Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students
of

CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA
250 University Avenue
California, PA 15419-4138

by

An Evaluation Team Representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
April 1, 2010

Prepared after review of the institution’s self-study report
and a visit to the campus on: March 21-24, 2010

The Members of the Team:

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This report represents the view of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair; it goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission.

It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist California University of Pennsylvania. This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.
AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

President/Chief Executive Officer:

Angelo Armenti, Jr., Ph.D.
President

Chief Academic Officer:

Geraldine M. Jones
Provost

Chair of the Governing Board:

Leo Krantz, Chairman of the Council of Trustees
and Vice President of the PA Association for the Council of Trustees (PACT)
I. Context and Nature of the Visit

California University of Pennsylvania (Cal U) is one of 14 public comprehensive universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). With a total of about 8,000 students, Cal U is the largest University in the southwestern portion of Pennsylvania. Emerging from its Normal School profile in the early part of its 158-year history, Cal U has gone through many significant changes to become a comprehensive university offering associate, bachelor, and master degree programs and select certificates/diplomas.

The reason for this visit is to provide a report to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education regarding the reaccreditation of California University of Pennsylvania. For the self-study, California University of Pennsylvania chose the comprehensive model in order to fully study the institution as it relates to the 14 Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education. The self-study report format aligns with the 14 characteristics. The self-study process was inclusive with many members of the University actively engaged in the development of the self-study. Additional analysis and data-based conclusions would have strengthened the report.

The campus visit was well-organized and there was ample opportunity to interview a number of the campus constituencies. Numerous documents were reviewed by the visiting team before and during the visit. A number of recommendations were made in the self-study and there is evidence that a number of these recommendations are being addressed by the campus.

II. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Eligibility Requirements

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

III. Compliance with Federal Requirements: Issues Relative to State Regulatory or Other Accrediting Agency Requirements

Based on certification provided by the institution, the team affirms that the institution’s Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits.

IV. Evaluation Overview

The visiting team was very impressed with the University’s mission and the degree to which the community has embraced it. Significant enrollment growth has occurred in the past decade and along with it, normal growing pains. The Strategic Plan seems to be well understood within the University and there is evidence that the plan
drives decision making. As a result, significant improvements are occurring across the University—a significant achievement in the context of challenging economic times.

The team was particularly impressed with the faculty’s dedication to maintaining a student-centered environment and ongoing concern for the preservation of academic quality during a time of rapid enrollment growth.

The University should be commended for its:

- student-centered learning environment and high rates for student satisfaction that were verified by the team;
- significant fundraising success, in particular its progress toward meeting the capital campaign goal;
- additional facilities and facility and campus landscape improvements all done with quality in mind, and;
- entrepreneurial approach in generating revenue.

V. Compliance with Accreditation Standards
Standard 1: MISSION AND GOALS

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

The University’s mission statement is clear and concise and was approved by various University constituencies in June 2003. It is based on the concepts of “building character and career” and focuses on three goals: student achievement and success, institutional excellence, and community service. The mission is widely disseminated to faculty, staff, and students and is linked to the University’s strategic plan.

- There is evidence that the chief executive’s vision for the institution (Declining Public Support for Public Higher Education in Pennsylvania) is widely circulated and understood as part of the institution’s entrepreneurial culture.
- The institution has an ambitious vision statement to be recognized as “the best comprehensive public university in America” which is defined by a set of 18 related descriptors.
- The University has a set of core values based on integrity, civility, and responsibility that are aligned with its mission.
- The institution is guided by the four tenets stated in its “bill of rights.”
- There is a Faculty Professional Development Committee (FPDC) to assist faculty and staff to grow and foster a spirit of institutional and academic excellence.
- The mission statement is widely promoted through a variety of media including TV commercials, convocations, and the annual Mission Day.
- The mission and vision are distributed to entering students on a regular basis and are posted in the student center with the student bill of rights.

Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:

- All new students with fewer than 24 credit hours are required to enroll in a First Year Seminar.
- The average SAT scores rose from 962 in 2000 to 1028 in 2008.
- Students are tracked to ascertain if they are making appropriate academic progress in courses through the Probationary Assistance Program.
- The establishment of an effective Internship Center has resulted in 850+ placements during the previous year.
- The University is actively involved with community service and is in the process of hiring a community service coordinator.
- The University has been cited in US News and World Report and The Princeton Review.
- The University has established a Character Education Institute which promotes Steven Covey’s work on highly effective people and the four quadrants of the planning paradigm.
- The University has a proactive Career Services Office that offers a variety of services to students on career development.
Suggestions:

- The University should develop valid and reliable multiple measures to assess the impact it has on student character development.
- The University should develop and administer comprehensive undergraduate and graduate alumni surveys to assess the effectiveness of its mission and vision statements in addition to the current survey on job placement.

Standard 2: PLANNING RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL

California University of Pennsylvan ia meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

Cal U has embarked on an aggressive and forward-looking strategic plan, which has four general strategies:

1. becoming more productive and entrepreneurial;
2. improving the campus physical appearance, including building new residence halls;
3. providing high-quality education and career advisement, upgrading the faculty, and pursuing program accreditations, and;
4. increasing resource development via fundraising and developing partners.

The current three-year strategic plan (2009-12) was updated during a year-long process, updating activities and objectives for each of the seven major goals. As part of the planning process, members of the University community evaluated the success of the previous plan, reporting completion of 94% on the objectives. The eight goals in the current plan are modifications or additions to the previous goals, each containing a series of specific, actionable objectives with measures for assessing their achievement.

In addition, the University has also developed operational plans in a number of functional areas such as student development, enrollment management, campus marketing, information technology, and other areas. The University is implementing a Facilities Master Plan which will upgrade the campus facilities, grounds, and circulation patterns with a projected $270 million in new construction and renovations over a 15-year period. Cal U improved the quality and attractiveness of its campus by investing over $100 million in new facilities and renovations since 2000. The University has experienced significant enrollment growth over the past decade while concurrently improving the academic quality of its entering students. It has also embarked on a highly successful and growing Global Online educational program, which has yielded significant growth in enrollment and revenue.

Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:
The University has a significant record of achievements, which have been
informed by its strategic planning. The University leadership is very focused on data-
driven decision-making, particularly when it involves resources.

- Cal U received the highest level of performance funding of any of the PASSHE
  institutions in 2008-09, by meeting or exceeding its baseline targets on 19 of 23
  performance indicators.
- The Cal U in the High School Program has yielded an impressive number of
  graduates who subsequently enrolled at Cal U.
- Cal U is the first PASSHE institution to replace all its residence halls via a public-
  private partnership.
- The University has incorporated geothermal technology in its residence halls,
  saving more than $6 million in energy costs.
- The University’s Master Plan and planning process were considered for an award
  by The Society for College and University Planning (SCUP).
- Cal U is implementing a 100% gender equity plan in athletics.
- The University has embarked on a $35 million capital campaign, which is
  currently 60 percent achieved.

Planning at Cal U is well-developed and articulated. On balance, it satisfies
most, if not all, of the fundamental elements of the Middle States Standard on Planning
and Resource Allocation. The University has a clearly articulated mission and set of
goals and strategic initiatives which are reviewed and updated on a three-year cycle.
The strategic plan appears to inform much of the institution’s activity, program
development, and resource allocation. The University’s strategic plan includes
measures of success, assigns responsibility for the achievement of objectives, and
provides for a systematic periodic review and updating on a three-year basis.
However, the evidence was mixed concerning other aspects of the planning process at
the University.

One of the fundamental elements of the MSA Standard 2 requires that “goals
and objectives or strategies, both institution-wide and for individual units,… reflect
conclusions drawn from assessment results,…and are used for planning and resource
allocation at the institutional and unit levels.” While the planning goals were evident at
the institutional level, it is unclear whether corresponding planning goals and objectives
are articulated for all academic and administrative departments. While there were
references to such unit-level goals and objectives in the Student Development and
Administration and Finance areas, the evidence was mixed regarding other areas within
the University.

Similarly, the use of assessment results in planning appears uneven or
inconsistent. While the self-study suggests that such assessment of results is reported
in vice presidential annual reports and quarterly reports to the Council of Trustees, the
evidence was inconclusive as to the extent to which such reports contained formal
evaluative data or reflected the results of program assessments (e.g., a review of two
years of minutes of the Council of Trustees revealed quarterly reports presented by the president and vice presidents, but most were listed under the category of “informational” reports, and there was no direct reference to formal evaluation or planning). Middle States also draws attention to the need for “constituent participation” in the planning process, and the University’s weakness in this regard may be one manifestation of its broader challenges of university governance in general.

Finally, standard two requires that evaluation and the assessment of goal achievement be used for planning and resource allocation. There are several examples of the University’s plans informing resource allocation decisions including: decisions to invest in new athletic facilities to achieve gender equity, the development of smart classrooms throughout the campus, the “Cal U for Life” initiative, Continuous Improvement Program, etc. While most of these initiatives were developed by the University’s leadership, there were also indications that departmental initiatives were supported in the budgetary process. However, we believe a formal or systematic linkage between planning, evaluation, and resource allocation, while nascent, should be a priority for the University.

**Recommendations:**

- The University should develop and implement a more formal and rigorous system of assessment activities which can coordinate and link planning and resource allocation at all levels throughout the University.

**Standard 3: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES**

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings:**

Cal U is employing an entrepreneurial resource development and management strategy driven by the realization that public higher education has experienced dramatic reductions in State support over the past two decades. It has successfully pursued an aggressive program of resource acquisition via enrollment growth, expansion of online learning and other non-traditional programming, enhanced student recruitment and marketing efforts, private fundraising, public-private partnerships, and other entrepreneurial initiatives.

In terms of process, the University employs a fairly conventional institutional budgetary process, with both bottom-up and top-down elements. There is an annual departmental request process with reviews up the organizational levels with priorities assigned and initiatives endorsed by the president and senior management. The process culminates in the submission of the University’s budget request to PASSHE, which in turn is incorporated in the PASSHE Budget Request to the governor and
The University is to be commended for its entrepreneurship and flexibility in adapting to the new fiscal climate, and the extent to which its resource priorities are consistent with its strategic plans. However, as noted earlier, it is unclear whether there is adequate opportunity for input into the budget process by faculty or even the department chairs. While senior management appears sanguine about the efficacy of this process, there was less consensus among the stakeholders regarding the openness of the budget process. For example, while the role of the University Forum was often cited as one mechanism for consultation and advisement on the annual budget request, it was learned that the University Forum Budget Committee had not met in two years, and its last meeting was unproductive.

**Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:**

The University continues to grow despite reductions in State support. For example, the University’s total Education and General Budget grew by nearly 11% from 2008-09 to 2009-10 despite a 4% decline in State support. This was in part due to a 6% growth in enrollment as well as federal stimulus funding and nearly $5 million in PASSHE performance funds. State support now represents only 30% of the University’s E & G budget compared to 52% a decade ago. The online learning program generated nearly $5 million in tuition revenue and the University’s record on performance funding also reallocates a total of $4 million, or a $2 million net additional allocation of State funding to Cal U annually.

The University has been able to support an aggressive program of capital construction and renovations, with $70 million in new buildings currently under construction. University facilities appear clean and well maintained, and several new state-of-the-art facilities have been developed for student housing, recreation, food service facilities, computing labs, support services, classrooms, and related academic facilities over the past 10 years. While deferred maintenance on its older facilities is a growing challenge, the University’s facilities management staff has documented and prioritized these needs, developing a multi-year plan with current spending of approximately $3 million annually. The shortage of parking is especially acute, with only 2,700 spaces for a campus population of approximately 7,000 students, faculty, and staff. This is being addressed by a $20 million program to build a 660-space parking facility plus expansion and improvement of several surface lots.

