TEAM REPORT – MAY 6, 2014

MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

ACCREDITATION SITE VISIT

THE NEW SCHOOL

The New School Leadership

President David E. Van Zandt

Board of Trustees Chair Joseph R. Gromek

April 6-9, 2014

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I. Content and Nature of the Visit

Institutional overview

The New School is a private, non-profit institution founded in 1919 as a progressive, modern university located in New York City’s Greenwich Village neighborhood. Throughout its history, The New School expanded and grew through both internal growth of the original university in exile, The New School for Social Research, and acquisition of what in the past had been free standing schools of note. Examples of the latter include The Parsons School of Design and The Mannes School of Music. Today, The New School is distinguished in the areas of the arts, design, humanities, public policy, and the social sciences. It is known for its teaching and its student centered focus. Enrolling 7,010 undergraduates and 3,565 graduate students, The New School is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a doctoral research-intensive university.

Scope of Institution:

The information for describing the scope of the institution is drawn from the Statement of Accreditation Status provided to the team Chair, as follows.

- Degree levels offered: The New School offers the following degrees: Associate’s, Postsecondary Certificate, Bachelor’s, Postbaccalaureate Certificate, Master’s, Post-Master’s Certificate, Doctor’s – Research/Scholarship
- Branch campuses: The New School – Paris, located in Paris, France. Note: this campus was re-opened after the Self-Study was submitted and therefore not included in this review.
- Additional locations: None
- Distance or correspondence education programs: Yes

Self-Study Process and Report

The Self-Study conducted by The New School is comprehensive. Its contents are arranged into six thematic chapters, as follows.

1. Vision and Leadership (addresses Standards 1, 4, and 6)
2. Resources and Infrastructure (addresses Standards 2, 3, and 5)
3. Faculty (addresses Standard 10)
4. Students (addresses Standards 8 and 9)
5. Programs and Curriculum (addresses Standards 11, 12, and 13)
6. Assessment (addresses Standards 7 and 14)

The process for producing the Self-Study was described in the Study (p. I), as follows.

“The process for producing the Self-Study was overseen by a Steering Committee comprised of New School faculty, administrators, students, and Trustees. The composition of the committee, co-chaired by a faculty member and a senior member of the Provost Office, emerged out of discussions among co-chairs, deans, officers, the Provost, and the President. In consultation with
the Provost, the Steering Committee co-chairs constituted and charged six working groups with responsibility for developing the six chapters of the Self-Study. Each working group was asked to examine and research the university’s strengths and weaknesses in relation to one or more of the fourteen MSCHE Standards of Excellence. With the exception of the Faculty Working Group, the working groups were co-chaired by a faculty member and a senior administrator, both of whom served on the Steering Committee. Other members of the Steering Committee included two Trustees, a representative from the Faculty and Student Senates, and four at-large members: one dean, vice-president, student, and faculty member.”
II. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation

Based on a review of the Self-Study, interviews, the Certification Statement supplied by the institution and/or other institutional documents, the team affirms that the institution continues to meet the Requirements of Affiliation in *Characteristics of Excellence*. 
III. Compliance with Federal Requirements; Issues Relative to State Regulatory or Other Accrediting Agency Requirements

Based on the separate verification of compliance with accreditation-relevant provisions of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 and, as necessary, review of the Self-Study, certification by the institution, other institutional documents, and/or interviews, the team affirms that the institution meets all relevant federal and state regulations and the requirements of other Department of Education recognized accreditors. See Appendix A.
IV. Evaluation Overview

This accreditation visit comes on the heels of a tumultuous decade, marked by leadership challenges and transitions, as well as rapid expansion in the faculty and student ranks. As a result of the way in which the university grew, most of the schools comprising what is known now as The New School were largely autonomous. Each had different curricula and admission standards, to name a few examples. Because most of the schools had faculty that were largely untenured or adjuncts and there were different hiring standards across the units, there was no unified voice for faculty and students.

The New School has made great strides in recent years toward centralizing the University by drawing together what in the past had been a confederation of schools into a more cohesive whole. This process encompasses the university's physical space, its academic programs, its governance, and its identity. Since its last accreditation in 2003, The New School has formally adopted a comprehensive mission and vision, and engaged in its first university-wide strategic planning exercise resulting in university-wide goals. These are being utilized to cohere and align the academic and operational aspects of the institution. Faculty and Student Senates have been established as have uniform procedures for tenure and promotion. Faculty hiring has emphasized full-time positions, and a Full-Time Faculty Handbook has been developed. The construction and January 2014 opening of the University Center will facilitate the relocation of Parsons The New School for Design's School of Fashion and Mannes College The New School for Music according to a campus master plan, and the sale of the buildings these schools formerly occupied. The University Center provides dormitory, academic, performance, and library space and functions as an urban commons of sorts, which is vital to the formation of a student and faculty community.

These events provided the backdrop for the Accreditation Team's site visit, from April 6 – 9, 2014. The team, chaired by Debbie Freund (President, Claremont Graduate University) and staffed by seven individuals with backgrounds in academics, finance, institutional research, and student affairs, toured the primary physical spaces of The New School, met with key stakeholder groups (executive and administrative leadership, students, faculty, trustees, the review steering committee, and leadership in various specific areas such as finance, human resources, development, student affairs, and facilities), and scheduled several intensive team working meetings over the course of the visit.

The team was impressed by the strides made by The New School to consolidate, align, rebalance, and focus the university. While the team did have suggestions and recommendations, which are detailed in the following section, there were also a number of significant achievements that were recognized. These are also detailed by Standard in the following section.

Particularly worthy of commendation in this section, and by way of encompassing the more specific achievements, is the fact that The New School has made a remarkable and positive transformation of the university over the span of a few years. Leadership at the executive and the dean levels and in the various functional areas of the institution has worked together to create a student-centered,
forward-looking, and balanced environment wherein the mission, vision and goals drive the
decision-making to a large degree. An institutional commitment to assessment over the course of
activities in all areas that feeds substantively into decision-making processes is the final major
element to put in place, and the team is confident that The New School will progress in this area.
V. Compliance with Accreditation Standards

The fourteen Standards of Excellence are addressed in groups that mirror the organization of the Self-Study (see Section I). A discussion specific to each standard, along with accomplishments, suggestions, and recommendations (if applicable) is provided.

Self-Study Chapter One: Vision and Leadership

Standard One: Mission and Goals

In the team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard.

The New School’s first institutional mission statement was adopted in 2003, but it did not result from a total university effort in which broad groups of stakeholders had input. Upon his arrival, President Van Zandt pulled together a leadership group comprised of the Provost and deans that drafted a vision statement to serve as a springboard for creating all-university priorities. After sharing this vision statement broadly with students, faculty, academic and administrative leadership and the trustees in many communiques including town hall meetings, a new mission statement was collaboratively written based on the vision; the mission statement was agreed upon and formally approved by the Board of Trustees in May of 2013. Embedded in the mission statement were values that historically were associated with The New School for Social Research “to make the world a better and more just place,” and other key phrases meant to distinguish a New School education from that of other universities. These phrases include "that students develop both the skills a sound liberal arts education provides" and "leadership in the emerging creative economy."

The development of the new vision and mission statements came about as part of a New Strategic Planning Effort begun at the very beginning of President Van Zandt’s tenure in 2011, a charge given to him by the Board of Trustees upon his hiring. The Strategic Plan outlines five overarching priorities each with its own set of goals and assessments, meant to bring the mission and vision to life. The areas of emphasis in the strategic plan include: 1) Student Success, 2) Academic Programs and Quality, 3) Global Education, 4) External Profile and 5) Infrastructure. Student Success focuses on learning, educational experiences and preparation for careers, including the necessity of cross-disciplinary learning, flexibility and innovation. Academic Programs and Quality places emphasis on the development of new programs, drawing the sense of university together through access to curricula across the University. The New School has a significant proportion of international students in attendance. Thus deepening global opportunities is both a distinguishing characteristic and, among other features, is meant to be brought about through increased international experiences. External Profile envisions marketing and branding those New School elements that distinguish it
from its peers. Finally, Infrastructure concerns the ability of The New School to plan its resources wisely leading to sustained investments in technology and the human capital needed to bring about institutional effectiveness.

