

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
of
CORNELL UNIVERSITY
Ithaca, NY 14853
by
An Evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

**Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report
and a visit to the campus on March 27 – March 30, 2011**

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

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

AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

President:

Dr. David J. Skorton

Chief Academic Officer:

Dr. W. Kent Fuchs, Provost

Chair of the Board of Trustees:

Mr. Peter C. Meinig
Chairman and CEO, HM International, LLC
5810 East Skelly Drive, Suite 1650, Tulsa, OK 74135-6403

I. Context and Nature of Visit

- Institutional Overview

Cornell is both a private Ivy League university and the land grant university for the State of New York. It is classified as a Research I university. Cornell enrolls 22,101 students and has a faculty of 2,596. On the Ithaca campus are located the following colleges that award bachelors' degrees: Arts and Sciences; Agriculture and Life Sciences; Engineering; Human Ecology; Industrial and Labor Relations; Hotel Administration; and Architecture, Arts and Planning. Graduate and professional degrees are awarded by the Graduate School and four professional colleges: the Johnson Graduate School of Management, the Law School, and the College of Veterinary Medicine. The Weill Cornell Medical College awards Ph.D. and medical degrees on a New York City campus and at an additional location in Doha, Qatar. The School of Continuing Education and Summer Sessions offers credit and non-credit courses both on site and on-line in Ithaca, Washington, Qatar and other locations around the world. Of these colleges four (Agriculture and Life Sciences, Human Ecology Industrial and Labor Relations and Veterinary Medicine) are the so-called "statutory" colleges, which receive funding from and operate in connection with the State of New York.

- Scope of Institution at Time of Evaluation

- Degree levels: Certificate/Diploma; Bachelor's; Master's; Doctor's – Professional Practice; Doctor's - Research/Scholarship
- Branch Campus: Weill Cornell Medical College and Graduate School of Medical Sciences of Cornell University, New York, NY*
- Additional Locations: Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia; Cornell-Queens Executive MBA, El Segundo, CA (ANYA); Cornell-Queens Executive MBA, San Jose, CA; Cornell-Queens Executive MBA, Walnut Creek, CA (ANYA); Galleria Center, Houston, TX; Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*; New York City Site, New York, NY; Oregon Site, Portland, OR; Palisades, Palisades, NY; Ravinia Center, Atlanta, GA; Regus Amherst Center, Williamsville, NY; Regus Evening Star, Washington, DC*; Regus Key Center, Bellevue, WA; Regus Metro Place, Dublin, OH; Regus Park One Center, Independence, OH; Shoppes at Breckenridge, Salem, NH; The Cornell Club, New York, NY*; Two Galleria Town Center, Dallas, TX; Weill Cornell Medical College - Qatar, Doha, Qatar

*sites visited by members of the evaluation team at the direction of MSCHE

- Self Study Process and Report: Comprehensive model. The self-study process was overseen by a nine-member Planning Committee and 18-member Steering Committee, and the report was written by six working groups. Faculty, students, and administration were all represented in the process.

II. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation

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

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

- Based on certification by the institution, along with specific student loan information and materials discussed and reviewed with institutional officials during the site visit, the team affirms that the institution's Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits.
- Based on certification by the institution, the team affirms that Cornell meets relevant requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 such as those on distance education and transfer credit.

IV. Evaluation Overview

This decennial reaccreditation review process confirms the team's belief that Cornell University is now, and will continue to be, one of the world's preeminent institutions of higher learning. All of the evidence reviewed indicates that Cornell's programs of research and teaching are of the highest caliber and that the University's human, fiscal, and physical resources are managed and nurtured prudently and responsibly. The team also applauds the resilience of the Cornell community during the recent period of economic constraint.

The team deeply appreciates that Cornell's President and Provost, senior administration, faculty, students and staff have taken this review process very seriously. In choosing to undertake the Middle States' comprehensive review option, Cornell has embraced the opportunity to engage in an extensive period of self-examination comprised of three different processes. One was the self-study tied to the reaccreditation itself. While that document was being prepared, in 2009 the University undertook two corresponding processes: a set of activities called "Reimagining Cornell," which were designed to respond to the budgetary pressures created by the economic downturn, and a strategic planning process that took place from 2009-10, and which designs a path for Cornell for the next five years. The team's task was thus enriched by working with the plans that were generated by these three processes.

The title of the self-study report, " 'Any Person ... Any Study' within One University," encapsulates the central themes of this review. Throughout its history, the University has been shaped by the "Any Person ... Any Study" aspirations of its founder Ezra Cornell, and it is clear from this review that Cornell understands that one of its ongoing challenges is how to apply that 19th-century mantra in a 21st-century higher education context: one in which the expansion of

knowledge is potentially infinite, but where resources are finite. Cornell's self-reflection and agenda for the future have been shaped by two complementary factors: the effects of the economic downturn and the relative decentralization of the institution. Both of these factors have influenced Cornell's desire to function more as "one university": to coordinate and streamline the disparate missions and operations of its college and units, and allocate resources where they have the greatest impact. The 2010 strategic plan, *Cornell University at its Sesquicentennial*, is an ambitious plan indeed, and will require, if not additional resources, significant targeting of resources to accomplish its aims. The self-study, too, makes many recommendations that are both echoed in the strategic plan and add new goals.

This accreditation review, therefore, falls at an unusual moment of transition in the University's evolution: Cornell has weathered the worst of the recent economic storms and is planning energetically for the years ahead. That timing has an inevitable effect on the tone of the teams' findings: the team applauds the University for its extraordinarily thoughtful and inclusive efforts to grapple with the challenges of both the present and future, but also raises questions about the implementation of the plans and recommendations, and makes further suggestions of its own.

