March 28, 2006

Via Federal Express and Electronic Transmission

Dr. Arthur Levine
President
Teachers College of Columbia University
525 W. 120th St.
New York, NY 10027

Dear Dr. Levine:

I am pleased to present the report of the Middle States team.

I would like to state again how much we appreciated the candor and hospitality offered by the Teachers College community.

Be assured that this experience was profusely rewarding and gratifying. In accord with the accreditation timeline, I will be sending the Chair’s Brief directly to the Commission. Concurrently, Teachers College is expected to release the team’s final report directly to the Commission.

Sincerely,

Sister Paula Marie Buley, IHM
Executive Vice President for Administration

PMB:lm
I. Context and Nature of the Visit

Teachers College is a unique entity among America’s colleges and universities. Founded in 1887 to provide schooling for teachers of poor, immigrant children in New York City, it became affiliated with Columbia in 1898 while remaining a financially independent institution with its own president and board of trustees. As Columbia University’s graduate school of education its curricula has three broad areas: education, psychology, and health, as such Teachers College is both a master’s and doctoral level graduate and professional school.

The Morningside Heights campus on West 120th street was established in 1894 and is comprised of eight contiguous buildings with approximately 1.2 million square feet and an additional five residences facilities. Today the College enrolls 5,070 students from all parts of the United States as well as 80-plus countries around the world. Many of the international students attend with the support of prestigious programs such as Fulbright Scholarships.

As referenced in the Self-study, Teachers College has embraced its history as an innovator, social activist and bold pioneer and has remained true to an emphasis on urban education. This history is reflected in the recently adopted theme: "Educational equity – A moral imperative for the 21st century."

The Middle States team, mindful of Teachers College rich history and substantial influence of American education, particularly exemplified in the City of New York stands at many crossroads. President Levine is in his last months as President after 11 years of growth, development, and restoration; the Teachers College community is engaged in the work of education that spans innovation, educational policies and national politics and a new mission statement. It is within this context that the Middle States team welcomed to Teachers College.

Scope of institution at the time of the evaluation (information drawn from the “Statement of Accreditation Status” including:

- Degree level(s) Masters Doctorate, 6 certificate programs
- Branch campuses: Tokyo, Japan
- Additional locations: Long Island U., C.W. Post Campus, Taiwan
- Distance Learning: none
- Initial Accreditation: 1921
- Last Reaffirmed: 2001
- Current Visit MSCHE Self-study visit, Self-study process and report
- Model: Comprehensive with emphasis on student experience
- Topics: n/a
STANDARD 1: MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Teachers College meets Standard 1.

A. Summary of Evidence and Findings

Teachers College has a clear, well developed, and focused mission statement adopted in 2005 that is relevant to its history and role as a national leader. The following mission statement is accompanied by specific goals and objectives.

*Teachers College is dedicated to promoting equity and excellence in education and overcoming the gap in educational access and achievement between the most and least advantaged groups in society. Through programs of teaching, research, and service, the College draws upon the expertise of a diverse community of faculty in education, psychology, and health, as well as students and staff from across the country and around the world.*

The mission statement was developed with the collaborative participation of a broad range of faculty and administrators, is well known throughout the College, and relates to internal as well as external contexts and constituencies. A new strategic plan was adopted in 2004 and implementation is underway.

B. Significant Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices

Teachers College is to be commended for taking on a challenging and important mission that will focus the efforts of their diverse disciplines on multi-disciplinary solutions to the complex issues of educational equity and excellence.

C. Suggestions

Based on interviews, the team suggests that the college further clarify its mission statement in a way that effectively mobilizes all disciplines, including health, psychology, arts, and the humanities. In order to do so, it will be important to articulate the role of excellence in both the education fields and other curricular areas of the College.

The team suggests further clarification of the relationship between the mission statement and the Campaign for Educational Equity.

STANDARD 2: PLANNING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL ARE ADDRESSED IN CHAPTER II OF THE SELF-STUDY.

Teachers College meets Standard 2.
A. **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

The Middle States team acknowledges the significant accomplishments during the last ten years which solidified financial vitality by erasing deficit spending patterns, implementing an extensive and well documented Capital Improvement Program, and assuming additional debt while at the same time increasing the College’s credit rating. Recurring year-end surpluses have been reinvested in technology, enhancements to the student experience, and contributions to the endowment.

