This Middle States Newsletter focuses on the activities of Working Group 3, co-chaired by Gary Levine, Professor, Department of Psychology and Denise Ohler, Assistant Dean, College of Science and Health Professions. This Group examined **Standard 5: Administration, Standard 6, Integrity and Standard 10: Faculty** to determine if Edinboro University met the key fundamental elements and broader intent of these standards.

As described in the *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation* (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2006), **Standard 5, Administration**, focuses on whether “the institution’s administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution’s organization and governance (p. x).”

The Working Group reviewed current policies, practices and factors impacting administrative structure and functioning. It is well recognized that the University has experienced significant administrative turnover during the past five years. Additionally, administrative reorganization has occurred both as a result of necessity due to administrative changes and thoughtful review and planning. The Working Group reported that the hiring and review of administrative personnel follows PASSHE policy and utilizes PASSHE processes. The self-study process revealed areas of concern regarding support of administrative functions, especially access to verifiable institutional data. Addressing this need has resulted in changes across several domains including personnel, data collection, and data dissemination. Early in the process, it was realized the Edinboro is relatively lean in terms of administrative and management personnel compared to other schools within PASSHE. This need for additional administrative staff has resulted in some new positions primarily in the areas of student academic support, veterans’ services, enrollment management, and marketing and communications.

As a result of the Group’s findings, two suggestions were made with regard to Standard 5:
• The University should develop and institute policies and procedures for regular review and revision of University hiring processes. While there is evidence showing that Edinboro University follows PASSHE policy for conducting searches, there is no evidence showing systematic assessment of the effectiveness of the University’s implementation of those policies in its hiring process.

• Summary reports indicating progress on key indicators such as enrollment and retention should be made available to the University community as a “dashboard” on the University’s institutional research webpage. Dashboard reports should be tailored to the needs of colleges, schools, departments, and programs in order to facilitate informed planning and decision-making.

**Standard 6, Integrity**, focuses on whether “in the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom (p. x).”

The Working Group’s findings for this Standard showed that Edinboro University follows PASSHE policy, relevant federal and state laws, and applicable collective bargaining agreements in meeting its mission. Additionally, University policies are consistent with these larger directives. Information to better inform all constituencies, including catalogs was reviewed. It was noted that the transition to electronic formats has posed some challenges but ongoing evaluation of practices, primarily in the Registrar’s area, has ensured that materials are current and accessible. Nonetheless, it was noted that data availability and distribution should be consistent across venues.

A concern found across several working groups, and perhaps most applicable to the area of integrity, was difficulty in obtaining current, valid and reliable data. As a result of this deficiency, efforts to assure data integrity have been initiated.

The findings of this Working Group regarding the Integrity Standard, led to two recommendations and four suggestions.

• Because data integrity is a critical issue, as discussed above in relation to Standard 5 (Administration) and below in relation to Standard 10 (Faculty), all reported data should link to one central data source that has been vetted for consistency and accuracy. The implementation of the new BoroReports data warehouse is a major step in this direction and should be carefully assessed to verify data accuracy. All publicly reported data and information should be presented with well-documented sources and definitions.

• It is recommended that a mechanism be established to ensure that information on the University’s website is routinely reviewed and updated. Historically, there has not been a process in place to review the accuracy of information in a timely and systematic manner.

• Since formal and systematic review of University policies has been recently transitioned to the University Senate, the review process and outcomes should be assessed to ensure efficacy.

• Employee participation in social equity training should be increased.

• Since first-year students participating in Common Hour and New Student Orientation receive information regarding student and academic policies and procedures, the material presented should be consistent and complete so that students are informed about policies and procedures regarding discrimination and grade appeals, for example. Students can locate many resources through the
Piper’s Guide on the University website or a similar web presence; however, the method of communication of these resources should be assessed for effectiveness.

- With regard to Integrity, the following measures are suggested:
  - Develop a testing center for online courses in which the secure proctoring of exams is ensured. It is recognized that the University already offers a mechanism and process for faculty to require proctored exams for online courses.
  - Create a standard template for reporting pass rates for credentials in fields such as nursing; speech, language, and hearing; and education.
  - Create a drop-down menu under the “About Us” button on the University webpage with links to the Fact Book, Common Data Set, College Portrait, and other sites that contain information that would be of interest to prospective students, their parents, and the general public.

**Standard 10, Faculty**, addresses whether “the institution’s instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals (p. x).”

In its review of evidence pertaining to the research questions for this Standard, the Working Group reported that the collective bargaining agreement between PASSHE and APSCUF drives conditions of employment for faculty, e.g. practices for faculty appointment, promotion, tenure, and evaluation. Local policies and practices are reviewed and debated at the local Meet & Discuss (monthly meetings between management and APSCUF) sessions. Hiring practices are systematized but not evaluated to assess their effectiveness. Despite an increase in part-time faculty, Edinboro University continues to have fewer part-time faculty on average than comparable institutions.

Academic programs continue to be ranked well and faculty scholarship is robust. The analysis finds that support for faculty professional development is strong when one includes sabbatical leaves, although there is currently no institution-wide, systematic process for providing resources for faculty development. However, the University’s Strategic Plan calls for the establishment of a Center to support and enhance the delivery of instruction and support faculty more broadly.

As a result of the findings regarding Standard 10, one recommendation and three suggestions were made.

- The University should evaluate the hiring process on a scheduled basis and implement processes to improve the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty and staff.
- The University should establish a standard date by which time department chairs are to submit requests for tenure-track positions, and post the *Faculty Search and Employment Procedures* document, the “Search Process Workflow” document, and a timeline that shows the general search and hiring process on either the Provost’s or the Human Resources and Faculty Relations webpage.
- The University administration should more clearly define targets for scholarly activity among faculty.
- The University should establish a resource center to assist faculty in improving teaching, scholarship, and service.

As can be seen from this brief summary, Edinboro’s efforts regarding the fulfillment of these Standards is impacted greatly by being part of our state system, PASSHE, and by the collective bargaining agreements for faculty and non-managerial staff. Additionally, we have experienced extensive administrative turnover during
the recent past which has impacted function and structure, but recent changes indicate that greater stability is anticipated. Data access and validity remain concerns for these areas as well.

The next edition of this newsletter will focus on Working Group 4, co-chaired by Missy Manning and Tim Pilewski, addressing Student Admissions and Retention and Student Support Services.