THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF A PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY:
THE MIDDLE STATES SELF-STUDY
The University of Maryland at College Park
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter I - Assessing Accomplishments in the Educational Mission

Findings

With regard to those programs and activities where the University has attained significant success over the past decade and is clearly moving in the right direction, we can cite the following general findings:

The University has committed significant resources to the implementation of the CORE program. The program is now fully operational, constitutes an important contribution to the undergraduate educational experience, and enjoys substantial support from both students and faculty.

The University Honors Program has been significantly changed and improved, provides a rich and exciting educational experience for an increasing number of students, and constitutes a positive attraction for prospective students.

Innovative programs such as First Year Focus, College Park Scholars, Gemstone, World Courses, and the various living-learning opportunities represent significant and exciting additions to the undergraduate educational experience. These initiatives also have resulted in a marked improvement in the University's ability to recruit promising undergraduate students. Other recruitment strategies have also been successful in enhancing the diversity of the student body.

Consistent with the numerous initiatives that affirm its commitment to quality undergraduate education, the University has also undertaken several programs that serve to bring about improvements in undergraduate teaching. The collaborative effort of the Graduate School and the Center for Teaching Excellence to improve the quantity and quality of teacher training for Graduate Assistants is an example of such efforts.

A number of undergraduate and graduate programs, departments, colleges, and schools have recently received positive evaluations and rankings from national media or organizations. The broad scope of the programs identified and the impressive number of such citations attests to the growing national reputation that the University enjoys.

The University is a major competitor for external funding to support its research activities. During the past decade the faculty has been increasing successful in obtaining external funding and in obtaining faculty fellowships.
The impressive success is evident across a broad range of disciplines and colleges. In recognition of the University's service mission, faculty have also undertaken a number of research and public service activities that contribute directly to the economy of the State of Maryland as well as to the well being of the citizens.

The Graduate Fellowship Program, initiated in 1985, has proven to be an invaluable resource in the University's efforts to recruit outstanding graduate students. The number of fellowships as well as the amount of the award has been increased since 1985. Financial assistance for minority students has also increased and constitutes a positive recruitment tool.

In response to external opportunities as well as to faculty strengths and interests, the University has established a number of new graduate degree programs, including interdisciplinary programs, that enhance both its academic and professional programs and its service to the citizens of the State.

The University's educational programs are significantly enhanced by the high quality of support services provided by both Classified and Associate Staff employees. Several of the support offices and programs at the University have received national or international recognition.

Diversity among faculty, staff, and students as well as diversity in the curriculum and other educational activities is a University goal, is being successfully pursued, and serves to enhance the University's educational mission.
Chapter II - Addressing Issues to Enhance the Educational Mission

A. Undergraduate Education

1. The Role of the Research Mission in Undergraduate Education

**Recommendation:** Research is an essential and accepted part of graduate education, especially for students in doctoral programs. Because the University is a major research university with extensive research facilities and opportunities, it should also seek to make research an increasingly important part of the undergraduate education experience. It should therefore undertake to enhance and to increase opportunities for undergraduate participation in faculty research and performance activities as well as increase opportunities for individual research and performance activities. In doing so, the University must address any disincentives for both faculty and students, real or perceived, that might impede the achievement of this goal.

2. Improvements in Retention

**Recommendation:** In accordance with the Strategic Plan, the University is committed to continue its efforts to improve undergraduate retention. The President has challenged the University to "set a five-year graduation rate goal of 70% for the freshman class that enters in the fall of 1997," a daunting challenge for students, faculty, and administrators. This is a worthy goal, made more worthy because of the increasing quality of the freshman class, and the University must marshal its resources effectively and creatively to meet this goal.

3. Student Assessment

**Recommendation:** It is important that the University continue to explore constructive approaches to student outcomes assessment that help to demonstrate institutional effectiveness while generating useful information for academic and student services. The purpose of such an assessment program should be to enhance the University's efforts to provide quality educational programs in a quality educational environment for all of its students.

4. Strategic Plan Initiatives

**Recommendation:** The Strategic Plan's section on undergraduate education recognizes that much remains to be done and puts forward proposals to continue the improvements in undergraduate education. The initiatives set forth in the Plan should be implemented.

B. Graduate Education

1. The Role and Purposes of Graduate Education

**Recommendation:** It is accepted that graduate education, especially doctoral education, is a fundamental component of a research university; but declaring that to be a fact does not answer important questions about the
desirable balance between graduate education and other important university activities, or about the balance to be achieved among the various components of graduate education. A campus policy statement offering general guidance and goals in the matters identified above would be helpful at this time. Indeed, such a policy statement seems to be implied in the effort currently underway to evaluate all doctoral and master's programs on the campus.

