Middle States Commission on Higher Education
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Team Report to the Commission on Higher Education

George Washington University
Dates of Evaluation: March 25-28, 2018

The Evaluation Team Representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Section A: Team Members, Titles, and Institutional Affiliation

· Dr. Rogan Kersh, Provost and Professor of Politics & International Affairs, Wake Forest University (**Chair**)
· Mr. Jeffrey Gray, Senior Vice President for Student Affairs, Fordham University
· Mr. Mark Green, Jr., Assistant Director, Assessment, Drexel University
· Dr. Alexandra Gribovskaya, Director of the Office of Accreditation and Assessment, Teachers College of Columbia University
· Ms. Stephanie Pianka, Senior Vice President for Budget & Planning and Chief Financial officer, New York University
· Dr. Michael Schober, Vice Provost for Research & Professor of Psychology, New School
· Dr. Andrew Wolf, Director for Educational Effectiveness, University of Rochester

Section B: Institutional Representatives at the Time of Visit

Officers of the Institution at the time of the visit:

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Dr. Thomas LeBlanc
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I. **Institutional Overview: Context and Nature of the Visit**

George Washington University is a Research I institution (Carnegie Classification) that offers a wide range of programs in arts and sciences, engineering, medicine, business, education, law, international affairs, public health, professional studies, and nursing in the university's ten colleges and schools. As of fall 2016, the University offered 108 bachelor's, 189 master's, 12 practice doctoral and 44 research doctoral degree programs, in addition to some 70 certificate programs. Program offerings are of a length appropriate to the objectives of the degree.

The institution's chief campus is in Foggy Bottom, Washington, DC. That compact campus now stretches to the GWU Corcoran School of Art several blocks away (formerly the Corcoran Gallery of Art), visited by our entire review team. Two branch campuses—the Mount Vernon Campus and Virginia Science and Technology Campus (VSTC)—were each visited by subgroups of our review team, as described in appropriate Standard reports below. The University also maintains satellite academic centers in Alexandria and Arlington, VA; a member of our review team visited the Alexandria site. Finally, the University has a growing suite of online/distance-learning options, as reviewed in appropriate Standards below.

Our review team met from Sunday afternoon, March 25, 2018, through late Wednesday morning, March 28. A detailed schedule is available from the Committee Chair or University accreditation chairs on request. We were joined for several meetings by the Chair of the DC Licensure Commission, Mary Dilworth; that Commission reviews all colleges and universities in the District of Columbia, and our review team was pleased to accommodate the Licensure Commission's request for participation.

II. **Evaluation Overview**

Our review team found George Washington University to be an impressive example of a nationally-recognized urban research university. Mission, goals, and strategic plans are coherent and are actively referred to in University operations; the new president's specific priorities have been clearly articulated and are consonant with those foundational goals. For additional details, please see Standard-by-Standard reports on the following 27 pages. We enumerate dozens of significant accomplishments and exemplary practices; several suggestions for improvement, and two recommendations (in Standards IV and VI). The University's Self-Study report was, in our collective judgement, a model of the genre.

III. **Compliance with Accreditation Standards**

Please see subsequent pages for a Standard-by-Standard description.

Our review team also thoroughly reviewed a Middle States Commission external compliance reviewer's finding that the institution was out of compliance in one area: Transfer of Credit Policies and Articulation Agreements. Based on our close reading of the University's written response (copies available from this review-team Chair or Cheryl Beil of GWU), as well as discussions specific to this issue—both of which detail specific changes made by the University in response to this finding—we conclude that the University is **in compliance in this area**.

Standard I: Mission and Goals

The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, our review team affirmed that a mission statement has been clearly defined; a strategic plan consonant with that mission helps guide university priorities, practices, and programs; and more specific statements of goals/priorities are in place.

George Washington University's mission is defined clearly and succinctly:

The University...dedicates itself to furthering human well-being. The University values a dynamic, student-focused community stimulated by cultural and intellectual diversity and built upon a foundation of integrity, creativity, and openness to the exploration of new ideas.

The University, centered in the national and international crossroads of Washington, DC, commits itself to excellence in the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge.

To promote the process of lifelong learning from both global and integrative perspectives, the University provides a stimulating intellectual environment for its diverse students and faculty. By fostering excellence in teaching, the University offers outstanding learning experiences for full-time and part-time students in undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in Washington, DC, the nation, and abroad. As a center for intellectual inquiry and research, the University emphasizes the linkage between basic and applied scholarship, insisting that the practical be grounded in knowledge and theory. The University acts as a catalyst for creativity in the arts, the sciences, and the professions by encouraging interaction among its students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the communities it serves.

The George Washington University draws upon the rich array of resources from the National Capital Area to enhance its educational endeavors. In return, the University, through its students, faculty, staff, and alumni, contributes talent and knowledge to improve the quality of life in metropolitan Washington, DC.

This mission is articulated expansively in the University's most recent strategic plan, *Vision 2021: A Strategic Plan for the Third Century of the George Washington University.* That plan was adopted by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees in fall 2012, so is in its sixth year of operation at the time of this writing. *Vision 2021* is organized around four central themes:

1. Innovation through cross-disciplinary collaboration
2. Globalization of our educational and research programs
3. Expansion of programs that focus on governance and policy in the public and private sectors
4. Emphasis on infusing the ideas of citizenship and leadership into everything we do

The themes are also expressed in infographic format:

THESE THEMES ARE:

| Innovation through CROSS-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION | GLOBALIZATION | GOVERNANCE & POLICY | CITIZENSHIP & LEADERSHIP |

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After a relatively brief overview of each theme, the Strategic Plan lays out a set of supporting actions, by which the plan presumably will be evaluated. These are organized not under the four thematic heads, but around three activities basic to any research university: education, research, and service. Each of these areas is specified in terms of a set of 'covering actions,' numbering thirteen in all: these tend to the broad and general. Examples include:

· Create a more unified and intellectually coherent undergraduate educational experience that fosters a range of core competencies [*the document then specifies these competencies*].
· Enhance postgraduation opportunities for our students.
· Encourage applied, translational, and policy research and scholarship that provide perspectives on and solutions to significant societal problems.
· Make GWU a leader in shaping the national dialogue in areas of our academic strength.
· Expand GW's role as a model institutional citizen for the greater Washington, D.C., area.

In turn, each of these thirteen 'covering actions' gives rise to between two and eight specific action items, for a total of 59 in all. A few examples of those specific commitments:

· Admit undergraduates to the university, rather than to individual schools.
· Identify additional international career and internship opportunities by improving the coordination between the Office for Study Abroad and the Career Center.
· Establish diverse affinity-living groups where students from different backgrounds who share cross-disciplinary interests reside together so as to build stronger communities.
· Develop four-year B.A./M.A. programs for highly motivated students who enter GWU with substantial advanced placement credit.
· Explore modifying the university's policies to allow some faculty and staff members to engage in classified research…[and] build a facility for classified research on the VSTC campus.
· Create GW-branded policy case studies similar to the Harvard Business School case studies; firmly establish GW's leadership in this area.