Taken as a whole, Cornell is a distinguished and thriving university. Its distinctive mission embraces both the elements of a major research institution and the roles of the land grant colleges that are important to the state and to society as a whole. It is not a complacent institution, but rather one that constantly seeks to do better, to rise in the ranks of global universities, to provide the best possible education for its students, and to serve the broader community in its outreach mission. At the same time, it strives to cope with the challenges of its diverse mission and its decentralized structure. Cornell benefits now from strong and innovative leadership at several levels, and from its faculty, students, and staff who are eager to move the institution forward.

However, for that effort to succeed, in a time in which one can foresee that there will be continued financial constraints, Cornell will have to come to terms with making both difficult choices about resource allocations and structural changes that will allow for better coordination and communication across college boundaries. But while Cornell may be perceived as large and decentralized, much is in place to provide coordination and common purpose. It was clear to the team that the Cornell community cares deeply about the institution and works hard to ensure that it is not merely a conglomeration of individual colleges but a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. As Cornell moves forward with centralization efforts, it is important to recognize the collaborative culture that already creates the conditions for the University to pursue Cornell's common good, and to preserve these well-working processes and relationships.

V. Compliance with Accreditation Standards

(Chapter sequence and titles follow those of Cornell's self-study document)

Chapter 3: Institutional Stewardship

This section covers the following standards:

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The institution meets these standards.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The University has crafted a succinct mission statement that appropriately reflects Cornell's basic purposes, character, and values. The statement effectively captures the common aspirations of Cornell's private university and land grant entities.

Drawing upon the mission statement is Cornell's new strategic plan. The planning process, set in motion by the President and Provost, was intended to go beyond the scope of previous planning efforts by focusing on the whole University and by incorporating measures for assessment. Creation of the plan became the responsibility of a Strategic Advisory Council of faculty from across the University; they were charged to provide a framework for a re-imagined Cornell of the future and were encouraged to think ambitiously rather than feel constrained by the then-current financial crisis. The whole University community was given the opportunity to vet the Council's work, and the final version of the planning document was approved by the Board of Trustees.

This new strategic plan provides a cascading series of five over-arching goals from which thirty-one objectives across five areas are drawn, and from which in turn a series of action items has been delineated. The new plan's goals and objectives are entirely in keeping with what one would expect of a leading American university, centered around faculty excellence, educational excellence, excellence in public engagement, staff excellence, and excellence in research, scholarship, and creativity. These goals and objectives, particularly related to the themes of faculty excellence and educational excellence, are already being used in colleges, schools, and departments to guide their forward planning. The Council also prepared an extensive list of measures that could be taken to assess the University's progress toward reaching its objectives, noting that the appropriate groups of administrators, faculty, and staff could further refine the evaluative methodology.

Across Cornell, several assessment, planning, improvement and resource allocation processes are being refined and implemented at both institutional and unit levels. Taken together, it appears that when fully implemented these will leverage current strengths to ensure a basis for longer

term institutional renewal. The team endorses Cornell's plan to continue efforts to coordinate and integrate its many planning, assessment and allocation processes.

The self-study places emphasis on a comprehensive process entitled Reimagining Cornell. Following an across the board budget cut of 5% that occurred during FY 2009, Reimagining Cornell was intended to identify and implement those further actions needed to ensure long-term excellence. It builds on the work of twenty academic task forces and the results of an assessment by an outside consulting firm. Campus responses described in the self-study include the 2010 strategic plan and a new Administrative Streamlining Program to facilitate the achievement of operational savings in procurement, facilities, information technology, finance, human resources, communications, and the organization and management of support activities. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning provides comprehensive information to support an annual budgetary process and current resource allocation decisions. In past years much of this activity has taken place at the college level. A new budget process, discussed below, is in its final phase of deliberation: the final product should facilitate the implementation of the One Cornell goal.

Progress is being made so rapidly on all the initiatives related to planning, resource allocation and institutional renewal that it appears that Cornell is poised to see the initial benefits of the foundation it is simultaneously developing and refining. A March 2011 report to the Board of Trustees addressed initial implementation progress on the three themes in the strategic plan of One Cornell, Assessment, and Faculty Excellence. Completion of action on the seven strategic initiatives has resulted in several documented outcomes including over \$11 million in donations raised to date for the Faculty Renewal initiative.

The self-study addresses the numerous types of institutional resources that are involved in University activities and in support of its strategic priorities - fiscal, facilities, technology and human resources. Cornell's fiscal resources are of a highly diversified nature.

The self-study details the various resources central to sustaining the current budgetary environment as well as priorities of the strategic plan. One of the most prominent relates to development and fundraising activities, which are linked with the institutional priorities of faculty renewal, financial aid, and capital. The University has surpassed the \$3 billion mark in its current \$4 billion campaign. A coordinated plan identifying the related fundraising targets by college and initiative is maintained and utilized by the development team. This team appears dynamic and energetic in reaching the defined goals. Continued discipline and commitment to the established priorities are essential to accomplishing a successful campaign for these priorities.

State appropriation revenues for the four contract colleges represent important operating and capital resources to accomplish their defined missions. The estimate of FY 2012 state appropriations for the upcoming operating budget cycle appeared to be prudent and conservative in view of the financial challenges that exist in the overall New York State budgetary environment. During the team's site visit, a tentative legislative New York State budget was announced which did not identify an additional reduction in resources below the budget assumption used in the planning process. The State resources appeared to be properly utilized and coordinated in conjunction with the contract college requirements.