2. Effective Program Review

**Recommendation:** In accordance with the initiatives of the Strategic Plan, the University has embarked upon a program for the systematic review of all doctoral programs. Such a review will provide the University with a comprehensive picture of the strengths and weaknesses of current doctoral programs and provide opportunities for appropriate actions.

3. Criteria to Assess New, Weak, or Underperforming Doctoral Programs

**Recommendation:** As a complement to the comprehensive review of doctoral programs, the University must develop and articulate clear and transparent criteria for the assessment of new, weak, or underperforming programs so that the University community may have confidence in the fairness and openness of the review process.

4. The Changing Role of the Master's Degree

**Recommendation:** The masters degree serves multiple purposes in a large and comprehensive university. Recognizing the complex problem of the changing nature and purpose of master's degrees, the University needs to conduct a review of the appropriate role and uses of the masters degree. The current graduate program review will attempt to address these issues in the context of the University's overall educational mission.

5. Graduate Student Recruitment

**Recommendation:** The recruitment of quality graduate students is an important characteristic of a strong research university. The University must continue and expand its efforts to increase the recruitment of good graduate students. It must also work to improve communication between the Graduate School and the departments. As mandated in the Strategic Plan, the University must continue its efforts directed to the recruitment of under-represented minorities and women.

6. Graduate Student Research Support

**Recommendation:** Because support for graduate student research is valuable for the quality of the students' education, diminishes the time for them to finish their degrees, and is also a valuable recruiting attraction, the Graduate School should investigate the trends in graduate student research support at this university and at its peers, and suggest appropriate actions.
7. Strategic Plan Initiatives

Recommendation: The Strategic Plan’s section on graduate education recognizes the central role of strong graduate programs in a major research university and calls on the University to build cornerstone programs of excellence in graduate education and research. In addition to recommending a comprehensive review of graduate programs, the Strategic Plan contains several specific initiatives to accomplish this goal that should be pursued.

C. Research

1. Federal Funding Issues

Recommendation: Recent actions in the U.S. Congress and in federal government agencies suggest that the federal government is likely to reduce the amount of funds available to support research, a problem that will affect all research universities. The University must continue to develop plans that will enable it to determine the extent to which such reductions would affect research activities at Maryland. The University must continue its efforts to remain competitive for federal funds as well as to seek sufficient funds from other sources in order to maintain its research activities.

2. Research Opportunities and Initiatives for the University of Maryland at College Park

   a. Effective Use of Internal Research Resources

   Recommendation: In addition to securing external funds to support its research activities, the University must also ensure the maximum utilization of its internal research resources. The Designated Research Initiative Fund (DRIF) monies constitute a major portion of the internal research resources. The formula for allocation of DRIF funds is clearly established; the University must ensure that there is a clear understanding of the purposes of DRIF and that all expenditures of such funds are consistent with the basic purpose in establishing DRIF.

   b. Maryland Center for Performing Arts

   Recommendation: The Maryland Center for the Performing Arts will be in use by the end of this decade. The facility will be a major teaching and research facility providing unique opportunities for students and faculty in the performing arts, as well as entertainment opportunities for the general public. The University must undertake that this new facility also will be supported and utilized in a manner that ensures the fullest teaching and research benefits. The University must be attentive to achieving the appropriate balance among the various roles of the Center.

   c. Partnerships and Entrepreneurial Activities

   Recommendation: The University's location in an area of significant research activity conducted by agencies in both the public and private sector
offers faculty and students unique advantages and opportunities to participate in externally-supported research and educational activities. The University must aggressively and creatively pursue partnerships and entrepreneurial activities with external agencies and organizations that will enhance the University’s mission.

d. Libraries

Recommendation: Following the development by the new Dean of Libraries of a plan to address long-standing deficiencies in the libraries, the University should implement the Strategic Plan recommendation, including appropriate increases in library funding.

D. Faculty and Staff in the Educational Environment

1. Staff

   a. Role in the Educational Environment

Recommendation: Staff at the University of Maryland have an active involvement in the educational mission of the University, especially as it relates to undergraduates. These opportunities occur both within the formal setting of a classroom and in the informal informational-giving and support roles that occur outside of the classroom. The staff teaching and support activities are part of the total learning environment. This learning environment can be enhanced if the University will develop additional opportunities for staff participation and see that those staff and faculty who interact with students are fully knowledgeable about the various resources on campus.

   b. Issues of Concern

Recommendation: A number of staff concerns have been identified. The University must be as aggressive and conscientious in addressing these concerns as it is in addressing faculty concerns.