The University provides state-of-the-art instructional facilities and equipment, and a multi-million dollar plan for upgrading all classrooms with progressive levels of “smart classroom” capabilities under development. The University library (142,000 square feet) has not had any upgrades in decade; the staff struggles to provide high-quality services in a facility that doesn’t have the infrastructure to support the information technology of today, let alone what the future may present. The University also budgets over $250,000 annually for faculty development.
The University is very focused on productivity and process improvement. Personnel cost as a percentage of its total budget has been reduced by four percentage points in recent years, and Cal U consistently ranks high on faculty productivity using PASSHE performance measures such as student/faculty ratio. Facilities improvements have produced savings in energy costs, including a $6 million savings via geothermal heating and cooling in the residence halls. Similarly, while Cal U has avoided the need to reduce positions during the State’s adverse fiscal climate, it is generating savings in personnel costs by maintaining vacant positions, hiring replacements at lower salaries, and implementing some administrative restructuring.

Nonetheless, the University is concerned about pending loss of funding when the current federal stimulus funds terminate in two years, PASSHE performance funding formulas are revised, and State appropriations and tuition revenue lag behind enrollment growth. While the University has been very creative and entrepreneurial to date, there may be some question whether the reliance on enrollment growth, including online programming, can be sustainable over the longer term.

Suggestions:

- MSA Standards on planning and resources emphasize the values of participation and transparency in budgeting as well as “resource allocation procedures and their relationship to planning, mission, goals, and objectives.” We encourage the University to develop a more formal, transparent, and participatory budget process which more clearly links the three interdependent functions of planning, budgeting, and evaluation.

Standard 4: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

Ultimate authority for the California University of Pennsylvania rests with the Board of Governors of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). The Board of Governors is a policy-driven board that has provided open access to policies, minutes, and decision-making processes. Since the Board of Governors is responsible for 14 institutions with locations throughout the state, each institution has its own Council of Trustees to which certain powers have been delegated. The Council of Trustees meets quarterly, has reporting responsibilities to the PASSHE Board of Governors, has sufficient political influence to support institutional initiatives, and is extremely supportive of all constituents of the institution including faculty, students, staff, alumni, and administrators. Overall, the balance of powers between the Governing Board, the Council of Trustees, the chancellor, and the president are clearly articulated in writing. Suitable conflict of interest policies exist to ensure impartiality. There is periodic assessment of the effectiveness of institutional leadership and governance.
In response to the 2000 Middle States reaffirmation of accreditation visit, the institution implemented the University Forum to serve as the primary source for faculty, staff, and student input into the governance process. This intended role was validated by the Council of Trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff that were interviewed. The team commends the initial efforts that the University community invested in for the successful establishment of this body as there is evidence that, in its formative stage, the University Forum served as a conduit for faculty, staff, and student input on policy recommendations. However, it is now evident that the University Forum currently faces a number of functional challenges.

A review of the Forum minutes indicates that in calendar year 2009, three of seven scheduled Forum meetings were cancelled for failing to achieve a quorum. In calendar year 2008, six of eight scheduled meetings were cancelled for the same reason. Of the meetings that were held in 2009, the Forum spent a total of 67 minutes on relevant business. In 2008, the total time spent on governance was 50 minutes. Forum participants who were interviewed indicated that little work was conducted in Forum committees and many committees did not meet during those periods.

Faculty members indicated that a significant contributing factor for lack of faculty participation in Forum meetings is the perception that the current bylaws are overly restrictive to the extent that dialog relevant to important issues facing particular constituencies is prohibited. The manner by which determinations are made as to what constitutes procedure, policy, or union-related issues is not clear. Many members of the University community feel frustrated that their voices are not heard by the administration on important issues affecting the University. This concern was discussed in the self-study and was reiterated many times during discussions with faculty and staff at the time of the visit. Senior administrators are attuned to this issue, though The Council of Trustees did not indicate awareness of the level of frustration and fear of retaliation that the faculty members expressed to the team during the visit.

The institution, in all good faith, tried to address this issue when it was raised 10 years ago during the previous reaffirmation of accreditation. However, from the perspective of the faculty and staff, the current shared governance model is not working effectively.

Suggestions:

- The team suggests that the institution complete an internal and external review of the Forum as previously contemplated by campus constituents as early as 2006.

Recommendations:

- The shared governance model should be addressed such that faculty, staff, and students feel that their input is welcomed and valued in decision-making practices of the institution.
Standard 5: ADMINISTRATION

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

California University has a full complement of administrators appropriate for the size and complexity of the University. Under the leadership of Dr. Armenti, Cal U has created an entrepreneurial approach to its strategic planning in response to the fiscal challenges facing all public institutions of higher education. The strategic plan for 2009-2012 is accessible on the University’s Web page. The Mission of the University is summarized in its tag line “Building Character. Building Careers,” and has wide support and understanding throughout the University constituencies.

President Armenti belongs to a unique group of university presidents by serving Cal U for almost 18 years. Nonetheless, turnover in Academic Affairs is prevalent (four provosts and six deans in the last four years). There is evidence that many senior-level administrators (dean and above) are hired from within and appointed without searches after serving in an interim capacity which is a concern among many members of the faculty.

Senior administrators work as a cohesive team under a strong leader and appear to be competent in carrying out their responsibilities. Appropriate administrative restructuring and creation of vice presidential positions has taken place in response to the growing importance of university advancement, development, and information technology. The two additional vice president positions were searched and filled externally.

The Council of Trustees, appointed by the Governor of Pennsylvania, sets local fees and recommends academic programs to the Board of Governors. In addition to providing presidential evaluation feedback to the Chancellor, the Council of Trustees serves in an advisory capacity to the president. The Trustees are actively engaged in the University community and are extremely supportive of the administration.

Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:

- Cal U has adapted a leadership development model based on Steven Covey’s Seven Principles of Highly Effective People. Senior and middle managers are well-versed in this leadership framework and refer to it often.
- There is a clearly identified Mission that is understood widely by the community and captured in the tag line “Building Character. Building Careers.”
- Cal U has experienced significant enrollment increase over the past decade (45% in the last 10 years).
- Growth in graduate online programs is a strategic initiative that is focused on generating significant revenue for the University.
• Facility enhancements have dramatically improved the campus ambience in an effort to appear like a private institution. The new convocation center will draw external funds to the campus and contribute to improving the image and reputation of Cal U beyond the region.
• Cal U has led the 14 State schools in acquiring an extra $5.2 million in performance funding based on the performance measures established by Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). This additional unrestricted revenue is used to support many initiatives in the Strategic Plan.