B. **Significant Accomplishments and Progress:**

The team acknowledges the consistency between objectives represented in the Self-study and the *Strategic plan for Teachers College* issued in March of 2004. This plan charts an aspirational and aggressive agenda represented in two phases, the second phase extending from 2006 to 2013. The over arching goals include:

- increased influence of Teachers College in the fields represented by the diverse constituents that it serves
- the reestablishment of Teachers College as a premier school of education
- a focus on the long term financial viability of the College
- improvement in all aspects of the student experience
- effectively and continuously cultivating diversity throughout the institution.

The Middles States team endorses the College’s commitment to specific steps which will lead to the implementation of these goals and acknowledges the practical wisdom of the community who recognizes the need for flexibility in achieving long term objectives, especially in light of the change in presidential leadership.

The Self-study provided a realistic assessment of some typical financial constraints emanating from a high level of tuition dependency, the significant fixed costs associated with instructional delivery, and the consistently recognized importance of investing in financial aid and institutional plant renewal.

The team acknowledges the participatory dimension of the budget development process. This will be particularly effective as the institution continues deliberation on the need to reallocate resources, strengthen the student experiences, and invest in those programs which are most consistent with its stated mission.

Teachers College is commended for its articulated strategy of developing relationships with institutions that create tangible value. This is particularly true in the potential partnership with Columbia University in the areas of group purchasing and the sharing of instructional spaces.
Suggestions

The Middle States team commends Teacher College for recognizing the need to "balance the scale, economics, and governance of the College to support its mission and aspirations." To this end, the community is encouraged to consider the "optimum size for the College and establish a plan for implementing any required adjustments to its current scale." The team recognizes that this objective will help focus resources which are appropriate at both Master and Doctoral programs.

The current stability of the senior leadership team and their familiarity with Teachers College, the recognition of the substantial improvements over the last ten years, and a keen intuition regarding projects that move the College forward is a demonstrable strength. In light of this strong institutional history, the Middle States team encourages a structured institutional assessment plan to focus on benchmarks for continuing achievements.

**STANDARD 3: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES**

*Teachers College meets Standard 3.*

A. **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Teachers College possesses evidence that it has effectively used internal and external institutional resources to support its mission and goals. The resources as defined are managed by key personnel and allocated to programs, units, and individuals based on institutional priorities. Institutional interviews and exhibits demonstrate a decade of continual progress related to resource acquisition and deployment.

Campus policies and procedures related to institutional resources are dispersed across documents, managerial offices, and individuals. The system(s) for resource allocation appear sufficient to support the former and redefined institutional mission. The physical plant is well maintained and the facilities and operations are governed by competent staff and sound systems for renewal, restoration, and renovation. At the same time, the institution may wish to outline a clear program for preventive facility maintenance.

Technological hardware is current and plentiful for the current institutional tasks and goals. There are adequate controls for depreciation and replacement. It is unclear as to whether there is indeed duplication of academic technological support between the Gottesman Libraries and the Information Technology units. Evidence suggests some tension between institutional size (i.e., number of faculty, students, and staff) and the physical space available, especially for instructional purposes. Not all classroom spaces are consistently outfitted for technology and/or varied physical arrangements for class instruction.
The team interviews suggested lack of operational systems to facilitate effective and efficient institutional operations. Transactional activities like personnel action and course registration are highly dependent on paperwork. There is no apparent coordinated management information system to inform operational decisions. Interviews with faculty and staff indicated that the online capacity for course scheduling and grade delivery is sporadic in terms of access and at times unreliable.

There is periodic assessment relative to the use of fiscal resources, cash-flow, and budgetary planning. The annual independent audit confirms fiduciary integrity and is free of any extraordinary management letters comments. Financial records indicate sufficient funds to support the basic academic mission, programmatic responsibilities, and administrative charges. However, recent institutional initiatives and priorities emerging from the strategic plan have not yet been tied to a clear funding source other than the capital campaign.

B. Significant Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices

The team commends Teachers College on the composition of its new mission statement that reaffirms the historic purposes for which the institution was originally chartered in 1887. This new mission statement serves as an anchor for the institution's curricular and programmatic offerings. Of particular note are Teachers College's mission coordinated activities (e.g., Think Tank and Campaign for Educational Equity).

The team also commends Teachers College for the physical renovation and renewed role of the Gottesman Libraries as an intellectual hub for student learning, faculty collaboration, and the cross-pollination of multiple forms of academic engagement.