The Strategic Plan notes that progress and success will be empirically assessed through identified, results-focused metrics. Given that a culture of assessment is currently under development at The New School, it remains to be seen whether the vision and mission statement, as carried out through the goals of the strategic plan, are in fact being fully realized.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- The New School is commended for the thoughtful work that went into the development of a forward-looking and unifying new mission statement and strategic plan resulting in university-wide goals.

Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- It is suggested that the entire New School community should keep a strong focus on the implementation of the mission statement and realization of goals through all of its existing and new programming, and the alignment of its components across units as well as across academic and operations.
- Assessment in the arena of mission and goals is stated in the strategic plan and it is recommended that appropriate results-focused targets be developed, articulated, measured, and that the results feed back into the process in an iterative fashion to inform the mission and goals, as well as the targets and metrics themselves.

Recommendations:

- None

**Standard Four: Leadership and Governance**

In the team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, documentation and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard.

The New School’s governance structure includes a Board of Trustees that is an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity, capable of reflecting constituent and public interest, and with the expertise and authority to fulfill its responsibilities consistent with the mission of the institution.
Regarding recruitment to the Board of Trustees, it appears that it is described more indirectly in terms of a desire for diversity and avoiding conflicts of interest, etc., rather than a formally documented nomination and selection process. There is a standing committee of the Board of Trustees, the Committee on Trusteeship, but it appears that the process by which it vets trustee candidates is not formally documented. Also, according to information discovered during the site visit, members of the Board are evaluated at the end of their four-year terms for continuation; however, it appears that this process is not formally documented. Instead, according to interviews conducted on campus, an informal rubric for assessing general contributions and levels of engagement is used to determine continuance.

The Board of Trustees’ bylaws Article VII provides that all members of the Board of Trustees shall comply with The New School’s conflict of interest policy, which provides that trustees shall disclose any conflicting interest in any transaction involving The New School and shall not use their personal influence in connection with, participate in, or act in any such transaction. The New School’s conflict of interest policy addresses matters such as remuneration (the Board has none), contractual relationships, employments, family, and financial or other interests that could pose problems; and the policy assures that those interests are disclosed through a process.

The Boards’ bylaws indicate that it has the necessary fiduciary authority to transact all business on behalf of The New School, however it is not clear how the Board assists in generating resources needed to sustain and improve the institution. Campus interviews indicate that the Board’s philanthropy is somewhat uneven and those interviewed indicated a desire to work with the Board to improve giving both in terms of both consistency and levels of contribution. The Board of Trustees’ bylaws also refer to regular updates of the bylaws and the Board’s committee organization. There is no requirement that new trustees need to go through an orientation. However, one such orientation was conducted for two new trustees in June 2013. Similarly there is no process for providing continuing updates and communication on issues of the institution’s mission, organization, and academic programs and objectives.

It is clear that the Board of Trustees has the authority to appoint the chief executive officer, whose primary responsibility is to the institution. Interviews on campus determined that the board has twice evaluated the chief executive officer during the current five-year appointment. The president is responsible for providing feedback and evaluation of all of the institution’s senior officers, including the provost.

Reporting to the president, the provost oversees faculty and administrative leadership of The New School through an organization of academic deans and directors that lead the various divisions of the institution, as well as an administrative staff that serves the academic support functions of the university.

With regard to leadership and governance across the institution, as The New School has begun to define itself as a single entity (rather than as a collection of independent schools), it is creating an institution-wide system of governance including written policies that outline governance
responsibilities of administration and faculty. This documentation is readily available to the campus community on the institution’s website which describes all of the constituent leadership groups of the institution. Governance responsibilities are laid out in bylaws for the Board of Trustees, the University Faculty Senate (UFS) and University Student Senate (USS).

Additionally, faculty handbook and student handbooks cover policy issues applicable to constituencies. Additional polices are available on The New School’s password-protected web portal. While complicated and occasionally unclear, the bylaws for all of these groups begin to delineate the institution’s structure and provide explanation on the duties and responsibilities of its faculty and staff. The Self-Study indicates that engagements between the administration and faculty and student committees occur primarily with the UFS and the USS, and the visiting team recognizes that The New School leadership is providing some good initial opportunities for constituent feedback on the development and communication of policy, processes and opportunities engagements with leadership.

However, larger issues are not yet addressed in UFS. Their role is primarily advisory, but it is clear from interviews that the body has an interest in continuing to evolve its role as part of the governance structure of the institution, in particular developing their input on issues relative to institutional mission and vision, program delivery, and resource allocations. In particular, the team notes that whether vested with UFS or another body, faculty governance issues related to tension between the university and the individual divisions needs to be resolved so that progress can be made on the assessment of institutional student learning outcomes, and to support the recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty.

Lastly, there is reference in the Self-Study and within the USS bylaws regarding student input to university committees and as a liaison to administration, but the mechanisms for this are not clearly described in the documentation provided. It is especially important within the consolidation of the committees of the Board of Trustees that the student voice not be lost. While it became apparent through interviews with students that there are some ad hoc opportunities for student input regarding decisions that affect them is manifest, it is not clear how their input is formally solicited, considered or utilized.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- The transformation of the institution over the last several years has been remarkable.
- Sensitive centralization by the President and the Provost, with support from the Board of Trustees, appears to be moving in the right direction.
- The New School seems to have stabilized around the notion of service to the students through a strategic plan that focusing on student success and academic quality, and service to the community with the understanding that all members are service providers and service consumers.
Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- As they evolve, the alignment of now disparate governance and leadership documents within a comprehensive model would provide clarity with the roles and responsibilities.
- Formal mechanisms for student input within leadership and governance structures should be clarified, especially within the new consolidated committee structure of the Board of Trustees.
- Set and enforce minimum expectations for Board philanthropy.
- The Committee on Trusteeship on the Board of Trustees should consider articulating criteria for the process in selecting prospective Trustees, formalizing the process by which it evaluates Trustees, and requiring newly-elected board members to undergo an orientation.

Recommendations:

- Especially as it relates to assessment of student learning outcomes, faculty governance issues on curriculum between the university and the individual divisions need to be more clearly defined to alleviate existing tensions.
- The process for faculty input, especially as it relates to issues involving institutional mission and vision, program delivery, resource allocations and right-sizing, should be more clearly defined and communicated on a regular basis.

Standard Six: Integrity

In the team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, documentation and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard.

The New School demonstrates a strong commitment to equity, justice, and ethical conduct. The Self-Study highlights achievements in several categories key to institutional integrity.

Development and Dissemination of Institutional Policies: In order to promote consistency and cohesion among the various units that constitute The New School, policy development has been centralized. Policies are developed by consensus, with input from the institution’s key stakeholders. The University Faculty Senate and the University Student Senate act as advisors to the administration and the Board of Trustees on policy matters but have no governance role. Policies and procedures are made widely available through the University Policies webpage, University-wide emails, the Full-Time Faculty Handbook, the Part-Time Faculty Guide, the Student Handbook, the
MyNewSchool portal, the Your Right to Know web page, and the Student Rights and Responsibilities web page. Policy changes are disseminated by similar means.

Dissemination of Information: Course catalogs from the 2010-2011 academic year through the present year are provided electronically on the university’s website. Statistics on admissions, enrollment, retention, graduation rates, and degrees granted are made available through The New School Fact Book. The institution’s 2014 Middle States accreditation Self-Study was made available to the public on the university’s website.

Student Grievances: Each division of the university has in place its own procedure for addressing academic grievances, such as grade appeals. In 2012, The New School implemented a university-wide policy on academic integrity to standardize the response to academic dishonesty across divisions. Matters of non-academic student misconduct are governed by the Code of Conduct, which is administered by the Student Rights and Responsibilities office.

