Evaluation of the Periodic Review Report of
Morgan State University
I. Introduction

Morgan State University was founded in 1867 and is located in Baltimore, Maryland. It is a Carnegie classified doctoral research university since 2005, and is one of the nation’s premiere historically black colleges or universities (HBCUs). Its most recent reaffirmation of accreditation by Middle States was in 2008. Morgan State offers a comprehensive range of academic programs including 15 doctoral, 30 masters, and more than 40 baccalaureate degree programs, and has been approved by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to award three online degrees and an online certificate.

The university’s full-time equivalent enrollment for fall 2012 was approximately 6,985, including 6,060 undergraduate students and 925 graduate students spread across 10 schools: the College of Liberal Arts, the School of Architecture and Planning, the Earl Graves School of Business and Management, the School of Computer, Mathematical and Natural Sciences, the School of Community Health and Policy, the School of Education and Urban Studies, the School of Engineering, the School of Global Journalism and Communications, the School of Social Work, and the School of Graduate Studies.

Since the 2008 Middle States’ decennial visit to university, Morgan State appointed Dr. David Wilson as its 12th president in July 2010. With his appointment, the university community and Board of Regents engaged in a year-long strategic planning process that produced a new mission, vision, and 10-year strategic plan.

The Periodic Review Report consists of 1) Morgan State’s responses to recommendations of the 2008 MSCHE Visiting Team Report and to the recommendations made in the university’s Institutional Self-Study; 2) a narrative identifying the university’s major challenges and opportunities; 3) enrollment and finance trends and projections; and 4) a discussion of processes to assess institutional effectiveness and student learning. The report was produced by a Steering Committee comprised of 30 members from across the university community. The Steering Committee scheduled monthly meetings over two years and worked with six subcommittees to prepare the report. The Committee shared each draft with the university community and invited input on the drafts, published the drafts on the Morgan State PRR website, and held public briefings including a presentation to the Board of Regents.

II. Responses to Suggestions and Recommendations

1. Responses to Recommendations by MSCHE Visiting Team Report

This section summarizes Morgan State’s responses to the Middle States Evaluation Team’s 2008 recommendations, along with those made in the university’s Self-Study. The Visiting Team Report included recommendations related to the university’s mission statement (Standard 1), institutional assessment (Standard 7), and educational offerings (Standard 11). The Self-Study included 34 recommendations covering the university’s mission statement, planning and resource allocation, institutional resources, leadership and governance, institutional assessment, student admissions and retention, student support services, faculty, educational offerings, and general education (Standards 1-4 and 7-12).
**Visiting Team Recommendation One:** Widely distribute and publish the mission statement on the web site, in the catalogue and in all public documents.

In August, 2010, shortly after the beginning of President David Wilson’s tenure, Morgan State began the process of developing a new mission statement as part of a new strategic plan. The development of the new mission statement was guided by the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, comprised of members of the Board of Regents, faculty, students, staff, alumni, administrators, deans, and representatives from the neighborhood and local business communities. In the process of developing the new mission, the Committee met with faculty, members of the university community, and other stakeholders. The new mission statement reads:

> Morgan State University serves the community, region, state, nation, and world as an intellectual and creative resource by supporting, empowering and preparing high-quality, diverse graduates to lead the world. The University offers innovative, inclusive, and distinctive educational experiences to a broad cross-section of the population in a comprehensive range of disciplines at the baccalaureate, master’s, doctoral, and professional degree levels. Through collaborative pursuits, scholarly research, creative endeavors, and dedicated public service, the University gives significant priority to addressing societal problems, particularly those prevalent in urban communities.

The mission statement was developed in broad consultation with the university community. It is clearly articulated on the University’s website and in the 2012 BearFacts publication, and is present as a guiding feature of many of the documents compiled for the PRR. The mission statement also plays a fundamental role in the university’s strategic plan, “Growing the Future, Leading the World: The Strategic Plan for Morgan State University, 2011-2021,” and thus in directing the university more broadly. The reviewers were not able to find the updated version of the mission statement in a few of the locations listed in the PRR, for example the Graduate Catalogue 2010-2013 (updated 1990 version) and the Undergraduate Catalogue 2010-2013 (2005 version).