The team further commends Teachers College for maintenance of an administratively strong, intellectually robust, and revenue producing University press. Teachers College Press is a tangible manifestation of the institutional mission and strategic plan.

C. Suggestions

The team concurs with Teachers College in its suggestion that key improvement be made to information systems that support the administrative management of the institution to facilitate the work of students, faculty, and staff as stated in the strategic plan.

The team also supports the Self-study recommendation that Teachers College give consideration to the institutional resources necessary to operationalize innovations emerging from the implementation of its strategic plan and new mission statement.
STANDARD 4: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Teachers College meets Standard 4.

A. Summary of Evidence and Findings

Teachers College currently enjoys a strong and committed Board of Trustees, whose role in institutional governance is clearly spelled out in the Statutes and By-laws of the institution. A recent change in the Statutes, which clarified the primary responsibility of the Trustees to select the President of the institution, represents a shift from earlier practice at the College, bringing it in line with current practice across the spectrum of higher education. This evolution in governance has been well-accommodated, as evidenced by the successful workings of the current presidential search committee, which all members agree represents a welcome development in faculty/Trustee collegiality.

While the Board is actively engaged in the affairs of the College, there seems to be a clear sense of the delineation between Board oversight of policy and the responsibilities of the administration and faculty for management and decision-making in their appropriate spheres. With regard to “appropriate opportunity for student input regarding decisions that affect them,” the Board is to be commended for recently creating a Committee on Student Affairs, as a direct response to students’ concerns about the quality of their experience at Teachers College. The creation of this new committee, in addition to the creation of the new Office of Enrollment and Student Services, sends a clear message that the Trustees are receptive to the input of students and appropriately focused on the centrality of students to the institution’s mission.

The Board has in place appropriate and documented processes for the selection, orientation, and evaluation of members. The Board exhibits diversity in a number of ways (e.g.: gender, age, race/ethnicity, alumni and non-alumni). It includes members with sufficient expertise to assure that the body’s fiduciary responsibilities can be fulfilled, and it has taken appropriate steps to voluntarily conform its practices to the Sarbanes-Oxley legislation. Moreover, Board members accept appropriate responsibility for generating resources for the institution. The success of a recent fund-raising campaign, and the many recent contributions to the programs and facilities of the College attest to this base of strong support.

B. Significant Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices

We encountered a striking consensus among the constituencies of the College that the strength of the Board today is itself a remarkable accomplishment. There is a sense that appropriate leadership by the Board had, in an earlier period, fallen into abeyance. Turning around such a situation is a difficult and very significant contribution to the long-term health of an institution. Again, the institution of a
C. Suggestions

The governance policies of the College are clearly documented, accessible, and in conformance with appropriate standards for governance. Yet team members often encountered, in many venues through the course of our site visit, a perception among community members that perhaps “the letter” has eclipsed “the spirit,” with regard to a sense of well-delineated roles, responsibilities, and rights in a context of shared governance.

More specifically, we heard that the ability to be heard, to participate in decision-making, or even to be informed in a timely way is felt by some to exist “more on paper than in practice.” We wish to stress the commitment—indeed, “love” would not be too strong a word—of all whom we encountered for Teachers College. Our interviewees, without exception, were proud of the history of this institution, proud of being a part of it, and eager to contribute to its future. Yet a sense of disenfranchisement was frequently expressed. We suggest that opportunities be sought to open lines of communication among the College’s many constituencies. Great teachers—as we understand more and more in these days of collaborative learning—often benefit from being great listeners.

STANDARD 5: ADMINISTRATION

Teachers College meets Standard 5.

A. Summary of Evidence and Findings

One aspect of this standard concerns the qualifications, vision, and accomplishments of the institution’s chief executive. The coincidence of this review with the closure of President Levine’s tenure at Teachers College renders judgment in these matters simple. It can hardly be questioned that the exceptional skills, clear vision, and achieved goals of President Levine have contributed greatly and very tangibly to the current strength of Teachers College.

Second, this standard focuses as well on the qualifications, skills, and effectiveness of the administrative leaders of the institution. President Levine has assembled a strong and capable team of senior leaders, who have been enviably successful in carrying out their shared vision for the improvement and advancement of the College.

Additionally, this standard considers the larger context for leadership of the institution, by asking, for example: are administrative leaders appropriately supported by information and decision-making systems, are their resources sufficient to accomplish their mission, and are the lines of organization and authority clear. Our team perceived some concerns in these areas.
Information technology in general and decision-support systems in particular surfaced as an area of considerable difficulty. Responsibility for IT seems to be diffused through several areas of the College, with a resultant lack of clarity and possible duplication.

