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President Richard L. McCormick
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
Old Queen's Building
83 Somerset Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1281

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear President McCormick:

I enclose with this letter the report to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education that I prepared with Mel Shay, Provost at Seaton Hall University, regarding Rutgers' 2003 Periodic Review Report.

We both thought that the Rutgers PRR presented a well organized case for how the University meets the standards by which the Middle States Commission affirms accreditation. The PRR documents the continued strength of Rutgers across the full range of educational responsibilities as well as some areas of genuine distinction, including the diversity of students, faculty and staff; faculty productivity in research; and innovations in undergraduate education.

While Rutgers faces undoubted challenges in the years ahead, it does so from a position of considerable strength and distinction that other institutions might well wish they enjoyed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dan Rich".

Daniel Rich

cc: Mel Shay
enclosure

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students of
Rutgers University

Prepared following analysis of the institution's 2003
Periodic Review Report

First Reviewer:

Daniel Rich, Provost, University of Delaware

Second Reviewer:

Mel Shay, Provost, Seton Hall University

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Overview

The Rutgers University PRR presents a well organized and documented case for how the University meets the standards by which the Middle States Commission affirms accreditation. The PRR addresses the recommendations of the 1998 Middle States evaluation team report, reviews areas of institutional development and achievement, describes the approach taken to outcomes assessment, and identifies current institutional issues. The PRR was prepared and reviewed in a systematic manner that involved diverse groups within the Rutgers community.

This PRR was completed during a time of potentially great change for Rutgers, some internally driven such as the appointment of a new President, but much externally driven through increasing economic pressures resulting from state budget cuts and a possible restructuring of New Jersey's public research institutions.

Overall Concerns

During his first year, President McCormick has been faced with two significant challenges from the State that further complicate issues raised by the 1998 Middle States review team report.

First, the Governor has accepted the recommendation of a Gubernatorial Commission that Rutgers, NJ Institute of Technology and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey be restructured into a single research university system with three distinct and autonomous university campuses in Newark, New Brunswick/Piscataway, and Camden. The Rutgers Board of Governors has appointed a study group to review the recommendation. The Governor has created a Steering Committee to plan for the implementation of the public university restructuring.

Clearly, the proposed changes pose a serious complication for the new President, particularly in regard to the pursuit of his long-range plans for Rutgers. The proposed changes also would have significant implications for accreditation. At the very least, implementation of the new proposals would further complicate the issues raised by the 1998 Middle States review concerning the appropriate balance between Rutgers' one-university concept and the responsibilities and autonomy of the three campuses. Rutgers recognizes the seriousness of the proposed changes and indicates in the PRR that it will keep the Commission fully apprised of planned changes. Middle States should expect follow-up reporting on these planned changes.

The 1998 Middle States evaluation team noted with concern that state government funding for Rutgers had declined over the previous decade. The review team's concerns included diminished State support, unpredictable funding mechanisms, little capital improvement support, and an inappropriate fostering of competition and duplication among New Jersey higher education institutions. During the subsequent five years, the State's overall budget situation has worsened and the State support provided to Rutgers has become even more limited and more precarious. The proposed budget for FY04 would have placed important academic programs in serious jeopardy. In his first year, President McCormick has led a public battle with the state

over proposed FY04 budget cuts of 12%. The evaluation team also called upon Rutgers to "intensify efforts to communicate the Rutgers story" and to help make New Jersey decision makers become "more fully aware of the institutions essential role as a catalyst for economic and social development." Clearly this has been done. Indeed, President McCormick has rallied alumni and friends of Rutgers to make the case to State decision makers. It appears that this effort has been rewarded since the approved State budget restored about half of the budget cut proposed for Rutgers. It is also clear that the mobilization of supporters will continue to be needed if Rutgers is to obtain the State budget support it will require in the future to fulfill its priorities.

While experiencing more intense budget pressures than in the past, Rutgers is also experiencing more intense enrollment pressures. The number of New Jersey high-school graduates is expected to grow by 42% over an eleven-year period with comparable growth in the number seeking college admission. While Rutgers affirms its commitment to provide opportunities for New Jersey's growing college-bound population, the ability to do so will be compromised by budget constraints and State budget cuts. The PRR reports that the New Brunswick campus is now at capacity and that increasing enrollment will require additional resources. While some incremental growth is expected at the Camden and Newark campuses, that growth is also dependent upon the availability of additional resources. Given its financial situation, it is prudent for Rutgers to recognize that it must remain flexible in developing and modifying enrollment and budget plans.