Facility assets represent a core institutional resource. Cornell has implemented prudent procedures – including committees that enable wide-ranging input - to prioritize future capital activities in concert with defined financial feasibility processes, reviews and approvals. These measures were implemented to strengthen oversight in response to past financial challenges. A Campus Master Plan, initiated in 2005, projects 30- to 60-year development while also serving as a framework for the current capital plan.

Information technology is recognized as an important University asset. The assessment of the IT operation resulted in a five-year plan and a recent leadership change; these were important steps in protecting and strengthening this critical component of Cornell's infrastructure.

Cornell's financial activities are presented in monthly financial statements and reports that are important institutional controls. While the components of the institution's revenue picture have changed over the last decade, it appears that the University has properly monitored and responded to the situation, whether caused by declining State funding or reduced investment values. Benchmarking of financial performance is performed both to peer institutions and external standards such as credit ratios. A dashboard of financial information is compiled on a monthly basis and used by the senior administration and the Board of Trustees. This well-received tool clearly and concisely summarizes the current performance of areas that have been the focus of past financial challenges, including debt management.

The financial operations of the Weill Cornell Medical College (WCMC) are significant within the overall financial statements of the University. Team members reviewed financial and budgetary information and discussed it with WCMC personnel as well as with the senior University administration in Ithaca. There is well-defined oversight and governance of the medical college operation, despite its geographical separation from the Ithaca operation, and appropriate review and discussion of WCMC financial matters appears to occur.

The budgetary process and model used to allocate institutional assets are supported by a planning process documented within the self-study materials. Significant refinements and improvements to the budget process and budget model are underway. A key focus is greater transparency and distribution of budget data and funds flow among the college leaders and University administration. The Budget Model Task Force is the forum that is coordinating the discussions, input and feedback on necessary budget process refinements and improvements.

The detailed Operating Plan for FY 2011 presents the financial information for each of the campuses and identifies the financial pressures on the anticipated operating budgets. As noted above, implementation of administrative efficiencies is a key component of the five-year plan to reduce such budgetary pressures. The monitoring and oversight of this initiative have been established appropriately within the Division of Planning and Budget.

An additional component of Cornell's internal control over institutional resources is the auditing function – both internal and external. The University's operations and financial information are audited by numerous organizations. An internal University Audit Office develops an annual risk assessment and maintains an annual audit plan. In addition, an annual audit is performed by

external independent auditors. In the June 30, 2009 and 2010 audited financial statements, the University received an unqualified audit opinion.

Appropriate oversight of University resources and risks are accomplished through the Finance, Audit and Buildings and Properties Committee of the Board of Trustees.

Non-binding Findings for Improvement

- This is a time of considerable transition at Cornell, with the appointment of new senior administrators, the streamlining of administrative staff, the preparation of a new budget model, and the re-tooling of the development campaign to take into account the strategic plan themes. The University should take care to develop a system for assigning implementation priorities to the very large set of action steps and then make sure the appropriate assessment measures and assignment of institutional responsibilities are in place.
- The team suggests that greater emphasis be placed on the implementation of a systematic process of periodic institutional-level assessment to ensure that the goals, objectives and initiatives are ultimately successful. To arrive at a point where this can be done, further refinement of a smaller number of metrics to assess overarching institutional impact will be needed.

Chapter 4: Integrity, Governance and Administration

This section covers the following standards:

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance
Standard 5: Administration
Standard 6: Integrity

The institution meets these standards.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Cornell University is a large and complex institution with two separate campuses and numerous colleges, spanning undergraduate, graduate, and professional education. Overseeing this distributed and diverse educational operation is one president, one Board of Trustees, and one set of by-laws. All of the constituents that the team encountered on its campus visit expressed their confidence in the current administration of the University, and praised the openness and innovative spirit of the current leadership.

The Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility for the fiduciary, academic, and administrative functions of Cornell but explicitly delegates authority for the daily operation of the University to the President (this matter was recently restated and clarified in Trustees Task Force Review of October 2010). The board annually evaluates the President: and there is regular annual process for review of the President's direct reports and deans of the colleges and schools. The deans of the colleges on the Ithaca campus report to a Provost, whereas the dean of the Weill Cornell Medical School is also the New York campus's Provost for Medical Affairs. In 1980 the Board of Trustees created a separate Board of Overseers for Weill Cornell Medical College and the

Graduate School of Medical Sciences: this board of overseers is described as having more active engagement with the day to day operations of the medical complex.

The structure of the 64-member Board of Trustees appropriately reflects the diversity of the University's mission, including the endowment and contract colleges: and it allows for the voices of the various constituencies of the community. The Board membership is approximately a third female and a fourth minority. As previously discussed, several Board Committees are actively involved in the fiduciary oversight of institutional resources and were noted to be appropriately informed and engaged on important University matters. The Board periodically and conscientiously reviews its own structure and function. Most recently, it formed a task force to review its own governance processes and issued a report in October 2010. Review of this report indicates that the Board meets the requirement of having in place a means for periodic self-assessment, while it was suggested to us that it would be good to further formalize this process. It also provides an orientation for new members. According to Article XXII of the Bylaws of the University, the Trustees are subject to Cornell's conflict of interest policy. There is a statement on conflicts of interest that is available through the policy office, which indicates the standards that cover all the members of the University.

The University expresses its commitment to shared governance primarily through the presence on the Board of its constituents and the engagement of five representative bodies: an undergraduate student assembly, a graduate and professional student assembly, an employee assembly, a faculty senate, and a University assembly, which has members from all these constituencies. Each of the colleges has its own governance structure, and Weill Medical has its own Executive and General Faculty Council. The assemblies function in an advisory role to the University administration: recent examples of effective use of that role include the Campus Master Plan and the collaborative development of a policy on suspending tenured faculty. The self-study implies, however, that the assemblies and administration are not always clear about what sort of decisions appropriately engage the constituent assemblies. All of the constituent assemblies that the team interviewed expressed a desire to be consulted earlier in the University decision-making process. The team also learned that there are conversations underway with the various assembly leaders to come to an understanding about the process of consultation, and the team hopes that these concerns can be resolved.