Faculty and Employee Grievances: Grievance rights for full-time faculty are described in the Full-Time Faculty Handbook. Each division of the university has a grievance committee that addresses minor issues. Major issues (such as tenure decisions and terminations) are handled by a university-wide committee. The grievance procedures for part-time faculty are governed by collective bargaining agreements with Local 802, the Associated Musicians of Greater New York, American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO; and Local 7902, Academics Come Together, ACT-UAW. The grievance process for non-unionized employees is handled by the university-wide Human Resources department.

Diversity, Social Justice, and Inclusion: Social justice and progressive values are core facets of The New School’s institutional identity. In the interest of social justice, the university has instituted a number of programs and initiatives aimed at increasing access to higher education for students from underserved demographics. The university has appointed a Director of Social Justice Initiatives, established an office for Social Justice Initiatives, and created university-wide Social Justice Committee. The New School has included a Social Justice Hub in the new University Center building to house the Social Justice Committee and accommodate programming and discourse around social justice issues. The university has established three (one for each: student, faculty and staff) Awards for Outstanding Achievements in Diversity and Social Justice. Shared Capacities, the university’s proposed general education program, includes an ethics and social justice component. The university’s efforts at promoting diversity and social justice are guided by its Affirmative Action Plan and Equal Employment Opportunity policy. The New School has the highest percentage of international undergraduates (29%) of any college in the United States.

Sexual Assault and Harassment: The university has adopted comprehensive policies on sexual harassment and sexual assault. The Student Rights and Responsibilities webpage provides detailed descriptions of the process for reporting sexual assault and harassment, the process for adjudicating charges of assault or harassment, and resources available to complainants. The university provides training on the Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault policies for all officials who have contact with
students. A university-wide campaign to educate students on the policies was also implemented. Ongoing education on sexual assault and harassment is made available to students through Student Health Services and student groups. Online training in sexual harassment prevention is available on the university’s website. Additional online training in sexual assault prevention is expected to be available in the fall of 2014.

Ethical Practices and Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest: The university’s Conflicts of Interest Policy ensures that decisions made by the Board of Trustees, administrators, and faculty are not influenced by improper considerations. The policy is subject to yearly review. Other policies governing the integrity of the university community include those on Sexual and Discrimination Harassment, Codes of Conduct for students and staff, and Academic Honesty and Integrity. The university provides guidelines for addressing collegial and romantic relationships between faculty and students and administrative supervisors and those who report to them. A Whistleblower Policy protects the interests of those who report unethical behavior by university officials.

Academic and Intellectual Freedoms: Since the university’s founding, academic and intellectual freedoms have been central to The New School’s institutional character. In support of these freedoms, the university has in place policies on the free exchange of ideas and on the freedom of artistic expression. The university’s Guidelines on Demonstrations in University Facilities were revised in response to student protests in 2009, when students who occupied a university building faced possible disciplinary action. The University Faculty Senate and the University Student Senate were instrumental in these revisions, which addressed the restrictions placed on academic freedom by the Code of Conduct.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- None

Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- The university may wish to consider making its Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedures more explicit. Disciplinary processes are described with phrases such as “The procedures to be used in reviewing the matter will be determined by the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities” and “The procedures to be used in reviewing the matter will be determined by the Disciplinary Review Panel. The alleged violator will be given reasonable opportunity to comply with the process.” A more specific account of disciplinary procedures would aid in transparency.

Recommendations:

- None

Self-Study Chapter Two: Resources and Infrastructure
Standard 2: Resources and Infrastructure

In the team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard.

The New School recently completed its Strategic Plan 2013-2018, which was just approved by the Board of Trustees (February 6, 2014). The Self-Study reports the Plan was the culmination of university-wide efforts over the last several years. The Plan outlines a mission, a vision, and goals in five broad areas. The Plan does include an “Assessment” section with each goal. At this time, however, the section only addresses a method to measure the outcomes. To complete the picture, numeric targets are needed. Also, a feedback process will ensure that issues identified in the data will lead to meaningful improvements in the area being measured.

It should be noted that The New School reports this is the first university-wide planning effort and reflects the changes in moving towards a more unified structure. The Self-Study reports that significant efforts have been dedicated to strengthen the Institutional Research and Effectiveness Department (IRE).

The New School reports it now has an extensive system of budget and accounting controls, policies and procedures in place as part of its Budget Development and Reporting System (BDRS). This followed some reorganization in the finance area, and the appointment of a chief operating officer. They also report greater coordination among the units in developing the budgets and the active involvement of the Deans in the process.

The New School is well served in developing a more detailed operation budget projection to ensure that the funds are in place to support the actions listed in the budget narrative related to the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The team understands from discussions with the financial leadership team that such a model is currently being beta-tested. Next year (FY 15) the model should be rolled out in a sequence which allows the Strategic Plan to drive the budget priorities. As with any new process, it will take several cycles to work out all of the details.

In discussions with The New School personnel, they indicated that they are updating the time table for the budget process to start it earlier in the year.

In the Self-Study, The New School provided a budget for the next several years. However, it is a very high level (Total Revenue, Total Expense, and Net Income) and did not provide details as to the impact of the Strategic Plan on the budget. Additional information provided by The New School included a multi-year plan with planning assumptions that included allocations to fund the Strategic Plan Objectives.
A critical element of the university planning process is the built environment. The New School produced a Facilities Master Plan Study in April 2011. It outlines an aggressive, multi-year plan to transform a series of buildings that are blocks apart in New York City into a cohesive Greenwich Village Campus that will engender greater campus life, provide space for planned growth, and provide a major new facility (365,000 GSF) which will provide 600 new beds, 58 instructional spaces, and library, study and dining spaces. The facility was opened in two phases – the housing was ready for the fall 2013 class and the remainder of the building was ready for the spring 2014 semester.

With respect to facilities renewal, the Capital Construction Projection includes funds for multi-year projects, as well as separate lines for Critical Maintenance and Technology. Additional information provided during the visit included a more detailed capital budget as well as funding to address deferred maintenance.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- Completion of the first formal university Strategic Plan

Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- In coordination with its assessment processes, The New School is urged to establish the appropriate benchmarks and feedback loops to complete its Strategic Plan.

Recommendations:

- The New School is encouraged to move as quickly as practical to implement its plans to more fully document its budget process to include the calendar of activities to better coordinate the planning and resource allocation needed to achieve the goals outlined in its Strategic Plan.

Standard Three: Institutional Resources

In the team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard.

The Self-Study describes several changes in the administrative structure but does not provide any analysis of the human resources beyond noting that there are 1,325 full-time and 66 part-time employees and that the growth of staff was 7.5% while full-time faculty increased at 25%. In conversations on-site the team learned that the institution went through layoffs several years ago and is now running a lean operation on the administrative staff side, but one that has been deemed by an outside agency to be sufficient. On the faculty side, a hiring freeze and lack of raises for the
past three years are giving way to faculty hires driven both by the strategic plan and a planned five years of 2.5% annual raises.

The discussion of the financial resources would appear to indicate things are going well. Institutional leadership underscored the shift from a 4% annual growth strategy to a zero growth strategy in order to allow for “right sizing” the institutional balance among its constituent units. However, the Self-Study notes that enrollment targets were not met in FY 12 or 13. As The New School is highly tuition dependent, the impact of the under-enrollment has been reductions in budgets and no salary increases for full-time faculty and non-union staff. While the University has taken steps to reorganize the enrollment management function, there is no information in the Self-Study as to the impact, if any, these have had. The Self-Study makes a point of noting that The New School was ranked in 2013 by NACUBO as one of the top 10 universities in terms of the growth in net assets between 2000 and 2010. However, when separated into components, the unrestricted net assets designated for operations are shrinking from $39 million at the close of FY 08 to $23 million at the close of FY 13, the latest data provided. There is an additional balance of $98 million that the Trustees treat as quasi-endowment.