The 1998 Middle States evaluation report highlighted the challenge Rutgers faces in fulfilling its commitment to shared governance, and the report anticipated that success would depend upon goodwill and constructive efforts on all sides as well as more effective internal communications. It is clear that Rutgers recognizes the importance of meeting this challenge. The PRR describes efforts by faculty and administrators on all three campuses to improve communications and enhance shared governance. The focus of efforts has been on arriving at wider agreement on the proper balance of responsibilities and on implementing improved methods of accountability. For example, the University Senate endorsed the development and implementation of a new evaluation system for deans. It seems obvious that progress in communications and shared governance is additionally challenged by the difficult resource environment faced by Rutgers as well as the prospect of an overall reorganization of the structure of the university in response to the recommendations from the State.

Special Topics

Undergraduate Education

The 1998 Middle States review proposed the need for more support for faculty instructional development in support of the undergraduate program and incentives to create more active learning opportunities for undergraduates. The report also emphasized the need for systematic assessment and the setting of priorities among worthwhile initiatives.

The PRR documents a wide range of curriculum development programs undertaken since 1998. Some are designed to support the University-wide Learning Goals that define the skills and knowledge that all Rutgers students are expected to acquire. Other programs provide more opportunities for undergraduate research, science education, information literacy, multicultural education, and in the use of technology in the class. The PRR indicates that much of this enhancement has been achieved "through the provision of faculty development incentives as vehicles for supporting faculty in their efforts to improve the curriculum and teaching."

The PRR highlights undergraduate research and scholarship, noting that undergraduate research takes place across the curriculum with students from all majors participating. The Rutgers Undergraduate Research Fellows Program appears to be particularly innovative and successful.

A serious concern noted in the PRR is the prospective cutback of state support for state merit scholarships that attract and support undergraduates with the strongest academic qualifications. The PRR also notes a university-sponsored review of the effectiveness of academic support programs that affirms the quality of these programs and suggests that they contribute to Rutgers University's continuing success in student retention and graduation rates. Rutgers leads all AAU institutions in the numbers of bachelor's degrees conferred to African-American students.

Graduate and Professional Education

The PRR indicates that "since 1998, significant resources in the form of financial support and selective tuition remissions have been made available to recruit and retain the best graduate students, especially in programs that are of the highest strategic priority." Some resources have been shifted to provide deans with greater flexibility in making graduate student support awards, and some additional University funds have been allocated to increase stipends and provide tuition support in areas of priority. Rutgers seeks to use university funds to leverage external sources of graduate support — a reasonable strategy for an institution with growing sponsored programs. Even so, Rutgers recognized that further improvements in support of graduate students are needed.

The 1998 Middle States review team reported that "Distance education is underdeveloped for the contemporary needs of graduate and especially professional education. There is need to articulate the elements that must be included to assure quality for all the[se] programs." The PRR does not directly resolve this concern. The PRR section on graduate/professional outcomes assessment does describe how Rutgers sustains a process of academic quality review for graduate and professional education programs. The PRR also describes efforts at improved data collection, including surveys of graduate students. The PRR does not directly address some of the issues of graduate education (enrollment, time to degree, postgraduate prospects) that were identified as critically important in the 1998 Self-Study Report.

Information Systems/Information Technology

The 1998 Middle States report identified information technology and the university libraries as two areas where Rutgers was realizing the vision of a single university. The PRR documents

considerable progress since then in improving the funding base, strengthening decision making, and increasing user-friendliness of the Rutgers libraries as well as in enhancing its IT resources, both human and machine, and setting benchmarked IT priorities.

Rutgers Libraries have made some progress in increasing base funding and especially non-state funding and have developed a five-year plan to guide acquisitions. Networked electronic resources have been rapidly developed and expanded, and resource sharing through consortia and direct agreement has increased. Rutgers uses its integrated online library system to track materials usage and user satisfaction and to guide collection development decisions. Rutgers Libraries have made a determined effort to improve services, especially to undergraduates on the Camden campus. Information assistants "wander" the computer area and provide one-on-one assistance; an e-mail help service is provided for remote users; and the library home page redesign responded to questions about how to find information and resources. Access problems have been mitigated through the use of more online resources; an e-mail recall process and real-time alerts (rather than paper forms by mail) have also helped. Delivery time among all the campuses for physical resources has improved.

Rutgers has been investing in both campus-based and university-wide technology training and professional development that support academic priorities. Planning began in 1997 to identify ongoing support for Rutgers Net 2000. Rutgers Computing Services is now responsible for support up to users' wall plates; network lifecycle replacement funding is under consideration. Rutgers Computing Services is also developing a strategic plan informed by its review of those of AAU peer institutions. In 2000 the university-wide Information Technology Coordinating Committee, a strategic decision-making body with a diverse membership that is formally linked to existing campus-based computing committees, was created to advance university goals by assessing and coordinating IT needs, opportunities and solutions.