In May 2016, the then-interim provost provided to the Board of Trustees an update on progress to date towards realizing the Strategic Plan's aspirations. Progress was notable in the areas of (1) expanding student diversity, including increased numbers of international students; and (2) cross-disciplinary advances, in such aspects as new institutes and enhanced learning. The update included an Appendix indicating progress toward all *Vision 2021* goals to date.

Our review team recognized that, in part due to a transition in leadership of both the president

and provost, along with several other senior administrative and faculty leaders, these focused action items continue to inform regular practice to varying degrees, and some not at all. We do not view this as in any way impeding the University's fulfillment of its larger mission, nor stated priorities (see below), but a fact of life at swiftly-changing institutions of higher education.

The mission statement and strategic plan are further distilled—on the University's website, as well as in the self-study report—into a set of six stated University priorities. These are:

· *Celebrating different perspectives and experiences*, encompassing **diversity** (across identity/ background, viewpoints, and values) and **access** (attracting/retaining lower-income students).

· *Setting students up for success*, defined in terms of **internship opportunities** that lead to fulfilling careers.

· *Discovering life-changing possibilities*, focused on **faculty research** efforts.

· *Doing good in the world*, in terms of community **service** and **civic engagement**.

· *Welcoming those who have served*, specifically education and career-planning support for members of the **U.S. military**.

· *Advocating for buff, blue, and green*, expressing the University's **sustainability** commitment.

After extensive discussion with senior administrators, faculty leadership, Board members, and students, our review team concluded that, during a year of presidential transition, those priorities are appropriately undergoing review and affirmation—even as they continue broadly to guide the University's core operations. Where the new president has articulated mission-related priorities in his own voice, those are consonant with the goals enumerated above.

Standard I

In the review team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

- **Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:** Too many strategic plans are swiftly shelved; we note with commendation the GWU model practice of providing a thorough update four years after promulgation.

- **Suggestions:** As the current administration's priorities are translated into concrete action items, link those to the extent possible to the existing Strategic Plan.

- **Recommendations or Requirements:** *None.*

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.

<u>**Summary of Evidence and Findings**</u>

George Washington University shows a commitment to ethics and integrity that begins with Board of Trustees leadership, governance, and organization. The Board recently revised its bylaws to strengthen and focus its commitment to the institution. Examples of these changes include: term limits on board members, a three-year mandatory bylaws review process, significantly reducing the number of board members, removing a high-level philanthropic requirement, and eliminating ineffective board committees. The Board also split the finance and audit committee into two separate committees, to allow the audit committee to operate objectively and place more focus on risk management. In addition to addressing conflict of interests, risk management, and compliance, the audit committee conducts an in-depth review of issues potentially facing the institution, evaluates the top institutional risks, and gives feedback on probability and prioritization.

Ethics and integrity are reinforced among faculty, students, and staff through the Office of Compliance. The Office has links on how to submit concerns and issues that may violate institutional policies. GWU hired an outside firm (Baker Tilly et. al.) to manage their policy review management process, tracking all policy reviews and where necessary recommending alterations. In addition, a Policy Process Guide provides structure and language to promote cohesive and uniform policies and management thereof. This partnership helps the institution monitor policies and update and revise as needed. One example was the recent Faculty Code review, an impressive joint effort by the Board and faculty to overhaul the Code to reflect the institution's mission and goals. This accomplishment and collaborative process was highlighted several times during our visit, by faculty and board members alike. One area of continuing focus is on policies that may create different standards for full-time and part-time faculty.

The institution has defined policies for faculty, students, and staff that protect academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for property rights (copyright). There is a concerted effort to help students learn about plagiarism through their mandatory freshmen year University Writing Course. They have reaffirmed their efforts by including plagiarism and other matters of ethical behavior in their Academic Success session at summer orientation. Individual graduate programs address plagiarism through their orientation and other academic touchpoints. The institution works with a vendor to help manage proctoring exams for their online programs.

The University has fostered a culture of respect and inclusion for campus constituents from different backgrounds. The focus is highlighted by an annual *Diversity Summit*, hosted by the Office for Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement. This full-day conference engages faculty, staff, and students in conversations around diversity and inclusion on campus; this year features a projected 16 workshops for over 300 participants. The Office has also conducted surveys to gauge how respected students feel on campus – most recently, an Unwanted Sexual Behavior survey and an Inclusive Excellence Assessment (2015). Information gathered from the

former survey motivated the Office for Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement (ODECE) to increase workshops and training on abuse and sexual assault in the campus community. ODECE also improved their website Haven, which features resources aimed at bringing awareness and aiding victims of abuse and harassment. The Office is currently reviewing, with the help of outside expertise, their Title IX policy, addressing current University management of Title IX complaints and advancing a unified campus-wide policy. The Office will continue to promote education on Title IX issues, including a mandatory online training course for students prior to arrival on campus and a live-session training that freshmen students must complete before they are able to register for spring term courses. The Inclusive Excellence Assessment resulted, *inter alia*, in the formation of a committee to promote inclusion in the classroom.

GWU's location in Washington, DC, is a remarkable locational advantage—that bears a few disadvantages as well, including inevitable impacts on campus life by national conversations. One example: during the ongoing DACA controversy, international students and their supporters have been especially urgently concerned about whether they can legally remain in the United States. The institution responded with a #YouAreWelcomeHere campaign, affirming an environment of inclusion and acceptance for students from the international community.

The University has taken significant steps to promote access to education, including a decision to make admissions test-optional for undergraduates. An Access and Success Task Force identified resources to help make college more accessible to academically qualified students from financially-needy backgrounds, including: Cisneros Institute scholarships to those invested in the Hispanic community, STEM Pipeline Partnership (a partnership with Virginia community colleges), Upward Bound, and dual enrollment with the DC public schools. Various programs additionally seek to ensure that strong applicants of limited means can attend and remain at GWU. The undergraduate discount rate is higher than that of many peer schools, signalling a commitment to affordability (but raising long-term financial-viability concerns as well).

Individual graduate programs have developed various methods to provide access to graduate education. The Columbian College provides partial tuition for masters and doctoral students from their minority support partner institutions. The School of Nursing changed new-student orientation to virtual to reduce travel costs for online students. In addition, data from Enrollment Management demonstrates that online programs are helping provide access to first-generation graduate students. The Financial Aid website offers ways for students to understand the cost of attendance and likely debt loads. All these policies help manage (and inspire) a growth in financially-needy students. The institution now faces the challenge of providing support structures to help these students persist through graduation.

Leadership pays commendably close attention to data in decision-making processes, as reflected in an array of dashboards and high-level reports. Our committee encourages a more expansive approach, combining data from different sources to provide a more comprehensive view of trends, programs, and concerns—particularly related to the student experience.

(*Standard II summary follows on next page*)

Standard II

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

- **Significant Accomplishments/Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:**
    - The Board of Trustees's revised bylaws and separating the finance and audit committees
    - The Diversity Summit
    - Policy Lifecycle Management and Policy Process Guide

- **Suggestions:** *(Non-binding suggestions for improvement)*
    - Campus climate surveys should be administered on a more regular schedule to help with continual, consistent feedback, attention to rapidly-shifting trends, and analysis of the student experience.
    - As the population of students from financially needy backgrounds continues to grow, additional resources to help students proceed towards their degree will be necessary. The institution should consider proactive measures to support its commitment to access and success.
    - Continue to review differing standards for part-time and full-time faculty; our committee recognizes that some differentiation is inevitable, but policy review is desirable to avoid unnecessary practices based on tradition/habit.