The University projects the revenues will exceed expenses starting in FY2015 and going for the next 4 years. This should provide adequate fiscal resources. In addition, The New School does have significant undesignated unrestricted net assets as well as a Board-designated “Quasi” Endowment Fund

With respect to broadening its revenue base, university leadership noted that several avenues will be pursued: 1) limited and careful engagement with global hubs and distributed education, 2) growth in annual giving by alumni resulting in $10 million annually by 10% of alumni by 2019, 3) pursuit of naming and endowment opportunities with selected donors. The university has relied on decentralized leadership in fundraising from deans and faculty. The newly-hired Chief Development Officer and the newly-hired Chief Marketing Officer are working, separately and in tandem, toward a rebranding of the university to reflect a coherent unified identity and building momentum toward a capital campaign. Alumni giving is currently at 5% and the cultivation focus will initially be with this group. The strategic plan and newly articulated vision and mission are drivers of these efforts, which should prove fruitful.

Since its last accreditation, The New School has undergone a rapid phase of expansion of both its human and physical resource base, and there are concerted efforts to consolidate these as well as to systematically plan for their allocation and future development. With planned level enrollment, the total need for space appears to be met. Significant spatial consolidation and rationalization of existing space use are emphasized. Building maintenance is budgeted in the annual capital budget ($3 million), repairs are budgeted for every building in inventory ($200,000-400,000 annually), and in major capital projects. The New School will have to continue to assess its facilities as part of the process of balancing enrollment, which may require changes in the types of facilities needed, even if no additional space is required.
Projects include the completion this January of the new University Center, scheduled rehabilitations, and changes in leased property. As part of the physical consolidation of the university in the Greenwich Village area, Mannes College The New School for Music and the Fashion School of Parsons The New School for Design are in process of relocating to the University Center. The Parsons building was very recently sold and the Mannes building is intended for sale, with proceeds from both going into the endowment. The Parsons presence will subsequently be diffused back out into a perimeter surrounding the University Center as part of the University’s rebalancing and rebranding efforts. The facilities planning personnel meet weekly with the Provost’s Office and every other week with the Provost and President to ensure alignment of physical and academic resource development.

The Self-Study does provide discussion on the current status and plans for academic and information technologies as well as the library within the context of resources. This area is discussed in later chapters of the Team Report related to faculty and assessment. However, in the Self-Study section on resources The New School notes the modernization of networks to emphasize wireless access, the migration of email to Google Apps for Education, which provides a suite of collaborative tools, and transition from Blackboard to Canvas LMS is underway, which will enhance video, live conferencing, and ease of learning.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- None

Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- The New School is encouraged to implement its plans to broaden their revenue base and to capitalize on fund-raising plans in anticipation of their 100th anniversary

Recommendations:

- None

Standard Five: Administration

In the team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard.

The current CEO and President of The New School, David Van Zandt, began in 2011 following an extensive search overseen by The Board of Trustees. President Van Zandt came to The New School from Northwestern University where he had served as Dean of the Law School.
President Van Zandt is empowered for overseeing all actions of the university and as detailed elsewhere has led the writing of new vision and mission statements and the creation of a new strategic plan. Currently reporting to President Van Zandt are the following positions: Provost, Chief Legal Officer and Secretary of the Corporation, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Enrollment and Success Officer, Chief Development Officer and Chief Marketing Officer. It should be noted that since the Self-Study was written, the position that formerly was known as the Senior Vice President for Enrollment and Career Services has been upgraded to the Chief Enrollment and Success Officer. Reporting to the Chief Enrollment and Success Officer is a Senior Vice President for Student Services, a Vice President for Strategic Enrollment Management, and a Vice President for Student Success; the student success officer oversees all student experiences after matriculation such as those things that contribute to retaining and graduating students as well as career services.

In the past, particularly during the Kerrey administration, there had been almost yearly turnover in the Provost position. In order to bring greater cohesion at the New School and centralize all academic planning, Tim Marshall, the former Dean of the Parsons School was appointed Provost and he has remained in the position now for over 5 years, thus bringing greater stability. The Deans of all the Schools report to the Provost.

To operate The New School there are two senior leadership teams. The Leadership Council meets bi-weekly and includes The President, Provost, Chief Administrators and the Deans. There is also a monthly meeting of The Strategic Group, which comprises those in the Leadership Council plus all Vice Presidents, divisional deans and directors, and the vice and deputy provosts.

Also, as is common when a largely decentralized university is centralized to bring about more cohesive planning and cost savings, new tensions are created between the resulting Central Administration and the Schools. However, in conversations with the leadership in academic, financial, and development areas such tensions were not evident; indeed the team was struck by the shared vision across leadership areas and apparent esprit de corps, particularly among the deans. It is important to note however that effectively managing tensions inherent to a historically decentralized institution will require appropriate assessment along the way.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- The path towards the restructuring of The New School has been greatly enabled by the close working relationship of the Deans which was very respectful of their responsibilities to their college, while making decisions that are in the best interest of The New School.

Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- Given that there has been substantial reorganization over the last several years, the current structure bears watching over time to determine if the expected efficiencies are achieved. This review can be an element of the institutional assessment process that is being developed.

Recommendations:
Self-Study Chapter Three: Faculty

Standard 10: Faculty

In the team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard.

There are four interconnected developments related to faculty that have been transformative in the university’s Strategic Plan: uniformity of terms and conditions of service across academic divisions, the adoption of collective bargaining agreements for part-time faculty, a move toward a more centralized faculty affair and services, and the establishment of University Faculty Senate.

There has been an effort to clearly define the terms and conditions of service across academic divisions. The documents that define the terms and conditions are readily available to faculty. In discussing this with full-time faculty, it is noted that there seems to be some confusion among faculty members across the different divisions in regard to the terms and conditions of service. It is also noted that many faculty members, especially full-time faculty (FTF), regard their service load as high. The Self-Study recognizes this problem: “Tenure Track appointments across the institution has created difficulties as ensuring service needs as tenure track faculty must also conduct scholarship and creative practices,” (p. 57) resulting in added pressure on senior faculty to commit to additional service for the university.

Part-time Faculty are covered by a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). In speaking with both full and part-time faculty members, the implementation of a CBA for part-time faculty only seems to have created a divide among the faculty members. Both the full-time and the part-time faculty members expressed concern over the perceived advantages and disadvantages afforded to the other group.

From the Self-Study, review of other New School documents, and from talking with both the administrators and faculty members, it is obvious that “faculty is at the center of the university’s academic achievements and critical to fulfilling the goals of its newly adopted strategic plan, particularly with regard to student and academic success” (p. 42). There is compelling evidence, from talking to some student leaders, that the faculty members (with appropriate institutional support) engage them and are committed to teaching, serving and facilitating learning.

Faculty evaluation is important and continues to contribute significantly to sustaining the required level of academic growth and professional excellence. The New School has established central and
standardized policies for full-time annual evaluations, reviews for tenure and promotion or reappointment. Part-time faculty evaluations and reviews follow the guidelines of the part-time contracts which have mandated uniformity and consistency.

The institution has continued to make strides toward shared governance with the establishment of faculty advisory councils and the establishment of a Faculty Senate. A culture of faculty governance is shared across the divisions with adjustments that capture the historical differences that existed among the seven divisions. The Faculty Senate operates in an advisory capacity, but senate members expressed an interest in moving toward a more fundamental role in decisions that affect the institution.

On specific faculty-relevant issues there has been a dramatic increase in the number of full-time faculty (FTF) with a 165% increase from 2003 – 2012. Part-time faculty, though disproportionately higher than FTF, rose slightly at the same period. The highest increase in FTF occurred in divisions that serve most undergraduates: Parsons, Eugene Lang and the New School for Public Engagement (NSPE). Additionally, there has been increased diversity of faculty by race, gender and ethnicity, the share of female faculty remaining steady at just under 50%, a high percentage of international full-time faculty (9.7%) which supports the global education initiative of the institution.