2. Faculty

   a. Evaluation and Accountability

Recommendation: Both the promotion and post-tenure review policies represent new reporting requirements for faculty. In order for the policies to have a positive benefit for both the University and the individual faculty member, the implementation of the policies should be monitored closely and reviewed periodically to ensure that they fulfill the purpose for which they were intended and are not overly burdensome for either party. In addition the University must ensure that promotion decisions or post-tenure reviews take into account the full range of the faculty member’s activities with regard to departmental and interdisciplinary teaching, research, service, and creative performance.
b. Teaching Portfolios

**Recommendation:** As the University gives greater attention to the documentation of teaching performance, it must continue to give attention to public recognition of teaching excellence. Increases in salary are an important form of recognition, but they are not the only method that can be employed to indicate that the University values teaching excellence. Contrary to campus perception, there are currently a number of campus, college, and departmental teaching awards that recognize excellence in teaching. The University should be creative in developing additional recognition and reward arrangements.

c. Issues of Concern

**Recommendation:** Although the level of faculty satisfaction with developments on the campus appears to be relatively high and although considerable amounts of new space have been added to the campus, the faculty continue to express concern about the salary level as well as the quality of the physical facilities in which the faculty teach, meet their students, and conduct their research. The President’s commitment to improve faculty salaries is seen as a positive step. Other steps need to be taken to address the concerns about the adequacy of the physical facilities.

d. Adjunct and Contingent Faculty

**Recommendation:** In the past, the University has preferred to employ regular, full-time faculty members and has resisted the temptation to rely heavily upon contingent or adjunct faculty. In some specific situations, there are positive reasons to employ particular contingent or adjunct faculty members because of the unique expertise they are able to bring to the research or instructional program on the campus. There are, however, numerous pressures upon institutions of higher education to rely increasingly upon such faculty, especially in periods of fiscal constraints or requirements for off-campus instruction. The University must address this issue and establish clear policy guidelines regarding the use of such faculty.

E. Allocation of Resources

**Recommendation:** The University should support the implementation of the Strategic Plan in its efforts to rationalize resource allocation and administrative operations.
A. Technology in Instruction

**Issue:** A leading issue will always be how to obtain and best utilize the resources involved: departmental, college, and University; financial, human, and physical. Each significant technological advance carries with it the need for an equally significant investment that might rather be spent on library books, laboratory equipment, technical support, or other critical educational needs. Further, each such advance raises the questions of maintenance, compatibility, and obsolescence. These issues must be weighed if the University is to make the most of its resources as it inexorably moves forward technologically. For this, the University must have a widely accepted plan to guide it, and an appropriate organization to make the decisions.

**Issue:** A second issue is that of management of the University's widely distributed instructional information technology system. Systems set up for dealing with a few high-tech lecture halls are insufficient for the operation and maintenance of increasing numbers of such classrooms, teaching theaters, and distance education rooms. Coordination and follow-through are needed not only to create new facilities and features, but to operate them, to ensure that successes are built on throughout the campus and that failures are not repeated, and to plan for not only the installation but the continued operation of new facilities and innovations.

**Issue:** Another major issue is that of faculty interest and resources. An enormous amount of preparation time is demanded by these new teaching methods. Immense amounts of preparation time (organization of material, preparation of graphics, mastery of software, etc.) are necessary to develop one hour of high-tech classroom instruction. While other uses of technology, such as the use of listserves in courses, are less demanding, each such innovation does require faculty interest and commitment. This requires basic training in the essential software, discipline-dependent pedagogy training, and an award structure that will encourage people to take the necessary time. An even greater investment of faculty effort will be demanded by the possibility of technology fundamentally reconceptualizing the ways of teaching. Already the Departments of Mathematics and Physics have made fundamental changes in their pedagogy. How should the University encourage faculty interest and pedagogical advances such as these while ensuring that all such efforts are educationally effective? How can the University provide what will be a dramatically increased need for support as faculty interest and usage expand?

**Issue:** Student preparation is yet another big challenge, and not merely before-class preparation. Not all students arrive owning their own computers or, indeed, even with computer experience. While this problem should diminish in the coming years, it probably will not go away. The amount of class time that is devoted to rectifying computing deficiencies can become a remediation resource problem. How much student effort should be invested in learning the technology of a course as opposed to the course subject matter? How should the University provide instruction in high-tech data searching? How much technological training is essential to the students' later careers?
Executive Summary

B. Interdisciplinary Programs and Research Activities

**Issue:** Interdisciplinary activities can provide innovative solutions to societal problems and can lead to economic benefits for the citizens of Maryland. This public research university has a land-grant mission and a State mission to address those problems to the best of its abilities. Yet no university can address all interdisciplinary problems. The issue is then how to select those problems in which the University of Maryland at College Park, with its current resources, can successfully contribute.

