated that they prefer to use a university email account over a commercial account when conducting university business. Eighty-seven percent of students indicated their satisfaction with their instructors' incorporation of technology in the classroom. Students also stated that use of technology was not a substitute for face-to-face interaction with faculty.

Other Services that Support Student Learning⁷⁵

Counseling Center

The Counseling Center supports the university's mission by providing services to students with a variety of personal problems that have a negative impact on their ability to succeed in their academic endeavors. The center offers psychological consultation and social skills training to students and also serves as a resource to the entire Towson community. All services are confidential and most do not require a fee. Nine psychologists, two alcohol/drug educators, three pre-doctoral interns, two part-time consulting psychiatrists, and three administrative staff work in the Counseling Center. In FY 2009, 1,304 individual clients were served, and a total of 6,861

⁷²DSS Student Satisfaction Survey and Report Fall 2008 in document archive, under Standard 9.

⁷³Discussion of these initiatives is in *Pathways for Success at T U...Closing the Achievement Gap* in document archive, under Standard 2.

⁷⁴OTS Interview on Academic Support Services for Students in document archive, under Standard 9.

⁷⁵Appendix 4: Table 4.4, *Thumbnail Sketches of Campus Support Services*.

people used consultation services and/or attended workshop and presentations.⁷⁶ The Counseling Center is fully accredited by the International Association of Counseling Services (IACS). The Pre-Doctoral Internship in Professional Psychology program is accredited by the American Psychological Association.

The Counseling Center is located in Glen Esk, a free standing house which is among the older buildings on campus. The building's limited space makes expansion of staff and services impossible. As enrollment growth has outpaced staffing increases, the Counseling Center's staff to student ratio is approximately 1:2,400 students, far above the national benchmark of 1:1,000 to 1:1,500 established by the International Association of Counseling Services (IACS). To continue quality service to students, faculty, and staff, the Counseling Center will require a larger facility and more staff.

The Counseling Center maintains a close relationship with the Department of Housing and Residence Life. As a result, student issues may be addressed in a timely manner. The Counseling Center also works with other departments and units on campus. For example, it provides a resource guide for faculty on how to deal with students in distress.⁷⁷ Over the last five years, there has been a significant increase in both clinical demand and severity of illnesses treated at the Counseling Center. This insight is based on the number of unscheduled emergency and extended intakes, referrals to psychiatric services and to community mental health workers for the more severe and/or longstanding cases, and in the number of out-of-session contacts in support of the clinical services provided.⁷⁸

Career Center

The Career Center provides career counseling, internship advising, alumni career services, career events, on-campus interviewing, Hire@TU, a job/internship database, resume writing assistance, mock interviewing, a career resource library, as well as a career and life planning course (GENL 121). Career Center visitor count has remained remarkably consistent in the past few years, even taking enrollment growth into account. During AY 2008-09, the total number of individuals served through all Career Center programs was 2,441.⁷⁹ This total includes students coming to the Career Center in person for counseling and/or advising, appointments, walk-in questions, and use of the career resources library.

Organizations Related to Campus Life

The number of student organizations and services has grown over the past 10 years. In AY 2008-09, there were 250 student organizations compared to approximately 100 in 1998. Many, including Student Government, are under the auspices of the Student Affairs Division; those sponsored by academic departments are in the Academic Affairs Division. Students can choose among a wide range of organizations, including those with a political, academic, arts, or cultural focus, as well as social organizations such as sororities and fraternities. Religious and service organizations are also present on campus. Some of the growth in student organizations has

⁷⁶Appendix 4: Table 4.5, *Services Provided by Counseling Center*.

⁷⁷Counseling Center's *Helping Students in Distress: Faculty Staff Resource Guide* in document archive, under Standard 9.

⁷⁸Appendix 4: Table 4.5, *Services Provided by Counseling Center*.

⁷⁹*Career Center Utilization Data AY 2008-09* in document archive, under Standard 9.

occurred through the proliferation of clubs that focus on specific topics or activities such as the Anime and Science Clubs. As groups and enrollment have grown, so has student participation. The quality of life on campus also depends on services such as dining and parking which are part of Auxiliary Services under the auspices of the Division of Administration and Finance. These services contribute in significant ways to how students feel about their Towson experience.

According to the *2007 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)*, 51 percent of TU students participated in co-curricular activities such as organizations, student government, intramural sports, etc. compared to 56 percent of students at peer institutions.⁸⁰ In response to the lower than desirable percentages, a program to encourage students to attend arts events was initiated in 2008 (pARTy@ Towson). In addition, *Friday Night Live* was launched in spring 2007 to enhance campus life on weekends. The program was expanded to include events hosted by student organizations catering to diverse audiences. The 2009 NSSE data show improvement to 54 percent for Towson students compared to 52 percent of students at peer institutions.

Athletics marketing has also made an effort to reach out to the student body and encourage attendance at athletics events. Special and/or multiple promotions are held for all football games, men's and women's basketball games, lacrosse tournaments and gymnastics meets. Most events are free. Attendance climbed in AY 2007, but was lower again in AY 2009.⁸¹

Accessibility

Accessibility includes ease of access to physical locations and programming, including hours of operation, which generally are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays. Recently, the campus has been undergoing significant construction projects making accessibility more challenging, particularly for students and faculty with disabilities. All campus support services are wheelchair-accessible with some notable limitations. For example, the Counseling Center's first floor is wheelchair accessible, but not its upper floor. Counselors take some appointments in first-floor spaces that are not as private. In Dowell Health Center, the poor configuration of the exam rooms does not allow for complete privacy for some patients. Most departments do not have anyone on staff proficient in sign language. In general, on-campus access to student services in the evening is inconsistent. However, many academic-related services can be accessed 24/7 via the student's Towson Online Service account.

The Off-Campus Coordinating Committee assessed the state of services for students at off-campus locations. A survey was distributed to all program coordinators at these sites to collect data on the availability of student/faculty services.⁸² The results of the surveys will be used by the committee and the program coordinators to develop effective ways to communicate which services are and are not offered at the various locations. The availability of on-site student services varies among the off-campus locations. The Universities at Shady Grove (USG) offer an array of on-site student services which give students the sense of being a part of the USG community, while maintaining a sense of connection to their respective home institution. The Hagerstown site offers very few, if any, on-site student services but does have verbal agreements

⁸⁰NSSE Summary 2007 and 2009 are in document archive, under Standard 7.

⁸¹Tiger Athletics Attendance comparisons in document archive, under Standard 9.

⁸²Regional Off-Campus Students Services Needs Assessment Survey and Summary are in document archive, under Standard 2.

for services with health care providers in the area. The Higher Education Conference Center at HEAT avails itself of the Harford Community College (HCC) on-site student services because of their close proximity. Special arrangements are made for students who require disability support accommodations. For example, Towson has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with USG that specifically addresses the disability support service needs of Towson students who take courses at the USG campus.⁸³ The Off-Campus Coordinating Committee is continuing to work to strengthen student service at these locations and to develop policies to address issues of access.

Communications

Communication with students takes place through a number of available channels. Information pertaining to student services is available on pertinent Towson websites. Brochures, flyers, the *Daily Digest*, and social networking sites like Facebook, the student newspaper, *The Towerlight*, emails sent to Towson accounts and BlackBoard are examples of how information is communicated to students. The university occasionally will use banners around campus, dining hall table tents, bus shelter ads, and electronic signs to convey event or service information. Emergency notification is offered to students, faculty and staff who subscribe to an alert system that sends text messages to cell phones or to their email addresses.

Assessment Practices

Assessment is the way the university identifies objectives and measures performance. Chapter 8 provides an in-depth analysis of Standard 7, *Institutional Assessment*, and Standard 14, *Assessment of Student Learning*. With regard to admissions and student services, assessment data regarding the Students Achieve Goals through Education (SAGE) and the Community Enrichment and Enhancement Partnership (CEEP) Awards are available in the Center for Student Diversity's end of year report.⁸⁴ Accurate and comprehensive data regarding financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, and refunds is available through the Financial Aid Office and other campus-wide offices responsible for specific financial support. Ongoing assessment of student success, including but not necessarily limited to retention, is available through the Office of Institutional Research, Academic Affairs, and Students Affairs.

Student-focused services and organizations are largely found in the Division of Student Affairs, which has established assessment protocols and reviews programs on a regular basis. In areas where students are one of many audiences, often in units located within Auxiliary Services, assessment is done on an ad hoc basis, as annual reviews, or not at all. Several areas might benefit from developing a client satisfaction survey that could be used regularly to provide feedback to departments. For example, the University Child Care Center could institute a formal assessment of learning goals as appropriate to a given age group. Opportunities for parents to provide feedback could also be useful to enhance services.

Towson has participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) since 2001. The 2009 NSSE⁸⁵ data offer insight into how students assess their learning experience: 85 percent of students rated their experience as good or excellent compared to 87 percent of students at peer institutions; 75 percent stated that they would definitely or probably choose Towson again if

⁸³*Shady Grove DSS MOU with TU* in document archive, under Standard 13.

⁸⁴*Center for Student Diversity Annual Report FY 2008-09* is in document archive, under Standard 9.

⁸⁵*NSSE 2009 in Brief* in document archive, under Standard 7.

given a chance compared to 83 percent of students at peer institutions; and 71 percent reported that their experience with advising was good or excellent compared to 56 percent of students at peer institutions. Towson student responses regarding their experience are slightly below the 87 percent of student responses at peer institutions.

Funding Levels for Support Services

The current funding level for support services appears to have kept pace with enrollment growth. Across the last decade, student enrollment has grown roughly by 32.5 percent.⁸⁶ During the same period, an analysis of data for support services budgets shows a total budget of \$43.3 million in 1999, compared to a total budget of \$73 million in 2008, an increase of about 69 percent.⁸⁷

Enrollment growth appears to have benefitted the funding levels for student services, as the growth of student services funding has exceeded the growth in student enrollment across the same period. Insofar as many student service departments are dependent on student fees for their budgets, each new full-time equivalent (FTE) student brings a concurrent increase in funds. In short, as enrollment grows, more student fees are collected and accordingly disbursed.

Nonetheless, underfunded and understaffed units find that as a result of the changing student demographics, it is a challenge to provide the additional services needed to address the changing student needs.

Undergraduate Retention

As Maryland's second largest university, Towson faces unique challenges to ensure its student population has the necessary academic skills to be successful and to remain personally and academically invested in a campus where the environment is interesting, pleasurable, safe, and responsive to their needs. To this end, Towson has made sure its internal and external planning documents include references to services that enhance the student experience and help promote retention.

Increasing retention rates, dedicating resources to maintain a diverse student body, and providing strong support for at-risk student populations are among the goals of the university's mission and strategic plan, *TU 2010*. Towson strives to maintain retention rates that place the university within the top 10 percent of its peers.⁸⁸ Student retention is also used as a point of comparison among peer institutions to gauge how satisfied students are with their college experience, as well as an indicator of overall student satisfaction. For this reason, both first-year retention rates and four and six-year graduation rate percentages are collected by the majority of four-year institutions across the nation and the results are published on institutional websites.

Comparative data for the fall 2001 cohort of Towson students measured against selected performance peers demonstrates that the university's six-year graduation rate is 66 percent, second only to James Madison within its peer group.⁸⁹ While the graduation rate for Towson just exceeds the rate for the University of Northern Iowa by only one percent, there is a significant gap between the top three institutions and the remaining bottom three schools in Towson's peer

⁸⁶ Appendix 4: Table 4.6, *Enrollment, Past 10 Years*.

⁸⁷ Appendix 4: Table 4.7, *Budget for Support Services*. Data in Chapter 2 for support services are not as inclusive, therefore, there is a discrepancy.

⁸⁸ *Towson University Mission Statement*, Section IV, Goal 2A; and *TU 2010, Student Experience and Success*.

⁸⁹ Appendix 4: Table 4.8, *Six-Year Graduation Rates and First Year Retention Rate for Towson University Compared to Peer Institutions*.

group included in this analysis. Furthermore, Towson's six-year graduation rate far exceeds the overall national average graduation rate of 57.3 percent among students in the 2001 cohort for all four-year institutions combined. The same pattern holds in relation to the first-year retention rate. Towson's first-year retention rate for the 2001 cohort is 82 percent, second highest among the six performance peers reported.

Towson's graduation rates for minority students and for male and female students compare favorably as well.⁹⁰ Among those enrolled in Towson in cohort year 2001, substantially higher percentages of both male and female students, as well as African American and Hispanic students, graduated in six years compared to the national percentages in each category. The difference is especially noteworthy for African American students, who have a six-year graduation rate of 65.1 percent versus just 40.1 percent for this demographic group nationwide. Where Towson falls below the national average, notably among Asian students, the difference is relatively small. Perhaps one reason is the greater language barrier for Asian students, some of whom are international students. As a result of the university's commitment to programs such as the ESOL Writing Lab, which offer English language support, the expectation in graduation rates for Asian students will improve.

Much of Towson's graduation success is the result of the university's commitment to offer support services to underserved or at-risk populations who are less prepared than the average admitted student. Included in this effort are developmental course offerings in reading, writing, and mathematics, the Support for Student Success Program (S3) which includes a first-year seminar course, the Students Achieve Goals through Education (SAGE) peer-mentoring program, academic success strategy workshops and tutorial services provided by the Academic Achievement Center, and the First-Year Experience Advising Program.⁹¹ All of these programs are described earlier in this chapter.

Accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs is available through appropriate academic departments and the Academic Advising Center. Required placement testing for reading, writing, and mathematics is available through the Office of Developmental Education. Statements of expected student learning outcomes are offered to students participating in the S3 Program, SAGE Program, and developmental courses. Chapter 7, which focuses on Standard 13, *Related Educational Activities*, provides a more detailed description of these programs.

University students are also challenged when they attempt to complete their programs of study within four years, a task that becomes even more difficult when transferring from another college or university. To assist in this goal, specific articulation agreements with regional community colleges have been developed so that the transition from two-year programs can be as seamless as possible. However, the challenge of making a successful shift from a two-year college to a four-year environment cannot be underestimated.

⁹⁰Appendix 4: Table 4.8, *Six-Year Graduation Rates and First Year Retention Rate for Towson University Compared to Peer Institutions* and Table 4.9, *Comparison and National and Towson University 4-Year Graduate Rates, Cohort Year 2001*.

⁹¹Appendix 4: Table 4.3, *Thumbnail Sketches of Academic Support Programs*.

Graduate Retention

The mechanism for determining the retention rates and the time toward degree completion among graduate students is another challenge for Towson. Graduate programs range from certification programs that can be completed within a year on a full-time basis to programs that require two or more years to complete. In addition, many graduate students attend part-time. Furthermore, graduate students tend to take breaks during their college careers, which obviously extends the time needed to complete a particular program. For these reasons, data on graduate student retention rates are difficult to capture, and although the graduate program at Towson has experienced continuous growth in both its graduate student enrollment as well as graduation numbers by program, Institutional Research does not track retention or time to degree completion statistics for graduate student populations.

There are corollary data suggesting that the College of Graduate Studies and Research is successful at graduating its students. As graduate student enrollment has increased, the number of students who have completed a master's program by college has generally increased as well. Between 2004 and 2007, the overall number of students earning a master's degree increased from 777 to 995 students. The data also show a slight drop in the total master's programs completed for 2008. Patterns within colleges are more difficult to discern and interpret, but through 2007, the College of Education has experienced the most notable increase in students completing a master's degree.⁹²

Summary of Findings

- Towson University's enrollment services, which include Admissions, Financial Aid, and the Registrar, are aligned with the university's mission and strategic plan, *TU 2010*, and are on par with industry standards.
- Information pertaining to admissions and financial aid, as well as advising and academic programs, is readily available on the Towson website and in print materials. Keeping the information current has proven to be a challenge.
- A wide range of student advising and support services are available to all students, including those at-risk, first generation, from underrepresented populations, athletes, veterans and transfer students.
- Student services at off-campus locations are not as extensive as those available at the main campus.
- Towson fares exceedingly well in comparative undergraduate retention and graduation rates analyses both among its peer group and nationally.
- Student support services are assessed differentially depending on the division and degree to which a culture of assessment has been implemented across units.

Recommendations

- That Towson creates an integrated enrollment services center that embraces Admissions, Financial Aid, and the Registrar offices to facilitate more efficient access to services.
- That Towson makes student learning outcomes explicit in admissions and marketing materials in print as well as on the Towson website.

⁹²Appendix 4: Table 4.10, *Master Degree Graduation Totals by College*.

- That Towson makes admissions policies and procedures as well as requirements for matriculation more explicit and readily available on the university website.
- That Towson commits additional resources to strengthen as well as assess student support services at off-campus locations.
- That Towson examines the adequacy of staffing levels and facilities in areas vital to the enhancement of student learning outcomes, including in the Student Computing Center and the Academic Achievement Center.
- That Towson develops a culture of assessment in Auxiliary Services and other areas not already involved in assessment processes by soliciting campus-wide user feedback which would be used to improve practices.