The self-study indicates that for the most part decision-making works effectively at the local level. It is clear from the team's visit, however, that the University is fully reexamining how decision-making takes place, in the coordination between the central administration and the colleges. The self-study suggests that "localized decision making" can result in a "splintering of effort" or even competition. The University has identified as a key priority for future planning means of strengthening coordination of effort and shared goals, and the team endorses those efforts. The team engaged in many discussions with members of the Cornell administration as to how to create the right incentive structure for coordination of efforts. Some said that this works most effectively when generated "bottom up" rather than top down. However, there is also clearly a role of central planning and initiative in this effort; the success of such a combined approach has been demonstrated by the experience with the Life Sciences Initiative, and the possible consolidation of economics that is under discussion holds similar promise. As discussed in Chapter 3 above, Cornell has undertaken several initiatives to assess administrative activities

so that the University can more efficiently and effectively allocate institutional resources. Some of these initiatives involve and consider centralization of functions where the academic missions would not be jeopardized and have been structured to be inclusive, so that the necessary stakeholders are given input into the decision-making process.

In the conduct of all of its activities, Cornell demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom. Cornell's policies are designed to connect the University's mission to the everyday actions of its community; clarify the institution's expectations of its individual members; mitigate institutional risk; enhance efficiency; and support the University's compliance with laws and regulations.

Cornell's University Policy Office (UPO) coordinates the editing, review, issuance, and archiving of all official University policies. Policies issued through UPO are available online. Policies relating to ethical behavior are publicized during new supervisors' training, orientation for new students and new employees, and training required by the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance as a condition of grant funding. In addition, each year the University President sends a letter to all Cornell community members highlighting the ethics policy, and the Vice Provost for Research sends a letter to all faculty concerning the conflict of interest policies.

Cornell recently evaluated its practice of maintaining responsibility for development and enforcement of conflict of interest policies at the college level. To ensure that unified policies are enforced across all parts of the University, oversight is now being transferred to the Office of the Vice Provost for Research.

The University Audit Office assumes primary responsibility for enforcement of the Standards of Ethical Conduct policy. Complaints are assessed for evidence to substantiate allegations or are forwarded to another appropriate office. Responsible University officials are notified of substantiated allegations for appropriate action. The Audit Office also has responsibility for investigating alleged violations of the Financial Irregularities Policy and conducts routine audits throughout the University to ensure that financial matters are being handled properly. The Audit Office brings its conclusions to a standing committee, the Financial Irregularities Committee, which decides whether to refer the matter for criminal prosecution and also adjudicates disagreements over appropriate sanctions.

The Code of Academic Integrity establishes a comprehensive process, uniform across each college, to maintain academic integrity and address deviations from community standards. Enforcement of the Code of Academic Integrity is decentralized, with each college having responsibility for alleged violations in that college.

Alleged violations of the Campus Code of Conduct by students, staff, or faculty are handled through the campus judicial system, which attempts to ensure fairness for the accused and provides opportunities for an alleged victim to participate and be heard throughout the process. In 2007 the Board of Trustees approved a new suspension and dismissal policy to address faculty nonfeasance and malfeasance, giving the deans guidance to address faculty misconduct and providing due process for the faculty member involved. The Board also adopted a more general formal grievance policy for faculty that serves as the basis for individual college processes.

Several offices may be involved in cases of alleged violations of human resources policies. A human resources professional may assist a supervisor with the disciplinary process, while that process also has formal appeal procedures for staff. The independent and advisory Office of the University Ombudsman has the authority to investigate allegations of policy violations by the University. More than 1400 people have utilized the office's services over the past five years.

Chapter 5: Student Admissions and Supports

This section covers the following standards:
Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention
Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution meets these standards.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Undergraduate Students

Like many of its peer institutions, Cornell has seen an unprecedented increase in freshmen applications over the past ten years - from 21,519 in 2000 to 36,338 in 2010 - while admission rates fell from 27% to just 18% during that same time period. More than a third of the class is admitted through Early Decision (ED), an important enrollment management tool but one that Cornell recognizes has a potential downside, as the ED pool has less diversity than the regular admit pool. Other enrollment tools include using a wait list to manage the freshmen number and accepting a number of students as guaranteed transfer students. Policies and practices regarding tuition, financial aid and payment plans are broadly available and easily accessed by both potential and current students. Cornell is need-blind in respect to admissions for undergraduate students. Cornell is need-based in providing financial aid to undergraduate students, without a budget cap on the aid made available to U.S. citizens and eligible non-citizens, but with a budget cap on total aid to international and undocumented students. Even though much is in place to address the financial burden of their college education, about half of Cornell's seniors report that paying for their Cornell education has had a 'considerable' or 'severe' impact on their families. At Cornell students apply directly to one of the seven undergraduate colleges, with enrollment managed independently in each one. Coordination of these offices is overseen by the associate vice provost for admissions and financial aid and the director of undergraduate admissions.

The institution has placed a priority on the recruitment of underrepresented minorities and has seen significant increases in applicants. Cornell has also been successful in maintaining exceptional graduation rates (93% for the most recent six-year cohort that entered in the fall 2004). While this level of success is outstanding, there remain differences by race and ethnicity that Cornell is addressing through a number of campus-wide programs. Cornell is in the process of reconfiguring the functions of the Office of Minority Educational Affairs in hopes that by having individuals at the associate dean and vice provost level addressing academic, programming and career development areas, underrepresented minority students will not only

continue to graduate from Cornell in high numbers but will match the overall academic performance of their peers.