Suggestions:

• The evaluation team respects the prerogative of the president to make senior-level administrative appointments in his chosen style and recognizes the value of selective appointments of internal candidates. However, the team felt that a better balance between external and internal candidates may benefit the institution, especially in the area of academic affairs. There are many reasons to have an open search process for senior-level administrators. For example, a clear description of job responsibilities shared with the organization could possibly initiate internal interest where there may have been none previously. Clear expectations of qualifications regarding credentials and experience for each position are developed in advance and understood by affected constituencies. Also, a wide array of perspectives and feedback on candidates contributes to a more informed appointment decision. Finally, there is increased “buy-in” of the successful candidate when the search process is more inclusive and transparent.
• A comprehensive policy manual for all employees at Cal U should be developed.

Standard 6: Integrity

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

The team finds that the University has clearly stated policies and procedures designed to produce an environment in which high academic standards are enforced. Faculty, staff, and students have open access to information that clarifies policies and procedures designed to ensure a climate of integrity. Sound and ethical policies exist that reduce the possibility of conflicts of interest, and agreements are currently in place to ensure the preservation of intellectual property rights, and academic and intellectual freedom. Access to catalogs, in paper and electronic form, is available to students and the public, and the institution is in compliance with Middle States and other reporting requirements. The University has policies that discourage academic dishonesty, which are communicated to students in University publications.

The team received the institution’s graduation, retention, certification, licensing information, as well as additional information associated with the University’s Common
Data Set. Team discussions with University staff and administration reveal that the University collects this information on a regular basis, but such information was difficult to find on the University’s Web site.

Suggestions:

- The University should place retention and graduation rates, and other information in places that are easier for prospective students, parents, and other University constituents to access.
- The University might consider surveying faculty, staff, and administrators to learn more about the degree to which various University constituents feel policies and procedures are fairly implemented.

Standard 7: INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

The University assessment process includes continuous monitoring of the University’s Strategic Plan which is closely aligned to with the goals and objectives of PASSHE. A standard set of PASSHE performance funding objectives for internal and external comparisons is monitored with a goal of achieving maximum performance funding.

A “data group” collects and analyzes data for employing multiple measures for institutional assessment purposes (performance indicators, system accountability plan, baselines (internal), benchmarks, peer institutions). The University has technical support available to assist with the construction and administration of satisfaction surveys.

The University Office of Continuous Improvement assists with the development and administration of numerous service-related satisfaction surveys that are utilized for program/service improvement in some cases. For example, such assessments resulted in service improvement by moving the Math Lab, Writing Center, and Advising and Placement –Testing Center into one building; another included enhancing the role of Student Orientation leaders by creating links between Student Orientation and the Student Mentoring Program. However, it is not clear if the University is taking full advantage of the data for the improvement of programs and services.

Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:

- The University has created an Office of Continuous Improvement.
- The University has 21 of 32 programs accredited by national associations.
- The University employs “lead and lag” reports to constantly monitor select
organizational factors from enrollments and FTE’s generated, to productivity-related measures.

Suggestions:

- While the University leadership has created a culture that emphasizes and embraces the concept of continuous improvement, evident by their promotion of Steven Covey’s principles and the creation of the Office of Continuous Improvement, the senior administration should equally support the efforts to assess student learning (see Standard 14).
- The team accepts the University’s Middle States Standard 7 report recommendation about “developing an institutional assessment structure, both operationally and on paper. The structure and charts should integrate and depict institutional assessment activities, links, and relationships.”
- The team suggests the institution embrace a comprehensive institutional culture of assessment that focuses on “closing the loop between assessment activities and program improvements.”
- The team suggests developing an all-inclusive institutional assessment process that is organized; systematized, and sustained. The process should communicate the results of assessment activities, share action plans for program improvement, and celebrate program improvement successes.
- The team accepts the University’s Middle States Standard 7 report recommendation to “develop and maintain, a central repository that would house, collect, evaluate, analyze, and integrate all university-wide assessments.”
- Responsibility for maintaining such an archive with related services could be delegated to an existing office or could lead to the creation of a new comprehensive Institutional Assessment Office.
- The University appears to lack a comprehensive learning outcome assessment structure (see Standard 14).
- The University emphasizes the concept of institutional effectiveness in its service satisfaction surveys administered by the Office of Continuous Improvement. The University also needs to emphasize the assessment of student learning outcomes (see Standard 14).

Standard 8: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND RETENTION

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

Cal U has successfully delivered the message to its students that the institution offers a high quality, affordable education with an emphasis on building character and careers. In general, the University has been very effective with regard to enrollment management. The institution’s plan is sustentative, having resulted in a steady improvement in both admissions criteria and in the retention of students. A variety of
programs and services has been created to ensure the success of admitted students (including those admitted marginally). Particular emphasis has been placed on ongoing assessment of student success, retention, and attrition.

- Admissions policies support and reflect the mission of the institution (character and careers), and criteria are available to assist prospective students. A progressive enrollment management plan has been developed over the past decade – minimum requirements have been raised including higher admissions criteria and higher academic quality and scholarly expectations. There has been an increase in enrollment, GPA, and standardized test scores.
- Significant efforts have been made to recruit and retain underrepresented minority students. Outreach efforts have been conducted in urban areas and have included the hiring of a Hispanic admissions recruiter.
- Catalogs, view books, Web-based materials/presence (facebook, blogs, podcasts, SMS) and other marketing materials have been improved. Additionally, more accurate and comprehensive information on financial aid, grants, and scholarships is being provided to potential and current students.
- Programs and services to ensure the success of students admitted marginally include – First Year Seminars, early warning assessments, needs lists, PASS programs, developmental programs, labs (math, reading and writing), and other clinics.
- Accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs and testing have been improved. These include increased program initiatives, enhanced recruitment efforts, better use of technology, increased learning resources, and a new welcome center.
- Greater emphasis has been placed on learning outcomes and networking opportunities. These combined with the Career Advantage Initiative have helped to boost retention rates.
- On-going assessment of student success, retention, and attrition has improved. Greater emphasis has been placed on issues of retention as a result of the decreasing numbers of high school students) in the region. Additionally, an Office of Retention and Success, staffed with Student Success Facilitators, has been created, and residential life services, recreational facilities, and smart classrooms have been enhanced. Most importantly, a five-part plan for student retention has been created by the University.

**Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:**

- Enrollment has increased, minimum standards have been raised, admissions criteria have been improved, and academic quality and scholarly expectations have increased. The average GPA and standardized test scores have also increased.
- The University is to be commended for the significant increase in retention rates.
- The University has established an Office of Student Retention and Success and a Career Advantage Initiative. A five-part plan for student retention has been implemented.
• Greater emphasis has been placed on the recruitment and retention of under-represented minority students, with outreach to urban areas and the hiring of key personnel (Hispanic Admissions Coordinator).

Suggestions:

• Continue academic standards improvement – steadily increasing minimum scores.
• Efforts to recruit under-represented minority students should be on-going and enhanced.
• The University should continue to improve its efforts in assessing student retention, success, and attrition.
• Consideration should be given to recruiting more international students and increasing the presence of international students and internationalization efforts on campus.
• More comprehensive information should be assembled for prospective students with disabilities.

Standard 9: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

The University has developed a strong, comprehensive student support services network which fulfills the institution’s mission of building character and careers. The institution is actively engaged in efforts which help students to realize their full potential. Students perceive the support services staff as helpful and supportive. Through a varied spectrum of student services (i.e., traditional student affairs areas), the institution is able to provide students with resources necessary to support and enhance both the in-classroom and out-of-classroom experience. This support includes, but is not limited to, service and referrals, academic advisement, extra and co-curricular activities, appropriate structures for delivering student support, comprehensive student support communications, and assessment of student satisfaction.

• Student Services meets the institution’s mission and provides varied services and communications. Areas that are particularly noteworthy include, but are not limited to, the student activities transcript, the Multicultural Center (International Student Services, BSU, HSU), the Women’s Center, the PEACE Project, Safe Zone, and Career Network. There is ample evidence to indicate that the institution has a structure appropriate to delivering successful student services.
• The Residence Life program is of high quality, and housing is in great demand. Additionally, the institution has successfully implemented a 24-hour Health Services operation and an expanded Counseling Center operation which provides needed services to students.
- The Athletics program has moved aggressively and successfully toward gender equity in its programmatic areas.
- The advisement procedures appear to be strong. The Department of Academic Development has created a series of initiatives that include transfer student services, student development, academic support services, student advisement, tutoring, mentoring programs, and disability services. The Student Retention Office is particularly noteworthy. In general the Divisions of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs have a collaborative working relationship.
- Students are receiving a positive developmental experience. Quality program initiatives, the SAI and SGA leadership experiences, community service and civic engagement experiences reflect a holistic student development approach.
- The Student Services areas have established good communication practices which provide students with the information necessary to navigate the institution and ensure student success. The practices have included, but are not limited to, Web-based communications, e-mail announcements, the use of social networking, handbooks, etc.
- Student Services has conducted on-going analysis of services and conducted numerous student satisfaction surveys (i.e. Web-based, surveys, NSSE, ACT, FSSE, focus groups etc). Assessment of student services is on-going.

**Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:**

- The institution is to be commended for its work on issues related to multicultural affairs. While the institution struggles to recruit and retain underrepresented minority students, the creation of a Multicultural Center and the PEACE Project is a worthwhile effort. Additionally, the effort to collaborate with faculty and academic areas on issues of social justice is to be commended.
- The creation of a Student Retention Office, a Career Networking and Advantage Programs and a Mentoring Program deserves special mention.

**Suggestions:**

- The team supports all recommendations listed in the self-study and believes they should be implemented.
- The institution should consider expanding its commuter student services (both assessing the current needs of commuter students and creating a commuter student services department). The majority of the Cal U population are commuters.
- Outreach and services to graduate students should be evaluated and enhanced.
- Services for transfer and non-traditional students should be assessed and where appropriate improved and enhanced.
- An analysis of the needs and resources of the Women’s Center and the Women’s Studies Program should be conducted. The institution should consider making a greater commitment to these areas financially, with space and with additional staff.
- Student mentoring at all levels should be developed and enhanced.
• Support services for international students should be evaluated and, where appropriate, enhanced.
• Services for students with disabilities should be evaluated. Special attention should be given to Assistive Technology Services for both on campus and online students.
• Multicultural Affairs should be evaluated on a deeper level to ensure that underrepresented minority students feel welcome in the Cal U community and that the needs of students from marginalized groups are being addressed. The discussions related to social justice should be substantive with great breadth and depth.
• A needs assessment of space (specifically meeting space for student clubs and organizations as well as athletic facilities for women), should be conducted and possible space reallocation or opportunities should be explored.
• Student academic advisement, particularly access to advisement conducted by faculty, should be reviewed.

**Standard 10: FACULTY**

California University of Pennsylvania **meets** this standard.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings:**

The University has 295 full-time faculty, who, along with all faculty in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, are unionized and represented by the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties. In addition to a teaching load of 12 credits a semester, faculty conduct research and participate in community and university service, including program and curriculum development.

Overall, the faculty are appropriately credentialed. Although the University has been making progress on increasing the number of faculty with terminal degrees (currently 78.5% of the faculty have terminal degrees), the percentage with terminal degrees is still below the system benchmark of 90%.

Most personnel policies and procedures are clearly spelled out in the collective bargaining agreement between the APSCUF and the State System; others are clearly articulated in University policy and included in a Faculty Handbook. The faculty evaluation process is appropriate and well documented, and includes student evaluations, self assessment, peer review, and annual evaluations by a department committee, the department chair, and the dean. Untenured faculty are reviewed annually, and tenured faculty every five years. The promotion and tenure review processes are independent. In both cases, departments and deans recommend promotion and/or tenure to University-wide committees, which forward promotion recommendations to the provost and tenure recommendations to the president, who makes the final decision in consultation with the provost.