CHAPTER 5

Standard 10: Faculty

The ability of Towson University to successfully fulfill its educational mission depends on the quality of its faculty. From its 1866 Normal School roots to its present identity as a metropolitan university that educates a diverse undergraduate and graduate student body, teaching and learning have remained the primary faculty emphasis. The faculty supports the university's mission by their teaching, scholarship, and service. Their commitment to excellence is evident in the quality instruction and scholarship that shape and improve curriculum at all levels. Innovative and dynamic, faculty engages in wide-ranging forms of scholarship, as well as many types of service and outreach activities. Faculty instills a spirit of inquiry and joy of learning in their students by staying current in their fields and being attentive to the changes in pedagogy and assessment opportunities.

Qualifications of Faculty

Towson University's instructional, research, and service programs are developed, monitored, and supported by qualified faculty. Faculty qualifications are determined by university policy found in the *Faculty Handbook*, the *Constitution and Bylaws of the University Senate* Section E, and, as specified by standing committees of the University Senate, such as the Academic Standards Committee, the University Curriculum Committee, and the Graduate Studies Committee.

Faculty and other professionals are appropriately prepared and qualified for the positions they hold, and model best professional practices in teaching, scholarship, and service. As a result of their academic preparation, expertise, experience, and commitment to continuous professional development and scholarship, faculty serve as exemplary models for undergraduate and graduate students. Towson systematically evaluates faculty performance and facilitates professional development. The effectiveness of teaching is evaluated by students on a regular basis as a part of the university student course evaluation (SCE) process.⁹³

Towson has carefully articulated, equitable, consistent, published, and implemented procedures and criteria for the appointment, supervision, and review for teaching effectiveness of all faculty including full-time tenured and tenure-track, as well as full-time non-tenure track (lecturers, clinical, visiting professors), and part-time. The *Faculty Handbook* contains a document that establishes the criteria for appointment as well as criteria and procedures for faculty evaluation, reappointment, promotion, tenure, merit, and permanent status.⁹⁴ These criteria and procedures are consistent for all faculty members, applying to each member regardless of location and/or method of delivery.

All faculty members have a role-appropriate degree.⁹⁵ Tenured/tenure-track faculty members have earned doctorates or discipline-specific terminal degrees in the field of specialization, such

⁹³ *SCE Course Evaluation Process AY 2010-11 Update* in document archive, under Standard 10.

⁹⁴ *Faculty Handbook*, Chapter 3, pp. 3-1 to 3-84. In August, Chapter 3 of the *Faculty Handbook* was replaced by the new *Towson University Policy on Appointment, Rank and Tenure of Faculty*.

⁹⁵ As defined by MSCHE, "a professional is qualified by virtue of education, training, experience, or appropriate skills. Designated professional qualifications should be consistent with the expected academic outcomes, reflecting both appropriate standards of quality and the institutional mission."

as the MFA. Full-time, non-tenure track faculty (lecturers, visiting professors, and clinical faculty), part-time faculty,⁹⁶ and unit administrators must either have a doctorate, discipline-specific terminal degree, appropriate master's degree or other academic credential supported by professional experience and expertise with respect to teaching and/or supervisory roles. Reappointment is based on an annual, role-appropriate evaluation of fulfillment of the expectations for the position.⁹⁷

Number of Faculty

In anticipation of enrollment growth, the president committed to hiring a new full-time faculty member for every 20 additional full-time equivalent (FTE) students. The five-year Institutional Research (IR) data that track the number of faculty and students demonstrate that there has been an increase in the number of faculty to accommodate enrollment growth. The number of full-time instructional faculty has increased by 26.7 percent in the last five years. In fall 2004 there were 622 full-time faculty members; in fall 2008 there were 788.⁹⁸ In the same period, the number of part-time instructional faculty, who are considered essential to the educational mission of the university, increased by 11.0 percent.⁹⁹ The number of FTE students enrolled in the university over this time increased from 13,561 in FY 2004 to 16,104 in FY 2008, an 18.7 percent increase in enrollment.¹⁰⁰

Among tenured/tenure-track faculty,¹⁰¹ the data also indicate that the largest growth occurred at the rank of assistant professor. New tenure-track hires receive a reduced teaching, advising, and service workload in their first three years in order to develop a research base in keeping with Towson's expectations for scholarly productivity.

Analysis demonstrates that the current ratio is 70.8 percent tenured/tenure-track faculty to 29.2 percent non-tenured/tenure-track faculty, including clinical faculty and lecturers. In addition, 61.1 percent of eligible tenured/tenure-track faculty members are tenured.¹⁰² Analysis of the faculty teaching workload data collected from 2003 to 2008 shows that while the number of PT faculty has gone up, the percentage of PT faculty relative to full-time faculty has decreased.¹⁰³ While these data provide additional documentation of the increasing number of FT faculty being hired to accommodate enrollment growth, the increased percentage of course units and SCH

⁹⁶Part-time graduate faculty must hold graduate faculty status, which is the same requirement as that of full-time faculty. To obtain graduate faculty status, faculty must complete the *Graduate Faculty Status Application*, which is then reviewed by members of the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC). Enforcement of this policy is via regular reminders to deans and chairs as they are assigning faculty to classes. There is a one semester grace period for new faculty (full- and part-time), in order to provide a faculty member enough time to submit an application. Part-time undergraduate faculty must complete an application and submit an official transcript prior to teaching a course. Individual departments are responsible for selecting faculty for part-time positions.

⁹⁷Appendix 5: Table 5.1, *Overview of Fall 2008 Full-Time Faculty and Degree Status*.

⁹⁸Appendix 5: Table 5.2, *Full-Time Instructional Faculty Headcount and Number/Percent Tenured by Rank*. See also Electronic Fact Pages.

⁹⁹Appendix 5: Table 5.3, *Part-Time Instructional Faculty Headcount and FTE Employment*. See also Semester & Annualized FTE Students enrollment by year.

¹⁰⁰Appendix 5: Table 5.4, *Annualized FTE Students*.

¹⁰¹Appendix 5: Table 5.2.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³*Faculty Headcount SCH by College, 2003-08* (Headcount, FTE, Course Units Taught, Student Credit Hours Taught) in document archive, under Standard 3.

taught by FT faculty further ensures the quality and consistency of the teaching and learning environment.

IR data provide additional confirmation of success in increasing the number of qualified faculty being hired to accommodate enrollment growth. The data document that the student to faculty ratio from FY 2004-08, even with the continuous student population increase, has remained approximately 18:1.¹⁰⁴

Diversity of Faculty

President Caret made diversity one of his priorities upon his arrival in 2003. In 2004, he established a Diversity Task Force with the mandate to review diversity policies and procedures to ensure that they align with specific diversity goals. The task force developed 27 recommendations in the following categories: representation, campus climate, education and scholarship, and institutional transformation.¹⁰⁵ Diversity goals were threaded throughout *TU 2010*, which ensured that resources were allocated to support diversity initiatives, including increasing diversity among the faculty ranks.

Towson's commitment to recruit a diverse faculty was reflected in the goals of *TU 2010* and numerous other documents including the *Diversity Action Plan*, and the *Faculty and Professional Librarian Hiring Procedures*. The Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) works closely with search committees to assure that applicants from underrepresented groups and women are considered for all vacancies. The ODEO and the associate provost review and approve the text of faculty search announcements and the list of candidates prior to campus interviews. Two or more outreach efforts such as advertising in journals that target specific racial/ethnic groups are required to be documented and reported to ODEO. The Office of the President monitors the achievement of diversity action items as part of the assessment process recorded in the *TU 2010 Report Cards*. As a result of the diversity initiative, Towson has increased the diversity of its full-time faculty as demonstrated by the number and percentage of female, Asian Pacific Islanders, African American, and Latino individuals hired to fill full-time faculty positions between fall 2004 and fall 2008.¹⁰⁶ A similar pattern is evident in the case of non-tenure track and part-time hiring.¹⁰⁷

Faculty Compensation¹⁰⁸

Although Towson has increased compensation for full-time and part-time faculty, it has not achieved the USM goal to be at the 85th percentile for nonunionized comprehensive universities for full-time faculty salaries by rank. Despite the progress made, Towson's tenured/tenure-

¹⁰⁴ Appendix 5: Table 5.5, *Student to Faculty Ratio*. The formula for computing the student to faculty ratio is also found in the *Common Data Set*, section I-2, in document archive, under Standard 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Diversity Task Force Report 2004* in document archive, under Standard 7.

¹⁰⁶ Appendix 5: Table 5.6, *Tenure and Tenure-Track Instructional Faculty Headcount by Gender and Ethnic Background*.

¹⁰⁷ Appendix 5: Table 5.7, *Non-Tenure and Non-Tenure-Track Instructional Faculty Headcount by Gender and Ethnic Background*.

¹⁰⁸ The charge question specifically requested the comparison of full-time and part-time faculty salaries to those in peer institutions. It was not possible to conduct this comparison, because the data are based on faculty salaries by rank. To compare faculty salaries by full-time and part-time instead of rank, IR would have to contact peer institutions to request this information. In the past, such requests were not successful.

track/clinical faculty with rank, faculty salaries continue to fall substantially below the 85th percentile for the ranks of professor (69th percentile), associate professor (74th percentile), and assistant professor (71st percentile). Reaching and maintaining salaries that align with the university's peers is necessary if Towson is to have a competitive advantage over time.

The USM provides Towson with comparative data related to the percentiles of full-time faculty salaries by rank at member institutions compared to their respective peer institutions within the same Carnegie Classification. Towson is compared to peers at the Master's I level. On an annual basis, the associate provost compiles data from the College and University Personnel Association (CUPA) into tables organized by academic disciplines and provides this information to the deans to provide guidance in establishing a salary range for newly hired faculty.

Salary percentiles for full-time tenured/tenure-track/clinical faculty with associate and assistant professor rank have increased with respect to their peers over the last five years, with the greatest increase at the assistant level. The comparative percentile for full professors shows a very small decline (1 percent).¹⁰⁹ Average mean salaries in real dollars for tenured/tenure-track/clinical faculty at all ranks on 9/10 month contracts have shown consistent increases in each year since fall 2004, with an increase by rank ranging from 14.5 percent to 18.9 percent.¹¹⁰ However, the median salary by rank for full-time tenure/tenure-track/clinical faculty shows similar but smaller overall increases, with median increases ranging from 11.2 percent to 15.4 percent.¹¹¹ Regardless of rank or the year analyzed, the mean salary is greater than the median salary. This suggests persistent compression at the low end for the faculty.

Between fall 2004 and fall 2008, salaries for non-tenure track lecturers increased by 6 percent and for senior lecturers by 35 percent.¹¹² Data also reveal a similar steady increase in part-time faculty compensation, which increased from \$2,100 per course in FY 2004 to \$2,500 per course in FY 2009, representing a 19 percent increase across this period.

Professional Development and Faculty Retention

Teaching and learning are central to the professional life and workload of faculty. Towson supports faculty with a range of opportunities and programs starting with new faculty orientation, followed by professional development in the areas of teaching, research, scholarship, and service. Faculty members are encouraged to pursue focused professional development, which they report in their annual reviews.

Orientation

The associate provost holds orientation programs tailored to new tenure-track, non-tenure-track, and part-time faculty, including those who teach on and off-campus locations. These programs

¹⁰⁹ Appendix 5: Table 5.8, *Percentile Comparison by Rank for Full-Time Tenured/Tenure-Track/Clinical Faculty Salaries to Respective Peers at the Master's I Carnegie Classification Level.*

¹¹⁰ Appendix 5: Table 5.9, *Average Salary and Percent Increase by Rank for Full-Time Tenured/Tenure-Track/Clinical Faculty on 9/10 Month Contracts.*

¹¹¹ Appendix 5: Table 5.10, *Median Salary and Percent Increase by Rank for Full-Time Tenure/Tenure-Track/Clinical Faculty on 9/10 Month Contracts.*

¹¹² Appendix 5: Table 5.11, *Average Salary and Percent Increase for Full-Time Non-Tenure Track Lecturer Faculty on 9/10 Month Contracts.*

introduce faculty to Towson's mission and the current strategic plan used to underscore the role faculty play in their implementation. They also raise the awareness among new faculty of key policies and initiatives, including the assessment of student learning. The orientation for new tenure-track faculty is more extensive and continues throughout the academic year.¹¹³ Six two-hour meetings that focus on such topics as promotion and tenure provide faculty with an opportunity to meet the university's leadership and to gain an understanding of the full range of programs, services, and resources available. Additional faculty orientation occurs at the college and department levels, although this varies by college and department.

Mentoring

Faculty mentoring usually occurs at the department level. The format of mentoring varies widely and often includes assigned senior faculty mentors and/or mentoring by the department chair. A significant proportion of the mentoring is related to promotion and tenure requirements; the balance is of a more general nature. Faculty did report a desire to have more mentoring options both within departments and on the university level.¹¹⁴ In response, the Junior Faculty Subcommittee of the AAUP is in the process of developing a voluntary, research-based system.

Faculty Development Awards

The university has rapidly expanded faculty development resources to support teaching and research. From 2004 to 2005, the Faculty Development and Research Committee (FDRC) total awards more than tripled, and then increased by almost half again the next year. Funding levels have stayed well above the 2004 total award pool of just over \$40,000.¹¹⁵ The total amount of faculty development funds awarded peaked for the spring, summer, and fall 2006 at just under \$188,000. The award pool was slightly lower for calendar year 2008. The current recession may change this pattern of accelerated growth in resources. While the university does not have a Faculty Development Office or a Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, such a center is called for in the *Towson University Strategic Academic Plan 2010-2016*.

Research

The Office of University Research Services (OURS) serves the dual function of protecting the university's interests in matters relating to external funding while providing a high level of service to faculty to support research and the development of extramural proposals. Towson Academy of Scholars (TAS) is a competitive program that invites new faculty to share their research with more established faculty mentors. It also supports faculty interested in pursuing grants and contracts.

Technology

Faculty members are provided with ample and accessible technology, library, and curricular resources. Towson has a strong technology infrastructure with over 70 percent of the classrooms considered "smart classrooms," numerous computer labs, laptops and technology carts, as well as staff support and faculty development opportunities. Reflecting the university's technology plan, Technology Enhanced Classrooms are part of a continual effort to make available a broad and

¹¹³ *Orientation Agendas for New Tenure-Track Faculty*, in document archive, under Standard 10.

¹¹⁴ Comments made by faculty who attended the Provost's 2009 January Conference Steering Committee, Section 5 break-out session; also, *Survey Results on Faculty Mentoring* in document archive, under Standard 10.

¹¹⁵ Appendix 5: Table 5.12, *Faculty Development Awards, 2004-08 (% of applications that received funding)*.

flexible set of tools to support instruction. In fall 2004, the entire campus became a wireless environment, which increased the convenience and flexibility of computer-based communication, learning, and research. The Office of Technology Services (OTS) provides ongoing professional development workshops for faculty and staff. A number of software packages such as SPSS are on the university server, and, therefore, available from any main campus or off-campus location. The Center for Instructional Advancement and Technology (CIAT) supports excellence in teaching and learning by providing professional development opportunities for instructional design, technical consulting, and a variety of multimedia services. The Digital Media Classroom (DMC), which is part of CIAT, serves faculty who wish to record their classes. Division of Economic and Community Outreach also has a DMC that is used for Applied Information Technology (AIT) classes, and putting professional certificate courses and programs online. However, faculty members who teach on campus in the evenings or on Saturdays also note that technology and multimedia support is not always available.¹¹⁶

Assessment

The Office of Assessment supports teaching and learning assessment activities. This office shares information on assessment tools and activities, coordinates assessments to minimize unnecessary duplication, provides resources to conduct assessments, and supports faculty interested in developing new assessment practices. The university moved to a campus-wide online course evaluation process using a common instrument.¹¹⁷ An extensive discussion of assessment, including assessment committees, is found in Chapter 8.

Travel

Full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty who wish to participate in professional conferences as vehicles for disseminating their scholarship and/or for professional development have access to travel funds. Resources are allocated at the college and department levels. Travel funding for full-time lecturers or clinical faculty varies from college to college. For example, the Fisher College for Science and Mathematics will consider funding travel for lecturers presenting their work at a conference; but generally part-time faculty travel is not funded.

Sabbatical Leave

Sabbatical leaves offer professional development opportunities to eligible faculty who apply and/or submit proposals and have their proposal approved. Information pertaining to eligibility, application, and requirements can be found in the *Faculty Handbook*.¹¹⁸ In addition, the Dean's Council has crafted sabbatical leave guidelines that are aligned with the *Handbook* and emphasize the relationship between scholarship and teaching.¹¹⁹

Library and Curricular Resources

TU 2010 underscored Towson's commitment to the library and campus technology as critical to the university's future. The Albert S. Cook Library offers a rich variety of faculty services to

¹¹⁶Reported by faculty to Steering Committee, Section 5, at the Provost's 2009 Conference dedicated to the Middle States *Self Study*.

¹¹⁷ *SCE Course Evaluation Instrument Assessment and Recommendations Fall 2010* and *SCE Course Evaluation Instrument Executive Summary Fall 2010* in document archive, under Standard 10.

¹¹⁸Appendix 5: Table 5.13, *Sabbaticals Fall 2004-Fall 2009*.