Faculty Hiring for FTF are by open recruitment, and by local recruitment from New York City region for part-time faculty. The Self-Study notes that tenure and extended employment opportunities throughout the university “have attracted high caliber applicants who might not have otherwise considered the New School.” (p.48)

The New School divisions now follow a single procedural timeline for reappointment and promotion reviews with appointments and reappointments ranging from two to seven years. (Self-Study, p.49) Tenure review process is now done by University Promotion and Review Committee (UPRC), while parallel review process for Renewable Term Appointments (RTA) is conducted by Term Review Committee (UTRC). The two committees ensure that equity and fairness are followed in faculty review processes.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- None

Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- Develop a systematic process for ascertaining the true faculty workload (FTF and PTF) rather than relying on self-reported and anecdotal evidence (Self-Study, pp. 57-58).
- The largest areas of dissatisfaction among faculty relate to tenure policies, feedback on the tenure process, inadequate facilities, work resources and service load. With respect to the distribution of service expectations, it is suggested that the institution more clearly define, articulate, and communicate the appointment types and the distinctions in service expectations within them. For example, with so-called "principle faculty" (according to the faculty handbook)
there are three types of appointments for full-time faculty (RT: Renewable-Term Appointments, TT: Tenure-Track/Tenure Appointments, and EE: Extended-Employment Appointments). This may be creating confusion and frustration with service expectations. The Faculty Handbook does address workload assignments, but it is suggested that the Handbook more clearly differentiate between the different faculty types.

- The evaluation team supports and concurs with the following statement from the Self-Study that the University should “Assess and improve the utilization and effectiveness of current resources for supporting professional growth and advancement of faculty, particularly with regard to mentoring of junior faculty.” (p.61). It is suggested that institution needs to explicate how it plans or intends to accomplish this particular goal, and demonstrate how the attainment can be ascertained or measured.

- Provide the faculty with a better understanding of the link between the faculty representation (senate or pFAC - the provost's faculty affairs committee), the Faculty Handbook, the expectations of faculty at each appointment type, and the evaluation process.

- It is suggested that The New School administration continue to build trust with the faculty by employing transparent and timely communication. An example of this would be the sharing of the COACHE survey with faculty members. Several faculty members relayed their disappointment in not seeing these results in a timely manner.

Recommendations:

- None

Self-Study Chapter Four: Students

Standard Eight: Student Admissions and Retention

In the team’s judgment, The New School appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard.

The New School has allocated resources and has developed policies and procedures to recruit, retain, and support their student body. The admissions function was centralized in 2005 and an Assistant Vice President for University Admissions position was created. The Vice President for Enrollment Management position was created in 2007. Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) was established in 2013 and includes marketing, admission, enrollment systems, and financial aid. SEM is now a centralized and coordinated function that uses a collaborative approach with other internal stakeholders such as the Provost’s Office, Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE), Finance and Business, and the academic divisions to plan and implement strategies to recruit students in a manner that aligns with the University’s mission. The Vice President for Student
Success position was created in 2013. The Ning Network provides an online community for first-year students to connect with Admissions, make friends, and learn about the University once they are admitted. In 2012 a pilot project was developed to help minimize “summer melt”. This project was expanded in 2013 to include all newly admitted undergraduate students and peer mentors now interact with these students and has decreased levels of melt due to these concerted communication efforts. Student-directed services are developed strategically and selectively to ensure success along the admission to graduation pipeline. The methods to develop these services are documented. Nearly 70% of first-time freshmen reside on campus. This number drops to approximately 17% for the total student body. A full residence life program is offered to on-campus students and The New School recognizes residence halls are an integral part of the University’s student development program, especially for first-time freshmen. Special interest communities (SICs) encourage unity and inter-community with the ultimate goal of positively impacting the student experience, retention and persistence.

The New School enrolls a rather high percentage of international students and economically diverse students. Almost a third (27%) of the overall student body was international students in 2012. Almost a third (27%) of the student body entering a four-year degree program in 2011 was Pell Grant recipients.

The New School is engaged in concerted efforts to improve student retention. The University’s retention rates have ranged from 78% to 83% and the six year graduation rate has ranged from 61% to 66% over the past five years. While the New School’s first-year student retention rates are four points higher than the national average for Private Doctoral/Research Universities, it is lower than their peer institutions (p.72). IRE administered the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) to a group of first-year Parsons and Lang students, as well as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), exit interviews and other surveys to identify factors correlated with retention.

The New School has not met enrollment targets the past two years (p. 5) and the “Projection for Fiscal 2014 through Fiscal 2019” includes an assumption for enrollment growth set at zero percent.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- The New School has the distinction of enrolling one of the most international student bodies in the country, as well as enrolling an economic diverse student body (almost a third of the student body entering a four-year degree program in 2011 were Pell Grant recipients).

- The New School has experienced a 29% increase in total credit-seeking enrollments over the past 10 years (2002-2012).

- Academic advising at The New School has either been done by a faculty member and/or a professional advisor. In 2011, the Provost’s Office created an Academic Advising working group. The Spring 2012 report included recommendations which SEM is addressing. Examples of changes based on these recommendations include moving towards an integrated approach to
academic advising, the online course catalog now includes a searchable tool for courses across all divisions, coordinate advising activities via the DegreeWorks degree audit program, and the piloting and adoption of the Student Success Network which is a retention management platform (Starfish) to address the retention task force’s recommendations for at-risk student which includes early intervention and the ability for faculty and administration to have immediate access to information related to student success.

- The Provost’s Office established the University Advisor Forum (UAF) which convenes monthly to discuss policies and procedures, share best practices, note potential improvements to university-wide advising services, and resolve issues.

Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- While The New School has established the University Advisor Forum (UAF) which convenes monthly to discuss policies and procedures, share best practices, note potential improvements to university-wide advising services, and resolve issues, it is unclear as to how the work of this group is captured and shared with the greater campus community. It is suggested that the activities of UAF be formally communicated to the campus community. In addition, students should have the opportunity to be involved and contribute to the UAF.

- The New School should reconsider the ethnic groups identified as an underrepresented minority (URM) in their SEM reporting. Specifically, Asian Americans are not typically identified as URM. URM typically includes African-American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Hispanic.

Recommendations:

- Due to the profile of the student body, in particular international and economically diverse, it is recommended that The New School:
  
  o Monitor student funding levels to ensure they are sufficient and sustainable to promote student retention and success (p. 66); and
  
  o Develop a comprehensive plan to assess student support services (including International Student Services, the Student Success Network (early warning system), academic advising, Student Housing and Residential Life, Career Services, and disability services).

- While The New School is assuming a zero percent enrollment growth over the next five fiscal years, it remains imperative that they continue to develop enrollment projection models to monitor the retention of entering and continuing students.

- Due to the variation across divisions, it is recommended that The New School monitor retention and graduations for the overall University, as well as by division.
Standard Nine: Student Support Services

In the team’s judgment, The New School appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard.

The New School has demonstrated that it is taking concrete and substantial steps to assess need, and to improve and develop a range of services to support students’ academic, professional, and personal well-being.

The New School has adopted national assessment instruments to measure student satisfaction and first-year student needs and expectations. Instruments include the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), and the ACT Student Satisfaction Survey. This chapter also discusses a number of other recently developed assessment efforts that, in sum, demonstrate the school’s commitment to “closing the loop” and using assessment data to identify solutions and inform actions. The Self-Study highlights several areas of accomplishment, including financial aid, academic advising, academic support services, student life, retention, and policies and procedures.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- In its effort to unify its disparate programs and campuses, to improve retention, and to enrich the student experience, The New School has allocated substantial resources and support services to the creation of an online presence delivering information and services to students and other stakeholders. The Ning network is an online community which links new students to admissions staff, provides information about the institution, and establishes an online meeting space where students can interact and “make friends.” The college catalog and registration process are fully online and, in 2012, the Student Success Network was piloted to address the concerns of at-risk students. In order to have an impact on students before they ever set foot on campus, the “summer melt” program was established in 2012 for incoming undergraduates. This initial pilot project employed professional staff coaches as contacts and advisors to students. In 2013 the program was expanded to include all new undergraduates, and the staff coaches were replaced with peer mentors.