**Suggestion**

The reviewers suggest that the university be as thorough as possible in disseminating their most current mission statement.

**Visiting Team Recommendation Two:** Re-examine and rewrite the Comprehensive Assessment Plan for Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness (CAP) to include mission-based assessment goals for student learning, academic programs, services and administrative processes.

Morgan State University has an ambitious agenda for assessment in place. The assessment tools that the university makes available to its units, including the National Survey of Student Engagement, the Collegiate Learning Assessment, and the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress, show that Morgan State has taken steps to get the information needed to develop an ongoing, systematic culture of assessment at the university.
The CAP, included with the PRR as Appendix 7, was revised in fall of 2012. Academic programs and student learning are assessed within a broader system of university-wide planning and assessment, and the system is clearly laid out. It is clear from the “Summary and Model of Institutional Effectiveness” and the accompanying flow chart that Morgan State understands the process of assessment to be an ongoing one, where assessment results are used to make decisions about improvement going forward. This is also clear from the forms used for academic unit assessment, which include questions concerning how the respondent will use this year’s assessment for improvement within the unit. In general, the forms used to collect feedback, such as those in Appendix C, are clear and easy to use, and thus encourage a high number of responses.

Less specific attention is paid to services and administrative processes in the CAP, though forms intended for non-academic units make it clear that these units are included. The Enrollment Management and Student Academic Support Services Unit Strategic Plan (EMSASS) demonstrates that the university has a plan in place to use assessment to reach goals with regard to service. The university’s work with the consulting firm ATTAIN shows that it is taking a similar approach to assessing administrative issues.

**Suggestion**
1. The reviewers suggest that Morgan State consider integrating the assessment of student services and enrollment management into the CAP, so that it can become a unified resource for assessment throughout the university.

**Recommendation**
1. The reviewers recommend that in assessing student learning outcomes, Morgan State base its assessment on student learning within degree types within programs (BA, MA, PhD, etc.) rather than at the department level.

**Visiting Team Recommendation Three:** Implement the revised CAP in a timely fashion.

The PRR does not present evidence that the CAP has been fully implemented, particularly with regard to student learning outcomes. This is presumably because it was just adopted in fall 2012.

**Recommendation**
The reviewers recommend that the university implement the revised CAP (Standards 7 and 14).

**Visiting Team Recommendation Four:** Implement the periodic review of graduate and undergraduate programs using the policies and procedures developed by the ad hoc Task Force on the Periodic Review of Programs.

The policies and procedures for the periodic review of programs developed by the ad hoc Task Force on the Periodic Review of Programs in October 2007 once again demonstrate the institution’s stated commitment to assessment. The introduction to the policies and procedures assert two motivations for developing a systematic review of academic programs at the university. The first is the need to assess new programs on campus. The second is the growing national demand for accountability at higher education institutions, in part to demonstrate that rising tuition costs are still worth paying. Both of these motivations remain relevant at the
present time.

In accordance with the visiting team’s recommendations in 2008, Morgan State developed a program review schedule for its graduate and undergraduate programs and began to review programs in 2011. The PRR states that 18 degree programs have completed reviews according to the process developed by the Periodic Review of Programs: Policies and Procedures.

2. Responses to Self-Study Recommendations

Institutional Effectiveness Recommendations

The recommendations that Morgan State provided in its 2008 self-study are wide-ranging and ambitious. Many of the recommendations complement the focus of the 2011 strategic plan despite their being adopted at an earlier date. The university groups its Self-Study recommendations relating to institutional effectiveness into the following categories: improving the delivery of administrative and student services; studying operational efficiencies for delivering administrative services; strengthening the management of grants and contracts; and enhancing the incentives for faculty and staff to pursue external funding. Morgan State’s decisions to train employees with regard to service and to hire ATTAIN as a consulting group to examine their administrative organization and processes are steps that address the first two of these recommendations. The first round of service training was completed in late 2012, and ATTAIN began working with Morgan State in early 2013. Morgan State has had success in increasing the amount of grant money it receives, but points out that high teaching loads for faculty and a high percentage of non-tenure-stream faculty will make it difficult for them to continue this recent momentum.