- **Recommendations:** *None*

- **Requirements:** *None*

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence of all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.

<u>**Summary of Evidence and Findings**</u>

The University offers a wide range of programs in arts and sciences, engineering, medicine, business, education, law, international affairs, public health, professional studies, and nursing in George Washington's ten colleges and schools. As of the fall of 2016, the University offered 108 bachelor's, 189 master's, 12 practice doctoral and 44 research doctoral degree programs, in addition to some 70 certificate programs. Program offerings are of a length appropriate to the objectives of the degree.

The coherence and rigor of the learning experience is monitored through the work of school curriculum committees or their equivalent. Additionally, a multi-step course and program approval processes (completed via CourseLeaf Sim) ensures coherence and consistency across programs and schools. The common templates for course and program approval emphasize learning outcome assessments and curriculum mapping as part of the academic planning process.

Graduating senior and graduate student graduation surveys suggest that students are generally satisfied with program quality and preparation for their intended careers. Interviews with students confirmed that students see their academic programs as coherent and rigorous.

Enrollment caps imposed by the District of Columbia and desire to capture new markets led GWU to identify online education as a strategic priority. This led to rapid growth of online learning in some programs, including nursing, engineering, and public health. This growth occurred in individual schools and programs without a unified approach, with some schools partnering with 3rd party vendors for marketing, enrollment management, instructional design, and support services. Other schools developed their own personnel and resources to support online learning. A university-wide exploration into online learning began with a 2013-2014 strategic planning committee for online education, and, significantly, continued with the hiring of the dean of libraries and academic innovation (GWLAI) in 2016. The dean's portfolio also includes the Instructional Technology Lab, the University Teaching and Learning Center, and the Academic Technologies. In 2016, the Online Learning Consortium reviewed GWU online offerings and provided a series of recommendations, most of which have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented, including: (1) a reconstituted online committee which includes representatives of all schools; (2) restructuring of the eDesign Shop services, (3) wide use of Quality Matters principles to ensure quality of online courses, (4) in-person and online training for faculty who teach online courses, (5) phasing out of contracts with third-party vendors, (6) ensuring compliance with state authorization regulations, and (7) providing support services for online students. The rapid growth of online courses and programs requires strategic planning, which has already begun.

Online courses and programs at GWU are developed and approved using the same processes as face-to-face programs. Academic program reviews, and evaluation of student success metrics,

has consistently shown that online courses and programs at GWU have outcomes equivalent to on-campus courses and programs. Additionally, students are equally satisfied with courses, whether they are taught online, face-to-face, or hybrid. The GWU Faculty Senate recently passed a resolution recognizing the importance of online learning to the mission of the university, and endorsing the University's commitment to quality online courses and programs through rigorous standards and processes of program development and review.

Student learning experiences are designed, delivered, and assessed by a highly qualified cadre of 1,129 regular full-time faculty members (79% of whom are tenured or tenure track). The recently revised Faculty Code described varied faculty appointments and allows an appropriate degree of flexibility for individual schools to meet their educational needs (e.g., SMHS, SoN). All regular faculty complete an annual report that includes a comprehensive self-assessment focused on teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and service to the university. Faculty promotion and tenure reviews are guided by clearly developed guidelines.

The full-time faculty is complemented by 1,386 part-time faculty, who often are drawn from a variety of governmental, non-governmental, and commercial organizations across the capital. The interviews with faculty, deans, and students showed that part-time faculty are generally seen as a major asset as they provide a first-hand insight into the careers inspired by students. However, such part-time faculty may need additional assistance with course design and teaching techniques.

Regular, contract, and part-time faculty's teaching is evaluated through course evaluations. The results suggest that faculty are generally rigorous and effective in teaching and assessment, regardless of the learning modality.

GWLAI offers a variety of training opportunities for faculty development, including a sought-out Course Design Institute (which includes a $500 stipend for faculty participants). Other opportunities for faculty development, identified during the interview with the deans of the schools, include: faculty Fridays for online learning (SoN); faculty orientations, junior faculty development workshops, master teacher leadership program (SMHS); review of syllabi of adjunct faculty, pairing adjunct faculty with more experienced faculty (CCAS); and instructional design teams (GWSB). The interview with the assessment coordinators from individual schools yielded a list of diverse opportunities for faculty to hone their assessment skills.

Academic programs of study are clearly described in the online *University Bulletin* and on the departmental websites. The University also uses DegreeMap, an online advising and degree auditing system, which displays requirements for a student's program of study and applies the student's individual and academic history to those requirements. During the student interview, students indicated they find DegreeMap a valuable resource for planning their courses of study.

Quality academic advising is critical to student success. GWU academic advising is school and/or program-based. Each school or program determines the advising structure that best meets student needs. Academic advising is assessed each year through graduation surveys. According to the graduating senior survey, over 40% of respondents were not satisfied with their first-year academic advising either with a faculty advisor or with a professional advisor. Our interviews showed that faculty and administration are aware of the problem with advising and are experimenting with new approaches. The university has begun assessment of professional

advising units and available infrastructure (CRM). Individual schools are also trying different approaches such as hiring faculty specializing in advising, involving student organizations, and creating advising pods. CCAS is preparing for a NACADA site visit and is working to align its advising with the best practices.

Other academic supports include the University Writing Center, STEM Works, SEAS tutoring, language tutoring, Disability Support Services, Center for Undergraduate Scholarship and Research, and the English for Academic purposes.

GWU's university-wide general education curriculum (G-PAC) includes at least 19 credits of approved courses in writing, natural or physical science, mathematics or statistics, the social sciences, and the humanities. The courses are aligned to nine general education learning outcomes which are consistent with the Middle States standards. All general education courses for the undergraduates are taught by Columbian College faculty; assessment of student learning in general education thus resides with CCAS. Common rubrics and assessment templates were developed for each of the general education learning outcomes providing consistency across courses and disciplines.

The University offers a variety of graduate and professional education programs across all 10 schools. Doctoral programs, in addition to the common program approval process, are also reviewed by the Council of Graduate Studies, comprised of one dean from each doctoral granting school (8 out of 10). The difference between the two doctoral degree types (research and practice) is articulated in the document developed by the Council of Deans. Students have a variety of opportunities to engage in research on and off campus. The funding opportunities for graduate students (including for research) are described on the Office of Graduate Student Assistantships and Fellowships website. As indicated by the surveys, graduates were generally satisfied with their educational opportunities at GWU.

Academic departments and programs within the various schools are evaluated through a system of Academic Program Reviews (APRs). APRs, held every five years, typically consist of a self-study created by the unit that is reviewed by both an internal committee (comprising faculty from other departments or programs) and an external team (comprising faculty from institutions external to GW). The APR guidelines were revised in 2014 to align better with departments' and programs' annual reports and to focus more on analysis rather than the mere reporting of data. Additional revisions were made in January 2018 to include guidelines for online program reviews. Interviews with faculty and assessment coordinators suggest that APRs, although time consuming and labor intensive, are generally seen as useful for continuous program improvement.