- Although most students at The New School receive financial aid in the form of scholarships, grants, work study, or loans, The New School administration realizes that support is less than ideal. In response to this need, The New School established a financial aid call center to handle students’ basic questions about financial aid. It also provides counselors for more detailed information, and responds to inquiries within 24 hours.

- Traditionally, academic advising reflected the scattered structure of the institution. Although most areas offered advising services, they varied from program to program. In 2011, the
Provost’s academic advising working group looked at the distribution of advising among faculty and staff and discovered variations. The working groups reviewed advising across the schools and submitted recommendations to improve online registration, advising, development of the systematic identification system that would allow for quick response to students who are struggling academically, and the establishment of a working group to articulate advising goals and objectives. Other advising initiatives include adopting Degree Works and piloting the Student Success Network. Clearly, the school has made an effort to assess advising and to use the resulting data to recognize problems and develop solutions.

- The institution is set in one of the world’s richest cultural centers, providing unparalleled opportunities for its students. It is also the densely populated urban environment which can create challenges for student housing. Student housing and residence life initiatives were assessed in 2012 through the ACT student satisfaction survey. The resulting data will provide a baseline for measuring the effectiveness of new initiatives. Note, the university will be using an in-house survey in the future. In 2013 the school opened a residence hall in the new University Center. This is especially important because the school encourages students to live in residence halls in their first year, allowing for a smooth transition to college life.

- The New School also participates in a number of long-standing programs designed to help students succeed. The higher education opportunity program (HEOP) serves the academically and economically disadvantaged through comprehensive program of tutoring, personal coaching, and a range of other activities. International student support services have become increasingly important, serving 27% of the total student body. The Institution offers intensive ESL classes for those with inadequate English language proficiency who hope to matriculate. They offer a year-round ESL certificate program through the NSPE, summer orientation program through Parsons’ Summer, Pre-College Academy, and Continuing Education SPACE. In the summer of 2011 a new ESL Design Certificate Program was launched. In 2013 an ESL Music Certificate Program was added. The Office of International Student Services provides a range of services dealing with second language student needs, including immigration, cultural support, and employment.

- President Van Zandt has made improving Career Services a priority at the New School. Institutional Research and Effectiveness and a Provost’s Task Force on Career Services have undertaken a number of studies aimed at strengthening this area. One outcome of this focus was the creation of a Senior Vice President for Enrollment Management and Career Services position (which late was elevated to Chief Enrollment and Success Officer).

- Student policies and procedures are available through the Student Rights and Responsibilities Web page (http://www.newschool.edu/about/your-right-to-know/) and the MyNewSchool online portal, the Your Right to Know Web page, the online and print catalog, and through a wide range of offices and publications. The Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy, and those dealing with sexual harassment and discrimination, and sexual assault are also widely disseminated. The institution continues to assess and revise these policies.
Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- The team suggests that The New School establish clear guidelines for providing and assessing Support Services for online and branch campuses.

Recommendations:

- The team recommends that The New School provide clear and accessible information about services for student populations with unique concerns, including military veterans, nontraditional, and LGBT students.

- Although The New School is undertaking dramatic changes in programming, governance, and institutional structure, many of these initiatives are too new to fully assess at this time. There seems to be a clear effort to establish a culture of assessment and transparency in the development, delivery, and effectiveness of Support Services. The team recommends that The New School follow through on these early efforts and undertake regular and rigorous assessment and review of these services in the coming years.

Self-Study Chapter Five: Programs and Curriculum

Standard Eleven: Educational Offerings

In the team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard.

The New School has undertaken dramatic changes in institutional structure and governance in recent years. It has strived to become a more transparent and unified institution. This move toward institutional coherence is reflected in the Educational Offerings through a range of initiatives that address this effort to become a more nimble, outward looking institution through organizational and curricular shifts. These changes take advantage of interdisciplinary programming, an array of rich offerings, and technology and online opportunities to move toward fully realizing the institutional mission.

The internal development and review process for new program applications is comprehensive, starting at the faculty level and soliciting input through the chain of command to include the deans, divisions, and University Curriculum Committee. Externally, programs are reviewed by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and comply with MSCHE and other accrediting requirements.

In its effort to unify the discrete programs that comprise the New School, the institution is breaking down systemic and disciplinary boundaries. The institution implemented a common bell schedule in
fall 2012. The institution adopted DegreeWorks, giving students and their advisors clear, usable information on student curricula, including progress-to-degree and specific needs. A new online course catalog has been developed, while a print catalog is still available. Other initiatives encourage collaborative teaching, new programming, outreach to external organizations, faculty development, and sustainability.

The New School has established several interdivisional and interdisciplinary programs, notably, Global Studies, Environmental Studies, and Urban Design at the undergraduate level. Examples at the graduate school level include Parsons Master’s of Fine Arts in Transdisciplinary Design, and the Management and Urban Policy Program (Milano). A number of coordinated hires have also served to bring disciplines together.

University-wide courses, required of all undergraduates in 2014, serve to unify and strengthen the liberal arts mission of the institution. The mission is further achieved through a robust campaign to provide project-based experiences to all undergraduates. This appears to be a special emphasis, and many of the experiential opportunities also engage students with social and civic concerns. One example is Integrated Design’s challenge to its students to develop products and service that promote sustainable living. Other programs provide opportunities for community services and clinical activities.

The online offerings are increasingly significant at The New School. Instructors complete a six-week web-based course in online technology and pedagogy. The Self-Study states that “all for-credit online classes meet the same standards as on-campus classes” (p. 83). The report does not specify how that is done.

The New School’s international programming and study abroad offerings are expanding and reflect the mission which strives to enable people “to better understand our world and improve conditions for local and global communities.”

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- In addition to a strong move into online programming, coherent scheduling, transdisciplinary curricula, a more global reach, and a commitment to service and civic engagement, many programs are pursuing other innovative educational initiatives. For example, the college is exploring the use of e-Portfolios, and the new “praxis doctorate” explores the integration of theory and practice and redefines research in broad terms.
- The New School has developed a comprehensive system of online and print communication to disseminate important information about curriculum to the campus community. It has also made a great effort to see that students receive clear, timely, and accurate information on courses and programs to ensure that they receive effective academic advising.

Non-binding suggestions for improvement:
The Self-Study states that “all for-credit online classes meet the same standards as on-campus classes” (p. 83). The report does not specify how that is done. The team suggests that the New School lay out specific guidelines for developing and assessing online courses.

Recommendations:

The team understands that The New School is in the early stages of dramatic changes and sufficient data may not yet be available; however, the team recommends that the institution establish ongoing assessment of these changes, analysis of the resulting data, and revision of institutional practices where it is appropriate.

Standard Twelve: General Education

In the team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard.

As with many recent changes, The New School is in the early stages of establishing a General Education curriculum. The report notes that prior to the 1970s, the New School’s liberal arts undergraduates programs were designed for non-traditional (mature) students who transferred there to complete their undergraduate education. As the student body became more traditional and diverse and the curriculum broader in scope, the institution saw a need for a common foundation in these important areas. The Self-Study describes a general education curriculum early in the development and adoption process under the umbrella of the larger “Shared Capacities” initiative. Although the five divisions currently have “clearly articulated” first-year requirements in written, oral, and even visual communication, they do not uniformly address technological literacy and quantitative reasoning.

Historically, the various undergraduate programs addressed general education separately, “crafting their own curricula” in order to meet the unique needs of their students. This seems to have resulted in an incoherent and incomplete general education approach. Even so, The New School is making progress.

