This installment of the Middle States Newsletter focuses on the activities of Working Group 2, co-chaired by Sean Biley, Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, and Scott Miller, Interim Dean, School of Business and Interim Director of Admissions. This Group examined Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal, Standard 3: Institutional Resources and Standard 4: Leadership and Governance.

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 2, Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal, focuses on whether “an institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality (p. ix).”

The Working Group reviewed the many efforts by the University over the past ten years to develop and implement strategic plans that were linked to our mission, drove resource allocation, incorporated broad constituent input, used institutional assessment data, and which responded to current and future challenges and opportunities. The analysis of the available reports and data found that, though a number of attempts were made, there was no comprehensive, university-wide planning process that clearly delineated responsibility for achieving goals, assessing and reporting measurable outcomes, nor feedback streams regarding the effectiveness of efforts. Additionally, the linkages between planning initiatives at the departmental level and budget were not transparent. However, links between planning and budgeting have existed, though not comprehensively. This Working Group describes those instances where such efforts were evident, e.g. the utilization of the 2009 Facilities Master Plan. Most recently, planning initiatives begun under Interim President Moran provided a starting point for the extensive work done by President Wollman since Fall 2012. The efforts of the Core Planning Team and PEC during the 2012-2013 academic year have addressed the limitations

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identified and will provide the foundation for a planning and resource allocation process in compliance with this Standard.

As a result of the group’s findings, two recommendations and four suggestions were made with regard to Standard 2:

- The University should ensure that the new Planning and Budget Committee is consistently engaged in reviewing strategic plan implementation progress and in linking planning to resource allocation.
- An assessment process for the planning function itself should be implemented.
- The University should annually update the University community on accomplishments in and progress toward meeting the Strategic Plan’s goals, objectives, and initiatives.
- The University should consider making the achievement of strategic initiatives part of the annual performance review of responsible parties (and of lower level management based on the initiatives delegated to them) to ensure accountability under the new strategic plan.
- Unit budget requests should include clear justification of the linkage between the request and the strategic plan objectives that the expenditure supports.
- Budget decisions should be documented through meeting minutes or meeting summaries to create and audit trail for each final budget decision.

**Standard 3, Institutional Resources**, focuses on whether “the human, financial, technical, facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution’s mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution’s mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution’s resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment (p. ix).”

The Working Group’s findings for this Standard showed that Edinboro exhibits linkages between initiatives and allocations. Throughout the past ten years, the University has been subject to changes in the planning process due, in part, to the changes in administrations (four presidents since our last Middle States visit in 2003). Each president had an approach and perspective to the issue resulting in planning bodies, all of which represented various University constituencies to some degree. However, there is no clear evidence that a culture of meaningful, useful planning was embraced. Under the current administration of President Wollman, the most recent iteration of planning has emerged and efforts are ongoing to facilitate a process that has utility and significance, plus the ability to continue regardless of administrative change. Evidence suggests a shift in practice.

As with Standard 2, it is clear that the link between resource allocation and planning needs strengthening. Examples are evident, especially with regard to the Facilities Master Plan, indicating such relationships exist but do not reflect standard practice across all areas of the University. Within the past academic year, faculty and staff retrenchment have become a reality as a result of several factors, including a decrease in the traditional high school graduate demographic, significant and unexpected reductions in state appropriations beginning in 2010, limited increases in tuition, and continuing increases in salary and benefit costs. It is recognized that the projected change in high school graduates was clearly established as early as 2004, but this information was not effectively considered in previous planning efforts. University efforts addressing the financial challenges have been based upon data analysis encompassing several factors including but not limited to the average enrollment of new students, transfer students, academic programs, and departmental credit generation.
As a result of the findings from Standard 3, one recommendation and three suggestions were made:

- The University should periodically assess the effectiveness of the Planning and Budget Committee, formed in spring 2013, in its linking of planning and budgeting.
- The University should implement a process by which major units within the University issue periodic public reports of their progress toward accomplishing the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. This reporting process should also include a careful annual review of the plan’s status in light of any significant changes (e.g., fiscal or demographic changes).
- The University should revisit the Facilities Master Plan to ensure that it is aligned with the current Strategic Plan 2013-2018.
- The University should ensure that the Annual Facilities Report outlines how additions, discontinued usage, or changes in usage were consistent with the Facilities Master Plan, or outline the rationale for a deviation from this plan.

**Standard 4, Leadership and Governance** focuses on whether “the institution’s system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution (p. ix).”

The Working Group found that the University complies with all areas of governance as mandated in Act 188. It follows PASSHE Board of Governors’ policies with regard to all areas of governance, with local policies aligned with System policies. Each president has had a series of advisory groups with campus representation which have functioned to provide input and advice to University leadership. As we are all aware, the University has experienced significant turnover in leadership over the past five years. The evidence to support the effectiveness of leadership changes is inconsistent, being influenced by the reasons for change.

As a result of the findings regarding Standard 4, two suggestions were made:

- The President’s Executive Council should perform an annual evaluation of leadership changes and the impact of these changes on the University’s efforts to achieve its strategic goals and should make recommendations, as necessary, for improvement. The report arising from this evaluation should be shared with the Council of Trustees to ensure proper and independent review and analysis.
- The various advisory groups and committees on campus should provide meeting minutes or meeting summaries to document how ideas were developed and decisions were made.

As can be seen from this brief summary regarding Standards 2, 3 and 4, Edinboro University’s efforts regarding their fulfillment have been varied over the period of review. The turnover in administrative positions has impeded the establishment of consistent processes for effective linkages between planning and budget allocation. However, recent efforts by President Wollman have established practices intended to ensure sustainability.

The next edition of this newsletter will focus on Working Group 3, co-chaired by Gary Levine and Denise Ohler, addressing Administration, Integrity and Faculty.