Additionally, program assessment is done through the graduation surveys and program reviews. Five years of survey data are available on dashboards that can be sorted by year, school, degree, and program, available to all faculty, department chairs, and deans. Program reviews include narrative on how programs use this data to inform the curriculum and student experiences.

(*Standard III summary follows on next page.*)

Standard III

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

- **Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:** *(Be consistent with narrative and suggestions, recommendations, requirements, if any, below)*

GWU has demonstrated a thoughtful approach to expanding its online learning opportunities in the past three years. This process included multiple opportunities for needs assessment, an external review, and various faculty deliberations on taskforces, committees and in the Faculty Senate. Significant progress that has been made on addressing the recommendations stemming from the external review by the Online Learning Consortium inspire confidence in the future of online learning at GWU.

GWU is also commended for the work that has been done to develop a unified and intellectually coherent undergraduate educational experience (G-PAC) across eight schools offering undergraduate programs. G-PAC provides for consistency and rigor of the general education experiences and allows students ease of transfer from one school to another. It ensures that all GWU students learn and master nine learning outcomes: oral and written communication; scientific and quantitative reasoning; critical analysis and reasoning; global and cross-cultural perspectives, local/civic engagement; information literacy and technological competency.

- **Suggestions:** *(Non-binding suggestions for improvement)*

Results of graduation surveys as well as our interviews with students suggest that the quality of academic advising, particularly academic advising during students' first year, may not be as effective as students would like it to be. There are examples of approaches centrally and in individual schools and departments to address these concerns, but GWU may benefit from a more systematic approach to improving first-year advising possibly as part of a broader efforts to improve student experience (as recommended in Standard VI).

- **Recommendations:** *None.*

- **Requirements:** *None.*

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributed to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

<u>**Summary of Evidence and Findings**</u>

Enrollment Services and Student Support Services appear to provide a standard menu of programs and services organized to meet the needs of the students of George Washington University.

There is evidence of basic focus on the provision of relevant support services and the planning and assessment activity taking place in key areas, specifically through (a) the descriptive listing of support service and extracurricular areas; (b) the reference to the development of assessment activity in some of the areas (i.e., Departmental Continuous Improvement Projects); and (c) the administration of the surveys designed to obtain student feedback and outcomes data, as outlined in the document roadmap (examples used include references to departmental action plans and dashboards). The establishment of the Division of Enrollment Management and Retention, with a focus on recruitment, access and retention, as well as the emphasis on certain key areas that can serve to enhance retention (Wellness Hub; Summer Academy; EAP program) and return on investment (Career Services area) provide evidence of intentional planning and advancement in key areas. A review of the Undergraduate Graduating Senior Survey 2012-2016 results offers evidence of basic satisfaction with some campus services and other areas of the University (i.e., career services; academic advising cited as an area of concern). A review of the Graduate Student Graduation Survey: 2009-2016 shows outcomes that are more focused and provide more specific feedback in certain areas (i.e. space, facilities and academic advising, housing, career assistance). The Inclusive Excellence Survey from 2015 is well done; it had a 22% response rate, and contained some focused specificity in terms of outcomes. It is dated by now, though, approaching three years old. GWU Unwanted Sexual Behavior Survey Findings from Fall 2014 had a 24% response rate, with 713 student responses, but only 363 from undergrads. It contained some focused specificity and was well done. It included an "implications" section, but there have been no updates on the follow through; it is dated by now, approaching four years old. **GWU is to be commended for the work they have undertaken thus far in the areas noted.**

While many of the traditional student support services are made available to George Washington University students, and basic assessment initiatives are underway in some of these areas, two features are less evident in the self-study: (1) A sustained program of assessment in all enrollment and student support services and departments, featuring more specific outcomes data related to student satisfaction and the effectiveness of services and programs in meeting student needs, achieving retention outcomes and supporting and advancing the mission; relatedly, the connection between outcomes data and program renewal efforts was not as evident as it could have been. (2) General visibility and emphasis of certain key areas of student support services which are important to student success, satisfaction and retention, and which were addressed only through brief descriptive paragraphs in this self-study, and in a couple of cases minimally or not at all (Center for Student Engagement; residential life). More information about these

programs may be found upon further review of the organizational chart and institutional website, but they were not emphasized in this chapter or in the comprehensive self-study.   Other key areas were also left out (student conduct process; Title IX management and oversight for matters involving students).

On the first point, while there appears to be general attention to assessment, it was not evident that a broad-based culture of assessment has been developed within the different administrative areas of enrollment management or student support services, as least as reflected in this chapter of the self-study. For most of the departments noted, the basic information provided in the self-study was descriptive, with few if any references to mission, outcomes data or to ongoing assessment efforts that utilize actual outcomes data for program renewal and improvement. In many cases, even the descriptive information provided was limited (i.e., references to dashboards and action plans). The document roadmap also took the reader to descriptive data, for the most part, with some attention to concrete outcomes. This observation is more reflective of Chapter 6 of the self-study, rather than the actual activity that is taking place in the units. In response to additional data requests, documents clarified that more robust assessment activity is taking place. This documentation included: (a) admitted students surveys, (b) withdrawal surveys, (c) departmental continuous improvement projects, and (d) departmental action plans in which outcomes data was used to identify short and long range goals and objectives. It was less clear whether the goals and objectives were actually being implemented and followed through.

In conversation with staff members on the campus, they confirmed that there is some emphasis and activity taking place in this area, even though it was not highlighted in the self-study report with specific examples. From discussions, it appears there may be a valid reason, which will be touched upon later in this report. What is not clear is whether certain student support service areas, which could make important and positive contributions to student success, satisfaction, retention and achievement have been receiving the level of institutional planning and assessment attention that can assist them in delivering their services in the most efficient and effective manner possible to the students of George Washington University.

On the second point, in reviewing Chapter 6, most but not all of the student support services offered by the University, as noted on the organizational chart and institutional website, were addressed in the self-study review, but were highlighted in only broad, vague terms (examples include student organizations {475 student clubs}, athletics and Greek life). Some key areas of campus life were not mentioned at all (i.e., student conduct processes; residential life and housing, where students likely spend the majority of their time; the Center for Student Engagement, which was mentioned a single time). This seemed like a missed opportunity.

These areas can make important mission-related contributions to student learning, quality of life, satisfaction and retention. In the context of the comprehensive self-study design, it raises the question as to the level of emphasis and attention given to these areas by the institution in this review, and the level of attention and support they have received in the institutional planning process, at a time when they could be making meaningful contributions to some of the desired undergraduate student experience outcomes, and related priorities like retention. Reviewing organizational charts and other information on the website raised further questions, as there appeared to be a lack of alignment between what is presented and the contents of the self-study. Discussions with staff and leadership confirmed that factors are contributing to this, and that renewed attention and focus is now being devoted to this area.