¹¹⁹*Sabbatical Leave Application and Guidelines* in document archive, under Standard 10

support research and instruction. Librarians work with faculty and students to develop their information literacy skills. The Library Liaison Program promotes a partnership between the academic departments and the Cook Library to improve learning and teaching. Liaison librarians work with faculty to customize information literacy instruction. They also recommend new materials and library services. Each academic department has a library representative. In addition, the Library Advisory Committee appointed by the University Senate, and the Student Library Advisory Committee appointed by the Student Government Association and Graduate Student Association assist the library with communications, assessment, and advocacy. Furthermore, all Towson students and faculty have full access to all the USM libraries. The university president's commitment to continue to fund the Library Information Management System (LIMS) demonstrates Towson's support for the library.¹²⁰

The budget for Cook Library has increased in the last five fiscal years.¹²¹ The library's operating budget increased an average of two percent annually from FY 2004-09. Similarly, the library's budget for materials in all formats increased an average of two percent annually for the same period. Allocations for library materials in academic departments have stayed constant. When journal titles are added, other titles must often be cut. An ever increasing percentage of the library budget is spent for critically needed journals, databases, and media. Academic departments receive an annual budget allocation for the purchase of books and media. In FY 2009, the library acquired 80,000 volumes from the former Joseph Meyerhoff Collection of the Baltimore Hebrew University (BHU) to support new academic programs in Judaic studies. Cook Library continues to strive to provide new resources to meet the changing and growing needs of the university. The library has benefitted from the Provost's Office's allocation of one-time funds for library materials each of the past three fiscal years: \$153,800 in FY 2007; \$169,000 in FY 2008; \$265,800 in FY 2009. One-time funds have become important to the library's ability to support the scholarly and academic endeavors of students and faculty, including resources for existing and new curricula, doctoral-level programs, and technology-based research tools. The library also utilizes these one-time allocations to pay for licenses for continuing and new electronic journals and databases.

Cook Library services and resources for students, faculty and staff were enhanced with increases to the library's capital budget from FY 2005-10.¹²² It included: \$700,000 for lobby renovations in FY 2006, \$500,000 for a new Learning Commons on the main floor in FY 2006, and \$746,000 for special collections and archives in FY 2009. The Learning Commons now has 170 computers, more than 200 electronic databases, over 150,000 electronic books, 56,000 electronic journals, internet access, and standard software such as Microsoft office and SPSS. Nine technology-equipped work areas provide space for small groups to work collaboratively. As part of this renovation project, the library's main lobby was expanded and modernized, creating an inviting and comfortable entrance complete with a small coffee bar.

Cook Library's Special Collections area benefitted from complete expansion and renovation in FY 2009. A preservation quality heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) system and specialized shelving, cabinets and storage units were installed to ensure a proper environment for

¹²⁰ *Library Budget 2004 to 2009* in document archive, under Standard 3.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Interview with the head university librarian.

rare, special, and archival materials. In support of academic-centered programs, well-equipped work areas were created. A small conference room was added and a large exhibit room was renovated to host lectures and special events.

Faculty Productivity

Analysis of *Towson University Faculty Productivity Comparative Data with Peer Institutions for AY 2008-09*¹²³ shows that among its peers, Towson University is seventh out of eleven in the number of total full-time instructional faculty and second in the total number of part-time faculty (headcount). Towson faculty teaches the highest number of class sections among its peers. An analysis of *Trends in Faculty Non-Instructional Productivity* shows that faculty has been consistent and strong.¹²⁴ Across the decade from AY 1998-99 to 2008-09, the number of books remained constant, while the number of refereed publications nearly doubled. Creative activities and professional presentations have increased about 40 percent across the period. Similarly, the number of manuscript reviews completed by faculty increased by over 70 percent. Funded grants received by faculty ranged from \$4.6 million and nearly \$7.4 million between FY 2000- 07, with a significant increase to \$11.2 million in FY 2009.¹²⁵ In the first quarter of FY 2009-10, the grants and contracts are 74 percent higher (\$5.9 million) than in the first quarter of FY 2008-09 (\$3.3 million).

Evaluation of Faculty

Faculty members are expected to demonstrate a balance in teaching and advising as well as scholarship and service; however, effective teaching is most important to merit, promotion, and tenure evaluations. Effective articulation, dissemination, implementation, transparency, and consistency in the criteria are necessary to effectively guide faculty toward successful promotion and tenure outcomes. The requirements for promotion and tenure are published in the *Faculty Handbook*. These, in combination with college and department documents, constitute the primary documents defining the requirements for promotion and tenure.¹²⁶ E. L. Boyer's model of scholarship as described in Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (1997) continues to inform how faculty members are evaluated.

Although university policies and procedures for promotion and tenure are disseminated at new faculty orientation meetings and in colleges and departments, the interpretation of the policies and procedures vary. Insofar as departments and colleges are most knowledgeable about their own disciplinary practices, they have some flexibility in how they interpret the evaluation criteria outlined in the *Faculty Handbook* and departmental *Standards for Promotion, Tenure, Reappointment and Merit* (PTRM). For example, creative presentations are viewed as scholarship in the fine arts, while mentoring and facilitating the Professional Development School initiative might be identified and designated as teaching and/or scholarship as well as service. New tenure-track faculty members consult with their department chairs and the department PTRM committee on matters of tenure.

¹²³ Appendix 5: Table 5.14, *Towson University Productivity Comparative Data with Peer Institutions for 2008*.

¹²⁴ Appendix 5, Table 5.15, *10 Year Trend in Faculty Non-Instructional Productivity at Towson University*.

¹²⁵ Data provided by Office of University Research Services (OURS).

¹²⁶ PTRM documents for the university, colleges and departments in document archive, under Standards 10.

Faculty members undergo regular, systematic, and comprehensive annual evaluations. The annual review process is directed by the university's *Criteria and Procedures for Evaluation, Reappointment, Promotion, Tenure, Merit, and Librarian Permanent Status*¹²⁷ and focuses on teaching, scholarship, and service. All tenured and tenure-track faculty are required by the university's PTRM policy to be reviewed annually by their department's PTRM committee and the department chair to assess their accomplishments in teaching, scholarship and service. For candidates pursuing promotion and tenure, the process must also include the College Promotion and Tenure Committee recommendations and a letter of evaluation from the dean in the report to the university provost. Tenure-track faculty members meet annually with their department chairs to assess their progress toward promotion and tenure. Modifications in workload and other assignments are negotiated on a case-by-case basis to optimize the potential for meeting professional goals. A third-year review has been instituted to assess untenured faculty members' progress toward tenure. In August 2010, the university adopted the new *Towson University Policy on Appointment, Rank and Tenure of Faculty* (ART). The new ART replaced Chapter 3 of the *Faculty Handbook*. In the fall 2010 colleges and department committees began the process of re-writing their PTRM documents to align with the new ART policy.

The final decision for promotion and tenure is made by the president; the final decision for merit rests with the provost.¹²⁸ The president retains the right to weigh factors related to the university's mission that fall outside the traditional review procedures and processes.¹²⁹ The publication and distribution of *Faculty Roles and Rewards: Teaching, Research and Service Redefined*,¹³⁰ prepared by the Office of the President, has been cited in recent promotion and tenure decisions. This document serves as a plain language summary of how the president interprets the formal documents.

Each year, the provost releases a memorandum that lists all faculty members who received a favorable review decision along with a narrative describing their teaching, scholarship, and service. Furthermore, the Provost's Office provides a summary, by year, of tenure review decisions and the reason for denial. These data reveal that since 2004, 122 tenure-track faculty at the rank of assistant professor have been reviewed for tenure and promotion to associate professor. Of this group, 6.6 percent (eight faculty members) were denied promotion, and 4.9 percent (six faculty members) were denied promotion and tenure. Three additional tenure-track faculty members were not reappointed during the 2007 review year. During this same period, 88 tenured faculty at the rank of associate professor requested consideration for promotion to full professor. Of this group, 23.9 percent (21 faculty members) were denied promotion to the rank of full professor.¹³¹ These data support the conclusion that most tenure and/or promotion decisions at Towson University since 2004 have been favorable, and that the most common denial is promotion to full professor.

¹²⁷ *Faculty Handbook*, Chapter 3, pp. 3-38 to 3-56.

¹²⁸ *Faculty Handbook*, p. 345 available in document archive.

¹²⁹ *Faculty Handbook*, PTRM Expectations for Faculty, pp. 3-40, A. 2.

¹³⁰ Hard copy of booklet in document archive, under Standard 10.

¹³¹ Appendix 5: Table 5.16, *Promotion and Tenure Decisions*, 2004-09 and Table 5.17, *Annual Denials of Applications for Promotion and Tenure*, includes decisions for librarians.

While denial of tenure ultimately remains uncommon, a different and, in recent years, new reality has begun to emerge around the review process. While the number of applicants requesting review remained relatively stable, the denial rate has increased from 8.5 percent in 2004 to 25.8 percent in 2009.¹³² The most frequent reason for denial for those applying to advance from the rank of associate to full professor is lack of scholarship, followed by insufficient time in rank to develop scholarship judged to be exceptional at the national level. Conversely, additional analysis of the *memorandums of positive decisions and summary of negative promotion and tenure decisions* for the period of 2004-09 suggests that faculty members are not denied promotion due to poor teaching or a lack of service. It is sometimes the case that untenured faculty members with poor teaching evaluations or a lack of collegiality demonstrated through service are terminated before reaching the mandatory tenure review year.

Faculty Workload

Faculty teaching load is currently determined in a process that considers scholarly productivity. In the late 1990s, Towson permitted the tenured and tenure-track faculty with significant programs of scholarship or creative work to teach a 3/3 rather than 4/4 load. The change was designed to both promote and reward high levels of scholarly productivity, to facilitate the shift of the university to a more research-intensive focus, and to enhance faculty recruitment. Towson continued to strive to meet the USM-mandated 7.5 teaching load policy. In 2004, the provost mandated that the average teaching load across the campus must approach the USM-mandated standard.

The faculty teaching load was also affected by enrollment growth, the expansion of the number of undergraduate and graduate degree programs, and a targeted 10 percent annual increase in external grant and contract funding. New tenure-track faculty members who have reduced teaching loads for the first three years also had an impact on the teaching load of more senior faculty. If a segment of the faculty are granted reduced teaching loads, then to keep the average above seven courses per year, full-time tenured and non-tenure track faculty with no active or less active scholarship or creative activity, as well as lecturers and visiting professors were required to teach eight courses per year.

The implementation in spring 2006 of mandatory Intentional Advising, which is considered part of the teaching responsibilities of a faculty member, likewise had an impact on faculty workload. The developmental aspect of Intentional Advising requires that faculty invest more time to work with students. Departments vary in size, approach to advising, use of lecturers to do advising, and number of new tenure-track faculty who do not advise in the first three years of their appointments. Therefore, the responsibility for advising is not shared equally across the campus.¹³³ The university's *Comprehensive Workload Guidelines* state that, "faculty members who formally advise 50 or more undergraduate students during an academic year shall be awarded one course unit reduction as approved by the chair of the department and the dean of the college."¹³⁴ This policy recommendation was not applied in the same manner across colleges and

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Appendix 5: Table 5.18, *Intentional Advising: 2008-09 Departmental Application of Workload Policy*. Comments made by faculty who attended the Provost's 2009 January Conference Steering Committee, Section 5 break-out session.

¹³⁴*Comprehensive Faculty Workload Guidelines 2005* in document archive, under Standard 10.

departments.¹³⁵ While most responding departments (97 percent) give new faculty reduced advising loads, only 57 percent give faculty with large advising loads a reduced teaching load. Those departments that do not reduce teaching loads apply the advising equivalency of 50 advisees equal to one course on the yearly USM reports. The lack of consistency creates tensions and raises the issue of workload equity.

Variability in teaching load among colleges is well documented.¹³⁶ For example, in the College of Liberal Arts, each department has its own policy. Individual workloads are negotiated at the departmental level, and then approved by the dean. In the College of Business and Economics, departmental policies align with Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation standards. In the College of Education, faculty workload policies are aligned with the USM policy. The Fisher College of Science and Mathematics has a college-wide workload policy but defers to the individual departments given the complexities of lab-based research, scholarship, and teaching. The College of Fine Arts and Communication faces an even more daunting task given the nature of faculty work. Delineations between teaching, scholarship, and service are blurred when rehearsal and studio time, individual and ensemble lessons, and theater and dance production schedules are taken into account. Similar challenges exist in the College of Health Professions, where clinical rotations and off-site teaching are taken into account in workload assignments. As appropriate for each of these colleges, the workload for each faculty member, a combination of teaching, scholarship, and service, is decided in consultations among the dean, department chairs, and program directors.

Full-time, non-tenure track faculty members are assessed annually in terms of their role-specific assignments, and prior to the renewal of their contracts. Measures include the standard candidate evaluation of course and instructor, and conferences with the department chair. Part-time faculty members are evaluated through the standard evaluation of course and instructor as well as conferences with the department chair. Faculty members follow the *Towson University Promotion, Tenure/Reappointment, and Merit Calendar*.¹³⁷

Summary of Findings

- Towson University has a highly qualified, credentialed, and intellectually engaged faculty committed to teaching, scholarship, and service both at Towson and in the community.
- Owing to recent enrollment growth, a significant number of new faculty members were hired in the recent years, increasing the ranks of tenure-track faculty across disciplines.
- Towson's commitment to diversity is evident from the relatively high proportion of recently hired faculty who self-identify as belonging to underrepresented groups.
- Faculty members with an interest in technology-enhanced pedagogy have seen a significant increase in the number of technology classrooms and easily accessible software that serves in-class, hybrid, and online learning.

¹³⁵ Appendix 5: Table 5.18 documents that departments vary widely in their response to the comprehensive workload guidelines for advising.

¹³⁶ Appendix 5: Table 5.19, *2008-09 Average Annual Course Load and Total Advising Units by Department and College*.

¹³⁷ See Chapter 3, p.3-64 of *Faculty Handbook for Merit Calendar*.

- Support for research has increased, in part, because of Towson's commitment to develop more opportunities for external grants and contracts.
- Faculty would like additional access to faculty development resources that address scholarship, teaching, and service.

Recommendations

- That Towson balances enrollment growth with new faculty hiring, particularly in areas and programs with the highest course enrollments.
- That Towson's commitment to diversity should continue to inform faculty hiring practices at all levels. Furthermore, faculty mentoring and retention initiatives should be implemented across all academic units.
- That Towson makes every effort to reach the USM's goal of the 85th percentile related to faculty salaries by rank when compared to peer institutions.
- That Towson engages in a university-wide conversation concerning the Boyer model and its implications for promotion and tenure.
- That Towson develops university-wide criteria for hiring part-time faculty that include written requirements with regard to credentials and experience.
- That Towson strengthens the university-wide orientation program for new tenure-track faculty by linking it to a new departmental mentoring program that follows a prescribed protocol to ensure that all new faculty members receive the same information about policies and procedures.
- That Towson develops expanded faculty development opportunities and establishes a Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching.
- That Towson extends efforts to support faculty who teach at both main campus and off-campus with regard to technology and support services

CHAPTER 6

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

Standard 12: General Education

Student learning is at the core of Towson University. The university is committed to providing students with educational experiences that are intellectually rigorous and pedagogically effective so that they "acquire the intellectual and social preparation to achieve their potential as contributing leaders and citizens of the workforce and a complex global society."¹³⁸ Goals and outcomes for student learning in undergraduate and graduate courses and programs are well developed. Students are expected to develop the ability to think critically, communicate effectively, organize and analyze data, acquire knowledge across disciplines, work as members of a team, make informed decisions, solve problems, adapt to a rapidly changing society, understand and appreciate diverse cultures and perspectives, acquire technological skills, and become lifelong learners.¹³⁹

Educational Offerings and Student Learning Goals

Towson offers students a diverse set of high-quality academic programs, including 64 undergraduate majors, 45 master's programs, and four doctoral programs¹⁴⁰ The excellence of Towson's programs is recognized by numerous accreditation agencies.¹⁴¹ In 2008, Towson was one of 117 institutions to earn the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Community Engagement Classification for Curricular Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships.¹⁴² This recognition reflects the university's philosophy of *thinking outside* and its role as Maryland's Metropolitan University.¹⁴³ The commitment to civic engagement is embedded in multiple course and program offerings. Virtually every department offers internships, independent studies, research opportunities, professional experiences, and other experiential learning opportunities.¹⁴⁴ The number of students who participate in such courses has increased by over 1,500 in the last five years.¹⁴⁵ Over 25 percent of Towson students are involved in courses that include off-campus learning during any given year.¹⁴⁶ In addition, student participation in Study Abroad is increasing, growing from less than one percent of the student body to three percent during the last three years.¹⁴⁷ Towson has also increased the number of sponsored Study Abroad courses offered each year.¹⁴⁸

¹³⁸Excerpt from the *TU Summary Mission Statement*, quoted in Chapter 1 of *Self Study*.

¹³⁹ Appendix 6: Table 6.1, *Types of Learning Outcomes from Highest to Lowest Frequency by Colleges, Programs, and Syllabi* and Table 6.2, *Learning Outcomes across the University*.