An active Faculty Professional Development Committee (FPDC) administers
funds for faculty development and travel. Faculty expressed satisfaction with the amount of funding and activities available for professional development, but the funding sources do not support paying for faculty time, so faculty are not able to use these resources to pursue time-intensive professional development activities.

Through the program review process, Curriculum Committee, the General Education Committee, and the Faculty Senate, faculty produce and review programs and courses; however, administrative decisions to drop classes and allow for course substitutions undermine faculty ability to maintain the curriculum.

**Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:**

- Faculty have in place a strong mentoring program for new faculty seeking promotion and tenure.
- Faculty have demonstrated a strong commitment to teaching and student success.

**Suggestions:**

- The University should consider allowing professional development funds to be used for faculty release time.
- The team encourages the institution to address the self-study recommendation to continue to increase the number of women faculty and faculty of color.
- While the team recognizes that faculty concerns regarding academic quality need to be tempered by administrative and budgetary realities, the team believes that the academic decision-making process would be enhanced if administrators consulted with faculty more frequently.

**Standard 11: EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS**

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings:**

Cal U is a comprehensive institution and offers a variety of degree programs at the associate, bachelor and graduate levels. The degree programs on the whole provide the content, breadth, and depth required of a substantive university education. CALU offers 12 associate arts, 64 bachelor, and 17 graduate programs, indicating an appropriate range of degree programs for this type of institution. At the undergraduate level, students must fulfill a well-developed general education curriculum as well as complete a significant portion of upper-division courses, as mandated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

There have been increased energies placed on articulating learning outcomes for each program and subsequently assessing both student learning and program
outcomes; the results, however, are inconsistent and vary across programs. Those programs that have sought external accreditation are much further along in implementing appropriate measures of student achievement of learning outcomes, and in using the results of those assessments to improve their programs. The assessment of student learning outcomes and of program outcomes is tied to periodic program review, which thus offers a good working model for all programs and is being implemented on a consistent basis. Prior Middle States reports have stressed the need to implement a comprehensive plan for the assessment of student learning and use assessment results to improve student learning. Efforts have clearly been made; nonetheless, this is an area that still needs sustained attention.

- The academic programs are characterized by breadth, as well as depth, and display an appropriate balance between general education and upper-division courses.
- The institution has appropriate learning resources and services to support students in the completion of their degree programs.
- The general education curriculum is sufficiently broad and comprehensive.
- There is a defined transfer articulation policy.
- Program outcomes assessment for both undergraduate and graduate programs is incorporated into program review in an effort to systematize student learning and program outcomes assessment. This model appears to be working well.
- Cal U Global Online is a very successful and innovative program that has generated increased enrollments and revenue streams. Consistent assessment of the program as a whole as well as the differences between online and onsite delivery must be continued.

**Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:**

- Development of Cal U Global Online
- Development of advisory boards for a number of programs, such as the Faculty Internship Advisory Committee and the Teacher Education Advisory Board, that help develop new programs, revise program goals, develop continuous improvement plans, and generate internship and career placement.
- Effort to increase the number of programs seeking accreditation where applicable from 65% to 80%.
- Development of partnerships with other institutions such as Penn State to offer innovative programs, e.g., development of a nanotechnology concentration.
- Growth in experiential activities such as practicums, co-ops, and internships.
- The institution is sensitive to the needs of non-traditional students and has developed programs and schedules to meet their needs, such as accelerated formats, evening and weekend course rotations, Web-based synchronous instruction, Prior Learning Assessment, and +2 BS completion programs for those with a similar associate degree.

**Suggestions:**
• Analyze collected comparative data between onsite and online delivery, particularly in relation to the Cal U Global Online program. Assess and evaluate student learning in onsite and online versions of identical courses. Ensure that student learning in the various delivery formats is consistent.
• Expand the number of program advisory boards, including Cal U graduates and external representatives, to provide recommendations and expertise for continued evaluation of programs, internship placement, curricular innovation, etc.
• Establish a University-wide guideline for the content component of internships.
• Continue to survey all graduates about training and skills they received, and utilize this information for program improvement.
• Establish a best practices document or Web site of successful learning and program outcomes assessment for programs to use as models in developing their own.
• Require that all programs continue to engage in substantive program review with a clear plan for sustained student learning and program outcome assessment.
• Ensure that all programs are using assessment results in a systematic and sustained fashion that is tied to student learning and program improvement.
• Monitor the impact of increasing enrollments and increasing class sizes on the quality of the educational programs.

Standard 12: GENERAL EDUCATION

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

General education requirements are consistent with the University’s mission to promote character and careers, and consist of at least 49 credits, including a First Year Seminar, two upper-division intensive writing classes in the major, and three upper-division General Education classes (9 credits). The areas for general education include critical thinking, public speaking, mathematics, multicultural awareness, values, health and wellness, humanities, fine arts, natural sciences, social sciences, technological literacy, and laboratory.

• The general education categories, the objectives within each of those categories, and the courses included in each, are listed in the catalog and on the institution’s Web site.
• General education provides a good foundation for the majors offered and is integrated into majors when appropriate. Program advisement sheets, developed for each program, include the general education requirements, including any requirements specific to a program.
• The University has a plan for assessing general education, but the actual process is in a nascent stage.
• Although the General Education Committee approves all courses prior to
including them on the general education menu, administrators have the authority to drop courses from the curriculum and make substitutions (e.g., the catalog menu for a second-level composition class includes ENG102 and HON250; but after cutting back on ENG102 courses, the administration allowed students to substitute other ENG courses for that class.).

**Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:**

- University faculty are fully invested in the general education process and the General Education Committee has made a careful review of all the courses included on the General Education menus.
- The General Education Committee has made earnest efforts to assess student outcomes from general education and, as a result, has proposed a revised review process that builds on the departmental student outcomes assessment process in place for the academic programs.

**Suggestions:**

- Decision-making processes should be reviewed to ensure that faculty have responsibility for developing, implementing, and maintaining the general education curriculum.