Since the last 2003 Self-Study, general education requirements at the institution, particularly at the divisional levels, are going through major revision with a view to accomplish two goals: (a) to strengthen general education proficiencies in several areas and, (b) to better connect curricular content to the university mission. (p.86)

In Fall 2010, the institution formed the Assessment of Student Learning Committee charged with articulating learning outcomes and proficiencies for the first and second year students. Also the Summer Institute on General education and Assessment was charged with finding ways to come up
with “an action plan for developing university-wide shared undergraduate capacities, and to educate institutional teams about current research and best practices to help them implement action plans at their home institutions” (p. 87). In Spring 2013 the Director of Assessment and Curricular Support submitted a report summarizing the “Gen Ed” Assessment Projects to date, showing that Information Literacy and Written Communication were being addressed across all programs. An earlier review of general education in all areas demonstrated even further the patchwork of gen ed competencies across the institution (Appendix 6.XIII). This effort sought to clarify the shared undergraduate capacities in ways consistent with the institution’s mission and vision and led to the formation of the UCC Subcommittee on Shared Capacities that has representation from all the divisions (across all the sectors on campus) with an active involvement or engagement of the Provost (p. 87).

Shared Capacities: In Fall 2013, a faculty subcommittee of the University Curriculum Committee was charged with leading the institutional community in a dialogue about the crucial ‘capacities’ that all undergraduate students should develop during their college education. These included communication, technology, and quantitative proficiencies and would be “guided by the research of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, in particular its Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative (www.aacu.org/leap/index.cfm) and the Essential Learning Outcomes defined by that initiative.” The initial formal conversation was to last one academic year, but would continue informally for several years.

The institution embarked on a series of steps to develop, operationalize, and assess the Shared Capacities initiative and, with the aid of extensive feedback from the campus community, have identified three ‘short lists’ of shared capacities. These have been presented to the campus community in open forums and are published on the Internet. The next steps include selecting one model from the three and assessing curricula in divisions and programs for compliance and for opportunities to meet the criteria. By 2015-2016 the shared capacities are expected to be met and reviewed in all divisions and programs.

Facilities: The University Learning Center (ULC) “provides the students support in improving their writing skills, as well assistance with math, English as a second language (ESL) services, tutoring and oral presentation workshops...” (p. 88).

The university’s Libraries and Archives provide adequate resources for both students and faculty and in addition to these, the community has access through university consortium arrangement and to an enormous catalog of electronic titles. According to the Self-Study, “nearly 80% of the Libraries and Archives titles are in digital format.” (p.88)

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- The New School is moving to create a uniform general education approach by engaging the faculty and other key players toward accepting the university-wide articulation and definition of general education that has been approved by the deans and is now posted on the institution’s website as well as reflected in the catalogs.
Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- The team suggests that the institution conduct an ongoing survey to demonstrate the relevance of its general education courses and goals and the degree to which they reflect their students’ academic goals, personal and career/professional interests, and aspirations.

Recommendations:

- The team recognizes that The New School has begun the process of developing an approach to general education that fits the character and spirit of the institution, but there is a great deal yet to be done. In order to ensure that this objective is met in the short term, we strongly recommend that a comprehensive assessment model be created and implemented in the next stage of the Shared Capacities development process.

- The team recommends that the institution specify who is responsible for ensuring that all divisions and programs incorporate the published general education competencies in their curricula.

Standard Thirteen: Related Educational Activities

In the team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard.

Basic Skills: The New School takes a differentiated and proactive approach in identifying and supporting students who are not fully prepared for undergraduate and graduate level programs. This multi-faceted approach includes an increased focus on English as a Second Language as evidenced by the shift of the ESL curriculum from the Parson’s School of Art and Design History and Theory to The New School of Public Engagement and the addition of the ESL+Design and the ESL+Music certificate programs.

The New School also participates in the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program which provides academic support to students at Parsons The New School for Design and Eugene Lang College The New School for Liberal Arts who may not meet all of the traditional college admissions criteria but show promise of succeeding in college (Appendix 4.X). This support is in the form of a six-week summer program to prepare incoming freshman, tutoring, counseling, and financial aid.

Certificate Programs: The New School offers a variety of credit and non-credit certificates in The New School for Public Engagement, Parsons, and Mannes. A review of the documentation reveals that all certificates are proposed, organized, and supervised by the academic departments in which
they are housed, following the same procedures as programs with regard to curriculum development, review, and faculty supervision.

Additionally, The New School has entered into a relationship with the Indian School of Design and Innovation (ISDI) to offer certificates of participation to qualified ISDI students. The New School’s role in ISDI is only to provide curricula and curricular oversight, quality assurance, and certificates of participation.

Experiential Learning: Students in The New School’s Bachelor’s Program for Adults and Transfer Students may accelerate their progress by demonstrating knowledge acquired outside the classroom through prior work experience, independent study, or volunteer work. Prior learning is assessed primarily through testing and portfolio assessment. Portfolios are evaluated by an instructor with expertise in the field for which the credit is requested. The processes and procedures that define the method by which prior learning is evaluated are clearly written and readily accessible to students via The New School for Public Engagement’s website.

Branches, Additional Locations, and Other Instructional Sites: The university is in the process of re-launching Parsons Paris. Parsons Paris has received provisional approval from MSCHE as a branch campus.

Contractual Relations and Affiliates: The university maintains local and international relationships in an effort to further their mission of preparing students to be global citizens and to meet the needs of student in specialized programs. These relationships are clearly identified in Appendix 5.XVII and include articulation, exchange, provider, affiliation, consortium and cooperative agreements. The institution has ensured that all activities conducted in its name uphold the integrity and credibility of the program.

Distance and Distributed Learning: Through interviews with the Senior Vice President for Global and Distributed Education, the Director of Distributed Education, and the Chief Information Officer it has been determined that course sections offered in the online format are designed to achieve the same course level goals and student learning outcomes as sections of the same course offered in classroom settings. It is further determined that the online courses offer equivalent academic rigor and meet the same standards of instructional quality as the traditional face to face courses.

Additionally, all online programs and classes are proposed, organized, and supervised by the academic departments in which they are housed, following the same procedures as on-campus classes with regard to curriculum review, faculty supervision, and student course ratings.

Evidence supports The New School’s commitment to continue offerings and concludes that students have adequate access to the courses they need for degree completion.

The development of technology modules ensures that students have the necessary skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the online environment. Additionally, an ongoing program of
appropriate orientation, training, and support for faculty participating in electronically delivered offerings is available.

The New School meets the Federal requirements regarding verification of student identity in distance education courses and has written documentation stating their compliance with this key area of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA).

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- None

Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- Establish procedures for the periodic assessment of the institutional impact of its distance learning activities.

Recommendations:

- None

Self-Study Chapter Six: Assessment

Standard Seven: Institutional Assessment

In the team’s judgment, The New School appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

Institutional assessment while a relatively new endeavor is a priority at The New School and a concerted effort is being made to make it more comprehensive and systematic. A newly articulated mission statement and strategic plan has been formally adopted. Over the past three years the institutional assessment infrastructure has been enhanced with the revitalization of a better resourced Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE) including two open searches currently to fulfill a Director of Institutional Research position and an Institutional Research Analyst position and potentially a third search for a Senior Institutional Research Analyst. IRE actively supports Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) and the assessment of the university-wide strategic plan. The New School is now in a position to ensure institutional planning and decision-making is informed by institutional assessment.

The New School is using institutional assessment to inform decisions in these specific areas: financial and budgetary planning; facilities and space planning; degree program review; faculty promotion and hiring; Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM); and student learning outcomes.
The New School is implementing a Data Warehouse that will incorporate multiple data sources such as Degree Works and Student Success Network (Starfish); and has initiated an academic program review (APR) process for all degree programs per the Provost’s Office in 2010 that includes a full self-review every seven years focusing on programmatic outcomes. The APR includes programmatic mission and goals, student profile, faculty profile, qualitative feedback on the student experience, learning outcomes for undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education students, curriculum mapping, resources, and recommendations. Institutional Research provides five years of trend data to support this process with programs having the opportunity to request additional data elements.