¹⁴⁰ Appendix 8: Table 8.1, *Assessment Inventory by Academic Program across the University*.

¹⁴¹ A list of links to accrediting agencies at *Towson at a Glance*.

¹⁴² Towson University receives coveted Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification, press release, December 18, 2008; Carnegie Community Engagement Application in document archive.

¹⁴³ Elaboration of the designation *Maryland's Metropolitan University* is found throughout the *Towson University Mission Statement*.

¹⁴⁴ Appendix 7: Table 7.13, *Internship/Experiential/Professional Experience Course Enrollments*.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Study Abroad Statistics; also *Study Abroad Annual Reports 2007-2008* and *2008-2009* are in document archive, under Standard 11.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

At all levels of Towson, many learning outcomes and goals are well developed and well aligned with the university's mission. Thirteen distinct learning goals and outcomes were identified in a review of university, college, program, and course data. Listed in order of prevalence in colleges/programs:¹⁴⁹

- Preparation to be leaders and citizens
- Knowledge of disciplinary content
- Research and critical thinking
- Communication skills
- Decision-making skills
- Appreciation and understanding of diversity
- Teamwork
- Technological Skills
- Skills for adapting to change
- Lifelong learning skills
- Self-reflection skills
- Creative thinking
- Fine arts performance

Of the programs and course syllabi analyzed, the average number of learning goals and outcomes per program was 5.6 and the average number per course was 3.8.¹⁵⁰ To engage these learning goals, faculty create a wide variety of assignments and learning experiences, including research design and analysis, oral presentations, team/group work, peer review and critique, civic engagement, artistic production, and the application of computer technology.¹⁵¹ A review of 306 spring 2008 syllabi found that the average course at Towson had 4.4 different types of assignments, including examinations, papers, projects, presentations, portfolios, journals, performances, with a range of 3.7 types in College of Liberal Arts courses to 5.8 types in College of Education courses.¹⁵² Eleven distinct types of assignments were common across the entire university, with over thirty types assigned overall.¹⁵³

In all courses, students are given multiple types of opportunities to demonstrate skill and knowledge. Compared to undergraduate courses, graduate courses at Towson are taught with increased rigor, and consistently require students to reach higher standards of independent thinking, analysis and synthesis of information.¹⁵⁴ A review of graduate degree requirements and course syllabi indicates that graduate programs prepare students to think independently, and to analyze and synthesize information.¹⁵⁵ Fifty-eight percent of master's degree programs require a thesis, independent research project, or courses in research methods.¹⁵⁶ The remaining degree

¹⁴⁹ Appendix 6: Table 6.1, *Types of Learning Outcomes from Highest to Lowest Frequency by Colleges, Programs, and Syllabi*.

¹⁵⁰ Appendix 6: Table 6.2, *Learning Outcomes across the University*.

¹⁵¹ Appendix 6: Table 6.3, *Types of Assignments in Syllabi by College*.

¹⁵² Appendix 6: Table 6.4, *Average Number of Learning Assignments in Syllabi by College*.

¹⁵³ Appendix 6: Table 6.3.

¹⁵⁴ Appendix 6: Table 6.5, *Graduate Course Syllabus Assessment Review (Spring 2009)*.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ *Graduate Program Research Requirements Master's Degree* in document archive, under Standard 11.

programs offer such courses as electives.¹⁵⁷ Some doctoral degree programs require dissertation credits, while others, such as the Applied Doctor of Audiology Program, require thesis credits.¹⁵⁸ In addition, a syllabus review of 54 graduate courses determined that 100 percent included assignments that required higher levels of independent learning, including analysis, synthesis, integration, and application.¹⁵⁹ Graduate courses are taught by faculty who are approved by the College of Graduate Studies and Research on the basis of scholarly qualifications.¹⁶⁰ Departmental compliance with this policy has varied in the past; the College of Graduate Studies and Research is implementing new procedures in the course scheduling system to improve compliance.¹⁶¹

New programs and courses at Towson are vetted through a rigorous review process, while established academic offerings are regularly evaluated. In the university as a whole and within the USM, the curriculum development and approval process ensures that new programs and courses, or revisions to existing curricula, meet the academic standards of the university. The curriculum approval process has multiple levels of review at department, college and university levels. In addition, proposals for new programs must be vetted by the USM Board of Regents and the Maryland Higher Education Commission.¹⁶² This information is summarized on the Provost's Office academic resources website.¹⁶³ Curriculum approval processes are identical for all courses, regardless of teaching modality or location. These levels of review provide a thorough assessment of academic offerings and ensure that proposed programs and courses meet expectations for academic rigor.

Existing academic programs at Towson are continuously revised to make them cohesive, current, and relevant. In a survey of department chairs and program directors, almost 90 percent of departments reported that they have various procedures to review and revise existing curricula.¹⁶⁴ Methods of review vary from department to department and include faculty input (88 percent), student input (30 percent), and input from external sources such as accreditation agencies and employers (37 percent).¹⁶⁵ Departments that offer multiple sections of the same course reported using different oversight methods to ensure that students were achieving the same learning outcomes.¹⁶⁶ These methods included standardized syllabi across sections, faculty review committees, faculty mentors assigned to monitor courses and regular rotations of faculty across multiple teaching campuses.¹⁶⁷ In addition to reviews at the department level, the USM requires program assessments every seven years.¹⁶⁸ These extensive assessments currently require visits from external reviewers. Annual assessment updates are required between the seven-year

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ *Graduate Program Research Requirements Doctoral Degree* in document archive, under Standard 11.

¹⁵⁹ Appendix 6: Table 6.5, *Graduate Course Syllabus Assessment Review (Spring 2009)*.

¹⁶⁰ *Graduate Faculty Status Application* can be viewed at: Graduate Faculty Membership and Appointment Policies; also available in the document archive, under Standard 11.

¹⁶¹ Interview with associate dean of the Graduate School on April 20th, 2009.

¹⁶² University System of Maryland Policy on New Programs; Maryland Higher Education Commission Academic Approval Process.

¹⁶³ Appendix 6: Flow Chart 6.1, *The Curriculum Process at Towson*; see also Academic Resources and Procedures for Submitting Program Proposals.

¹⁶⁴ *Survey Results on Academic Programs and Course Offerings* in document archive, under Standard 11.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Office of Assessment USM Program Reviews.

reviews.¹⁶⁹ These updates are submitted to the Office of Assessment for internal review. However, owing to the extended vacancy in the Assessment, oversight of the processes of internal assessment has been uneven. In addition, while the program assessment plans are developed at the department level, in the past minimal guidance was given regarding the content or format of these reports.¹⁷⁰ Due to confusion and misunderstanding about the differences between the assessment of student learning, which is supposed to take place on a three-year cycle and requires yearly updates and program reviews on the progress toward completing the action items, the University Assessment Council recently implemented new assessment templates for departments to follow. Under the leadership of a new associate vice president for Assessment who arrived in October 2009, a new seven-year cycle plan for assessing courses and programs was developed and implemented in the fall 2010.¹⁷¹

Towson expects departments and programs to have well-developed learning goals and outcomes for programs and courses.¹⁷² Departments are expected to engage in assessment of student learning and program outcomes, including devising program goals stated in terms of learning outcomes and developing course syllabi that state expected learning outcomes. The *Faculty Handbook*, however, formally requires course objectives on syllabi, not learning outcomes, and until recently the University Curriculum Committee has followed that policy.¹⁷³ As a result there is variance across the university in terms of how well goals and outcomes for student learning are communicated. In a sample of 306 syllabi, 54 percent included learning outcomes, 37 percent included course objectives, and just nine percent contained neither.

The inclusion of learning outcomes varies widely by college.¹⁷⁴ At the high end, 87 percent of syllabi in College of Health Professionals contained learning outcomes, at the low end, 33 percent in College of Fine Arts and Communication, and 36 percent in Fisher College of Science and Mathematics, with other colleges falling between 54 and 59 percent. The General Education Assessment Committee recently approved a recommendation that general education learning outcomes be included in each general education course syllabus. This recommendation is currently in the curriculum approval process. In terms of majors and programs, while a vast majority of chairs indicated that their units communicate program-level learning outcomes in some way, there is no consistent mechanism by which this occurs, not even across websites. Department and program brochures were discontinued in AY 2007-08, in part because the information became outdated so quickly. Conceivably, the elimination of these brochures could have contributed to the unevenness in the communication of program learning outcomes. Department chairs reported that intentional advising and orientation meetings were the primary method of informing students about the rationales for their degree programs.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁹ Interview with interim director, Office of Assessment on March 24, 2009.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ *Program Assessment Instructions August 2010* in document archive, under Standard 11.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ UCC Policies TU (Appendix D), *Faculty Handbook* syllabi requirements; *Course Approval Requirements* memo linked to the University Curriculum Committee homepage, *Forms and General Information*.

¹⁷⁴ Appendix 6: Table 6.6, *Percentage of Course Syllabi Containing Learning Outcomes or Course Objectives by College*.

¹⁷⁵ Appendix 6: Table 6.7, *How Program Learning Outcomes/Goals Are Communicated*; also, *Survey Results on Academic Programs and Course Offerings Summary Table* in document archive, under Standard 11.

In summary, academic programs at Towson offer students learning experiences that have rigor, depth, and breadth. Students are regularly asked to reflect on their learning. Many departments include such reflections in their assessment process using a variety of methods to collect this information, including exit surveys, reflection papers, and post-graduation alumni surveys.¹⁷⁶ The majority of students respond positively when asked whether their degree programs led to higher levels of independent analysis, synthesis, or application of learned information. In addition, national student survey data indicate that Towson students are satisfied with their degree programs, positively rate the value of course content and quality of classroom instruction, and feel they are receiving help towards their career goals.¹⁷⁷

Information Literacy and Technological Competencies

Skills related to information literacy, technological competency, and the effective and ethical use of information are critical to Towson students' academic foundation, their success at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, their success in the workplace, and as lifelong learners. To promote students' success, to ensure their ability to compete in the global marketplace, and to enrich their personal lives, it is essential that information and technology competencies are incorporated into every program of study and supported by the university as a whole. At Towson, information literacy instruction and technology support are woven into students' curricular and co-curricular experiences. Library instruction focused on information literacy is embedded into academic courses. The model of embedded liaison librarianship exemplified by the Albert S. Cook Library faculty ensures collaboration in the creation of appropriate assignments, class activities and exercises, and assessments. This collaboration is critical to ensure that students understand and meet information literacy goals, and that they are indeed able to access, evaluate, and use information in an appropriate and ethical manner.¹⁷⁸

Housed together in the same building, the Office of Technology Services (OTS) and Cook Library offer a wide variety of print, digital, and face-to-face information and technology support services for Towson students and faculty. Technology support and instruction is available through a variety of formats and access points in order to reach students and faculty based both on the main campus and off-campus locations. The 24/7 nature of many of the technology supports available at Towson allow students and faculty to receive individualized and timely technical assistance to support learning, research and instruction. Distance learners are offered parallel learning/research experiences through access to digital reference materials, e-books, and the full-text of journal articles via Cook Library's subscriptions. Faculty professional development in the effective use of information technology is a priority for both Cook Library and the Office of Technology Services. Faculty members teaching off-campus or online courses use the Blackboard course management system to create an interactive learning environment for distance learners.

OTS and Cook Library services have expanded over time to include various access and service points and to include research instruction and technology training and assistance in various formats.¹⁷⁹ The rate at which the university community seeks and uses the support has increased.

¹⁷⁶Appendix 8, Table 8.1, *Assessment Inventory by Academic Program across the University*.

¹⁷⁷*Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory 2007* in document archive, under Standard 7.

¹⁷⁸*Library Instruction Sample Materials* in document archive, under Standard 11.

¹⁷⁹Various library usage and instruction statistics in document archive, under Standard 11.

In FY 2008, over three hundred information literacy sessions were taught by librarians in academic courses across the university curriculum; over thirty-four thousand library reference desk transactions took place (including almost seven hundred by instant message); almost twenty thousand requests for assistance were fielded by Student Computing Services staff; OTS offered over five hundred self-help documents, over three hundred training sessions, and fifty movie tutorials available for download; over five hundred fifty classes were recorded in the Digital Media Classroom with nearly nineteen thousand subsequent views; and the Cook Library homepage recorded over two million views (including over one million unique views).¹⁸⁰

All seven information literacy skills described in the Middle States publication, *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* (p.42), are addressed, and four learning outcomes in particular were found to be most prevalent among the Towson University documents analyzed in this *Self-Study*.¹⁸¹ These four learning outcomes directly support the information literacy/technological competency goals found in the university's mission statement, general education curriculum, and individual college's objectives (contained in the appendix materials):

- Accessing information effectively and efficiently;
- Evaluating critically the source and content of information;
- Incorporating selected information in learner's knowledge base; and
- Using information effectively for a given purpose.

The university successfully promotes learning outcomes of gathering, assessing, applying, and using information ethically towards a given purpose. Fulfilling general education requirements by taking the *Using Information Effectively* courses provides some reasonable assurance that all students are exposed to these competencies. What is not as well promoted is the overall impact of the widespread availability and use of information on current society, and its ultimate economic, legal, and social effects.¹⁸²

To ensure that Towson students meet information literacy goals, teaching faculty and librarians collaborate regularly, especially in the instruction of *Using Information Effectively* (UIE) courses, as well as upper level research methods and technical writing courses. Library faculty are guided by the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*, which defines and contextualizes information literacy as "the basis for lifelong learning... common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education."¹⁸³

The majority of courses that include course objectives and learning outcomes related to information literacy and technology competencies do include key research/presentation assignments which feature and practice these skills, including digital or print portfolios. These assignments focus on mastering the use of general and discipline-specific tools, and resources, including the use of data sets and/or specialized software, and citation styles.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Syllabus Review for Learning Outcomes on Information Literacy and Technology Competencies* in document archive, under Standard 11.

¹⁸² *Review of Campus Statements about Teaching Information Literacy, Technological Competency, and the Effective and Ethical Use of Information* in document archive, under Standard 11.

¹⁸³ *ALA Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ *Library Instruction Sample Materials* in document archive, under Standard 11.

Ongoing and frequent communication and collaboration between OTS and library staff members enables both units to identify and anticipate campus-wide areas of potential information technology concern in order to provide timely technical assistance and innovative solutions. Emerging technologies are being explored, introduced and taught regularly by OTS staff, librarians, and faculty members with the intent that finding innovative solutions will enhance the learning, research, and work of the university community.¹⁸⁵ In order to enhance access to research tools and information, Cook Library undertook a thorough website reconstruction project guided by data gathered via usability testing and focus groups of various constituents. Cook Library's website enhancement was completed in 2010.

Engaging distance learners is a unique challenge, but as the population of distance learners at Towson grows, both OTS and Cook Library will need to continue efforts to devise new and better ways to reach and support this group by identifying methods and creating materials to help develop their technology skills and their ability to access discipline-specific content in a variety of formats.

Given the growth of the university's physical campus and the growth of the distance learner population, providing remote-access and off-site library research and technology support in locations such as academic buildings, residence halls, as well as off-campus locations will become more and more important. To that end, it is essential to examine and improve awareness of general services such as helpline support, self-help guides, research assistance, and specific workshops and training sessions so that more students and faculty benefit from the nearly 24/7 support offered already by both units. One strategy is to include boilerplate resource information in each course syllabus related to supplementary services available to assist students, such as descriptions and contact information for Blackboard TU Resources Content, Writing Lab, Academic Support Services, Student Computing Services and Cook Library resources.

Issues Unique to Transfer Students

Approximately 40 percent of incoming students transfer to Towson University from other institutions.¹⁸⁶ Their ability to progress academically and graduate on time is important to them, and to Towson.¹⁸⁷ ARTSYS, the USM web-based resource, provides articulation information for students who wish to transfer between Maryland colleges and universities. Using ARTSYS, students can check to see if their courses will transfer from institution to institution. In addition to ARTSYS, some students are enrolled in programs at community colleges that have articulation agreements with Towson.¹⁸⁸ These articulation agreements make the process of transferring from one institution to another much smoother.

Once students transfer to Towson, policies regarding transfer of credits are clear.¹⁸⁹ Students are given a *Transfer Credit Report* that lists all courses accepted for transfer with a list of their equivalent courses at Towson.¹⁹⁰ In addition, both transfer and native students can access their *Degree Progress Report* to monitor progress towards graduation. This report was implemented

¹⁸⁵Link to *Library Emerging Technology Blog* in document archive, under Standard 11.

¹⁸⁶*Data Journal Fall 2008* in document archive, under Standard 7.

¹⁸⁷ See objective 4.2 in the *Managing for Results Fall 2008*; also in document archive, under Standard 7.

¹⁸⁸For an example, see *UB/Towson M.B.A. MOU* in document archive, under Standard 13.