The area of campus and student life is in flux right now, with leadership transitions and a realignment of the organizational structure (consolidation with enrollment services into a new Division of Enrollment Services and the Student Experience). The goals of this restructuring seem to be: (1) to address and improve the "student experience," and to focus on deficiencies that seem to exist in this area of University life: those deficiencies were apparent in the self-study, as much by what was not addressed as by what was; and (2) the creation of a structure that will provide a positive, cohesive experience throughout the student lifecycle, from the admissions process through graduation and beyond. Outcomes relate to student satisfaction with community life, student engagement and retention and persistence concerns. There were many references to the "student experience" during the visit, and when asked what this concept meant to them, different stakeholders found it challenging to articulate a cogent response. As part of this process, the leadership of the institution has conducted several *listening sessions* with staff and student members of the University community to gather feedback to further refine this and assist in focusing their effort. The staff from Student Affairs was especially articulate in discussing what this meant, and the challenges and pressures that are present.

An engaging session with a small group of undergraduate student leaders offered additional clarity on the lived student experience. The students were delightful: bright, engaging, articulate, and passionate in expressing their pride in and love for the University, while also offering constructive feedback on aspects of their experience that they believe could benefit from more focused attention from the University. While some of their feedback for improvement focused on the traditional student support services mentioned in other sessions (health services, mental health services, student involvement), the conversation extended into a wide range of other topics and areas, including students' academic experiences, thoughts on the limitations of adjunct instruction, connections to the faculty and what more they desire from these relationships, limited campus facilities for programming and socializing, the lack of a traditional dining program and related common dining facilities, broad-based campus programming, student club structure and programming, Greek Life, athletics, service responsiveness from administrative and facilities offices, the condition of the residence halls and the impact this has on campus living, the Mt. Vernon experience for freshmen residents, and more. Some direct quotes from this session that capture their sentiments in a striking way:

- "I want to love GW, but George Washington makes it hard to love them back."
- "Academics are an afterthought for many students and faculty members, and not challenging."
- "The vibe from the faculty is that students are more a hindrance than they are helpful."
- "There is no central GWU pillar to rally around."
- "Internships are the common community thread."
- "There is no institutional identity; GWU needs a unifying theme."
- "Marketing highlights individual achievements and internships."
- "At GW, as a student you are expected to be an adult from day one."
- "The alumni giving rate is low because there is no connection and it's so expensive, and people don't want to give back."

This is a summary, of course; space does not allow for an exhaustive review of the detailed feedback attached to each of these items. However, this represents a good starting point for institutional focus and planning, and it is feedback we assume has been shared with campus leaders in the ongoing listening sessions. Student feedback has been presented to institutional leadership in various proposals, which the students shared with us. All of this has an impact, for good or ill, on efforts to build a sense of community on campus and institutional pride. It seems

clear to us that the lens for examining the "student experience" will need to be a broad based institutional one, focused on many aspects of the undergraduate experience, and this will require concerted institutional effort that reaches across many divisions and departments.

The student experience effort that is underway may be the most important work that George Washington is doing in this area, and it will require focused attention and commitment to advance this in a way that improves life on campus for students, and that creates appropriate structures that work well for the campus and surrounding communities. Leadership, as well as their staff, seem to know where they would like to go. Getting there will be the challenge, and doing so in a way that ensures that all the many important processes carried out by this area of University life are properly managed, including those that are not always popular with students. It bears noting that the University has physical and operational barriers to overcome in this process, related to limited central and distributed student gathering and programming spaces, deferred maintenance in the residence halls and the lack of central dining spaces and programs.

Finally, the self-study offers several observations and initiatives related to recruitment and retention and the identification and support of at-risk students. The enrollment metrics and retention figures cited in the report are certainly better than average, but may require focused monitoring and support (with the first-year retention rate stronger than the four or six-year graduation rates). Beyond the broad student experience, there are number of underlying variables that can impact retention efforts, including the following: (1) financial challenges for admitted students; (2) academic advising that is well focused and coordinated (this was consistently highlighted by faculty, staff and students as a concern); (3) various initiatives that can seek to identify early warning signs for at-risk students that can be coordinated in intentional ways; (4) service intensive needs of a changing undergraduate population; and (5) student engagement with campus life, all variables that George Washington seems to have on their radar. This appears to be and should remain part of their restructuring efforts. The question is: how is the institution gearing up to meet these needs? The self-study report did not make this clear, but the follow up discussions seemed to suggest that this is an area of focus.

(*Standard IV summary follows on next page*)

Standard IV

In the review team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:
- The establishment of the Division of Enrollment Management and Retention, with a focus on recruitment, access and retention.
- The emphasis on certain key areas that can serve to enhance retention (Wellness Hub; Summer Academy; EAP program) and return on investment (Career Services area)
- The above initiatives provide evidence of intentional planning and advancement in key areas.

Suggestions: Our review team offers George Washington University the following suggestions and recommendation for Standard IV, which relate to the areas of concern and recommendations that the University identified in Chapter 6 of the Self-Study Report and in follow-up discussion.

1. As GWU continues with the commendable progress made on the recruitment of underrepresented students and students from distant and international markets, both of which are strategies that are responsive to changing demographics and market conditions, they are encouraged to pay careful attention to the underlying retention pressures and the issues that may contribute to attrition. While the retention and graduation figures cited in their report are solid, this will require continued monitoring in the future.

2. It appears that the units comprising enrollment management and student support services could benefit from a renewed approach and commitment to a culture of assessment, the overarching goal of which should be to obtain more specific outcomes data related to the student experience, and the effectiveness of programs and departments in supporting student success, satisfaction, engagement, retention and achievement, as well as supporting and advancing the mission of George Washington University.

Recommendation:
Student support service areas are essential to the broader GWU educational mission.
One relevant finding of the self-study: "although GWU undergraduates are satisfied with their academic experience, they are less satisfied with their overall undergraduate experience." The finding goes on to highlight areas that emerged as concerns. The discussion with the undergraduate student leaders both supported and challenged this finding.   A related recommendation is that the University should "continue efforts to improve the overall undergraduate experience for students." While somewhat vague, we agree with this recommendation, and we encourage GWU to plan appropriately for the intense student service, campus life and infrastructure demands that will continue to be presented by their student population, in ways that will contribute to stronger retention and better satisfaction with the overall student experience.

Requirements: *None.*

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their programs of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The University has clearly stated learning goals at the institution, program, and course level. In 2013, the University implemented new processes requiring clearly-written student learning outcomes at the course and program levels, reviewed by curriculum committees and administration. This process was supported by the adoption of a new course catalog management system, CourseLeaf (see also Standard III report), which facilitates workflow for course review by faculty, curriculum committees, department chairs, deans, and the provost's office. In 2015, the Faculty Handbook was revised to clarify that all syllabi should include 3-5 clearly defined learning outcomes mapped to the program curriculum.

Faculty are engaged in the systematic assessment of student achievement at multiple levels. Course faculty complete assessments at the end of each semester indicating learning outcomes, assessment measures, findings, analysis, and an action plan. Faculty are instructed to indicate and evaluate both direct and indirect measures of student learning. At the program level, faculty engage in annual program evaluations which are informed by the course assessment data. Additionally, program faculty and administrators complete in-depth systematic academic program reviews every five years. These academic program reviews focus on program learning goals, curriculum mapping, and a review of student learning outcomes data. In these reviews, faculty evaluate curriculum design, assessment data, strengths and weaknesses, and an action plan. Academic programs that are evaluated by professional accreditors implement academic program review in accordance with expectations of their accreditor.