**Issue:** For undergraduate education, an issue is how to continue to provide exciting, even individualized, interdisciplinary courses of study without permitting a degeneration into superficial, unguided programs.

**Issue:** Graduate education necessarily is constrained by the recognition that graduate students are training for careers, but at the same time there is an awareness that interdisciplinary training in some cases may be the training better suited to the changing workplace. At the graduate level an issue is how to ground the student fully in the acquisition of a discipline-based knowledge and methodology before or concurrently with interdisciplinary training.

**Issue:** The dynamic relationships between established disciplines and interdisciplinary activities is and will continue to be a major issue, or series of issues. The administrative structures and intellectual communities are strongly grounded in the departments. What is necessary is the means to encourage the kind of intellectual environment in which faculty can engage easily in scholarly inquiry and education across departmental and college boundaries and in which innovative interdisciplinary research, education, and service can thrive. Tangible resources and incentives would be needed, not just for the sake of the resources themselves, but to balance the faculty's allegiance to the departmental system. The University might consider a system that fosters multiple allegiances by the faculty.

**Issue:** The question of multiple allegiances by the faculty suggests issues about the evaluation of program and faculty in interdisciplinary activities. Interdisciplinary activities must be reviewed periodically and held to the same quality standards that apply to departments, but they also must demonstrate true interdisciplinary interactions among recognized disciplines. Perhaps the discourse can be framed in terms of partnerships where interdisciplinary programs and departments enhance each other in ways that benefit the increase of knowledge, the education of students, the betterment of society, and the realization of the University's mission.

C. Entrepreneurial Activities

**Issue:** Academic issues for discussion include the control of content and the approval of programs. The University will need to give serious consideration to the effects of entrepreneurial activities on faculty and academic units. Concerns such as rewards to units and faculty have been raised and will require continued discussions. Also of concern is the issue of the quality of
the offerings and how quality is be maintained when financial opportunities beckon at its expense.

**Issue:** Resource issues require discussion. While the expectation is that entrepreneurial activities will be profitable to the University, start-up costs use scarce resources. Where profits are generated, the University must evaluate the range of uses for those profits. Because such activities may not always succeed, the risks must be apportioned. Further, care must be exercised that entrepreneurial activities reach new markets rather than draw students from other University programs.

D. Continuing Education

**Issue:** The issue of definition for continuing education raises many questions. Who will define continuing education in a University where there is already a variety of continuing education programs? Where are the boundaries between continuing education housed in traditional academic units and new kinds of continuing education programs involving OCEESP? Issues of definition can affect students if they seek to move between continuing education and regular academic programs.

**Issue:** The issue of organization focuses on the role of OCEESP. Discussions about that role often see OCEESP as a central control of continuing education. One view sees such centralization as necessary for growth and innovation, but another view sees it as bureaucratic interference with successful programs. Organization also affects financial matters. A central office can be the source of start-up funds for a program, but it can also be viewed as an office that will require a large share of whatever profits are generated by a continuing education program.

**Issue:** For faculty, continuing education poses opportunities and problems. While some faculty may welcome the expanded use of their expertise, others question the ways continuing education programs may be staffed. Where a program is profit-driven, adjunct faculty may be sought as a less expensive “outsourcing” to fill courses. Adjunct faculty could be so heavily used that the program loses touch with its academic base in the University, or adjunct faculty might be engaged for departmental courses so that regular faculty would be available for a profitable continuing education program. Another form of the staffing issue is whether some continuing education should be a normal part of faculty workload, in which case a member of the faculty might be required to teach continuing education courses with appropriate funding.

**Issue:** Continuing education calls upon the services and facilities of the University. The use and fair compensation for the use of those services and facilities are issues for the University. Expansion of continuing education will increase the burden on service units such as accounting, advising, admissions, financial aid, records, and registration. As a consequence, these services may need more staff and space. Facilities such as laboratories, libraries, and computers as well as parking, transportation, and buildings will be more heavily used and require expansion or more frequent maintenance to meet increased demands. Whether the University can accept increased usage of some its services and facilities must be considered, and if it can accept the
increase, the forms of compensation will be an issue in an expansion of continuing education programs.

E. Human Resource Development

**Issue:** The University needs to address the establishment of a comprehensive human resource policy that states the institution's commitment to its employees as new directions are explored. Some of the directions that must be considered include outsourcing, productivity enhancements, program review outcomes, contingent workforce, and market-based compensation and benefits programs.

**Issue:** The University may want to consider the realignment of authority and accountability for personnel decisions. The introduction of redesigned business processes supported by information technology could place more authority and accountability at less central levels of the institution, and this could make the whole University more accountable for the human resource functions.