Graduate Students

Admission to graduate and professional programs at Cornell is highly selective as well and all programs have seen an increase in selectivity during the past ten years. The Law School admitted just over 17% of applicants in 2010 while the College of Veterinary Medicine admitted 12% and Weill Cornell Medical College slightly over 5%. Each college has its own criteria to evaluate admissions standards as they apply to student success after matriculation. The vast majority of doctoral level students receive funding for their graduate work (97%) at a rate that is competitive with peer institutions and includes student health insurance. As with graduate education everywhere, students are supported in a variety of ways including teaching and research assistantships, fellowships and training grants. More fellowships are needed in all areas. Funding for the professional programs varies among the colleges.

Recruitment and retention of underrepresented minorities remains a major goal of the graduate programs. The Graduate School has steadily increased the number of minority applicants during the past decade while applicants from white candidates have remained relatively unchanged. More underrepresented minorities have enrolled during this time as well. The professional schools have also developed programs to increase minority recruitment. The percent of students completing graduate studies at Cornell is higher than the national average while the time it takes them to finish is shorter. Data also suggests that new Ph.D.s are successful on the job market with 76% of those responding to the 2009 Survey of Earned Doctorates reporting definite employment plans.

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Cornell provides a broad range of support services that strengthen the institution's academic mission. Academic advising is a core service that is utilized by every student. While different models exist in each college, all undergraduates are advised by a combination of faculty and staff. Pre-major advising appears to be the greatest source of dissatisfaction for students while seniors have a much higher rate of satisfaction with their major advisors. A new electronic degree audit and advising review system is being used by Agriculture and Life Sciences as well as Arts and Sciences and may be adopted by other colleges, allowing students and advisors to focus discussion on academic issues as opposed to the mechanics of course selection. The 2011 "Cornell University Undergraduate Advising Report" from the Associate Deans Group summarizes advising processes across the colleges and outlines comprehensive goals.

In addition to the central Cornell Career Services, most of the colleges, professional schools and master's programs have their own career office. The center is well used by students, who report a fairly high level of satisfaction with career services. Undergraduates do well upon graduation, with 50% getting jobs and 34% attending graduate school. In 2009 92% of students applying to law school and 70% of students applying to medical school gained admission, with both rates well above the respective national averages.

Identifying and responding to students in distress is the focus of Cornell's student mental health services. In addition to a Council on Mental Health and Welfare, key administrators form an

“Alert Team” that meets weekly to discuss students of concern. A multi-level approach begins with residence hall staff and faculty advisors, who may then refer students to Counseling and Psychological Services. The number of students using the counseling services has doubled within the past ten years, reflecting a national trend. A wide range of outreach strategies have been put in place for students and faculty, with others being developed for staff and families. Recent changes in how the University implements FERPA regulations now permit Cornell to be more proactive in helping students who are experiencing difficulty.

Freshmen, sophomores and incoming transfer students are guaranteed housing at Cornell, while the majority of juniors and seniors live off campus in housing that is fairly contiguous to campus. While there is a demand for more on-campus housing by both undergraduate and graduate students, it is unlikely that Cornell will be able to increase its current stock in the near future. Living-learning programs that have been established on both North and West campus are designed to enhance opportunities for intellectual engagement outside of the classroom. Housing all freshmen together on North Campus has created a very solid first-year experience. West Campus has recently completed a much-needed series of five houses of approximately 300 students each. Each house also has a live-in house professor/dean and 30 faculty fellows who are actively involved in the living community.

The University affirms and supports its Greek system, but it has also taken strong steps in partnership with students and alumni to address challenges relating to hazing, compromised academic achievement and drug and alcohol abuse. In 2010 the Recognition Policy for Fraternities and Sororities was amended to reflect changes that addressed these issues. There is still concern about lack of oversight in living environments and practices that may continue to put students at risk, and strategies are being identified to further address these concerns.

Cornell has identified living-learning, health and well-being, civic engagement and diversity as core components of the Cornell student experience. They have presented well-defined recommendations that they are actively implementing. Additional areas they have identified for in-depth focus include plans to continue careful evaluation and monitoring of their Greek system, and strategies for assessment of learning outcomes in the student life area.

Chapter 6: The Faculty

This section covers the following standard:
Standard 10: Faculty

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Without question, Cornell is respected internationally for its distinguished faculty. By the common measures of faculty excellence, Cornell’s faculty is one of the top 20 universities in the world. Their faculty are exceptionally productive in research, by all the typical metrics of membership in honorary societies, fellowship awards, and citation counts: they rank in the top 20 (at 16) of R&D expenditures among US universities, with the portfolio increasing yearly.

According to the self-study, the faculty headcount on the Ithaca campus in fall of 2010 was 1571 and 1187 on the Weill Medical Campus (this includes all three professorial ranks and clinical part-time and acting faculty). The size of the Ithaca faculty increased slightly over the past decade. Over that period the proportion of women overall has increased (marginally decreased at the assistant professor ranks), as has the percentage of under-represented minorities. These percentages put Cornell within the norms for Research I institutions with a comparable breadth of mission. The team commends Cornell for the CU Advance program to increase representation of women in science faculty. While the self-study does not address the means of increasing the overall diversity of the faculty, the strategic plan does, and the Provost and President have identified funds to support those efforts.

The tenure and promotion process takes place in three steps, with a process of appeal at each level. The Faculty Handbook clearly explains the steps in the process and the Provost's office has also developed documents to clarify that process. The faculty that the team interviewed reported that they are satisfied that the expectations and process are well understood, and that faculty play an appropriate role in evaluation for tenure.