Academic program review processes are facilitated by TaskStream, an assessment management system used to collect, analyze, and communicate assessment outcomes. This enables faculty to enter data at the course level and analyze it at the program level. Initially, many faculty members found this system challenging to use and faculty shared data via a paper-based system with data entered by administrators. Based on faculty feedback, the system has been redesigned to simplify the data entry process to better align with faculty needs.

The student outcomes assessment data that inform academic program reviews and professional accreditation include aggregated data from student course evaluations (i.e., end of course surveys). Student satisfaction with courses and with teaching are collected using SmartEvals. Questions were standardized and developed by the Faculty Board for the Teaching and Learning Center, with questions that emphasize the achievement of student learning outcomes and teaching and learning activities. In some cases, student's success metrics such as retention, graduation, and employment rates are also considered. These data are available in real-time via a Tableau dashboard. Direct assessment of student learning is collected and analyzed only at the course level, and there is no systematic process for aggregating direct outcomes data across programs. As a result, programs are reliant on indirect outcomes data to inform curriculum.

The University has an outstanding infrastructure and processes in place to collect, analyze, and use assessment data for continuous improvement of teaching and learning. The self-study includes multiple examples of how this process has been used to inform curricular innovation and change. The processes of assessment are supported by an organizational structure with associate deans directing assessment efforts at each college, and strong support from the central administration. The university has invested in multiple technology platforms that support the collection, analysis, and communication of assessment data. These investments have resulted in the development of a culture of assessment in which faculty and administrators recognize the value of assessment to support a process to improve teaching.

The GWU assessment team has many notable accomplishments at the program and university level. Commendably, in summer 2017, the institution developed a summer assessment institute in which graduate students are trained in best assessment practices, then tasked with collecting and analyzing assessment results and improving assessment processes. Participating graduate students met with faculty and evaluated how they engaged in course-level assessment processes using TaskStream. Through this process, graduate students identified challenges and designed new templates and workflows in TaskStream to improve the process. This innovative program exemplifies how GWU has engaged in exemplary practices to build a culture of assessment the engages and benefits the entire university community.

Since the last review, the institution has made great strides in the development, measurement, assessment, and analysis of student learning goals. This change in processes and culture shift is most notably attributed to the Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Assessment, who has collaborated with leadership and faculty to ensure the Academic Program Reviews are effective and easy to use. The Associate Provost is integral to the institution's measurement of student learning and alignment of curriculum, and should be commended for the growth and promising practices created since the last review.

Standard V

In the review team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

- **Innovative Practices:** The summer assessment institute innovatively engages graduate students, faculty, and administrators in a collaborative team approach to improve assessment practices. Through this six-week institute, graduate students and faculty collaborated about effective student learning outcomes assessment and developed tangible improvements for institutional assessment practices. This is a powerful example of how to build assessment capacity and support a culture of assessment.

- **Suggestions:** Course faculty are identifying and collecting direct assessment of student learning outcomes. However, this data is not collected in a way that can be aggregated and analyzed across programs, so it is difficult to track the progress of student achievement throughout a program. The evaluation team suggests that the University consider the use of assessment management systems to collect outcomes data from rubrics across programs. These systems would enable the collection and analysis of objective outcomes data from course to course and across programs.

- **Recommendations:** *None.*
- **Requirements:** *None.*

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

<u>**Summary of Evidence and Findings**</u>

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team affirmed that the University has robust planning processes, resources and structures which align with the missions and goals of the University, with metrics in place to monitor and periodically assess progress towards goals.

GW's new budget model, which has been in place since 2015, is linked to the strategic goals of the University. This well-documented and clearly-communicated model places priority on investing in areas of strategic growth and projects revenues and expenses by school, capital investments, liquidity, reserves and staffing. The University's goals and strategic initiatives are considered as financial resources are allocated. Tools have been, and continue to be, developed to support this new model. These include the Financial Management Tool, or FMT, their automated business intelligence and planning system which supports operating budget development, forecasting, position management and other planning processes. A study of the University's core administrative systems has recently been undertaken and they have hired an outside consultant to assist in planning for and prioritizing systems enhancements over the next 3-5 years. In the past five years, the university has invested in an enrollment management department and has developed and deployed econometric tools to align enrollment management with budget and planning. Enrollment is a critical success factor for GWU, as the number of full time equivalent students at their Foggy Bottom campus is capped by the District of Columbia, and enrollment must be carefully managed if the University is to meet its revenue goals.

In the past five years the University has made significant investments in physical plant and new programs, specifically: the Science and Engineering Hall, the Milken School of Public Health building, the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design, several residence halls and online education programs. Between 2013-2017, over $730 million in new construction and major renovation projects were completed. University sustainability programs are taken into consideration as they construct and renovate existing infrastructure.

During this same time period, the University's undergraduate enrollment grew by 15% and graduate enrollment grew by 12%, providing resources to partially fund these capital improvements. Federally funded research expenditures also grew, increasing by 28% between 2012-2016. As revenues rose, staffing during this time period remained fairly flat. Resources were deployed to programs such as online education and to build reserves. Full time faculty headcount increased by just over 1%, graduate assistants increased by 4.9%, research staff remained constant, and as a result of several cost initiatives, full time staff was reduced by 2%. As GWU continues on its path towards realizing its strategic 2021 plans, as well as President LeBlanc's five key strategic goals, they should look to technology and/or further aligning their cost structure with their revenues to ensure adequate resources to support this large enterprise.

The University has leveraged its significant and substantive real estate holdings to generate the

financial resources to support capital and academic programs, and plans to continue to do so. Their annual independent financial audit and recent credit rating affirmation by Moody's and S&P confirm GW's financial viability, and both rating agencies recognize GW's recent growth in reserves.

The institution conducts regular periodic assessments of progress on their operating and capital plan. They prepare quarterly financial results analysis. There are good linkages and communication between the Deputy Executive Vice President and Treasurer, the Vice Provost for Budget and Finance, and the Chair of the Senate Faculty Affairs finance sub-committee. They frequently meet to discuss the financial status of the institution, along with budget and planning priorities.

Standard VI

In the review team's judgement, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:

As a tuition-dependent University, it is imperative that GWU have strong budget and planning practices that facilitate the regular evaluation of their financial position and provide a framework for determining how they will allocate their limited resources. GWU is currently in the fourth year of a five-year plan to expand revenues and align their cost structure. Results of the new planning process and budgetary discipline include an ability to prioritize mission-supportive funding, build reserves, and fund strategic initiatives such as online education programs.   The anticipated timeline to a balanced budget has been met and accelerated by two years, thanks to success in revenue growth and cost alignment strategies. The new planning process has also facilitated greater transparency across the university community regarding the university's financial health and how they deploy their resources.

The University has implemented several dashboard tools, including financial metrics for their Board of Trustees that track key metrics including debt service, fundraising and endowment per student ratios.