Student Learning Outcomes Recommendations

There are initiatives in place that will eventually allow Morgan State to improve student learning outcomes, but they are in the early stages. In this case, the university is engaged in a demonstration project with the Association of Governing Boards, supported by the Teagle Foundation, that will allow the Board of Regents to be more involved in student learning outcomes. This program has the potential to link the highest level of university administration directly with the classroom, and thus has great promise for keeping the university’s mission in focus.

III. Major Challenges and/or Opportunities

Morgan State assessed its challenges and opportunities through a SWOT analysis, conducted by the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, in conjunction with the Board of Regents.

One of the most significant points of overlap between strengths and opportunities comes in Morgan State’s success in educating students whose family income and secondary academic preparation places them at risk of not completing a baccalaureate degree. This strength aligns with the State degree completion goal of 55% ages 25-64 by 2025. The recommendations from the Panel on Comparability and Competitiveness of Historically Black Institutions in Maryland
indicate that the State has committed itself to funding historically black institutions as part of its attempt to reach this goal. This puts Morgan State in a good position to receive additional funds in the coming years, and creates additional incentive to move several of the initiatives outlined in the PRR forward. The increase in the number of minorities, particularly African Americans and Hispanics, graduating from high schools in Maryland also creates an opportunity for the university, though one area of concern regarding this opportunity is the university’s conclusion (listed as weakness #2 in its SWOT analysis) that current facilities may not be adequate to handle enrollment growth.

The SWOT analysis included in the PRR points to several weaknesses that could prove to be obstacles in pursuing the university’s overall vision and direction, without proposing any strategies for addressing these concerns. The weaknesses articulated in the SWOT include “insufficient financial resources to fully support its current mission thereby posing serious implications for Morgan to support the new vision and mission outlined in this strategic plan” and a “belief that policies and procedure, drafted when Morgan was primarily an undergraduate teaching institution, do not support the vision of an expanded contracts and research agenda, including further doctoral program expansion as feasible.”

In researching the university while preparing to write this response, the reviewers noted that Morgan State has experienced some instability in its leadership, having appointed a new President in July 2010 followed by a series of high-profile leadership challenges between December, 2012 and March, 2013. The reviewers felt that this instability in leadership may have impacted Morgan State’s ability to implement its strategic goals and may have delayed progress on fulfilling the university’s broader mission. The reviewers hope that the most recent expression of unity on behalf of the Board of Regents and President signals an opportunity to create a more stable governing vision and momentum to advance the university’s strategic goals.

**Recommendation**

The reviewers recommend that the university revisit its current strategic plan in light of the university’s financial resources, facilities, policies and procedures, and bring the two more in line with each other. This effort may involve adjusting goals, or providing more specific evidence for how current goals will be met (Standards 1 and 3).

**IV. Enrollment and Finance Trends and Projections**

Morgan State reached a milestone in fall 2011 when its total enrollment exceeded 8,000 students for the first time in its history. Its enrollment numbers have decreased slightly since then, but as the university notes, there has been a sustained increase in enrollment over the past decade.

This growth has largely been the result of an increase in the number of graduate students. The PRR asserts that Morgan State’s long-term success in increasing enrollment rests on its success recruiting and retaining undergraduate students. With regard to undergraduates, the university has ambitious goals for enrollment through AY 2020-2021, aiming to increase undergraduate enrollment 45.5%, from 6,711 (FTE) in fall 2011 to 9,765 in fall 2020. The university’s current
efforts at recruiting have shifted from the traditional undergraduate student population of first-time full-time freshmen between the ages of 18 and 24 to transfer students and non-traditional students. Important progress has been made on this front with the university’s memorandum of understanding with the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), which facilitates the transfer of students from CCBC to Morgan State. The Bernard Osher Foundation’s support of the Osher Re-entry Scholarship Fund is an important resource to support students pursuing a bachelor’s degree who are between the ages of 25 and 50 and have been away from higher education for five years or more.