Organizational Development and Leadership

Rutgers' Center for Organizational Development and Leadership (ODL) is recognized as a leader in higher education organizational assessment and improvement. The 1998 Middle States evaluation report suggested that Rutgers should both develop explicit measures and indicators to track success with its organizational assessment and improvement goals and link those goals with other university-wide goals and measures (strategic planning, University Accountability and Excellence) so that activities could be prioritized and resources allocated to serve overall objectives. ODL has established a five-year plan for identifying and collecting critical success measures; data source and baseline measures have already been identified in core program areas. To support the university's strategic planning efforts, ODL worked with the President's Cabinet to develop and disseminate a university vision statement, which was widely discussed on campus and with external constituents.

The 1998 Middle States evaluation report also suggested that Rutgers increase the participation of all groups, especially faculty and department chairs, in ODL efforts in order to help integrate efforts to improve academic excellence with those to improve organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Indeed the Middle States team recognized that ODL programs could be a vehicle for

bringing about a more collaborative approach between faculty and administration and among different faculty groups and thus contribute to improvement of its shared governance structures and of inter-and intra-campus communications (a recommendation in "Governance"). ODL has involved faculty in a needs assessment that is shaping its agenda on facilitating conversations between faculty and administration on institutional change, creating a forum for discussions of leadership theory and practice, and assessing and promoting organizational change. ODL has also worked to create a collaborative environment for faculty and administrative discussion of issues confronting the entire university community, including academic leadership support and assessment assistance, disciplinary self-study, academic advising, and orientation of new employees.

Outcomes Assessment

The 1998 Middle States review team report expressed two concerns regarding outcomes assessment at Rutgers: the need for additional data related to graduate students and graduates of the campuses; and an incomplete overall institutional effectiveness effort, which it tied to "the eclectic assessment process at Rutgers [that] is a strength." The PRR explains at some length the context of outcomes assessment approach implemented by Rutgers, which appears to be reasonable, coherent and capable of informing decisions at both the university-wide and campus levels. Rutgers' Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning "collects and mines data, and provides analytical, assessment, planning and reporting services for the Rutgers community." The PRR points out that considerable effort has been spent on developing a warehouse environment rather than continuing to rely on databases with limited reporting and analytical capabilities. While the 1998 review team stated that "the individual departments at Rutgers seem to have a good idea of how well they are doing with students," their report expressed concern that "there is less evidence of what it means to have been educated at Rutgers as a whole." According to the PRR, the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning "has developed and has begun to implement an ongoing series of surveys that will provide continuous monitoring and assessment of undergraduate student achievement, attitudes, opinions and aspirations." The PRR also describes the efforts to strengthen the collection and use of data about Rutgers' graduate programs and the graduate student experience at Rutgers as well as Rutgers' part in the development of an AAU pilot program involving ten peer institutions to collect and exchange information about graduate programs and to develop common survey instruments for use with entering and exiting graduate students.

Significant Campus Issues

Camden

In addition to the improvements to library access noted above, Rutgers-Camden has made progress with other issue identified in the Middle States report — articulation agreements with community colleges, involvement of faculty in graduate programs offered on other Rutgers campuses, and telecommunications — as well as in other academic initiatives, student services, enrollment planning, service to the community, and campus visibility. Rutgers has spent \$20

million on deferred maintenance, modernization and renovation of campus facilities since the Middle States report, and future land banking will be guided by a new campus master plan.

Newark

The 1998 Middle States report suggested that Rutgers should continue to assess the relationship between Rutgers-Newark, with its unique features and qualities, and the single university idea. The structure of campus autonomy in the context of centralized planning and many centralized services within which Rutgers-Newark developed, however, "is now in a state of flux, and a process of administrative devolution is underway," but it is too recent for the PRR to assess the full implications of the changes. The PRR documents in much more detail than for the other campuses the range of activities undertaken at Rutgers-Newark. While these are all commendable in themselves, the PRR does not indicate how the members of the Rutgers-Newark community see these diverse activities combining to suggest a vision that could guide the development of the campus.