Not surprisingly, we also encountered concerns about resources. All members of the College share the understanding that the resources of the College for financial aid are inadequate, and there appears to be a shared commitment to addressing this issue as a primary objective. As the College focuses on the quality of its students' experience, we are concerned that more resources may well be needed for the Office of Enrollment and Student Services.

With regard to the clarity of lines of organization and authority, existing documentation is rather scant—with a resultant lack of clarity that is not surprising. Thus, we learned that in some instances even supervisors were unclear about who, exactly, reported to them or in some cases reporting relationships appeared counter-intuitive or less than optimal for organizational effectiveness.

B. Significant Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices

So much has been accomplished in the last decade at Teachers College (roughly coextensive with President Levine's tenure) that it is difficult to single out particular examples for praise. Certainly, successful fund-raising has enabled a true renewal of the College's facilities, including the extraordinarily well-received resource of the new library. A new discipline in the financial area enabled the retirement of a long-standing deficit, the generation of surpluses, and an upgrading of the College's rating by Moody's. The diversification of the student body is truly admirable. A new focus on student experience, including advising, residential life, and non-curricular life is a real and important innovation at the College.

**STANDARD 6: INTEGRITY**

*Teachers College meets Standard 6.*

A. Summary of Evidence and Findings

Teachers College is committed to a broad based and inclusive approach to institutional integrity. The institution has also committed itself to an internal equity. This equity is manifested through clearly articulated and distributed policies and procedures with not only inform the community but also provide a sound basis for conflict resolution and mediation. Hiring and affirmative action initiatives have received special attention, especially as they refer to historically underrepresented minority populations. This objective is complemented by a Diversity Mission Statement and the Special Counsel to the President, Office of Diversity and Community and through Human Resources
Academic freedom, intellectual property, and appointment and tenure processes are appropriately articulated. These formalized policies are designed to reduce ambiguity, increase accountability, and to promote appropriate decision making.

**B. Significant Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

The team commends Teachers College for the development of the Annual Conflict of Interest/Conflict of Commitment Disclosure Statement which is required of faculty and staff. This exercise provides an annual opportunity to examine potential competing interest.

**C. Suggestions**

The team fully supports Teachers College effort to expand professional development opportunities. In addition, we encourage Teachers College to actualize its goal of consistent and uniformed performance reviews throughout the institution.

**STANDARD 7: INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT**

*Teachers College meets Standard 7.*

**A. Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Teachers College operates in a manner and fashion indicative of sound decision-making predicated upon assessment. Exhibits and interviews confirm that the institution is engaged in multiple forms of assessment of varying scope and qualities across sectors. This is further represented by benchmarking of common indices and variables. There is a rich culture of data and analysis; however, the institution has no single written document or set of documents commonly referenced as the institutional assessment plan.

There is high inter-rater reliability and commonality of language related to the assessment process, strategies for planning and implementation, as well as for systematic evaluation of institutional goals, objectives, and responsibilities. Senior staff consistently referenced the institutional strategic plan as the proxy document for a formal institutional assessment plan. There is evidence that the strategic plan is mission based, goal focused, and has measurable objectives. There are and have been periodic assessment updates, shared campus-wide, to the strategic plan which are used to inform institutional improvement and goal setting.

The institution also uses the assessment system created for the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education process as the starting point in its efforts toward a campus-wide set of systems for assessing program outcomes. As related in interviews this is fully operational. The institution is actively engaged in scaling up outcomes assessment in other areas of the college.
B. **Significant Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

The team commends Teachers College for the composition and initial implementation of the strategic plan. The strategic plan has been clearly communicated to the campus community and currently serves as a linchpin for decision-making.

The team also commends Teachers College for the design and use of its Comprehensive Modeling process used to make planning decisions relative to enrollment, budget, and institutional resources.

C. **Recommendations**

**Fundamental Element:** “A written assessment plan and process that meets the following criteria: evaluative approaches that yield results that are useful in institutional planning, resource allocation and renewal.

The team recommends that Teachers College develop and implement a written assessment plan and process that links planning to decision-making, budgeting, and to institutional assessment. It is also recommends that the document reduce the fragmented system of indicators currently used by adopting common metrics or variables linked to the mission, strategic plan, and institutional goals.