¹⁸⁹See *Evaluation of Transfer Credit Information*; also see *Understand Transfer Credit* booklet in document archive, under Standard 8.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Also, *Evaluation of Transfer Credit Report Sample* in document archive.

in 2005 and provides an online checklist of courses completed towards the degree.¹⁹¹ Native and transfer students use the same *Degree Progress Report* to track their progress, and the system is used to clear students for graduation. This insures that native and transfer students have identical degree requirements. Additional information regarding degree requirements is conveyed to transfer students by faculty advisors.¹⁹² For further discussion about issues that pertain to transfer students, see Chapter 7, Standard 13, *Related Educational Activities*.

Despite all of these supports, transferring has an impact on the coherence of the academic degree program. Graduation rates and academic warning data provide a glimpse of these issues. Consider the 2003 cohort in which 45.9 percent of native students complete their degrees within four years, versus 19.3 percent of transfer students.¹⁹³ This gap is still evident at the five-year graduation rate (native = 69.2 percent, transfer = 53.8 percent) and does not “catch up” until six-year graduation rates are reviewed (native = 72.5 percent; transfer = 68.6 percent).¹⁹⁴ Similarly, transfer students are placed on academic warning at higher rates than native students. For example, in fall 2008 academic warnings were given to 276 native students, and 402 transfer students.¹⁹⁵ Considering that transfer students only comprise 40 percent of the student body, the number of academic warnings associated with transfer student is disproportionate.

There are several potential reasons for these disparities. First, admissions standards for transfer students are less selective. In fall 2008, 61 percent of first-time freshmen were accepted for admission; whereas 73 percent of transfer applicants were accepted.¹⁹⁶ National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data indicate that in comparison to native students, transfer students have longer commutes and dedicate more time to outside jobs.¹⁹⁷ These factors likely account for some of the academic differences between the two groups, however the disparities combined with these factors provide support for the notion that transfer students need an advising process focused on their unique needs. Towson piloted such a system in 2003 and 2004, providing incoming transfer students with specially trained advisors to manage their unique issues.¹⁹⁸ The program was discontinued for financial reasons and assessment data regarding the success of the program do not exist. In spring 2009, a proposal to reconstitute the program was developed and funding is being sought for implementation.¹⁹⁹

General Education

In the mid-1990s, a committee was appointed by the Provost’s Office to revise the General University Requirements (GURs) and to create a new general education (GenEd) program. At about the same time, MHEC issued a policy statement on general education requirements. Towson aligned the design and requirement of the new GenEd program, which was implemented in fall 1996, with the MHEC policy and Towson’s mission. The GenEd program has remained in place for over a decade. In 2008, the Provost’s Office appointed a General Education Review

¹⁹¹ *Degree Progress Report UG Quick Reference Guide* in document archive, under Standard 8.

¹⁹² *Survey Results on Academic Programs and Course Offerings* in document archive, under Standard 11.

¹⁹³ See *Full-Time First-Time Degree-Seeking Undergraduate* graduation rates and *Full-time First-Time Degree-Seeking Transfer* graduation rates.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Appendix 6: Table 6.8, *Students Placed on Academic Warning for Transfer v. Native Students*.

¹⁹⁶ *Data Journal Fall 2008* in document archive, under Standard 7.

¹⁹⁷ *National Survey of Student Engagement Summary Report 2007* in document archive, under Standard 7.

¹⁹⁸ *AAAdvC ORIE 305 First-Year Experience Sample Syllabus* in document archive, under Standard 9.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Assistant Provost Catherine Horta-Hayden, April 13, 2009.

Committee chaired by the dean of the College of Liberal Arts.²⁰⁰ Its fall *2008 Report of the General Education Review Committee* proposed the creation of a University Core that “might better reflect contemporary conceptions of important objectives for undergraduate education.” This document was approved by the University Senate in December 2009, and the new University Core will be implemented in the fall 2011.

The GenEd Curriculum

The current General Education (GenEd) curriculum is organized into courses focused on skills and disciplinary content for liberal learning. Students learn to develop: (a) basic writing skills; (b) skills of gathering, critically evaluating, and applying information from various fields through writing and speaking; (c) mathematical skills and knowledge; (d) an ability to write effectively at a more advanced level in a particular discipline; and (e) an ability to think, work, and know things in creative ways. The curriculum also provides exposure to various contexts of liberal learning in: (a) scientific inquiry; (b) the American experience of arts and humanities; (c) contemporary issues in the American experience; (d) Western traditions of arts and humanities; (e) Western traditions of social and behavioral sciences; (f) Western traditions of diversity concerning race, class, gender, religion, and minority relations; and (g) non-Western cultures, traditions, and issues. The structure of the GenEd curriculum requires students to take courses across a range of disciplines, enriching the substance of their liberal education as it also develops their learning skills.²⁰¹

Many, but not all, departments offer general education courses (GenEds) as part of their curricular offerings. Towson provides information about GenEds through the *online undergraduate catalog*, the Office of the Registrar’s website and various print materials.²⁰² GenEds are also discussed in first-year orientation sessions and during advising. The Intentional Advising program works with students to encourage them to appreciate GenEd offerings as an opportunity to explore a wide range of disciplines, develop new interests, and expand and strengthen existing knowledge and skills. Data collected by the Academic Advising Center in AY 2007-08 indicate that 71 percent of the 1,017 students surveyed felt that their advisor was knowledgeable of GenEd requirements, and 63 percent felt the advisor encouraged them to learn university requirements. A mean score of 4.6 (disagree=1 – agree=5) was found for advisor knowledge of GenEd requirements.²⁰³ There is some concern that while the procedures and requirements are made quite explicit, the philosophy and rationale of general education is not always so clear. Students, and even some faculty, see GenEds as something to be endured rather than as a liberal arts core upon which to build a strong major.

Although student learning outcomes in GenEds include critical thinking, quantitative analysis, and effective use of information among others, which align with learning outcomes for many majors, there is no explicitly stated university-wide commitment to aligning GenEd learning outcomes with those in courses in the major/minor. The deeply embedded philosophy at Towson

²⁰⁰ The committee consisted of 18 members with faculty from all colleges except CGSR, two deans, two representatives from Student Affairs, and two undergraduate students.

²⁰¹ Appendix 6: Document 6.3, Part A - *General Education Curriculum Standards* and Part B - *General Education Key Learning Goals*.

²⁰² Hard copies of print materials in Middle States document room.

²⁰³ *First-Year Experience End of Year Survey, 2008* in document archive, under Standard 12.

is that, ideally, the GenEds should not count toward one's major and should remain 'general'. The General Education Reporting Committee, which certifies and approves GenEds, discouraged departments from proposing courses designed to fulfill both GenEds and requirements in the major. Similarly, in the fall *2008 Report of the General Education Review Committee*, the committee noted that GenEds can contribute to majors, but "Students would not be well served...to take multiple University Core courses within the same discipline or major. The committee recommends, therefore, that no student be allowed to count more than two courses toward both the major and toward University Core requirements."

Syllabi in GenEds include learning goals that are consistent with the existing GenEd framework and learning categories. A review of sample syllabi from thirty-five GenEd courses across all categories showed a majority of syllabi included student learning objectives linked to key course assignments.²⁰⁴ In GenEds with multiple sections, instructors meet intermittently to improve their instruction and discuss student achievement on key assignments.

Prior to AY 2004-05, the General Education Reporting Committee reviewed and approved all new GenEd courses. The General Education Coordinator served as committee chair and provided leadership for the assessment of GenEd learning outcomes on a cyclical basis. Among the fourteen categories of GenEds, three categories were to be reviewed and recertified each year. Courses had to meet the criteria established by the committee. The review included a meeting with instructors to discuss the standard GenEd curricular expectations with regard to course objectives. The assessments were designed to lead to improvement.²⁰⁵ Prior to AY 2004-05, the General Education Coordinator had a \$10,000 budget, which was mainly used to support assessment efforts, including course recertification workshops, faculty development activities, and guest speakers. Currently, the University Assessment Council's Subcommittee on General Education Assessment (SGEA), and the University Assessment Office oversee GenEd assessment. Following the arrival of a new provost in spring 2004, the position of General Education Coordinator was eliminated, and with it, the cyclical review and recertification of GenEds.

Recently, the SGEA developed and implemented a new GenEd assessment. New assessment templates have been designed and the general education course recertification process has resumed.²⁰⁶ Results of the assessment in early summer 2010 focused on three key GenEd categories: Writing for Liberal Education, College Mathematics, and Scientific Inquiry.²⁰⁷ The review of course based assessments indicated a need to revise the instructions associated with the process as the information requested did not address the evaluation guidelines. This inconsistency resulted in more than two-thirds of the reports requiring additional information to judge the adequacy of communication regarding course learning outcomes and assessment of multiple opportunities to develop competency prior to formal assessment. In addition, limited data were provided to improve practice, courses or instruction. Still, 61 percent of the reports received "meets" or "best practice" on the assessment methods designed to address specific learning outcomes. Additional categories will be added on a rotating basis to ensure review of

²⁰⁴ *General Education Review Committee Working Notes* in document archive, under Standard 13.room.

²⁰⁵ Interview with former GenEd Coordinator and Chair of the GenEd Reporting Committee on February 20th, 2009.

²⁰⁶ For an introduction to the recertification process, see Office of Assessment – General Education.

²⁰⁷ *General Education Assessment Report December 2010* in document archive, under Standard 12.

all categories within a five-year cycle. The next general education categories to be recertified include Advanced Composition and Creative Development.

The New University Core

The *General Education Review Committee Report Fall 2008* proposed a new University Core to replace the existing GenEd program.²⁰⁸ To be implemented in fall 2011, the requirements align with the university's mission and reflect current assumptions about the 21st century learning goals for undergraduate education. A greater emphasis is placed on global perspectives and courses and/or activities reflecting Towson's commitment to community engagement and its identity as a metropolitan university. The University Core is distinctive, yet aligned with the courses required by MHEC. Most importantly, the requirements of the University Core are no longer bundled into the first two years before students engage in the major field of study. Rather, the University Core recognizes the value of offering students the opportunity to build a strong liberal learning foundation throughout their undergraduate education.

The University Core establishes key learning outcomes, spells out general policies for course approval, and proposes an organizational framework for the assessment of student learning and the use of outcomes to improve practice.²⁰⁹ The proposed University Core includes four elements:

- Fundamentals - ordinarily taken during the first year, emphasize writing, mathematics, and creativity, and include the new Towson Seminar designed to introduce students to college-level liberal learning.
- Ways of Knowing - ordinarily taken in the first two years of college study, include courses offered in Arts and Humanities, the Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Biological and Physical Sciences.
- Writing in a Chosen Field - ordinarily taken in the third year of college study, emphasizes the importance of writing across disciplines.
- Perspectives - which ordinarily could be taken between the first and final years of an undergraduate education, emphasize Towson's commitment to expanding and deepening students' understanding of the world around them - including metropolitan, national, and global perspectives. Issues of diversity, difference, and ethics cutting across a range of disciplines would be emphasized as well.

The Towson Seminar will be a new development in the university's curricular offerings. It is a powerful sign of the Towson's commitment to student learning. It offers students an opportunity to work together in small groups as they expand their horizons and discover new fields of inquiry. The Towson Seminars will provide a strong foundation for the major and other electives.

Course goals related to the specific learning outcomes were developed by faculty committees in winter 2010 and have been approved by the University Assessment Council and rubric development is scheduled to begin in spring 2011. Core courses will be cycled into the course

²⁰⁸ *General Education Review Committee Report Fall 2008* and *General Education Review Committee Working Notes* are in document archive, under Standard 12.

²⁰⁹ Appendix 6: Document 6.4, *Proposed Revision of General Education Curriculum* provides outline of new University Core and related learning goals.

recertification process with the submission of assessment planning documents due in summer 2011.

Summary of Findings

- In keeping with its mission, Towson University is committed to provide students with learning opportunities that expand their knowledge base, develop competencies and skills to assure their success in the workplace, and prepare them to be life-long learners.
- Educational offerings include a wide range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary majors and minors at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, a general education curriculum for undergraduates, and abundant professional/clinical experiences.
- Although not explicitly stated in Towson's mission or in *TU 2010*, student learning outcomes are embedded in the overwhelming majority of departmental and program descriptions and/or missions.
- The responsibility of assessing student learning is a faculty responsibility which follows departmental, college-wide, and university-wide guidelines.
- In addition to classroom learning, Towson has a strong commitment to community engagement, service learning, and other experiential learning including study abroad.
- Students are well served and supported by the staffs of Cook Library and OTS which are deeply committed to promoting information literacy and technology competencies.
- The current general education curriculum, which has served students well for more than a decade, was reviewed in 2008. The new University Core introduces significant changes to strengthen the liberal arts core including the addition of a mandatory Towson Seminar for all in-coming first-year students as well as transfer students.

Recommendations

- That Towson continues to strengthen its efforts to implement an integrated, university-wide, systematic, and effective plan for the assessment of student learning with an emphasis on the use of results to improve practices.
- That Towson advertises the website dedicated to posting, tracking, and updating information pertaining to all aspects of curriculum, including all related policies, procedures, and practices to enhance faculty awareness of the site.
- That Towson creates consistency across colleges, departments, the University Curriculum Committee, and the *Faculty Handbook* regarding the protocols for articulating and communicating student learning outcomes and the assessment of student learning in courses and programs.
- That Towson develops guidelines and practices geared toward improving transfer student satisfaction, GPA, and graduation rates, and by implementing the proposed advising specifically targeted for transfer students.
- That Towson identifies university-wide student learning outcomes that link the University Core learning outcomes to those of majors and minors.

CHAPTER 7

Standard 13: *Related Educational Activities*

Towson University provides high quality learning experiences for all its students through a wide range of educational offerings and support services. Aligned with the institutional mission and strategic plan, *TU 2010*, the university aims to educate students on the main campus and off-campus locations, and to create a university of expanding boundaries and rising expectations. As a public comprehensive metropolitan university, Towson has the responsibility to serve a community of learners with differential levels of college-learning preparedness and to ensure that it graduates all students with the skills and competencies required to succeed.

Basic Skills

All admitted freshmen and transfer students with fewer than 30 units are required to demonstrate competence in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. Regularly admitted students who are underprepared for college-level coursework are initially identified through their SAT or ACT scores and subsequently required to undergo placement testing using the ACCUPLACER Computerized Placement Tests (CPTs). Their scores on the ACCUPLACER tests determine whether they will be placed into developmental coursework. Students with SAT scores at or above 500 in any of the three subject areas -- Critical Reading, Writing, or Mathematics--or with an ACT score of 21 or above in the same subject areas are exempt from taking the placement test in that respective skills area.²¹⁰

Placement test exemptions for students below the SAT or ACT cutoff are determined by specific guidelines. Students scoring lower than 500 on the SAT or lower than 21 on the ACT may be exempt from placement testing if they are transfer students with 30 or more credits, or have advanced placement (AP) credit (AP English Composition with a score of 4 or above; AP Calculus AB or BC, with a score of 3 or above), any TOEFL score for non-native English speakers for writing and reading, or transfer a college-level writing or math course with a grade of C or better.

Towson offers developmental coursework in mathematics, reading, and writing for underprepared students. The mathematics courses DVMT 101: *Developmental Mathematics II* and DVMT 110: *Intermediate Algebra* and DVRD 101: *Developmental Reading II* carry institutional credits which do not count toward graduation. Special sections of the general education requirement, *Writing for a Liberal Education* include two developmental courses, REED 102: *Academic Literacy*, and ENGL 102-Stretch, which are fully credited. Students at off-campus locations must take the developmental coursework at the main campus.

ENGL 102-Stretch, the developmental writing course, is a three unit college-level course, which counts as the first-year English composition general education requirement. Students complete the same work as assigned in the regular English 102 classes and are given additional assignments to develop college-level skills. Full-time lecturers teach stretch courses and work one-on-one with students. Students must earn a grade of C or better to satisfy this requirement.

²¹⁰Appendix 7: Table 7.1, *New Student Placement and Testing*.

Students who need to improve their reading skills are placed in one of two courses depending on how they score on the ACCUPLACER CPT. The more basic noncredit reading course DVRD 101, Developmental Reading II, is designed to teach students effective reading and study skills. Students must earn a grade of SX for successful completion of this course. REED 102, Academic Literacy, which began as a pilot program in fall 2006, is a credit-bearing college-level reading proficiency stretch course for students with higher placement test scores but who do not read at college-level. Students must earn a grade of D or better to complete this course. DVRD 101 and REED 102 are not sequential.

Developmental math is offered in a two course sequence: DVMT 101, Developmental Mathematics II, and DVMT 110, Intermediate Algebra. Students with lower placement scores must complete both levels with a grade of “SX” in order to take math courses that meet general education requirements. Students with a higher score must take only DVMT 110, which is offered as a stretch course in which developmental course content is taught in the initial five weeks, followed by credit-bearing general education math course content for the remainder of the semester. The two stretch courses offered are MATH 103, which includes the college-level MATH 105 curriculum, and MATH 109, which includes the college-level MATH 111 curriculum.²¹¹ Over the last five years, developmental programs have been reviewed, assessed, and improved.