GWU's board will be implementing a best practice in board governance, as they plan to split the Finance and Audit Committee into two separate committees, one to focus on the University's finances and long range financial plans and the other to focus more on risk management, financial compliance and accounting and reporting oversight.

Suggestions: (1) GWU's financial profile is sound. However, like all business models, theirs has inherent risks. In order to effectively manage these risks, it is imperative that the University retain strong fiscal, treasury and operational management. With over $1.8B of debt that is structured as fixed- rate, long-dated 30 year bullet maturities, GWU is increasingly reliant on their growth in reserves and effective treasury management to fund the principal for their 2044-2049 debt maturities.   Their sources of funding to pay their almost $95M a year of debt service is 75% dependent on revenue streams such as investment real estate cash flows. At the same time, their five-year planning process focuses on less than certain revenue streams, such as growing graduate enrollment, specifically off-campus and online, as they are constrained by caps at the Foggy Bottom campus. We would note also that these risks need to be evaluated and monitored as the higher education business model continues to evolve, as flagged by the Board chair in our conversations.

We therefore suggest that GWU leverage its Enterprise Risk Management program and its FMT forecasting tools and, at least annually, model financial stress scenarios and their impact on a ten-year planning horizon. Now that GWU has the tools in place, they could extend their forecasting beyond the regular five-year planning process, and simulate stresses to their current assumptions regarding growth in reserves, net tuition revenue, graduate enrollment, investment real estate revenue, capital requirements and other factors, and then evaluate the impact of these stresses on their financial plans and forecasts. This enables the leadership team to identify mitigating actions that they might take should these risks become a reality, and share these actions and plans with their Board and other governance bodies.

(2) Other risk management measures which could be considered by GWU are the creation of a working capital investment policy, reviewed annually by the finance committee of the Board of Trustees, to identify the credit qualities, concentration limits and duration for the University's short term investment of its operating funds, and a debt management policy which governs the investment of the reserve funds to be established for the future payment of the University's long term debt, and the approval authority for the use of those reserve funds.

- **Recommendation:** The University has significantly expanded its physical plant footprint in the past five years. Between 2012-2017, the university purchased $920 million of property, plant and equipment. Depreciation and amortization runs $80 million per year, yet the University's repair, replacement and renewal budget is $83 million for FY18 through FY22, with $27 million projected to be spent in FY18, leaving $56 million in total for FY19-FY22. There are limited assessment measures in place today to determine if this level of repair and replacement funding is adequate. While the current capital plan does consider a seven-year refresh plan for residence halls, students have commented on the conditions in some halls, including limited shared community space, kitchen facilities and maintenance concerns. GWU should engage a third party to evaluate their facilities and make recommendations as to the level of repair, replacement and renewal that can ensure that a deferred maintenance backlog does not materialize, and to provide input into the capital planning process.

- **Requirements:** *None.*

Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituents it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

<u>**Summary of Evidence and Findings**</u>

1. *Governance structure*: The university has a clearly articulated governance structure on multiple fronts, as documented by the university charter, its by-laws, its organizational chart, the faculty code, the board of trustees governing documents, and the various powers invested in the faculty senate, faculty assembly, and student government. The board of trustees has appropriate fiduciary and governance responsibilities, while other constituencies have a range of decision-making and advisory roles appropriate to different arenas of university action (academic, fiscal, strategic planning), with appropriate separation of powers.

The provost, deans and faculty are appropriately tasked with academic decision-making. A recently revised faculty code delineates the rights and decision-making responsibilities for faculty with different kinds of contracts (tenure-track, contract, specialized, part-time), with some variation across schools as appropriate for their faculty compositions and disciplinary norms. The faculty senate and faculty assembly have procedures for advancing proposed policy changes to their deans and to the provost and board, and student government also regularly presents policy proposals to academic leadership. Major financial decisions and longer-term financial plans that affect the future of the university (e.g., real estate and investment decisions) are appropriately assigned to the president and board of trustees, as informed by the finance team; other members of the university community (academic leadership, faculty, students) are informed about such decisions in leadership meetings, town halls, and other forms of communication. Academic decisions with substantial financial implications (or financial decisions that are deeply intertwined with academic decisions—e.g. the expansion of online education) are made collaboratively with members of both sides of the house.

Beyond these formal structures, additional less formal inputs into governance occur. The community norms allow faculty, staff, students, and alumni to meet with the president, provost, deans and board members for open conversation about issues of concern. The colleges and divisions have an additional set of governance inputs in the advisory bodies to the deans and academic leaders. While these bodies do not have formal governance or fiduciary roles (they are assembled by academic leaders, sometimes as part of development and fund-raising efforts), the advice from members of these bodies can play important roles in academic decision-making.

2. *Legally constituted governing body*: The legally constituted governing body of the university is the Board of Trustees. Its by-laws clearly define their responsibilities and powers, which include fiduciary decision-making, ultimate responsibility for the academic quality of the university's offerings, and support in strategic planning. The board's term limits policies are clearly defined, including explicitly handling questions over what happens when the timing of

board membership and committee roles are out of sync. Our review team discussed at length with Board members, including the Chair, their involvement in University governance.

The Board of Trustees is exemplary in adopting best practices and norms for board governance, including having a board committee devoted to monitoring and improving governance. The board regularly reviews its bylaws and practices, relying on newly available data to inform their discussions and reorganizations, as exemplified by the recent decision to separate its subcommittees on Finance and Audit & Risk. In recent years the board has strategically moved to substantially reducing the number of board committees and the board's size, with an ultimate target of 15-25 members who are deeply invested in their work on two or more different committees and who collectively have oversight of all major board decisions. Board members are intentional about the range of expertise, capacity to provide counsel across multiple arenas, and the high level of dedication they expect of their membership (which they see as more important than members' capacity as donors). They are also intentional about the diversity represented by their membership, as well as their desired percentage of non-alumni members who can bring new ideas to the community.

The university has clear conflict-of-interest board policies in place that support the independence of the board's decision-making and minimize the chance of inappropriate influence in the board's and board committee members' roles. The board sets clear boundaries limiting the board's role in managing day-to-day and academic affairs (curriculum, faculty personnel decisions, degree awarding), even as the full board and its subcommittees play important roles in ensuring integrity and appropriate financial management (e.g., reviewing financial statements before audit), hiring and supporting the President, and initiating a complex multi-year conversation leading to significant revisions in and upgrades to the faculty code.

The board has invested substantial energy into orchestrating conversations with relevant faculty, student, staff, and alumni stakeholders that inform their decision-making. This is particularly notable in their work on updating the faculty code and in the community-building exercises that led to defining the job description in the search for the new president. The evidence from the self-study, as well as from the testimonies of leadership, faculty, deans and students, suggests that these efforts have succeeded in creating a newly collaborative atmosphere and sense of optimism about the institution's direction and promise. The degree of collaboration and strategic alignment between the board chair, president and provost is unusually strong.

The board has strong new procedures in place (enshrined in the president's contract) for evaluating the president's performance. Over a 5-year term, the board will initiate a first 360-degree review process after Year 2 and a second after Year 4, informing the board's decision about potential reappointment.