**STANDARD 8: STUDENT ADMISSIONS**

*Teachers College meets Standard 8.*

A. **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Teacher’s College maintains its tradition of recruiting many of the best and brightest students in the world, and is duly proud of its academic and professional standing. At the same time, the institution is concerned about its ability to attract students to the range of program offerings, especially those outside of education, and to provide scholarship and grant funding opportunities sufficient to allow students to enroll and fully matriculate is consistent with other highly ranked competitors.

The process of admission decision-making and scholarship granting is cumbersome, resulting in considerable staff and faculty effort. As a result, admission decisions are not timed well to the market, creating a competitive disadvantage with highly selective peers. Moreover, the allocation of limited grant and scholarship funding is poorly calibrated to a need based funding objective.

The branding and marketing of Teachers College, particularly in disciplines outside of education and in areas beyond New York City, is not consistent with the
institution's caliber, depth or breadth, application and yield. Recently enhanced focus in this area is likely to produce continued positive results in applications and yield.

The affiliation with Columbia University, whatever its complications, is understood to be an enormously powerful influence in recruitment. The realized experience of students is that the connection is less relevant than expected in daily life, which risks straining the credibility of some Admission efforts.

B. Significant Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices.

The restructuring of the Admission Office has resulted in considerable improvement in the areas of admissions, financial aid, branding and marketing operations. These interrelated activates will be a critical foundation for future collaborations.

Recruitment of under-represented minorities, so endemic to the mission of the college, is worthy of considerable praise. The new Students of Color recruitment brochure and collaborations with HBCU’s are especially noteworthy.

C. Suggestions

Teachers College is encouraged to review and enhance the process and flow of work between the Office of Admission and the faculty making admit decisions. This enhancement will most likely occur through the implementation of technology which supports work flow. In addition, the team suggests an investigation of more sophisticated financial aid modeling tools and the allocation of pooled institutional resources to enhance student access and persistence.

The team recognizes that the effectiveness of targeted institutional marketing; especially to alumni, non-traditional employers in corporate and related non-for-profit settings, may enhance the applicant pool. This marketing effort can be further supported through the mission focused on educational equity.

The Self-study clearly recognized that Teachers College is limited by the pool of financial aid resources needed to achieve its loftiest ambitions. The team concurs with the on-going focus on fund raising as a remedy to this situation.

**STANDARD 9: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

*Teachers College meets Standard 9.*

A. Summary of Evidence and Findings

The restructuring of central student services under inspired leadership has brought a fresh sense of the primacy of student welfare to the mission of Teachers College.
This was underscored in interviews in which students identified this area as a source of thoughtful and well-considered support for students’ non-academic needs. While the enhancements in this area are to be applauded, especially in advising students, activities and staff development, the total resources and staff size are small compared to the real and potential need.

The value of academic and non-academic advising is clear to the Teachers College Community. There is a concern about the advising load on faculty and the ability for less motivated students to find advising support.

During our interviews we noted that students report a lack of community at Teachers College. Contributing factors may include dispersed residential life, part-time studies, work and other off-campus commitments. These same factors appear to limit student self-governance in the residence halls, orchestrated peer support mechanisms, and organizational involvements. The issue of community is also related to Teachers College affiliation with Columbia University. At times there is a modest alienation in feeling not fully a part of that larger community.

Team interviews indicated that offices providing student services express some lack of clarity on the impact of their service to student development. In this regard, the team suggests a particular review of the resources allocated to career services.

B. Significant Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices.

The establishment of the Office of Enrollment and Student Services appears to be a watershed event representing a commitment to the student experience. This is further consistent with improvements related to student activities, non-academic advising, orientation activities, and the design and delivery of support services for disabled students.

C. Suggestions

The team suggests that investment in technology facilitates enrollment services processes including course scheduling, registration, internal communication, advising, and programs for personal development, career services, and student engagement. This may be captured in the theme of creating a greater virtual student community. Suggested topics include: career development, professional skill development, internship, and externship placement.

In the areas of assessment, student support services should be considered in light of student development and the measurement of relevant outcomes. Students themselves will benefit from and internalize the role that assessment has in the development of their own careers.
Teachers College is encouraged to assess the appropriate availability of physical and mental health services consistent with the needs of the community and comparative programs in major urban universities.