As also discussed in Chapter 4, Towson provides several academic support services for students who are underprepared for college-level learning. The Academic Achievement Center provides peer tutoring services, assessment of learning styles, structured study groups, and a variety of study skills workshops. Students who are required to take two or more developmental courses are assigned to the Support for Student Success (S3) Program. Students participating in the program are enrolled in ORIE 050, a first-year seminar designed to introduce them to campus resources, and to reinforce their study, organizational, and time management skills. The course is a noncredit, eleven week course. The university offers two writing tutoring services. The Writing Lab helps native English speakers strengthen paragraph and essay writing skills. The Writing Support Program assists native English speakers with sentence writing and grammar skills. ESOL Writing Services provides similar help for non-native English language speakers.

Instructional Programming at Off-Campus and International Locations

Towson University offers instruction at six off-campus locations,²¹² as well as through international overseas degree programs,²¹³ National Student Exchange programs, and Study Abroad. As of January 2011, the university off-site programs are available at 29 locations.²¹⁴ In addition, as allowed by state law, closed-site contracts for programs and courses are offered to employees of specific school districts. By delivering instruction at locations throughout Maryland and overseas, Towson meets the *TU 2010* goals of educating a broader part of the state’s workforce while at the same time meeting enrollment growth targets without adding pressure to the space limitation of the main campus. Enrollment at off-campus locations has grown from 1,208 students in AY 2004-05 to 2,067

²¹¹ *Syllabi Developmental Courses Sample* in document archive, under Standard 13.

²¹² Appendix 7: Table 7.2a, *Total Off-Campus Programs by Location*, and Table 7.3, *Specific Off-Campus Program by Location and Director*.

²¹³ Appendix 7: Table 7.6, *International Degree Programs*.

²¹⁴ Appendix 7: Table 7.2b, *Locations of Off-Site Programming Effective January 2011*.

in AY 2008-09,²¹⁵ an increase of 42 percent. At international sites, enrollment has increased substantially during the same five year period, from a headcount of 36 to 258 students.²¹⁶

In order to review Towson off-campus locations offerings, a survey was developed to collect information about the location, design, and delivery of the programs as they relate to main campus analogs. The survey considered: planning and development of off-campus programs, enrollment, available support services, implementation, and assessment processes. In fall 2008, the assistant provost appointed and convened the Off-Campus Coordinating Committee. One of the committee's responsibilities was to take an institution-wide needs assessment approach to off-campus programming. Currently, the university is in the process of developing plans for the first Towson-managed off-campus location in Harford County.

Educational programs at off-campus locations are closely aligned with main campus offerings with regard to planning, development, implementation, and assessment and are recognized as off-site locations by their respective specialized accrediting agencies. The availability of resources such as advising, online access to library databases, email, and the like are the same for students and faculty at off-campus locations.²¹⁷ However, more specialized services such as student health center access counseling and disability support are not readily available.²¹⁸ Work continues on providing such services to students at these sites.

In the past ten years, Towson University has developed international degree programs in four countries as part of its mission to enhance the educational opportunities of its students and build links across the globe. The College of Business and Economics (CBE) offers undergraduate business programs in Panama and Vietnam. The College of Education is scheduled to begin its second cohort in a master's degree in secondary education in China in 2011. The College of Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR), in cooperation with CBE, offers a joint Towson/University of Baltimore Executive MBA program in Poland. Face-to-face and online courses are taught by Towson faculty.²¹⁹

All international degree programs are evaluated for effectiveness in the same manner as their main campus counterparts. Instructors in international degree programs are selected and evaluated based on the same qualifications and procedures that apply to main campus instructors. The syllabi, academic quality, instructional methods, evaluation, and assessment processes for coursework and learning outcomes in the international programs are similar or identical to main campus courses. Department chairs use the data collected from evaluations to determine whether the international degree programs should be renewed each year.²²⁰

Students have the opportunity to earn Towson University credit for courses taken at other universities through the National Student Exchange (NSE) and Study Abroad. Nearly 200 universities participate in the National Student Exchange Consortium. The consortium requires

²¹⁵ Appendix 7: Table 7.4, *Student Enrollment Headcount at Off-Campus Locations*.

²¹⁶ Appendix 7: Table 7.7, *Student Enrollment in International Degree Programs*.

²¹⁷ Appendix 7: Table 7.5, *Off-Campus Programs in Comparison to Main Campus*.

²¹⁸ *Regional Off-Campus Student Services Needs Assessment Summary and Survey* are in document archive, under Standard 2.

²¹⁹ Appendix 7: Table 7.6, *International Degree Programs by start year*.

²²⁰ *Survey Results for International Degree Programs* in document archive, under Standard 13.

that universities be accredited, and any university seeking membership must be approved by existing members. Students may also participate in numerous Study Abroad programs either offered directly through Towson or through other universities and/or programs. The number, type, and location of Study Abroad programs vary each semester, but enrollment has been steadily increasing with about 400 students per year currently traveling and studying abroad.²²¹

Study Abroad programs offered by Towson faculty must be approved by the faculty member's department and college dean for content and by the Study Abroad office for feasibility and logistics. Study Abroad programs and courses offered through other universities or organizations are evaluated by the Study Abroad Office according to the Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad developed by the Forum on Education Abroad. Assessment of Study Abroad programs can be conducted through site visits, through recommendations and consultations with other universities, and through regular meetings with program representatives in the United States. Student evaluation and feedback also play significant roles in the evaluation of Study Abroad programs.

To transfer course credit to Towson University, students who participate in NSE or Study Abroad must petition the relevant departments for prior approval for each course. The College of Business and Economics, for example, requires that students who participate in NSE enroll only at schools that are members of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business in order for their coursework to transfer. The Study Abroad Office has developed a "course levels equivalency" spreadsheet for study abroad programs in countries that Towson students tend to select.²²² The information assists students, department chairs and programs directors with determining the number of units assigned for international courses.

Online Learning

In the summer of 2004, the USM asked each member institution to create a strategic plan to enhance online learning opportunities for students.²²³ Towson University created a plan for online learning, and implemented a pilot program to get four graduate programs and one undergraduate program fully online by fall 2006. Online programs were selected based on market demands and on the desire to meet *TU 2010* enrollment goals.²²⁴

The Provost's Office provided start-up funds and asked the college deans to suggest online courses and programs. The Online Program Committee (OPC) was formed by the provost and included all online program directors, Division of Economic and Community Outreach (DECO) staff, as well as representatives from the Registrar's Office, OTS, Center for Instructional Advancement and Technology (CIAT), Bursar's Office, CGSR, and Cook Library. The faculty OPC developed fully functional online courses including a comprehensive delivery system. Ongoing efforts by the university are to continue to enhance existing high demand courses, and to offer more hybrid/online instruction both for credit and noncredit outreach programs. The total

²²¹Appendix 7: Table 7.8, *Towson University Student Enrollment in National Student Exchange and Study Abroad*.

²²²The *Study Abroad Course Level Equivalencies* forms and related spreadsheets in document archive, under Standard 13.

²²³The *USM Online Learning Strategic Plan* in document archive, under Standard 13.

²²⁴*Online Learning Report TU February 2005* in document archive, under Standard 13.

number of fully online courses has grown from two sections in AY 2004-05 to 159 sections in AY 2008-09. Student enrollment has increased from 32 to 2,636 over the same period.²²⁵

The processes and procedures used to select and orient faculty, review and approve syllabi, and evaluate instruction for online courses and programs are the same as those established for courses and programs offered on-campus. Departments employ a combination of tenured, tenure-track, and full- and part-time instructors to teach distance education courses. About 120 Towson faculty members have participated in online teaching since fall 2004.

The Office of Assessment worked with online program directors to develop an online course evaluation form that allows students to comment on their learning experience, teaching effectiveness, and technical support.²²⁶ A nationally recognized faculty-centered, peer-course review quality assurance process for online learning, called Quality Matters™ (QM) for Online Learning is used for assessment.²²⁷ CIAT applies QM principles in support of all online and hybrid instructional design guidance and the graduate certificate for Interactive Media Design is now QM certified.

DECO assesses online learning service providers using three methods: (1) WIA-MHEC and Baltimore County reviews noncredit workforce classes; (2) state/federal agencies and DECO review customized online courses, (3) University Continuing Education Association and/or the sponsoring entity certifies industry certification courses. DECO tracks student completion and passing rates for online program certifications. The results are analyzed and compiled for the Workforce Office, Department of Labor Licensing Regulation.

Online course delivery is supported by OTS through Blackboard, the web-based learning management system, and class capture applications such as MediaSite and WebEx. Blackboard course sites have grown from 2,394 (2006) to 4,691 (2008)²²⁸ and class capture recordings have grown from 73 users who made 292 recordings (2007) to 121 presenters who made 557 recordings (2008) OTS.²²⁹ MediaSite classrooms have grown from one in 2007 to four in 2009. Six additional MediaSite classrooms were created for fall 2009, with five in the new CLA Building and one in the 7400 York Road building which houses DECO's Extended Education and Online Learning (EEOL) unit.

To further assist in their online course development, faculty have access to both departmental resources and CIAT, which provides service in the areas of instructional development, technology training, and the development of multimedia content for course related projects. Cook Library plays an important role in providing services to online learners. Off-campus access to online databases and periodicals, and the online e-reserves systems integrated with Blackboard, enhance the resources available to the faculty and the online learner.

²²⁵ Appendix 7: Table 7.9, *Student Enrollment in Online Courses*.

²²⁶ Sample of forms in *Student Course Evaluation - UAO Online Classes, UAO Classroom* in document archive, under Standard 13.

²²⁷ Sample of online course evaluation rubric in *Quality Matters Rubric Standards 2008-2010* in document archive, under Standard 13.

²²⁸ Appendix 7: Figure 7.1, *Blackboard Course Sites by College* and Table 7.10, *Comparison of Blackboard Course Sites 2006-08 by College*.

²²⁹ Excerpt on online instruction from *OTS IT Centers Annual Report 2008* in document archive, under Standard 11.

Certificate Programs

Towson University offers two types of graduate certificates: Post-Bachelor Certificates and Certificates of Advanced Study (CAS). Enrollment in graduate certificate programs has increased from 117 students in AY 2004-05 to 170 students in AY 2008-09. Both undergraduate and graduate students may earn teaching endorsements in specific disciplines. Total undergraduate and graduate enrollment in teaching certificate programs has increased from 1,943 students in fall 2005 to 2,231 students in fall 2008.²³⁰

A few certificates such as Dance K-12, School Psychology, and Environmental Science are embedded within degree programs. Other certificates are stand-alone entities including Secondary Education, CAS Early Childhood, and Psychology. Certificate programs are reviewed as a part of the academic program assessment process to ensure that they are aligned with the university's mission, *TU 2010*, and that they are successful in addressing student learning outcomes.

The results of a recent survey demonstrate that over 80 percent of programs describe the requirements and expectations for student learning in program publications such as the *undergraduate catalog*, brochures, handbooks, and other print materials. Almost all (94 percent) programs report that all their courses can be applied to degree programs. Almost all (94 percent) of certificate program directors stated their programs were designed and evaluated through established institutional procedures. Almost two-thirds (60 percent) of the programs are accountable to national organizations that have established criteria by which to measure the consistency of learning goals. All students enrolled in certificate programs have access to the university's campus support services.²³¹

In addition, DECO offers paper and/or electronic certificates for certain noncredit professional certification programs conducted by Towson University Extended Education and Online Learning. Most are based upon the professional certification programs such as those offered by Microsoft and CISCO. Others are based on the contact hours of noncredit instruction in a workshop. A few qualifiers pertain: 1) all participants must receive the same instruction; 2) evaluation is required after the course/workshop; and 3) course instructor's credentials and syllabus are kept on file.²³²

Experiential Learning

Many departments offer at least one experiential course, including internship, practicum, clinical experience, or student teaching. Some departments also use such vehicles as independent study or research courses to award credit for experiential learning, depending on the content. Some departments allow students to earn elective credit for experiential courses; others incorporate a required experiential component through a professional practice course or capstone. Students who pursue experiential learning opportunities are generally students enrolled in coursework at the university; therefore, they have access to all available student support services.

²³⁰ Appendix 7: Tables 7.11, *Certificate Program Enrollments* and 7.12, *Teachers Certificate Program Enrollments*.

²³¹ *Survey Results for Certificate Programs* in document archive, under Standard 13.

²³² Feedback gathered from the director of Extended Education and Online Learning October 19, 2009.

Enrollments in experiential and professional practice courses have increased each year over the last five years. More than 5,100 students earned credit through some experiential course during AY 2008-09, up from approximately 3,600 students enrolled in experiential coursework in AY 2004-05.²³³ A new interactive website, TU in the Community, is now available and allows faculty to share resources and encourage additional faculty to incorporate service-learning into their classes, which may result in enrollments continuing to increase.

Experiential learning is not consistently tracked or identified by PeopleSoft. Some internships have course numbers; others are tracked through the Career Center. The lack of a single system makes it difficult to gather data about experiential courses and enrollments. In addition, there are few mechanisms for students who want to earn internship credit outside of their major discipline. There is also no systematic means of identifying the number of students engaged in internships but not earning academic credit. The Career Center has worked with departments and faculty to encourage students to report experiential learning experiences to their advisers but results have been limited to date.

Departments with experiential learning coursework that are identified as internship, practicum, clinical, or fieldwork, were surveyed about their methods of assessing student learning in experiential courses. About 73 percent of respondents noted that students engaged in experiential coursework are required to develop a learning plan or establish learning goals. All respondents said their courses required some evaluation of student performance by means of journal, reflective report, research, performance evaluation, portfolio, group discussion, and/or presentation to a group of peers.²³⁴

Credit for Prior Learning

The Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) program allows students to receive college credit for life/work experiences using several different methods of assessment and evaluation. Students can take proficiency tests, present portfolios, and/or provide documentation of prior coursework and/or experience. The Office of the Registrar publishes a list of College Level Exam Program (CLEP) Tests and departmental ‘challenge’ exams. CLEP tests are evaluated by the computerized CLEP program; whereas departmental exams are evaluated by specific departments. Students also have the option of petitioning individual departments to receive CPL through portfolio review, written examination, or demonstration of acquired learning. Through Towson’s participation in the Servicemembers Opportunity College, students presenting appropriate documentation may receive credit for specific military experience.

A maximum of 45 units for may be granted. CPL units can be used to fulfill general education requirements, electives, and/or major requirements as long as students are degree candidates with a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA. These are also evaluated by the department. CPL is noted on

²³³Appendix 7: Table 7.13, *Internship/Experiential/Professional Experience Course Enrollments, AY 04-05 to AY 08-09*.

²³⁴*Internship Forms Career Center – Course Evaluation, Internship Forms Department Samples and Experiential Learning Course Assessment and Grade Type Used Checklist and Summary* are in document archive, under Standard 13.

students' transcripts as credit awarded; however, there is no grade reported or calculated into the cumulative GPA.²³⁵

Towson Learning Network

The Towson Learning Network (TLN) was formed in 1997 by the College of Education. It was designed to meet the ongoing professional development needs of teachers and school systems, including initiatives related to federal and state legislation, and to address teacher and administrator shortages nationally. Specifically, TLN is an outreach initiative to respond to the needs of the larger community. It offers courses and programs at the Regional Higher Education Centers, and in school systems in the metropolitan region, on the Eastern Shore, and in Southern Maryland. TLN provides a convenient and cost-effective solution for pre-service and in-service teachers to remain at the cutting edge of their profession. All off-campus courses use syllabi and NCATE standards, including assessments and other requirements, which are identical to those in main campus courses. Over 80 percent of students enrolled at off-campus locations are in TLN-affiliated courses and programs.²³⁶

Non-Credit Programs

A complete list of all non-credit programs offered at Towson is not available; therefore, a representative sample of offices that offer noncredit programs were surveyed, including the Community Art Center, the Willard Hackerman Academy of Mathematics and Science, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and the International Contracts Office. The Community Art Center offers art workshops for children and adults. The Hackerman Academy arranges science presentations and classroom visits for area K-12 schools, organizes full-day science programs for middle school students, and runs a Saturday Morning Science Series that features presentations, performances, and demonstrations that are available to students of all ages.²³⁷ The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute offers adults age 50 and older opportunities for continued learning through programs and activities for social and cultural enrichment. The International Contracts Office arranges non-credit programs for foreign students by creating a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Towson and a foreign educational institution or corporation.²³⁸

The Community Art Center, the Hackerman Academy, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and the International Contracts Office were surveyed to evaluate the relationship between non-credit programs and academic departments, assessment methods, and use of university resources.²³⁹ Based on the survey responses, the goals of Towson's non-credit programs are aligned with the university's mission and strategic plan. Non-credit program goals and objectives are stated in program brochures and publications. A sample of these goals and objectives are available on the non-credit program websites. All respondents indicated that non-credit program instructors are screened and often selected from established experts within and outside the university community. Many Towson faculty and staff, both current and retired, serve as program leaders through the International Contracts Office and the Osher Lifelong Learning

²³⁵ *CLEP Test Sample Credit Posting* on PeopleSoft in document archive, under Standard 13.

²³⁶ Effective January 1, 2011, TLN moved from the College of Education to the Provost's Office.

²³⁷ *Hackerman Academy Yearly Reports* in document archive, under Standard 13.