**Recommendations:**

- General education student learning assessment is only in its beginning stages, due to a number of constraints, be it a lack of institutional resources (e.g., release time) or a lack of participation. While a plan appears to be in place, little or no progress has been made over the years, despite Middle States' notice to the institution that it must work toward compliance with the elements germane to this standard. The institution must implement a system of general education assessment that features specific student learning outcomes for all elements of its general education program of study, the assessment of student learning (including direct assessments, or evaluations of actual student work), discussion of findings by faculty, and the use of such information in enhancing curriculum, teaching, and student learning.

**Standard 13: RELATED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings:**

California University of Pennsylvania’s related educational activities demonstrate the institution’s commitment to its core values of integrity, civility, and responsibility. The related educational activities provide a wide array of educational opportunities for Cal U
students as well as regional residents.

Given the tremendous rate of growth of the online programs at California University, the team paid particular attention to efforts related to Global Online. While the self-study, supporting documents, and various reports appear to emphasize the financial benefits of the online programs, administrators and participating faculty routinely emphasized access and program quality as the primary factors for pursuing these offerings. This emphasis is validated by evidence that there is an attempt to manage the sizes of individual sections of online courses. The institution should continue to focus on these primary drivers for implementing the online programs. There are examples of assessments of student learning outcomes and faculty evaluations that have been provided for the online programs. Discussions with faculty and administrators indicate that all new online programs and related courses are reviewed by the University Curriculum Committee. All new Web-based programs must meet a number of established preconditions that includes relevance to mission, financial viability, and market demand before being considered for implementation. All online courses are subject to the standard approval processes for new courses and to the established assessment procedures for traditional campus courses.

Additionally, the self-study outlines the various related education activities, such as the Summer Educational Enrichment for Kids (SEEK) Program, Lifelong Learning initiative, certificate programs, distance/online learning through Cal U Global Online, experiential learning opportunities, and activities at additional locations.

Of particular note are the efforts spearheaded by the Office of Student Retention and Success. The institution is well on its way toward helping underprepared students succeed at the campus. Various learning resource programs such as Student Retention, Probationary Assistance, First Year Seminar, Peer Mentoring, and Math, Writing, and Reading Clinics have been located in a centralized building to facilitate student participation and access. The institution should be commended on its ability to identify niche online programs that are consistent with its mission and provide access to the institution.

**Suggestions:**

- Comparisons between the effectiveness of online courses versus in-class courses should be formally included as part of the assessment of programmatic and general education student learning outcomes.

**Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning**

California University of Pennsylvania meets this standard.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings:**

The institution has endeavored to engage in student learning assessment at
course and program levels, as well as in online programs. The institution has developed a common template which departments and programs have used to construct their assessment reports, and which has served as a means of communicating common expectations about student learning to programs and departments. As a result of the efforts of college and department assessment coordinators, the associate provost for student retention and success, deans, department chairs, and other individuals, assessment at program levels generally includes defined student learning outcomes, assessments of these outcomes, and strategies for following up on any recommendations made as a result of a review of these assessments. Interviews with key individuals involved in the assessment of academic programs (e.g., the University Committee on the Assessment of Student Learning, department chairs, etc.) reveal that the institution is actively seeking accreditation for eligible programs, although the team concurs with observations in the self-study that there are differences in the quality of assessment efforts among academic programs, with accredited programs generally having more advanced and useful assessment programs. Yet, the team also found evidence of the faculty’s support for student learning assessment in both accredited and non-accredited programs.

Assessments associated with co-curricular programs and activities appear to be appropriate to the scope and intent of the institution’s mission and vision. A review of the self-study’s assertions relating to Cal U’s distance learning programs also indicates that the institution has engaged in meaningful and useful student learning assessment in distance learning programs.

The institution’s catalog affirms Cal U’s commitment to a liberal (general) education, but the institution’s assessment of learning in several areas of general education is only at its beginning stages. The General Education Committee has attempted to organize and implement a system in which randomly selected courses participate in assessment and then submit reports, but response rates for those courses have been low. Other reasons cited for lack of progress in this area by University administrators, faculty, and members of the curriculum and assessment committee are numerous, but include a high turnover in deans and provosts, the paucity of measurable student learning outcomes in general education, and a lack of faculty released-time and staff to administer the assessment of general education.

The associate provost for student retention and success, the curriculum and general education committees, college assessment coordinators, department facilitators, and other faculty, have worked hard to implement general education assessment plans and remain committed to doing so. Their efforts should be widely recognized and applauded. However, there appears to be little emphasis on general education assessment in current strategic plans at the University and academic affairs levels although the Division of Academic Affairs indicates that it is currently working with faculty to include assessment of student learning in its future strategic plan both for educational offerings and general education which is to be finalized in future months.

A review of a few assessment initiatives the University already participates in
suggests that potentially meaningful information might be available for general education assessment. For example, the University has participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which has questions relating to general education, but conversations with faculty, staff, and administration reveal few efforts to discuss ways these data can be used. At the behest of the Pennsylvania State University System, the institution is a participant in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), which requires the use of one of three standardized tests to assess student learning in critical thinking and other areas, but few administrators or faculty were aware of what these tests were or what they measured.

In addition, there appears to be a lack of vision for what general education assessment might be used for, once it is successfully implemented. When academic administrators and members of key committees involved in assessment were asked what their visions and expectations were for a well-functioning assessment system in general education, there were few substantive recommendations for what kinds of direct assessments might be used. Yet, consistent with generally accepted principles of continuous improvement, successful institutions must engage in continued renewal through the practice of targeted, meaningful, and useful assessments, supported by a vision for how such information is to be used, and with sufficient support to see the assessment process through so that such continual renewal might occur. Successful student learning assessment begins with leadership from the top, but it is unclear the extent to which University leadership understands or supports assessment, particularly in general education.

The team therefore concludes that assessment in educational program offerings is functioning satisfactorily, but that the institution cannot currently ascertain what strengths and weaknesses exist in student learning within its general education curriculum, beyond course grades and transcript analyses.

**Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:**

- The institution has organized a system whereby departments and programs can report their assessment activities on a regular basis, a process that is well thought-out, and which is rare at many institutions in the region. The associate provost for student retention and success, faculty serving as assessment coordinators, and others who have played a role in developing this system should be congratulated for their efforts to design this system, and in their efforts to implement it.
- Cal U has begun to organize a system of feedback from advisory boards in several programs. Further use of advisory boards should serve the institution well with regard to informing faculty about the quality of learning in the area of career development.

**Suggestions:**

- The University has collected information from various surveys, including the
National Survey of Student Engagement. While survey data are usually indirect, not direct, methods of assessment (in that they do not involve the direct observation of student performance in areas such as composition), they can still provide meaningful information about the quality of a liberal (general) education. Sometimes, such data can be used to assess the quality of some outcomes in general education. The institution might consider using survey data for indirect measures of assessment, if not to simply begin conversations about the quality of student learning in both general education and in the institution’s several educational offerings.

- Although a system of student learning assessment in educational programs has been organized, there is a disparity in the quality of assessment between accredited and non-accredited programs. The institution should continue monitoring this disparity by encouraging all programs to engage in the direct assessment of student learning, giving feedback periodically.
- The team agrees with the self-study’s recommendation that the Assessment of Student Learning Committee be redesigned to add representatives from the General Education Committee, Student Development and Services, and other principal parties, and that the president might empower the committee to implement its own recommendations. Such a committee should have its own budget. The chair of the committee might report to the provost or provost’s designee.
- The institution might consider conducting workshops with faculty to discuss ways that assessment information can be successfully used to inform curriculum decisions, teaching, and learning.
- Teams of faculty involved in general education assessment and senior administrators in the Division of Academic Affairs might consider attending workshops together on general education assessment, many of which are sponsored by regional and national organizations such as the American Association of Colleges and Universities, Middle States, etc. Through such participation, administrators and faculty might also learn from many institutions that assess general education outcomes particularly well.

**Recommendations:**

- Assessment of student learning, in educational offerings and general education, should be included in the strategic plan for the Division of Academic Affairs, with specific goals and objectives regarding the implementation of assessment efforts.

- The self-study recommends that release time be given to a faculty member who might therefore have enough time to collect and aggregate information in order to facilitate student learning assessment in general education. However, the team feels that a full-time assessment professional, with experience in student learning assessment, should be hired to oversee and coordinate the student learning assessment process. This person should have a direct line to the Provost or President, and should be charged with interacting with faculty leadership, to ensure that the student learning process is legitimate, meaningful, and useful.
VI. Summary of Recommendations for Continuing Compliance and Requirements

Based on an extensive review and discussion of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, it is the conclusion of the team that California University of Pennsylvania meets all of the standards for accreditation as presented in the Characteristics of Excellence.

Again, the team was impressed with the faculty’s commitment to a student-centered learning environment and the strong dedication on the part of the administration to assure that the University remains financially viable in these strenuous economic times. With the significant enrollment growth the University has experienced in recent years, in particular through the Cal U Global Online initiative, and the strategic focus on statewide performance indicators, the team encourages the entire campus community to be mindful of assuring quality in its academic and support services programs. The following summary recommendations are made by the team to assist the University in assuring that the quality of student learning remains a preeminent priority of the University and that California University remains on track in meeting the accreditation standards set forth by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Recommendation One:

Standard Two refers to the relationship between planning, resource allocation, and assessment for institutional renewal and to improve and to maintain institutional quality.

- The team recommends that the University develop and implement a more formal and rigorous system of assessment activities which can coordinate and link planning and resource allocation at all levels throughout the University.

Recommendation Two:

Standard Four calls for accredited institutions “…to possess or demonstrate…a well-defined system of collegial governance including written policies outlining governance responsibilities of administration and faculty…” (p.15, Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education). Though the University has created such a system, from the faculty and staff perspective, it prohibits the ability to have significant dialog on many important issues facing the University. Therefore:

- The team recommends the shared governance model (University Forum) should be revised such that faculty, staff, and students feel that their input is welcomed and valued in decision-making practices of the institution.

Recommendation Three:
Standard Fourteen emphasizes the assessment of student learning and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education considers the assessment of both institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes central to the 14 standards. Additionally the University’s Strategic Plan Goal Four states, “To continue to incorporate continuous improvement into all programs and activities, University–wide, to ensure competitive excellence.” Therefore:

- The team recommends that the assessment of student learning, in educational offerings and general education, should be included in the University and Division of Academic Affairs strategic plan, with specific goals and objectives regarding the implementation of assessment efforts.

**Recommendation Four:**

Standard Fourteen states, “Organized, systemized, and sustained assessment processes are on-going, not once-and-done. There should be clear interrelationships among institutional goals, program- and unit-level goals, and course-level goals. Assessments should clearly relate to important goals, and improvements should clearly stem from assessment results.” The self-study report recommends that release time be given to a faculty member who might therefore have enough time to collect and aggregate information in order to facilitate student learning assessment in general education. However:

- The team feels that a full-time assessment professional, with experience in student learning assessment, should be hired to oversee and coordinate the student learning assessment process. This person should have a direct line to the provost or president, and should be charged with interacting with faculty leadership, to ensure that the student learning process is legitimate, meaningful, and useful.

**Recommendation Five:**

General education student learning assessment is only in its beginning stages at Cal U, due to a number of constraints, be it a lack of institutional resources (e.g., release time) or a lack of participation. While a plan appears to be in place, little or no progress has been made over the years, despite Middle States’ notice to the institution that it must work toward compliance with the elements germane to this standard.

In Standard Twelve (General Education) there is an expectation that institutions demonstrate “…assessment of general education outcomes within the institution’s overall plan for assessing student learning, and evidence that such assessment results are utilized for curricular improvement” (p.48, _Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education_). Therefore:

- The team recommends the institution implement a system of general education assessment that features specific student learning outcomes for all elements of
its general education program of study, the assessment of student learning (including direct assessments, or evaluations of actual student work), discussion of findings by faculty, and the use of such information in enhancing curriculum, teaching, and student learning.