**STANDARD 10: FACULTY**

*Teachers College meets Standard 10*

**A. Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Teachers College has clearly demonstrated that the instructional research and service programs are in the hands of very dedicated, involved, hard-working and highly qualified professionals. It is the faculty who develop, review and evaluate course proposals, who serve by election on the Faculty Executive Committee and its various subcommittees, who serve by election on the Faculty Advisory Committee which is the institution's faculty grievance body. While many of their activities are advisory, it is clear that the willingness of instructional faculty to engage in such service activities is of great benefit to their fellow faculty and to the institution as a whole.

The instructional faculty working within the structure of nine departments and sixty-five programs is also responsible for the academic requirements of the various degree offerings and for the teaching, curricula and guidance to degree completion of the students at Teachers College. There are 154 currently designated "faculty on appointment," serving in all ranks with augmentation by a substantial number of full and part-time adjunct faculty in all ranks, as well as lecturers and instructors. The institution's Self-study underscores the attempts to reach the goal of a student: FT Instructional Personnel ratio of 25:1, currently at 26.3:1. Additional related goals involve increasing the points taught by "faculty on appointment" and by other full-time instructional staff. Another goal is to reduce the student: faculty advising for doctoral students.

**B. Significant Accomplishments**

The team concurs that the commitment to increasing faculty diversity is a noteworthy objective. Data presented in the Self-study indicate that women are well-represented on both tenure and non-tenured faculty tracks. By 2005-2006, the number of minority faculty on appointment had risen to 21%, from 12% in 1996-97. The faculty voted to support faculty diversity with a goal of having about one-third of new faculty hires come from targeted groups including racial, ethnic and persons with disabilities. To date three "target of opportunity" faculty have been hired.

Innovative programs that involve faculty are the Dean's Grants available for tenured, pre-tenured and non-tenured track faculty. Some of these grants are consistent with faculty development that can be fostered before and beyond sabbaticals, others...
encourage mentoring of student research and still others aim at developing diversity concerns.

C. Suggestions

1. Enhancing Coherence and Consistency

The Team identified the advisability in developing some basic processes that can clarify the interactions of departments and programs and also establish a core template of criteria for academic program review. While some processes are in place, there is a wide divergence in program review methodologies which appears idiosyncratic. Some faculty have articulated a process whereby key decisions are made at the program level rather than at the department level. Nonetheless, third and sixth year reviews operate at the department level.

2. Assessment of Workload

Workload for faculty is a complex issue. For a graduate faculty, responsibilities go well beyond actual classroom instructional time. As indicated in the Self-study there is recognition that student: faculty ratios need to be improved. The team suggests an inclusive assessment of the workload of all full-time instructional faculty taking into consideration the variations in workload across departments and programs.

3. Increasing Transparency as an Assessment and Planning Tool

There is, as such, no annual review of faculty beyond the reviews done at the third, sixth, and promotional years. In this regard, the team suggested that Teachers College consider a mechanism to gather faculty information involving teaching, advising, student supervision in doctoral programs and other educational activities not likely to be reflected on a vita. Clear and well assessed data is vital to both coherent individual and unit planning. The availability of this type of information could allow for sufficiently transparent data to inform assessments of workload.

STANDARD 11: EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

*Teachers College meets Standard 11.*

A. Summary of Evidence and Findings

Teachers College demonstrates strong educational offerings that are among the best in the nation. There is little question of their excellence. The first fundamental element of MSCHE Standard 11 states that “an accredited institution, whatever its
mission, is characterized by . . . educational offerings congruent with its mission . . . .” The team recognizes that the mission, particularly the focus on educational equity, is relatively new.

Interviews and a review of the Self-study suggest some dissonance with the mission for some of the less education-centered areas, for example the health and psychology disciplines. Many of the faculty members we met resonate with the importance of the mission and see it as a way to focus effort. Some, however, fear a loss of emphasis on excellence within their disciplines or an erosion of independence of scholarship.

The Academic Planning Subcommittee of the Faculty Executive Committee regularly reviews new courses for approval. This process includes examination of level, coherence with program, and course quality. However, the team notes that the required course approval form and the faculty handbook guide for syllabi do not require specification of student learning outcomes as identified in the Standard 14 on Assessment of Student Learning.

Administrators at Teachers College recognize the need for periodic program review and conduct a variety of formal and informal reviews as evidenced by the Self-study and interviews with faculty and administrators. Some, but not all, educational programs are periodically evaluated, and there is extensive, informal evaluation activity across the college. Programs with state, national accreditation or program approval are reviewed periodically in accordance with the requirements of the accrediting bodies. In addition, the dean informally evaluates each of the departments on an annual basis. However, there is no apparent policy that specifies standards and processes for a regular institutional program review.