3. *Chief Executive Officer*: The president is appointed by, evaluated by, and reports to the Board of Trustees and may not chair the board. The president has the appropriate credentials and prior experience to carry out the role effectively and to carry out the institution's mission, as well as the appropriate authority and autonomy to fulfill the responsibilities of the role.

The team of administrators and staff who report to the president is experienced and highly qualified. As a president relatively new in his role, he continues the process of assembling his

team, with roles whose definitions may continue to evolve, that will be of the right size and aligned approaches that will allow the president to plan strategically, allocate resources effectively, and work toward enacting the university's mission and developing strategic plan.

The president has brought a new level of commitment to data-informed planning and decision-making to the university, which has diffused throughout the academic leadership and administrative structure. In this important way the president is appropriately discharging his responsibility for establishing procedures that assess the organization's efficiency and effectiveness. The president's widely-known openness to learning from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, as well as his academically-oriented focus, also help in his ability to establish such procedures.

4. *Administration*: The university's administrative structure is clearly documented with clear reporting relationships, even as there has been substantial shuffling and changes of roles in recent years and with the arrival of a new leadership team. University administrators have the appropriate experience and credentials for fulfilling their roles in the organization and for assisting the president in fulfilling his roles and responsibilities.

In the main, university administration is provided with sufficient support—technological and otherwise—to carry out their duties, although there are areas in which stakeholders and leadership agree that additional investments are likely to be needed in order to fulfill the university mission and strategic objectives. (For example, in order to advance the strategic objective of improving the university's research climate and output, additional investment in research support staffing, in human research protocol processing software, and in more attentive onboarding and ongoing training procedures for school-based research support staff in areas of the university without deep research administration expertise will be needed). In most cases the roles are structured so as to allow administrators the time they need for their work; ongoing efforts to identify areas for process improvement are uncovering when particular staff roles are overburdened, when reorganized work flows, staff roles and additional technology investments could allow more streamlined and service-oriented operations.

The administration regularly engages with faculty and student stakeholders as they advance the university's mission and objectives. Examples of such engagement include the fact that administrators have organized a benefits advisory group that listens seriously to and discusses faculty requests and concerns; changes in benefits policies and practices have resulted. A new procedure in research administration (placing trained research administrators within the colleges that didn't have them) seems to have upgraded the experience for faculty, as evidenced by a perceived reduction in complaints from faculty and increased faculty satisfaction. And there were apparently multiple meetings with stakeholders in developing the new strategic plan in which members of the community interacted with administrators as the plans developed.

Procedures are in place for assessing the effectiveness of governance, leadership, and administration, particularly with the arrival of new leadership. The Board's self-review through its governance committee provides strong evidence of attention to this kind of assessment. The fact that the university by-laws and the faculty code have been regularly updated and amended every few years, with collaborative input from faculty governing bodies demonstrates that the university is engaged in serious assessment of the effectiveness of its governance.

Regarding leadership, new procedures are in place for reviewing the performance of the president (described above), as well as newly clarified and sytematized procedures for assessing the performance of deans. Assessment of the performance of other leaders occurs through annual performance reviews of staff members.

Assessment of the effectiveness of administration occurs through two important mechanisms, even as the relevant administrative units work internally to improve their operations in focused working groups and task forces. The first mechanism involves Internal Audit of polices and procedures, carried out by (external consultants) Baker Tilly. Domains of review have ranged widely, in 2017 including reviews of Procurement to Payment processes, Sponsored Research, Vendor Risk Management (including Study Abroad and Athletics), Faculty Hiring and Termination procedures, Law School Review, and reviews of multiple other business processes, compliance and security issues, and compensation practices. The 2018 planned audits include reviews of the Office of the Registrar, Medical Resident Academic Affiliation Agreements, Sponsored Research (follow-up), and to-be-determined reviews related to the president's university priorities (Sponsored Research, Medical Center, Fundraising, Campus Culture, and Student Experience).

A second mechanism for administrative assessment is review by the Business Management and Analysis Group (BMAG), a consulting group internal to the university. Reviews by BMAG are commissioned by central leadership on an as-needed basis.

Standard VII

In the review team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:
- The sustained efforts by the Board of Trustees to improve university governance and its own governance procedures to reflect best practices is exemplary, and has played an important role in leading to the exemplary alignment in goals and values between the board of trustees, president and provost
- The flow of communication and channels of input and feedback among the various university stakeholders—academic leadership, faculty, students, trustees—have allowed significant progress in unifying and advancing the institution in recent years.
- The university's increased attention to improving administrative processes has led to notable changes that are building the infrastructure to support advancing new priorities.

Suggestion:
- Based on all the evidence, as well the stated priority to focus on improving Student Experience, the team strongly suggests that one or both of the university's administrative assessment mechanisms (BMAG, Baker Tilly) be tasked with holistic user-centered analyses of student experiences to focus on improved services, reduced burden and frustration, eliminating unneeded bureaucratic steps, and designing solutions that build student community. The assessment and proposed improvements should be as comprehensive and system-wide as possible—recognizing that improvements are likely to be needed across administrative and academic units rather than focusing only within particular units. (The areas of greatest concern to students straddle multiple and

intertwined administrative areas, processes, and resource allocation decisions. For improving undergraduates' experience of community, for example, it is likely that what will be involved could involve changes in student residence choices (e.g., allocation of community spaces in which students can socialize, attention to maintenance and repair, housing assignment policies), academic advising, student activities funding, appealing academic and research opportunities for undergraduates that connect with faculty research projects, greater connection of curriculum with student life, etc.).

- **Recommendations:** *None.*

- **Requirements:** *None.*

Section D: Verification of Compliance

I. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation

Based on a review of the self-study and accompanying materials, interviews, and the Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations, the team **affirms** that the institution continues to meet all of the *Requirements of Affiliation.*

II. Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations

The team **affirms** that the institution meets all accreditation-relevant federal regulations, which is based upon the review of the self-study report, accompanying materials, and the Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations and the evaluation visit.

Section E: Verification of Data and Student Achievement

I. Verification of Data and Self-Study Information

The team **confirms** that data and other information provided by the institution are reasonably valid and conform to higher education expectations.

II. Student Achievement

After interviewing institutional stakeholders, the team **confirms** that the institution's approach to its student achievement goals is effective, consonant with higher education expectations, and consistent with the institution's mission.

Section F: Third-Party Comments (if applicable)

Section G: Conclusion

Our evaluation team sincerely thanks George Washington University; we hope that the institution will find valuable the ideas contained in this report, all of which are being offered in the spirit of collegiality and peer review.

As a reminder, the next steps in the evaluation process are as follows:

1. The institution replies to the team report in a formal written Institutional Response addressed to the Commission.

2. The team Chair submits a Confidential Brief to the Commission, summarizing the team report and conveying the team's proposal for accreditation action.

3. The Commission's Committee on Evaluation Reports carefully reviews the institutional self-study document, the evaluation team report, the institution's formal response, and the Chair's Confidential Brief to formulate a proposed action to the Commission.

4. The full Commission, after considering information gained in the preceding steps, takes formal accreditation action and notifies the institution.