The New School is using multiple means for institutional assessment. Students: The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) has been administered approximately every three years since 2001, as well as the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshmen Survey (2010), the ACT Student Opinion Survey (2012), a Campus Climate Assessment (2012), and an “At Graduation Questionnaire” and a “one year out” survey (began with the class of 2012). Administrative: Routinely assess faculty via the reappointment and promotion review process and staff via the Human Resources Performance Report; faculty have completed the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey; and course evaluations are available via the university-wide Learning Management System (LMS). The Customer Service Initiative has informed changes in institutional practices related to information technology and student financial services.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- The New School should be commended for their commitment and progress related to the assessment of institutional effectiveness. This is evident by the vacant Director of the Office of Institutional Research position being upgraded to an Associate Provost for Institutional Research and Effectiveness, as well as investing resources in a data warehouse project. In addition, the Provost’s Office formed a university-wide Assessment of Student Learning Committee (ASLC) in 2011 and appointed an individual in the newly titled Director of Assessment and Curricular Support position.

- The New School has established a five-year assessment plan which includes a recommendation for the development and implementation of key performance indicators that include benchmarks for the assessment of strategic goals and the development a formal policy and procedures for sharing institutional assessment information to both internal and external constituencies.

Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- The implementation of a data warehouse is an all-encompassing, resource intense initiative. Support of senior leadership, involvement of numerous campus stakeholders, and close monitoring of the project is imperative to its success.

- Utilize business intelligence to create a mechanism to communicate the metrics captured in academic program review (APR) on an annual basis via standard reports or a visual display of
data such as an electronic dashboard. An electronic dashboard could also be utilized to 
communicate the results of NSSE, other surveys, and information related to the assessment of 
student learning such as curriculum mapping. This mechanism would facilitate fostering a 
culture of assessment.

- The New School might consider replacing the “Privacy Policy” link on the main home page with a 
“University Policies” link to the newly developed indexed University policies webpage making 
sure the Privacy Policy, as well as a Notice of Non-Discrimination, Equal Opportunity and 
Affirmative Action are included in the index. The New School might also consider having a direct 
link to the “Your Right to Know” website on the main home page right under “University 
Policies”. This would highlight The New School’s concerted efforts to be in compliance with the 
Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008 federal reporting and disclosure requirements 
for consumer information from various administrative areas of higher education institutions.

Recommendations:

- Significant efforts need to be made to close the feedback loop. For instance, the information 
gathered via the multiple means of assessment needs to be communicated to the campus 
community. In addition to formal presentations such as town halls, there might be the 
opportunity to present this information via a web portal. An effective method to communicate 
integrated assessment is via an institutional report card with benchmarks such as those 
described in the Self-Study (pp. 107-109). Another effective method would be an electronic 
dashboard detailing strategic indicator benchmarks that reflect goals of the strategic plan.

- The New School has provided examples of key ways and means to evaluate the progress toward 
meeting the goals of the strategic plan (pp. 107-109); however, as indicated in the Self-Study 
“Specific metrics, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and appropriate comparisons to be 
developed over the next year with individuals from appropriate planning domains.” Accordingly, 
the New School needs to develop a formal institutional effectiveness assessment plan that 
includes specific metrics and a specific timeframe to ensure institutional planning and decision-
making is informed by institutional assessment. These metrics need to incorporate achievable, 
measurable outcomes that can inform decision making, planning, and allocating resources. 
Furthermore, these metrics need to be directly linked to the mission of the institution and the 
institution’s strategic plan. This plan, as well as related outcomes, should be actively 
communicated to the campus community and external constituencies fostering an environment 
of institutional learning that spans across academic divisions and administrative units.

- While The New School is committed to developing a comprehensive institution-wide assessment 
plan, progress must be sustained encouraging a culture of assessment. Monitoring the 
percentage of overall academic divisions and administrative units that have developed and 
implemented assessment plans would be informative, as well as having academic divisions and 
administrative units systematically demonstrate how the results of their assessment efforts are 
being used to improve institutional effectiveness.
• Expand efforts to receive feedback and guidance from senior leadership related to the appropriate basic indicators that should be captured in standard reports, as well as providing information essential to effectively manage and lead academic divisions and administrative units.

• Expand efforts to track alumni and their activities after graduation such as administering the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) beyond Parsons The New School for Design.

Standard Fourteen: Assessment of Student Learning

In the team’s judgment, The New School appears to meet standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard:

The New School is still in the early stages of having a systematic student learning outcomes process as required in the Fundamental Elements for Standard 14. Their Assessment of Student Learning Committee and their Academic Program Review process show evidence towards a sustainable and systematic process for academic assessment. But their processes are relatively new and not fully integrated in all academic divisions. As stated in the Self-Study “…Student Learning Outcomes assessment is not yet at the stage where it has influenced pedagogical and curricular planning in major ways” (p. 100). Part of the challenge for The New School is their specialized programs which are also at the heart of the institution. As indicated in the Self-Study, Student Learning Outcomes were conducted informally in the past and “relied on capstone experiences, final projects, and other terminal experiences that provided students with a chance to demonstrate learning at the end of their programs to faculty members” (p.93).

The New School shows clear commitment to academic assessment and is striving to evolve assessment into an institutional endeavor. Specifically, The New School does show evidence of clearly articulated student learning outcomes at the program/major level. These student learning outcomes could be improved by being more institutionally integrated with one another. These student learning outcomes would also be more beneficial to The New School if they were clearly tied to the institution’s mission. What The New School lacks in a sustained assessment process they make up for in their effort to organize and document their process. They appear to be clearly trying to improve their academic assessment utilization. There are gaps in their overall student learning outcomes process, specifically when it comes to presenting direct student learning outcomes, but again, relative to the newness of their processes, they have made great strides in the last few years. As the Self-Study highlights, “…the university is now positioned to ensure that the assessment of institutional effectiveness at all levels, including student learning, can reliably guide future institutional planning and decision making” (p. 93).
Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- The Provost’s website contains a repository for “clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes” which is a requirement of Standard 14.

- Incorporating an external review component for Program Assessment Reports shows priority in regard to time and money. In addition, having a one-year follow-up process for the Program Assessment Reports further supports this priority.

- All new degree programs have to present learning outcomes, curriculum maps, and an assessment plan.


Non-binding suggestions for improvement:

- Continue to work on ‘cultural shift’ towards assessment... “...coordinating and implementing these assessment results [program outcomes and general education capacities] has been difficult because of the cultural shift needed to move to a more assessment-orientated approach” (p. 94). Consider integrating University Student Senate and University Faculty Senate into assessment processes to push the culture of assessment on campus. Consider using the Syllabus Audit as a mechanism to solicit participation in the Student Learning Outcome process. Consider adding a Faculty Liaison to bridge faculty and administrators to support the assessment of student learning outcomes.

- Share completed Academic Program Review reports with the academic community. Allow members of the faculty to see what each other are doing and learn from each other. Similarly, as the years go by and academic assessment data is collected The New School could benchmark against itself longitudinally.

Recommendations:

- Make the Assessment of Student Learning a priority for the institution by continuing to provide financial and human resources support for the endeavor. Academic Leadership needs to ensure that faculty incorporates the assessment of student learning at the institutional, program, and course level.

- Show evidence of a decision making process which incorporates student learning outcomes data into improvements at the institutional, program, and course level.

- Strategically integrate general education assessment processes into the work of the Shared Capacities Initiative.
Conclusion

The team again thanks the institution, and we hope that the institution will be open to the ideas contained in this report, all of which are being offered in the spirit of collegiality and peer review. As a reminder, the next steps in the evaluation process are as follows:

- The institution replies to the team report in a written response addressed to the Commission;
- The team chair submits a confidential brief to the Commission, summarizing the team report and conveying the team’s proposal for accreditation action;
- The Commission staff and the Commission’s Committee on Evaluation Reports carefully review the institutional Self-Study document, the evaluation team report, the institution’s formal response, and the chair’s brief to formulate a proposed action to the Commission; and
- The full Commission, after considering information gained in the preceding steps, takes formal accreditation action and notifies the institution.