The proportion of tenured faculty on the Ithaca campus (83%) is high, in comparison with Ivy peers. At Weill Medical, 26% are full professors, 24% are associate professors and 50% assistant professors. The self-study also notes that over the past decade roughly two-thirds of those hired in a given year will receive tenure. This is expressed as intentional on the part of the institution rather than a failure of rigor, and the team would not suggest that they should deviate from this course.

Also notable are the demographics of the current Ithaca faculty: 48% are over age 55 (compared with 36% in AY 2000). The University's strategic plan has identified replacing this aging faculty as one of the key challenges in the future. To renew the faculty, the President announced in 2010 the establishment of a \$100 million Faculty Renewal Fund. At the time of the team's visit, some of this fund had already been supplied through philanthropy and reallocation of internal resources, and was supporting the University's redoubled effort in hiring.

Research is an important part of Cornell's mission and of its faculty's responsibilities, and the University supports these efforts through infrastructure (libraries and laboratory facilities), graduate education, and administrative services. Cornell has been responsive to the intellectual leadership of the faculty by investing in areas identified by the latter, such as nanoscience and the life sciences, and has an efficient system of shared core science facilities. The University is closely monitoring trends in federal and state funding and working to make its faculty as competitive as possible for sponsored awards. At Weill Cornell, a concerted effort to increase and diversify its grant portfolio over the past decade has been highly successful, and a major new medical research facility is under construction in New York to support this enterprise.

While Cornell is a preeminent research institution, the faculty also have a mandate to teach at both the undergraduate and graduate level. As is consistent with its decentralized structure, support varies across the colleges when it comes to teacher training, TA allocations, and awards for teaching. In 2008 the University did establish a central Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), and the well-respected Knight Institute for Writing offers training in the teaching of

writing, while the Academic Technology Services support teaching with technology. While still relatively new to campus, the CTE is used appropriately for remediation of poor teaching and for proactive programs to enhance teaching quality across the campus.

As with other institutions of its size, Cornell employs a large body of non-faculty academic staff: 1,126 in AY 2010. These are roughly divided into 30% instruction, 40% research, 20% extension and 10% library. Academic non-faculty served as primary instructors for 44% of all undergraduate classes in the fall of 2009: in some colleges they teach the majority of the units, while the overall number of non-faculty instructors has not gone up over the past decade. This includes the fact that each section associated with a large lecture is counted as an undergraduate class. Cornell convened a task force in 2004 to review the role of the non-faculty academic staff, but those recommendations were not implemented at the University level; instead, the different colleges have different policies about the engagement of lecturers in governance and planning.

Chapter 7: Educational Offerings

This section covers the following standards:

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

Standard 12: General Education

Standard 13: Related Educational Offerings

The institution meets these standards.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Cornell has always striven to provide “any person” “any study,” and its numerous colleges and interdisciplinary centers offer an amazing diversity and breadth of educational offerings, with almost 100 undergraduate majors, 81 doctoral fields and about 100 fields of study, and an array of master’s- and doctoral-level professional programs. The University as a whole, the individual colleges, and all departments have articulated student learning goals at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The web-based course bulletin includes course goals along with the traditional course descriptions. The goals and assessment process for the academic curriculum is fairly recent, outside the colleges with professional accreditation, but assessment seems to be taken seriously at Cornell, as discussed in further detail later in this section and again in Chapter 8 with regard to Standard 14. Numerous faculty committees oversee the curricula and ensure coherent and coordinated program offerings.

The students uniformly testified that the courses are generally rigorous with exemplary depth and content. Courses at locations off the Ithaca campus or Weill Cornell Medical College campus have oversight of faculty from the main campuses, while students studying abroad have syllabi preapproved and have follow-up surveys to assess the quality of the learning experience.

There is evidence to indicate that Cornell laid a foundation for its common educational experience shared by all undergraduate departments based on the institution’s core values, mission, and University-wide learning goals.

As noted above, Cornell has developed University-wide learning goals that are publicly documented and reflect the core competencies that all undergraduate students are expected to attain by graduation. Members of the Core Assessment Committee along with “assessment agents” designated by each college jointly developed these goals. While the core competencies were first generated by the colleges and schools, Cornell recognizes the need for further alignment between the University-wide and program level-learning goals developed by the colleges: “opportunities exist for greater coherence in undergraduate education with greater focus on the university-wide learning goals” (p. 181, self-study).

There is evidence of shared requirements addressing the University-wide learning goals. All first-year students are required to take at least one writing course delivered by the Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines - and the vast majority take two - and all first-year students reside in a living-learning community located on North Campus where they engage in shared academic experiences. Undergraduate degrees conferred by all seven colleges require students to take at least one quantitative or science course. The four largest colleges conferring 85% of the undergraduate degrees share the same minimum course distribution requirement. These requirements address the University-wide learning goals.

There is commitment by Cornell, as evidenced by its strategic plan, to strengthen the core competencies taught by the seven colleges and to deliver a shared intellectual experience in a student’s first two years. The University-wide learning goals address Cornell’s commitment to faculty-led student research. To this end, findings show that nearly “a quarter of all undergraduates and close to half of graduating seniors have had some experiences engaged in research projects with faculty members” (pp. 190-191, self-study).

Cornell also provides many nonclassroom learning experiences: as noted above, a significant number of undergraduate students participate in research projects, while many others write a senior thesis or a design project, residential students participate in living-learning community programs run with the assistance of about 250 faculty members, the Engineering college has a popular coop program, most students do internships or travel abroad, the Cornell Commitment program provides funding for outstanding research and service projects, and the Public Service Center fosters many service-learning opportunities.