Learning resources, facilities, library services, and professional staff are adequate to support the institutions educational programs, as outlined in the Self-study. Since the 2001 Periodic Progress Report, the College has “re-imagined” and “re-positioned” the library, assigning to it additional roles as a gathering space for academic endeavors, as a venue for leading-edge educational technologies, and as a center for student and faculty interaction. The new conception of the library reflects a center for teaching and learning, drawing in pedagogy and organizational behavior, almost as much as technology. Staff members have been reorganized into five service teams. Staffing and resources are reported as adequate by the director. Yet, since the Self-study, the professional staff members have reportedly been reduced by 6, half of the total, to permit re-allocation of resources to acquisitions, resulting in the outsourcing of much of the reference function to an external online service provider. While the new functions of the library were outlined as additional functions, the very recent reduction in staffing and substitution of services bears monitoring and evaluation.
The Self-study identifies a substantive and varied list of informational and instructional activities carried out by the library staff. Collaboration with faculty is emphasized. The director and staff elaborated upon their activities in interviews and described a new liaison program for faculty that was further promoting collaboration, although the number of liaison librarians is apparently now reduced.

B. Significant Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices

The attention to synthesis of learning in each of the degree programs is commendable. In the doctoral programs, a department comprehensive examination precedes the dissertation stage of the program. In the master’s programs, comprehensive examinations, integrative projects, or formal essays serve to cap the programs and promote synthesis of learning.

C. Suggestions

The team acknowledges the efforts of Teachers College to secure funding to renovate the remaining two floors of the Gottesman library and suggests monitoring and evaluating the success of the library’s staff reorganization, including the reduction in professional staff and outsourcing of information services.

In the area of assessment, the team suggests including appropriate student learning outcomes and the appropriateness of the library holdings to the new course and program proposal forms.

The team suggests review of the Middle States Guidelines for Information Literacy in the Curriculum to consider how these might be applied to the benefit of the instructional programs.

D. Recommendations

"Course syllabi that incorporate expected learning outcomes"

The team recommends that an explicit statement of student learning outcomes be added to course syllabi.

"Assessment of student learning outcomes relative to the goals and objectives of the graduate programs ... and use of the results to improve student learning and program effectiveness”.

The team recommends an institutional policy specifying standards and processes for periodic program evaluation that would strengthen Teachers College’s existing processes and potentially provide a framework to integrate the multiple existing assessments into an institutional assessment plan.

**STANDARD 12: GENERAL EDUCATION – NOT APPLICABLE**
STANDARD 13: RELATED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Teachers College does meet Standard 13

A Summary of Evidence and Findings

Teachers College offer basic skills training, certificate programs, and non-credit courses. They have one branch campus and two other locations for instruction. Online courses are offered.

Basic skills help students in three areas: writing, research, and technology use. The Writing Center particularly supports international students. However, fee-based services are a constraint in fulfilling their mission. The library and computing center offer varied workshops in their respective services. Planning, referral, coordination, and assessment of basic skills might be strengthened across these service units, as recorded in their Self-study.

The branch campus, supporting an M.A in TESOL in Tokyo, and the additional locations, an M.A in Music Education in Taiwan and the Gifted Education doctoral program at C.W. Post University on Long Island, are cohort based and self-supporting. Each stemmed from the initiative of an individual faculty member. Representatives interviewed reported that further support from the Gottesman Libraries would be welcomed as would greater support generally from Teachers College. As written in the Self-study, online courses might bolster enrollment and merit study, especially in Taiwan where competition for students is keen. These programs have been generally held to standards equal to those at Teachers College and those coordinating these programs remain attentive to quality issues.

The Center for Educational and Outreach and Innovation (CEO&I) is under new leadership. The Center coordinates and markets the offering of credit and non-credit certificate programs, workshops and conferences, and distance learning. Certificate and non-credit courses have received the same review as credit courses and are, thus, held to the same standard. For certificate and distance learning, especially, the responsibility for content rests with the academic departments. The quest for new markets and revenue streams is an essential element of its role. Its new mission includes lifelong learning and corporate training, expansion of the summer program, and identification of new revenue streams. A sophisticated learning management system (LMS) is planned for the management of the many aspects of this service, a solution that may address concerns from off-campus and online service units which consistently reported problems in gaining access to Teachers College online services.