²³⁸ *MOU International Index November 2009* in document archive, under Standard 13.

²³⁹ *Survey Results for Selected Non-Credit Programs* in document archive, under Standard 13.

Institute. The Community Art Center also hires graduate students and upper-class Art Education majors with relevant expertise.

The International Contracts Office was the only unit indicating they issue certificates of completion for non-credit programs; however, these certificates do not grant Towson course credit. Assessment measures reported include student evaluation questionnaires, which are reviewed and assessed by the director and curriculum committee for future improvement. Programs offered through the International Contracts Office, the Hackerman Academy, and the Community Art Center seek verbal and written feedback from participants.

Survey results indicate that the non-credit programs are making efficient and effective use of university resources.²⁴⁰ The programs are created with the intention of making maximum use of existing resources such as faculty and facilities. Most students of non-credit programs can access support services that are available at the university at the time the program is offered. As of summer 2007, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute has newly designated classroom space for its programs and partners with organizations outside of the university in order to engage more community members. Most non-credit programs have not encountered difficulty reserving space, finding program leaders, or using Towson facilities, although program directors are concerned that these will become greater issues as the university continues to expand.

Contractual Relationships and Affiliated Providers

Towson University and the University of Baltimore (UB) have entered into an agreement to offer a joint MBA program.²⁴¹ Admissions requirements are published in the program's promotional materials and on the MBA website. This program is also offered in Poland, as noted above.

The program has its own MBA Director whose time is shared between the two institutions. The MBA Director coordinates admission to the program, assigns a home institution for each student enrolled, determines course assignments and schedules courses in conjunction with respective associate deans and department chairs, and facilitates advising. Students enrolled in the program have program advisors available to them at both campuses, and they have access to all student support services at both campuses. Faculty who teach in the program at both institutions must be academically and/or professionally qualified by Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) standards.

Both universities are accredited members of the AACSB, which ensures a consistent level of quality between courses taken at Towson and courses taken at UB as part of the UB/Towson MBA program. Subject to institutional approval procedures, faculty from each institution are jointly responsible for approving all new courses and tracks included in the program, evaluating the program, approving any changes in admissions criteria, developing and assessing learning objectives at the program and course level, and creating a policy of academic dishonesty for the program. Tracks, graduation requirements, and admission criteria for the UB/Towson MBA program are published in the *graduate catalog*. Both institutions meet regularly to review and revise the MOU.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ *UB/Towson M.B.A. MOU* in document archive, under Standard 13.

The Fisher College of Science and Mathematics (FCSM) has entered into separate MOUs with Shanghai Finance University, Soongsil University in Korea, and Beihua University in China to transfer up to two years of coursework taken at each institution into Towson's undergraduate program in mathematics with a concentration in actuarial science and risk management. Students who complete all of the required courses earn a degree from their home campus as well as Towson University.²⁴² Towson faculty worked with the faculty at each institution to ensure the transferability of the coursework and coverage of all program learning outcomes.

Summary of Findings

- Towson University is committed to provide all learners with opportunities to increase their knowledge base and to offer services that support student learning at every level.
- Through a wide array of off-campus locations, alternative learning modalities, and programming for non-matriculated students, Towson promotes educational opportunities that increase the economic and social well-being of people throughout the region.
- Enrollment growth has been a powerful force behind the growth of online and off-campus location programming.

Recommendations

- That Towson assesses the preparedness of all transfer students for college-level work using multiple assessment modalities.
- That Towson assesses the effectiveness of developmental courses measured against students' GPAs, retention, and time to graduation as part of a long-range plan to enhance student learning for underprepared students.
- That Towson expands the opportunities for students to engage in experiential academic learning, with specified measurable outcomes that are tracked and assessed, as part of its core commitment to civic engagement.
- That Towson develops an Online Learning Strategic Plan that would guide the expansion of online learning as it relates to student learning, faculty participation and enrollment growth.

²⁴² Copies of the three MOUs are in the document archive, under Standard 13.

CHAPTER 8

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

Towson uses multiple quantitative and qualitative approaches to measure, assess, and evaluate the degree to which the university is effectively achieving the goals and objectives outlined in its mission and strategic plan, *TU 2010*. In most instances, assessment results serve to shape policies and procedures and improve practices differentially across all divisions and units.²⁴³

Institutional Assessment across Units

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Office of the President assessed the progress of each division and the Department of Athletics toward achieving the goals and objectives outlined in *TU 2010*. Results were published and widely disseminated in the *TU 2010 Report Cards*, which focused on key areas identified in the strategic plan 1) enrollment management, growth, and mix; 2) resources for success; 3) student experience and success; 4) partnerships philosophy; and 5) telling and selling the story. The five divisions and the Department of Athletics received letter grades as a measure of their efforts. As assessment tools, the *Report Cards*, which were widely distributed, effectively and efficiently demonstrated how well the university met its institutional priorities, stimulated debate about priorities, and informed initiatives to improve practices.

On behalf of their respective divisions, vice presidents submitted quarterly updates to the *TU 2010* Milestones and Action Items. Divisions used a variety of assessment methods to determine completion of strategic plan objectives. For example: the Division of Student Affairs developed an assessment agenda and expectations for units within the division. The information gathered by tracking the satisfaction of users of services, as well as tracking student learning outcomes, was reviewed and used to inform future practices. Other divisions may rely on different methods such as the assessment of performance. The library participates in a national user satisfaction survey of academic and research libraries, LibQUAL+. Assessment results from students, faculty, and staff respondents are used in strategic planning and budget decisions for library improvements.

The university also submits reports to the Maryland Department of Budget and Management for the annual Managing for Results (MFR) accountability process, as well as the Maryland Higher Education Commission's Performance Accountability reporting system. The Office of Assessment, which is a unit in the Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, has responsibility for and oversight over all university-wide assessment practices that pertain to student learning. The assistant vice president for Assessment (AVPA) works closely with the University Assessment Council (UAC) to guide and support all student learning assessment initiatives. The UAC members include faculty from each of the colleges and key administrators and students. The UAC is composed of three subcommittees that focus on undergraduate and graduate assessment as well as on the assessment of general education. In its consultative, planning and oversight roles, the UAC plays a key role in creating a culture of assessment at Towson. The position of AVPA was vacant from July 2008 to late August 2009. The new AVPA began her tenure in October 2009. Since 2000 there have been three incumbents and two interim

²⁴³As part of the information gathering process to assess assessment at Towson, interviews with academic deans and heads of nonacademic divisions or their designees and with the members of the University Assessment Council (UAC) were conducted. Results are available in: *Interviews on Assessment with Key Administrators* in the document archive, under Standard 7.

unit heads. As a result, division operations have suffered from repeated development as programs and processes have not been not systematically incorporated into university operations.

Prior to 2010, Towson had not yet identified university-level learning outcomes which linked the various educational offerings such as general education, the major, and other co-curricular offerings, including student services and outreach. In 2010, the university revised its mission statement addressing university-level learning.²⁴⁴ In addition to educating students in specialized knowledge within a defined field, the university's revised mission statement focuses on developing students' capacities for effective communication, critical analysis, and flexible thought. In addition, students will cultivate an awareness of both difference and commonality necessary for multifaceted work environments and for local and global citizenry and leadership. Once the proposed mission statement is approved, a university-level assessment plan focusing on these outcomes will be developed. Developing and implementing this process and embedding the operations into ongoing operations across the campus are the primary goals for the Office of Assessment for 2011 and beyond; it will involve the entire university community.

Program Assessment

The UAC has assessment expectations and programs in place for all undergraduate and graduate departments and programs as well as for general education courses, and for programs that are developed in Student Affairs. The Division of Student Affairs is the only nonacademic division to report assessment findings to the UAC in which findings and implications of results from nationally based assessment projects are presented and discussed. Additionally, Student Affairs works closely with all of the other divisions to schedule and regulate assessment projects across the campus.

The Subcommittee on Undergraduate Program Assessment (SUPA)²⁴⁵ and the Subcommittee on Graduate Program Assessment (SGPA) are charged with supporting the design, evaluation, and promotion of undergraduate and graduate program assessments. All undergraduate and graduate academic departments and programs are expected to have a student learning assessment plan in place. All are required to report on student learning outcomes in their Undergraduate Assessment Reports and their Graduate Assessment Reports to the appropriate subcommittee.²⁴⁶ Every three years, programs are expected to report assessment data and results for the major/s they offer. During the intervening years, each unit is expected to report any modifications or improvements to their assessment protocols and/or how they used their assessment data to improve student learning.

In addition to the assessment of student learning that is reported internally, the USM requires a program review for all academic degree programs every seven years. The program review process is extensive and consists of an internal *Self-Study* of the degree program, and an external reviewer.²⁴⁷ The *Self-Study* must demonstrate how the curriculum supports student learning outcomes and how outcomes are assessed and used to improve practice. Other issues addressed include developing core liberal learning competencies and skills, the quality of faculty teaching, comparison of program quality to peer programs, enrollment trends and program demands, and

²⁴⁴ See revised university mission statement, *TU 2016*, and *Academic Strategic Plan*.

²⁴⁵ SUPA membership includes faculty from each college and the AVPA.

²⁴⁶ Appendix 8: Table 8.1, *Assessment Inventory by Academic Program across the University*.

²⁴⁷ Appendix 8: Document 8.2, *Towson University Academic Program Review Guidelines*.

cost-effectiveness of the program.²⁴⁸ The program review offers an opportunity to engage faculty in the assessment process. The USM requires that programs under review identify an action plan to improve practices based on the recommendations of the external reviewer, including ways progress will be assessed.²⁴⁹ Program reviews require the signatures of the dean of the college in which the program resides, and the provost.

Degree-granting programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels show strong compliance with the USM program review requirements and with the completion of external reviews.²⁵⁰ At the undergraduate level, 87 percent of programs have completed USM program reviews, 87 percent have had an External Review conducted during the previous seven years, and seven percent have been exempt from a program review as they are new programs and are scheduled for future years. At the graduate level, program reviews were completed by 71 percent of the master's and doctoral programs and external reviews were completed by 69 percent of the master's and doctoral programs. Approximately 18 percent of graduate programs were not scheduled for review during the reporting period due to their recent implementation. While only 46 percent of the certificate programs conducted USM program reviews and external reviews, 29 percent of the certificate programs were not scheduled for a review due to their recent implementation.

Academic departments and colleges have assessment protocols and practices pertinent to their disciplines. Degree programs accredited by external agencies such as NCATE for the College of Education, and AACSB for the College of Business and Economics, develop assessment practices that align with accrediting agency standards. Assessment reports from 86 academic programs, including 44 undergraduate programs, 30 master's programs, four doctoral programs, and eight certificate programs were reviewed. These reports are submitted to (SUPA) and (SGPA) for review. These committees rate the programs in four key areas: learning goals, teaching/learning strategies, assessment methods, and use of results. For each of these areas, each program is rated according to three rubrics: best practice, meets standard, and needs attention.²⁵¹ These ratings, along with qualitative feedback, are designed to assure that program directors can demonstrate continuous improvement in student learning.

According to the data from the *Program Assessment Inventory across the University* (Appendix 8: Table 8.1), 73 percent of all undergraduate programs submitted an internal student learning assessment report. In AY 2006-07, 48 percent submitted reports, 35 percent in AY 2007-08, 22 percent in AY 2008-09, and 23 percent in AY 2009-10. At the graduate level, about 76 percent of all programs filed a report providing an update on the assessment of student learning in the last four years. In AY 2006-07, 40 percent submitted reports, in AY 2007-08, 36 percent, AY 2008-09, 13 percent, and 29 percent in AY 2009-10. Data for graduate level certificate programs are very low with around 33 percent submitting an assessment report for the previous four years. In fall 2008, the assessment reporting cycle shifted from an annual cycle to a three-year cycle. In addition, the cycles were shifted to accommodate external accrediting visits. As a result, many of the programs have reporting cycles outside the four-year period included in the table. The revised assessment process includes the submission of an assessment plan for any program not

²⁴⁸ Appendix 8: Document 8.3, *Towson University Academic Program Review Report Outline*.

²⁴⁹ Appendix 8: Document 8.4, *Reports on Periodic Review Academic Programs*.

²⁵⁰ Appendix 8: Table 8.1, *Assessment Inventory by Academic Program across the University*.

²⁵¹ Appendix 8: Document 8.5, *University Assessment Committee Feedback on Assessment Plans & Reports*.

reporting in the prior four years, including all new programs.²⁵² Assessment plans were due in fall 2010 and will be reviewed by either SUPA or SGPA in spring 2011.²⁵³

While most academic programs fully embrace Towson's assessment process, some have not. In some cases, these are programs with very few students, as is the case with the new Bachelor of Technical and Professional Studies (BTPS) program in the Department of Computer and Information Sciences, which has about 10 majors. In other cases, the programs may be too new to be assessed and they have not been consistently added to the assessment schedule. The new program assessment process is designed to address these issues. The results of program assessment will be a key component in the development of new programming as well as in the strategic planning process and resource allocation decisions.

To document specific characteristics of academic assessments, a survey of chairs and program coordinators was conducted in spring 2009. The survey was emailed to 130 academic undergraduate and graduate chairs, program directors, and coordinators associated with majors and related offerings, including minors, tracks, concentrations, certificate programs, graduate degrees, honors programs, and professional development programs. A total of 112 chairs and program coordinators or their designees (86 percent) responded.²⁵⁴

The survey of program coordinators revealed that 47 percent of undergraduate programs, and 59 percent of graduate programs have "teaching methods ... and assessment of student learning linked to external accreditation and assessment standards."²⁵⁵ External accreditation has a positive effect on the success of programs in education, business, and health professions. These external accrediting agencies tend to have higher standards that are tailored to their fields as compared to the internal standards used for all other programs. Programs with external accreditation are nevertheless also reviewed by SUPA and SGPA.

In 50 (43.9 percent) out of 114 programs, the most common type of student learning assessments include case analyses, research projects, performances, or other complex works that demonstrate expertise in a field. Students are required to demonstrate knowledge of research methods and complex content. Some assessment practices use rubrics to measure learning outcomes. Others include exit surveys (37.7 percent), term papers (36.8 percent), and portfolios (31.6 percent). Nearly a quarter of academic programs rely on performance in a field experience to assess student learning. Furthermore, across all academic programs, a wide variety of program assessments are implemented, including alumni surveys, employer feedback, exit interviews, presentations, town meetings, labs, theses, course grades, and Praxis II.

In addition, 95 (83 percent) programs rely on more than one type of assessment. For example, in the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration program, student learning is assessed in a number of ways, including papers, assignments, projects, and tests. In the capstone course,

²⁵² *Program Assessment Instructions August 2010* in document archive, under Standard 11.

²⁵³ Appendix 8: Document 8.1, *Assessment Plan Template Program Assessment Report AY 2009-10 Summary December 2010* in document archive, under Standard 11

²⁵⁴ *Survey of Chairs and Program Directors on Assessment* data file in document archive, under Standard 14. Note: Summary data and tables have higher sample numbers because some respondents oversee multiple majors, minors and/or other programs.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

students' core knowledge of business is assessed using a comprehensive multiple choice test. Seniors are asked to fill out a student satisfaction survey from Educational Benchmarking Inc. (EBI) that compares Towson students' satisfaction with that of students from hundreds of other comparable institutions. Seniors also participate in exit surveys that ask for feedback about the quality of their academic experience. Results are used to improve practice. In the required practicum course, employers are asked to assess whether students can apply what they have learned.

Most academic programs use information from three or more courses to assess student learning goals. A review of assessment reports demonstrated that 40 percent of programs use assessment information from five or more required courses. Another 40 percent reported using data from more than one course to assess student learning goals. These results demonstrate that most programs use multiple courses in their assessment of student learning which reflects "Best Practice" standards. Using multiple courses ensures that students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning, and that multiple faculty participate in the assessment process. However, some programs rely on only a single capstone course to assess program learning outcomes.

Communicating Academic Learning Goals to Students

The vast majority of chairs and program coordinators indicated in the assessment survey they completed that the undergraduate and graduate programs they oversee have learning goals that are communicated to students and faculty in several ways. As reported in Chapter 6, the most common modalities of communication include syllabi, advising, program websites, catalogs, brochures, as well as department and program handouts.²⁵⁶ In the case of faculty, program learning goals are most frequently communicated at department meetings, advising training workshops, and orientation sessions. They are also communicated during mentoring sessions and one-on-one discussions pertaining to syllabi development, and during the program review process.²⁵⁷

Faculty Engagement in Student Learning Assessment

According to the results of the assessment survey completed by chairs and program directors, faculty members are committed to the assessment of student learning and to continually improving their teaching.²⁵⁸ In about 84 percent of academic programs, the assessment of student learning is discussed at department meetings. Faculty members in over 50 percent of the academic programs have participated in student assessment workshops. In over 86 percent of programs, faculty members collaborate on developing effective teaching pedagogies. Pedagogy is discussed at faculty meetings in more than 74 percent of the programs. In over 60 percent of the programs, faculty members are involved in professional development activities related to improving their teaching. About 29 percent of programs compensate faculty for working on new assessment models. Few programs, just about 11.8 percent, offer release time for assessment-related activities. Less than 7 percent of the programs report that faculty members get release

²⁵⁶Appendix 8: Table 8.3, *Most Frequent Ways (from High to Low) Program Learning Goals Are Communicated to Students (Chair/Program Director Responses)*.