To encourage increased freshman enrollment and retention, the university created the Enrollment Management and Student Academic Support Services Unit (EMSASS) and appointed the former Assistant Provost as Associate Provost for Enrollment Management and Student Academic Support Services. One of the Associate Provost’s first responsibilities was to create the Enrollment Management and Student Academic Support Services Unit Strategic Plan (EMSASS Plan—Appendix 13) to increase enrollment at the university to 10,000.

The EMSASS Plan has clear goals, strategies and timelines to achieve them, and assessment processes in place. It is ambitious in terms of the administrative changes it wants to bring to the university, including introducing a University Welcome Center, a cross-trained Student Services Call Center staff, and a Sophomore Experience Program. As mentioned earlier, the SWOT analysis conducted by the PRR committee points to several weaknesses that could hinder the university’s plans. In the case of the EMSASS Plan, the SWOT points to the need for more staff and operating funds for current EMSASS areas, and the lack of support for nontraditional students.

V. Assessment Processes and Plans

Much of Morgan State’s response to the Middle States’ recommendations from the 2008 visit concerned assessment, and thus has been addressed above in Section II. In terms of other assessment processes that have been established, the reviewing team noted that the benchmark data in the Morgan State University dashboard (Appendix 15) will be useful in evaluating progress and using these evaluations to set goals moving forward.

The Performance Accountability Report (Appendix 14) has been aligned with the university’s goals and will provide an important opportunity for yearly assessment and improvement moving forward. The Performance Accountability Report contains some clear examples of completed assessment processes; for example, in its assessment of progress towards the university’s goal of enhancing student success. The university’s long-term commitment to assessment processes and plans are indicated by Morgan State’s ongoing search for an Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Program Review. This position will create stability and ensure quality of assessment processes and the university going forward.

VI. Linked Institutional Planning and Budgeting Process

Though Morgan State’s PRR does not have a specific section that addresses how their institutional planning and budgeting process are linked, the CAP contains a section that matches institutional planning and goals, as well as a timeline that details the 18-month budget process.
The university has in place a Budget Advisory Committee (BAC), comprised of four faculty members, the president of the University Council, a school dean, an administrative staff member, and a member of the non-exempt staff. The purpose of the BAC is to ensure that resources are distributed according to the campus plan as well as other priorities. The PRR notes that flat university funding and resources over the past several years has limited the impact of the BAC on Morgan State’s decisions concerning resource allocation. Nevertheless, it is good that the Committee is in place, as it will need to play an important role if the university is to achieve its strategic goals.

VII. Conclusion

Since its last Self-Study in 2008, Morgan State has increased its enrollment, the number of applications it has received, and the number of graduate degrees it has conferred. The university’s new strategic plan responds to pressures facing higher education by emphasizing the need to secure funding through grants, positioning the university globally, and exploring the possibilities of online technology for higher education. Consistent with the recommendations made by the MSCHE Visiting Team in 2008, the university has re-written its Comprehensive Assessment Plan, an important step in building a culture of assessment.

There remain ways in which Morgan State needs to extend or continue its efforts to improve. In summary, the reviewers recommend or suggest the following:

1. *The reviewers suggest* that the university be as thorough as possible in disseminating their most current mission statement (standard 1).

2. *The reviewers suggest* that Morgan State consider integrating the assessment of student services and enrollment management into the CAP, so that it can become a unified resource for assessment throughout the university (standards 7 and 14).

3. *The reviewers recommend* that in assessing student learning outcomes, Morgan State base its assessment on student learning within degree types within programs (BA, MA, PhD, etc.) rather than at the department level (standard 14).

4. *The reviewers recommend* that the university implement the revised CAP (standards 7 and 14).

5. *The reviewers recommend* that the university revisit its current strategic plan in light of the university’s financial resources, facilities, policies and procedures, and bring the two more in line with each other. This effort may involve adjusting goals, or providing more specific evidence for how current goals will be met (standards 1 and 3).