A critical partner to CEO&I is the Gottesman Libraries which now supports the development of distance learning. Lack of clarity remains between the library and academic and administrative computing functions. Given the scope of offering
which include six certificate programs, (3 online and 3 campus-based) and over 40 online courses defining roles of CEO&I and the Gottesman Libraries is essential.

B Suggestions

The team suggests that the academic administration continue to consider how to address the academic and administrative aspects of successful distance education programs. This will include guidelines which ensure high instructional quality and equal access to library and other College support services. As suggested in the Self-study this may include the appointment of a departmental liaison or a committee to work with the CEO&I.

The team concurs with the Self-study recommendations to implement planning, referral, coordination, and assessment of the basic skills programs. Teachers College is encouraged to consider an institutional funding commitment to the Graduate Writing Center in an effort to preclude charging students for this service.

STANDARD 14: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Teachers College meets Standard 14.

A Summary of Evidence and Findings

The Middle States Characteristics of Excellence present four primary components related to the Assessment of Student Learning. A summary of these components include:

1. Articulated expectations of student learning occur at various levels and are consonant with the institutions mission and relevant disciplines.

2. A plan that describes student learning assessment activities being undertaken by the institution.

3. Evidence that student learning assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning.

4. Documented use of student learning assessment information as part of institutional assessment.

The team notes that Teachers College presents a bifurcated assessment program. First, a number of programs have assessment plans based on professional accreditation requirements. Secondly, the team recognizes that other departmental areas have not begun conversations related to assessment planning. The team found an inconsistent focus on desirable learning outcomes at institutional, degree/program and course levels.
Due in part to the recently adopted mission statement, Teachers College will need to make a significant commitment to connecting mission and curricular outcomes. Teachers College is especially encouraged to develop a clear definition of "educational equity" as well as its desirable outcomes which emerges from this focus. The need for resources that directly operationalize the mission will be paramount in academic circles, student services, and any other domains in terms of recognizable accountability for achieving the goals of the mission and strategic plan.

Beyond the institutional level, the specific application of the mission's emphasis on educational equity should appear in some way in at least the majority of academic programs offered, allowing the faculty the exceptional opportunity to articulate their own values in shaping that mission for their programs and their students.

That process of articulating learning outcomes should lead to the establishment of a robust and consistent program review process that has been discontinued at Teachers College. When the faculty can clearly articulate what they want their graduates to know and be able to do, they are well on their way to writing an assessment plan that connects the programmatic dots, linking the desired outcomes to the curriculum and then measuring evidence from which results can be garnered and decisions made that will strengthen the programs.

While assessment planning is lacking, the team recognizes that assessment is occurring at Teachers College. Indeed, some rather impressive work—especially at the doctoral levels—is taking place. The use of a departmental certification examination that in many ways functions as a pre-test or milestone assessment of a student's progress before proceeding to the preparation and defense of their dissertations provides some useful data for both program review and student learning review. The dissertations, which have strict committee membership guidelines, serve as a final assessment of student learning. At the master's degree level, students complete some form of capstone assessment, either a comprehensive examination, a departmental integrative project, or a formal essay.

The Middle States Commission embraces assessment as an opportunity for faculty to articulate their values and devise a process that provides meaningful information that is useful in determining the success of their programs in promoting student learning outcomes. That emphasis on meaningfulness is critical in driving the usefulness of the process and its results and—without creating a competing model that may interfere with disciplinary accreditations, assessments, and standards—should be regarded as the primary touchstone for all decisions regarding institutional practices in assessment student learning outcomes.

The team acknowledges the value of hiring a new administrative support person for accreditation and assessment and encourages a comprehensive analysis of how the Assessment of Student Learning can transfuse every activity at Teachers College.
This includes data on the prioritization of academic programs, allocation of resources, faculty hiring decisions, enrollment targets and donor opportunities.

C. Suggestions

The team encourages Teachers College to clarify the direct correlations between resources and strategic initiatives in service of the new mission.

D. Recommendations

The team recommends that Teachers College more fully implement the following Fundamental Elements of Assessment of Student Learning:

- “articulated expectations of student learning at various levels (institution, degree/program, and course) that are consonant with the institution’s mission and with the standards of higher education and of the relevant disciplines.

- “a plan that describes student learning assessment activities being undertaken by the institution, including the specific methods to be used to validate articulated student learning goals/objectives.”