²⁵⁷Appendix 8: Table 8.4, *Most Frequent Ways (from High to Low) Program Learning Goals Are Communicated to Faculty (Chair/Program Director Responses)*.

²⁵⁸Appendix 8: Table 8.5, *Ways Faculty Are Involved and Supported in Efforts to Improve Assessment of Student Learning (Chair/Program Director Responses)* and Table 8.6, *Ways Faculty Are Supported to Change, Update, or Improve Teaching (Chair/Program Director Responses)*.

time to work on improving pedagogy; however, a full 38 percent receive monetary incentives to improve teaching. These include professional development grants to develop new courses, grants to develop online versions of existing courses, and grants to improve teaching methods.

Assessment to Improve Practice

An analysis of assessment reports submitted to SUPA and SGPA shows that 64 percent of programs implement assessment results to improve practice.²⁵⁹ Ten of the 86 programs (12 percent) have specific plans for improving programs in order to achieve better assessment results, but the plans are not yet implemented due to the newness of the plan (“NYI”). Twenty of the 86 (23 percent) received a rating of “NI” indicating a need to provide more information before any assessment can be made. Beginning in fall 2010, follow-up procedures have been put in place to address areas requiring additional documentation. A review of submitted assessment reports showed that 23 percent received a negative rating (“No” or “NI”). However, 79 percent received a “Best” practice rating in at least one measure during the same period. These data show that Towson’s assessments of student learning provide useful feedback that is used to improve practice.

The recently revised program assessment process should yield greater participation. The new reporting cycle is every three years, rather than every year, and requires that programs state how assessment data will be used to improve student learning. In addition, assessment reports must be submitted to the dean of the college before being submitted to the UAC.

General Education Assessment

The current Subcommittee on General Education Assessment (SGEA) tracks student learning outcomes in general education (GenEd) courses. Under a previous provost, the general education coordinator facilitated the approval process for new GenEd courses, and coordinated the GenEd assessment process. Under a subsequent provost, the position of general education coordinator was eliminated. As a result, the GenEd review and assessment program was discontinued.

The collection of general education student learning data has been restarted and the first data were due at the end of spring 2010. The SGEA has established a process to review and recertify each general education course every five years. Courses in the new University Core will be added to the cycle effective fall 2011. The subcommittee will review, and analyze and rate the courses in four key areas: learning goals, teaching/learning strategies, assessment methods, and use of results. For each of these areas, SGEA will rate each course according to three rubrics: best practice, meets standard, and needs attention.²⁶⁰ These ratings, along with qualitative feedback, are designed to assure that departments can demonstrate continuous improvement in student learning.

The results from the first cycle of course recertification were submitted for review in fall 2010. SGEA review of the first set of materials occurred in November 2010. As a result of that review, SGEA recommended further modification in the reporting template to ensure coverage of each element of the rubric. Of the 46 courses being submitted for recertification, only eight were fully recertified. Additional documentation (primarily course syllabi) has been requested for 35

²⁵⁹ Appendix 8: Table 8.1, (see column 13) *Assessment Inventory by Academic Program across the University*.

²⁶⁰ For feedback on assessment plans and report on the first cycle, see *General Education Assessment Report December 2010* in document archive, under Standard 12.

courses. SGEA will be reviewing these materials in spring 2011. Extensions were granted to 10 additional courses. The reports received in 2010 are best characterized as planning documents, with limited use of data for improvement being reported as the data collection processes have only recently begun. One of the modifications to the template includes identification of the processes associated with sharing data. A positive result in the process is the high percent of submissions (61 percent) using multiple assessment methods appropriate to the identified learning outcomes.

Assessment of Teaching

Towson recently approved a course evaluation instrument for use campus-wide.²⁶¹ Student feedback is a crucial component in the improvement of classroom learning as well as teaching effectiveness. The instrument is delivered using an online tool. As a result, faculty members have access to the results as soon as grades are posted. A committee was established by the Provost's Office in late 2010 to develop additional measures to assess the effectiveness of teaching.

Assessment of Student Learning in Co-Curricular Programs

The Division of Student Affairs has assessment plans in place for its support services including Campus Recreation Services, African American Cultural Center, Students Achieve Goals through Education (SAGE), and Disability Support Services, among others. In addition, the Career Center launched a comprehensive program to measure the satisfaction and learning outcomes associated with the center's activities and resources. As described in the Student Affairs Assessment Report,²⁶² each assessment plan has appropriate assessment tools and practices to assess student learning.

In 2006, Student Affairs developed learning outcomes for each unit in the division. Results are reported annually to all departments within the division. Each year, the Division of Student Affairs' Assessment Committee also presents its annual report to the University Assessment Council, which includes reports from national benchmarking initiatives and recommendations for improvement of practices. This committee tracks which assessment activities were completed and degrees of satisfaction. Results were linked to the goals of *TU 2010*.

The Student Affairs Division is implementing a system for tracking student participation and learning in co-curricular activities through a variety of assessment practices including initial benchmarking initiatives, program evaluations, focus groups, surveys, and tracking studies. Assessment measures consist of internally developed and/or nationally-normed instruments. With regard to co-curricular student learning outcomes, in 2008, units within Student Affairs conducted over 674 assessment projects including 329 program evaluations, five national benchmarking initiatives, 123 tracking surveys for users of services, and 10 satisfaction surveys. A total of 131,138 student responses were gathered. In spring 2009, Student Affairs conducted several large national surveys including the Educational Benchmarking, Inc. *Housing Benchmarking Survey*, the *National College Health Association Survey*, and the National Association Student Personnel Administrator *Assessment Consortium Survey* consisting of three parts—student conduct, campus climate, and student activities. Over 2,000 students participated

²⁶¹ *SCE Course Evaluation Process AY 2010-11 Update* in document archive, under Standard 10.

²⁶² *Student Affairs Assessment Reports* fall 2007, spring 2008 and fall 2009, AY 2009-10 in document archive, under Standard 7.

in the NASPA survey representing almost a 30 percent response rate. Data from these assessment initiatives were shared with the campus community in the spring 2010 semester.

The Department of Athletics has protocols and practices to assess student learning that are responsive to the standards set by the NCAA. The NCAA Division I Committee on Athletics Certification has established standards to measure student-athlete well being. The committee requires that, “the institution must demonstrate that it has an active CHAMPS/Life Skills program (or equivalent) pursuant to NCAA legislation with programming to address nonacademic areas (e.g., career counseling, personal counseling, nutrition, diversity, gambling, alcohol and drug guidelines, sexual orientation, personal development, leadership).” The Department of Athletics administers a series of assessments and personal interviews to gather data to demonstrate compliance with this standard.

Although the Department of Athletics does not concern itself with assessing student learning by tracking skills building or the attainment of college level learning competencies, the department does track the GPAs of student-athletes and measures them against the GPAs of the entire student population. However, data pertaining to the use of student learning assessments to improve practices are not systematically collected or evaluated.

National Assessments of Student Learning and Student Engagement

In fall 2009, Towson began to participate in the Collegiate Learning Assessment as an additional means of assessing student learning. The assessment tool was administered to first-year students in fall 2009 and to seniors in spring 2010. The Office of Assessment plans to administer this assessment for three consecutive years in order to establish baseline values. Future testing will be on a biannual basis. The first results of the first cycle are promising. Over time, the results will be used in combination with the results from the program assessment and course recertification processes to provide valuable longitudinal data that measure student progress in critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication.

Towson also participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), tracking the many facets of students’ experiences in academic and student life activities. NSSE data are broken down by first-year and senior students, by native and transfer students, by colleges, by Middle States standards, and by student engagement benchmark clusters. NSSE data allow comparisons to groups of peer institutions in the mid-Atlantic region and across the nation. FSSE data compare data reported by students with similar questions directed at faculty. Insofar as Towson has been participating in the NSSE since it was first released nationally in 2000, the rich longitudinal database of student responses can be used to improve practice. One example is the implementation of a mandatory Intentional Advising program as a result of the marginal scores Towson received from students about their advising experience. Towson was invited to participate in the *Spencer Foundations: Learning to Improve Study* based upon our improvement in key areas. The Office of Assessment published reports on results from the 2005, 2007, and 2009 NSSE. Towson uses the data from other similar studies, including the College Senior Survey (CSS) and the Cooperative Institution Research Project (CIRP) New Study Survey.

Other Assessment Activities and Structures

The Office of Assessment and the Division of Student Affairs co-founded the Survey Coordinating Council (SCC) charged with university-wide coordination and oversight of large surveys used for assessment purposes in order not to overwhelm students with survey completion. The council is staffed by representatives from all divisions including representatives from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Research, Assessment, Office of Technology Services and the Office of University Research Services. The SCC strives to reduce redundancy and survey fatigue.

Institutional Assessment and the Transformation of Practice

All divisions and colleges report some correlation among assessment results, improved or improving practices, and resource allocations. Colleges report satisfaction with data, whether garnered from national assessment tools or departmental reviews.²⁶³ Divisions use a variety of methods, including retreats, appraisals of monthly and quarterly reports, evaluations of user feedback, and review of accreditation materials to make program improvements and allocate resources. The Division of Administration and Finance has used assessment data to improve the shuttle service for students, faculty, and staff. For example, a shuttle route from the campus to Penn Station in downtown Baltimore was added as a result of assessment feedback.

Colleges report that program assessments and accreditation requirements, where applicable, have been used to hire new faculty in areas found to be deficient, enhance advising, and strengthen curricula. In the current economic downturn, a state-mandated hiring freeze and other budgetary constraints have forced a number of deans to focus program improvements that are consistent with assessment findings.²⁶⁴ For example, assessment data in the College of Business and Economics resulted in a faculty workshop on using student teams more effectively.

Although Towson is committed to assessment, the establishment of a culture of assessment that is valued and supported campus-wide across divisional lines has not been fully realized. In Academic Affairs, owing to the recent vacancy in the position of the assistant vice president for Assessment and the limited tenure of the two recent vice presidents of academic affairs/provosts, assessment efforts have been uneven despite a strong foundation to build or rebuild an assessment plan. Student Affairs does have a strong culture of assessment, as does the Department of Athletics. In other divisions, assessment has been less vigorously addressed. A centralized assessment database has not been developed to facilitate efficient collection of data across the different programs and levels. Discussions are underway with different vendors to identify an appropriate tool.

The dissemination of assessment outcomes varies across divisions and units. For example, the UAC provides feedback with a standardized reporting form²⁶⁵ and awards Best Practice certificates annually to departments and programs with model assessment protocols and practices.²⁶⁶ In December 2010, the Provost's Office and UAC hosted a breakfast reception to honor 2010 Best Practice recipients. Assessment outcomes and information about assessment practices and procedures are also reported to the Provost's Council, Deans' Council, and

²⁶³ *Interviews on Assessment with Key Administrators*, questions 3 and 9 in document archive, under Standard 7.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Questions 2, 8, and 9.

²⁶⁵ Appendix 8: Document 8.5, *Feedback on Assessment Plans and Reports*.

²⁶⁶ Appendix 8: Table 8.1, *Assessment Inventory by Academic Program across the University*.

occasionally to the Council of Chairs, all of whom serve as a conduit for the dissemination of information to their constituents. The UAC, however, reports that faculty members continue to see assessment as a burden and a punitive exercise that is not valued in the promotion and tenure process.²⁶⁷

For the most part, divisions have mechanisms in place to inform their constituents of assessment results. Some rely on departments and programs to disseminate information internally. Others regularly post assessment data on websites, share information with advisory boards, and/or discuss results at staff meetings and retreats.

Summary of Findings

- Towson University has been and remains committed to develop a culture of assessment across all divisions and units.
- The *TU 2010 Report Cards* instituted by the university president were very effective in tracking progress, creating a system of accountability and monitoring the implementation of improvements.
- Currently, there are no clearly articulated university-level learning outcomes, nor is there an integrated systematic campus-wide assessment plan to measure those learning outcomes. Although, in fall 2010 the Office of Assessment was in the process of implementing a coordinated seven-year assessment cycle for courses and programs.
- On the academic side, the long vacancy in the leadership of the Office of Assessment and the instability in the leadership of Academic Affairs over the past six to seven years frustrated efforts to develop a coherent assessment plan that included regularly published reports and tracks improvement in practices based on the data gathered in reports. The arrivals of a new provost in the fall 2009 as well as a new assistant provost and an associate provost for Resources and Planning in the fall 2010 provides a strong leadership team that will address assessment as a high priority.
- The assessment of student learning is more consistently tracked on the undergraduate level than on the graduate level.
- The Division of Student Affairs and the Department of Athletics have strong assessment plans to assess the work of the division, per se, and of student learning.
- Assessment of student satisfaction and student learning is not being systematically conducted within the other nonacademic divisions of the university.
- The University Assessment Council is effective in reviewing academic and Student Affairs assessment reports to the degree that they are submitted. Follow-up and follow-through by departments and programs remains uneven.

Recommendations

- That Towson makes assessment of student learning among its top priorities in the new strategic plan and commit resources to support and sustain university-wide assessment initiatives.

²⁶⁷*Interviews on Assessment with Key Administrators*, particularly the UAC response to question 8, in document archive, under Standard 7.

- That Towson creates an integrated systematic campus-wide assessment plan aligned with the mission and strategic plan that has specific goals for each division and that makes the enhancement of student learning a university-wide goal.
- That Towson creates a more transparent reporting structure for all assessment outcomes and resulting improvements, including posting all assessment reports on the Assessment website, as well as on department or program websites, and posting examples of assessments that are Best Practice Award winners. This includes providing resource support to collect, maintain and analyze assessment data and results across all levels of the institution in a more efficient and effective manner.
- That Towson communicates and/or distributes assessment outcomes and the use of results to improve practices widely and at regular intervals.

CONCLUSION

The *Self-Study* has convincingly demonstrated that Towson University has much to celebrate. The Towson community has worked hard to bring about and sustain positive changes that resulted from unprecedented growth. The vision and goals of the university's mission and strategic plan, *TU 2010*, informed and guided Towson's growth initiatives. The university has witnessed enrollment of more quality students, the expansion of faculty, and increased diversity among students, faculty and staff. The re-imagined master plan, construction of technology-equipped and environmentally conscious academic buildings, development of a campus-wide electronic network, and expanded student services are tangible examples of what, in the words of President Caret, makes "Towson ... an institution of high value."

Opportunities and challenges remain. *TU 2010*, challenged Towson to "create a productive future for our students, our region and the metropolitan area." The challenge was met with significant success as documented in this *Self-Study*. With the implementation of the new strategic plan, *Towson University 2016*, Towson is building on its successes and addressing issues that will strengthen its core commitment. The university continues to provide students with a quality education that prepares them for employment in a 21st century marketplace.

Detailed recommendations pertaining to each of the 14 standards that measure institutional effectiveness and academic excellence are found at the end of each of the eight chapters. In its analysis, the *Self-Study* identified two key issues to which Towson needs to pay particular attention: 1) the absence of university-wide student learning goals, and 2) the lack of an integrated university-wide assessment plan that holds every division/department accountable. These issues align with the core values described in the *Characteristics of Excellence* defining the accreditation standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Since fall 2009 when this *Self-Study* was largely written, the Provost's Office has led in the creation of the *Academic Strategic Plan* that will be the key component in *Towson University 2016*. The *Academic Strategic Plan* clearly establishes university-wide student learning goals. Each college, in turn is creating its own strategic plan that will adhere to the principles of the *Academic Strategic Plan*, but will tailor the more general student learning goals to its own academic discipline.

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Student Learning

That Towson University links the new University Core learning goals with those of majors/minors. Furthermore, that Towson considers embedding a student-learning focus that establishes assessable learning goals across the curriculum and co-curricular offerings into its mission statement and the next strategic plan. In addition, that the goals and objectives of all divisions and units make explicit how they support and enhance student learning. Student learning goals should be highlighted in admissions and marketing materials.

Assessment

That Towson put in place an integrated, university-wide, systematic, and effective assessment plan that includes the assessment of student learning and supports the use of results to improve practices. A transparent reporting structure for all assessment outcomes and resulting improvements should be part of any plan. Timely posting of all assessment reports on the Office of Assessment website, as well as on department or program websites, and posting examples of assessments that are Best Practice Award winners will allow for greater access to assessment data. To promote the assessment of student learning, that Towson create a multifaceted Faculty Development/Teaching and Learning Center to cultivate faculty knowledge and pedagogical skills.

Since the completion of the self-study in January 2010, many of these issues have already been addressed or are in the process of being addressed through *TU 2016*, the revised mission statement, and the creation of the *Academic Strategic Plan*. For example, the revised mission statement includes university level learning outcomes, and the *Academic Strategic Plan* focuses on more detailed outcomes, including development of the Center for Teaching and Learning. The work of the Middle States Steering Committee served as the foundation for many of Towson University's strategic initiatives.