New Brunswick

The 1998 Middle States report noted the importance of setting priorities to make the most of scarce resources and suggested regularly evaluating campus centers, bureaus, and institutes in order to enhance their funding or phase them out as appropriate. According to the PRR, "centers, bureaus, and institutes are subject to the same cycle of university external review that departments and schools are." More generally, the PRR points to "years of state underfunding" which has led the New Brunswick campus to develop effective means to determine priorities and reallocate necessary funds. The 1998 Middle States report also suggested that Rutgers-New Brunswick involve faculty more in campus governance (elsewhere there is a recommendation that RU continue to improve shared governance structures and mechanisms and improve inter- and intra-campus communications). The University Vice President for Academic Affairs convenes a monthly New Brunswick Deans Council (and meets individually twice a year with each dean). He is also directly involved with the New Brunswick Faculty Council of elected campus-wide representatives that is advisory to him.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The PRR adequately addresses the concerns, suggestions and recommendations included in the 1998 Middle States review team report. Equally important, the PRR is useful in pointing out the significant challenges that have evolved over the last five years and that Rutgers must address in order to continue to fulfill its institutional priorities.

The 1998 Middle States review team found that Rutgers was in compliance with all 16 standards for accreditation set by the Commission on Higher Education. The PRR documents continued academic progress in meeting these standards. Clearly, Rutgers remains in compliance on all 16 standards and the university continues to add to its list of accomplishments. As a major research university, these accomplishments are particularly notable in regard to faculty achievements and

recognitions and in the significant increase in sponsored research programs. Rutgers is close to meeting a \$500 million capital campaign goal with one year still remaining on the campaign. Rutgers remains a national leader in fostering an environment that highly values and reflects diversity in its student body and its faculty.

The appointment of President Richard L. McCormick signals a new period of transition, opportunity, and development for Rutgers. The PRR provides an overview of President McCormick's priorities and values, which emphasize transparency and openness, service, devolution of authority, teamwork and collaboration, and clarity of responsibilities and functions.

To assist with implementation of his vision, President McCormick has reconfigured the administration to create two executive vice presidential positions — one for academic affairs and one for administrative affairs — that will respectively provide academic and business leadership for the entire university with some stipulated reporting exceptions regarding the Provosts of the Camden and Newark campuses. An additional Vice President for University Relations will be established later this year. It will take some time before it is clear what impact these changes will have on the one university model or the implementation of shared governance.

The change in leadership will surely mean some refocusing of Rutgers institutional priorities. The 1998 review called upon Rutgers to prioritize the various initiatives outlined in the self-study report. In the context of the intensified external pressures on resources and the prospect of a university-wide organizational restructuring, it may be all the more important and all the more difficult to sort out the ordering of operational priorities. That said, President McCormick has reaffirmed the commitment to Rutgers "becoming a top-rank national research university" while offering an excellent education to Rutgers students, "conducting innovative research that contributes to the state's competitiveness in the global economy, and serving the people of New Jersey."

The 1998 review raised questions about the appropriate balance between the one-university model and the distinctive responsibilities and roles of the three campuses. The PRR narrative sections on the three campuses raise questions about whether those on the three campuses themselves have a one-university model and a clear and agreed upon vision of their own role in the one-university ideal.

Based on the outline in the PRR, the proposed changes would significantly alter Rutgers one-university model and would fundamentally change the responsibilities and autonomy of the three campuses. Indeed, the prospective reorganization of New Jersey public higher education poses significant implications for accreditation. Rutgers recognizes the seriousness of the proposed changes and appears to be addressing them carefully.

The prospective reorganization may further complicate the challenges Rutgers faces from diminishing and unreliable state support. At the same time, the prospective reorganization may have significant implications for how and whether Rutgers will meet the enrollment pressures it faces. Given the importance of these interrelated challenges, Middle States should expect Rutgers to meet its commitment to follow-up reporting on these planned changes.

Various sections of the PRR discuss Rutgers's response to the governance recommendations made in the 1998 review report. Based only on the information provided in the PRR, it is difficult to determine whether the responses made have significantly diminished or eliminated the concerns that led to the recommendation. Obviously the sweeping structural changes the Governor is proposing would have dramatic implications for shared governance structures and mechanisms. The issues of governance should be addressed by the self-study report and site visit team review five years from now.

Given recent experience with the State regarding diminished funding and the precarious priority of higher education, the 1998 review team recommendation to improve communications continues to have great importance. This importance is clearly recognized by the new Rutgers president, and the recent successful campaign to restore state funding is an indication of what may be required on a continuing basis in the future.

Overall the PRR documents the continued strength of Rutgers University across the full range of educational responsibilities and notes some areas of genuine distinction, including its diversity of students, faculty and staff; faculty productivity in research; and innovations in undergraduate education. Rutgers has many important prerequisites – faculty and students, technology, capital assets – for success. But there are significant challenges, too, from the lack of reliable state support, the pressures for increased enrollment, and the uncertainty regarding the basic organization of the university in the future.

In sum, the PRR provides appropriate responses to the recommendations and suggestions of the 1998 Middle States evaluation team report and should prove a useful document, both for the Commission's purposes and for Rutgers University's.