As discussed in the chapter on faculty, the University provides extensive faculty teaching support, principally through the Center of Teaching Excellence. A variety of programs support teaching assistant development, especially the ITAP program assisting international TA students. Each year about 200 graduate students receive specific teacher training from the Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines. The library has several world-renowned collections, both physical and online, and both students and faculty surveys indicate high satisfaction with the library resources. To develop students’ information literacy, one of Cornell’s core competencies, the library offers a broad range of programs, including tailor-made sessions for the largest undergraduate majors. The University provides state-of-the-art computing resources and the software necessary for the various technical programs.

Transfers constitute a small portion of the student population; nevertheless, the course catalog adequately outlines program offerings and policies for transfers. The transfer students told the

team that they have no significant complaints about the transfer process and they were pleased with their advising, living situations, and overall integration into Cornell.

Programs for Academic Credit for Non-Matriculated Students

A range of such programs is overseen by Cornell's School of Continuing Education and Summer Programs. Local citizens may take regular Cornell courses; there is a process by which they may apply the course credits to a Cornell transcript. As these courses are regular parts of the Cornell curriculum, they have been approved by the educational policy committees in the relevant colleges, and meet Cornell's normal standards for learning outcomes and assessment.

Certificate Programs

Cornell offers five certificate programs: two in Labor Relations, one in Health Studies, and one each in intensive Chinese and Japanese. These programs are all overseen by the relevant academic division at Cornell, where responsibility for their quality and assessment is lodged. One of the two Labor Relations certificate programs is jointly run with the City University of New York Graduate School. The certificates' websites clearly outline admission requirements and learning objectives.

Branch Campus

Two team members spent a day at the Weill Cornell Medical College and Graduate School of Medical Sciences, located in New York City. Because these two units are not subsets of Ithaca-based programs but rather free-standing entities that form important parts of the larger Cornell whole, discussion of this campus's academics and administration are interspersed throughout the rest of this report.

The physical distance between the Weill Cornell and Ithaca campuses presents an ongoing challenge to capitalizing on their potential intellectual interactions. The team commends Cornell's President and Provosts for making the strengthening of links between the two campuses a priority; faculty, students, and staff interviewed by the team in New York and Ithaca praised the many successful results of these efforts. Seed funding has enabled an impressive set of joint research programs between the two campuses; the Medical College is developing programmatic links to colleges in Ithaca; faculty and graduate students report having ready access to programs and resources at both locations; and the simple implementation of a Cornell bus between New York and Ithaca has been widely applauded (although graduate students note that the cost makes travel for ongoing projects prohibitive). Barriers to further interaction include a lack of visitor housing in either New York or Ithaca, and differences in tuition, stipends, and other costs that make the administration of dual-campus partnerships cumbersome. Weill Cornell faculty also expressed their desire to interact with Ithaca undergraduates, perhaps through summer research opportunities.

Additional Locations

The 17-month Cornell-Queens Executive MBA Program allows students to earn both a Queens University MBA and a Cornell MBA, visiting both Queens and Cornell but with classes delivered primarily remotely via real-time interactive video in a city near their homes. One team member traveled to the Cornell Club in Manhattan and another team member to the Evening Star in Washington DC, two of the 18 sites where students participate in the online courses. At both

sites they found the facilities appropriate, the technology very well-designed to promote interactive learning, and the students they interviewed highly satisfied with the program. Admissions and governance practices meet acceptable standards.

The team chair also made an on-site visit to the Cornell-Nanyang Institute of Hospitality Management in Singapore, a 12-month program in which students take courses in Singapore and Ithaca and earn a Master of Management in Hospitality awarded jointly by both institutions. She toured the Institute's dedicated space in the Nanyang Business School, which she judged to be well-suited to the program, with modern classrooms well fitted-out for teaching with new technologies, and faculty offices that offer easy student access. Students in the program are provided with IT support and access to an up-to-date business library. Admissions and governance practices meet acceptable standards. The chair held a follow-up videoconference with students and faculty that confirmed her initial impressions of the Institute's success.

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During the Ithaca visit, the team noted that many of Cornell's recommendations in this chapter of the self-study are already being implemented. The first several recommendations stress the need for cross-college cooperation on common academic goals. In spite of the strong tradition of independence of each college, the team observed a surprisingly strong culture of connections between the colleges that already leads to cooperation without losing individual college identities. Other Cornell recommendations deal with assessment issues. Although the team does not take a position on the value of any particular recommendation, it strongly supports Cornell's strategic data collection and the use of data as one important factor in decision-making.

Non-Binding Findings for Improvement

- The team suggests that Cornell convene an interdisciplinary faculty working group to explore the value of strengthening its existing core set of courses offered by the individual colleges by including a common set of courses offered to all first-year students based on the University-wide learning goals.
- The team notes that as strengthening public engagement is one of the five umbrella goals of the University's strategic plan, activities such as certificates, credit and non-credit programs for non-matriculated students, and off-site, extension, and distance learning programs are likely to grow. This would be an excellent time to convene a working group to inventory the current efforts and compare best practices, with an eye to providing guidance to new programs that will be launched as a consequence of the strategic plan.

Chapter 8: Assessment of Student Learning

This section covers the following standard:
Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

The institution meets this standard

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Cornell has made a significant effort to develop a “culture of assessment” over the last year. While the institution has not yet achieved its goal in its entirety, in particular in relation to “closing the loop” on its use of data to improve student learning, there is strong evidence to indicate that the University is moving in this direction and will assuredly achieve its goal.

Cornell has made a substantial resource commitment to advance systemic and ongoing assessment of student learning throughout the University as evidenced by the organizational structure it has put in place. Led by the Provost, there are multiple levels of administrative and faculty support from throughout the institution leading these efforts, including the Core Assessment Group composed of key administrative and faculty members from across campus, as well as individual college-based committees. In addition, the ongoing student learning assessment expertise offered by the University’s Center for Excellence in Teaching reinforces Cornell’s commitment to overcome the barriers that its decentralized culture has created, as indicated by the self-study.

University-wide learning goals have been established and publicly documented on the institution’s website. These goals are integrated into the learning goals developed respectively by all seven of the University’s undergraduate colleges. Establishment and public documentation of learning goals at the departmental/major/program level varies, however there is evidence that indicates activity on all levels within each of the colleges and schools. There is also evidence of faculty including their learning goals on their respective syllabi, with some departments adding this as a requirement for all new and revised courses speaking to the institutionalization of this effort.

With regard to assessment processes, efforts have been taken to develop learning goals and corresponding assessment plans for each of the University’s undergraduate majors for all seven colleges. Some plans are further along than others, however there is strong evidence to indicate that plans will be developed by all. The College of Arts and Sciences pilot of 3 majors (Physics, Psychology, and English) provided the models upon which other departments are basing the development of their own learning goals and respective assessment plans. This appears to be a cost-effective approach to achieving more systemic assessment practices. Some college and programs have more defined plans than others and many of these units – at both the undergraduate and graduate level - are subject to an external review by an accrediting body other than Middle States, (e.g., College of Engineering, Master of Management in Hospitality.) Many departments indicate that their plans are in their infancy, having only recently developed their learning goals. In addition to the University’s commitment to this process, there is also increased “on the ground” support by faculty. While not completely explicit, from all indications, Cornell’s faculty who have pursued assessment efforts recognize the need for direct and indirect measures of student learning assessment.

The Graduate School has developed a common set of learning goals and is in the process of implementing its plan for all doctoral fields of study to develop their own respective learning outcomes. A timeline for data collection and analysis has been publicly announced. Interviews and a review of documentation by team members indicate that the Weill Cornell Graduate

School of Medical Sciences has not yet undertaken a systematic program of student learning assessment at the School or program level.

In terms of the use of evidence to improve student learning, some departments have begun to apply evidence generated through assessment activities to make changes to the curriculum. However, for the most part, Cornell is in its beginning stages with this part of the assessment process. There is every indication that Cornell will develop sustainable processes that will result in improving student learning. There is already strong indication that the process of developing learning goals and outcomes has had a positive impact on departments' curriculum design and development efforts. Employing the curriculum mapping process has enabled departments to identify both gaps and redundancies in their curriculum.

Non-binding Findings for Improvement

- The team suggests that Cornell honor its own self-reported recommendation to “take steps to ensure that there is ample central support for the assessment project, in order to continue to expand and improve Cornell’s culture of assessment” (pg. 255, self-study).
- The team further suggests that the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences develop a systematic process of student learning assessment, including the creation of School-wide student learning goals and outcomes.

Recommendation

- The team recommends that there be follow-up to ensure that the University is carrying out its plans for implementing a systematic and sustained culture of assessment.

Chapter 9: Institutional Assessment

This section covers the following standard:
Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

With the completion of the 2010-2015 strategic plan, Cornell now has a framework from which to implement systematic and comprehensive use of assessment data to achieve institutional renewal. The team concurs with the self-study’s recommendation to implement the highest-priority institutional assessment activities identified in the strategic plan. Cornell is on track to fully implement the process that has been developed to assess, evaluate, and improve the complete range of programs and services that together enable the sustainable achievement of institutional goals and objectives.

Cornell’s aspiration is “to be widely recognized as a top ten research university in the nation and world, and a model university for the interweaving of liberal education and fundamental knowledge with practical education and impact on societal and world problems.” (p. 38, self-study). The strategic plan includes a number of metrics with which to potentially measure achievement of both this aspiration and the plan’s five goals and 31 objectives; these metrics will

now be prioritized so that a smaller number of focused metrics can be used to ascertain success. Results of this assessment can then be used to inform subsequent University strategic plans and their implementation priorities.

For many years Cornell's individual colleges have relied on a rich set of data that are easily accessible by their administrators for use in decisions related to staffing, budget planning, and academic program planning. Deans may make comparisons at the college and departmental level for benchmarking and overall planning purposes. Individuals within colleges have together developed an online system to view past performance on key performance indicators.

The development of the current plan was informed by data from the Office of Institutional Research. An extensive program of survey research has been used for several years to study the undergraduate experience and is now being modified to incorporate questions that will facilitate the generation of indirect evidence in support of student learning outcomes assessment. Colleges will use these data along with direct measures to determine the degree to which their program learning goals are achieved and make subsequent modifications to curricula where warranted.

It appears that unit-level goals have been employed for several years and the development of comprehensive program-level learning goals has been underway in earnest for more than a year. Now that University-level goals have also been identified, it will be possible to align and integrate program-, unit- and institutional-level goals where appropriate. Subsequent assessment and evaluation of goal achievement will then enable the informed organizational learning and growth that are necessary for sustained institutional renewal.

Non-binding Finding for Improvement

- Expansion of the college-level data set to enable its use by University-level administrators should be considered as a potential means of facilitating the "One University" Goal.

Recommendation

- The team recommends that there be follow-up to ensure the University's successful implementation and sustained effort in the area of institutional assessment.

VI. Summary of Recommendations for Continuing Compliance and Requirements

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.

- The team recommends that there be follow-up to ensure the University's successful implementation and sustained effort in the area of institutional assessment.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

- The team recommends that there be follow-up to ensure that the University is carrying out its plans for implementing a systematic and sustained culture of assessment.