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The Art Institute of Pittsburgh Granted Accreditation by Middle States Commission on Higher Education

[PITTSBURGH, June 30, 2008] – The Board of Trustees and President George L. Pry announced today that The Art Institute of Pittsburgh has been granted accreditation by The Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Middle States accreditation marks the culmination of The Art Institutes' academic transition, beginning in 2000, when received authorization by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to award baccalaureate degrees.

"This is a significant and defining chapter of The Art Institute of Pittsburgh's history and our process of redefining our mission as an academic institution," said George L. Pry, President. "The recognition of the Middle States Commission is an important validation of how we have woven academic rigor into our core mission of graduate career preparedness," he said. "The Art Institute has always placed great importance on accreditation and its value on a student's investment." The college is also accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) and maintains programmatic accreditation with the American Culinary Federation (ACF) and the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA).

The accreditation process was managed by a steering committee comprised of faculty and staff under the leadership of Dr. Cynthia Liefeld, Vice President of Academic Affairs with focus on collegiate mission, strategic planning and assessment of outcomes and investments.

A two-year, substantive college-wide self-study analysis was evaluated during a formal review by an eight-member visiting team who spent several days on campus in March 2008 chaired by Ms. Patricia McGuire, President of Trinity Washington University in Washington DC.

"The visiting team observed a deep sense of mission and purpose flowing through the work of The Art Institute of Pittsburgh," said President McGuire. "In addition to our recommendation for accreditation, the team commends The Art Institute on their commitment to excellence in the creative and commercial arts." The Art Institute of Pittsburgh has met all fourteen Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education—including eligibility requirements and standards for accreditation--as defined by the regional accrediting agency, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

"This peer-reviewed accreditation is an expression of confidence that The Art Institute of Pittsburgh will continue, over the years, to substantially accomplish its mission and goals," said Dr. Liefeld. "We have demonstrated that we methodically evaluate student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness and use the results toward a continuous cycle of improvement."

The Art Institute of Pittsburgh currently offers 14 Bachelor of Science degree programs and is comprised of approximately 12,300 students, as of Spring 2008, who pursue degree programs through coursework both at the Downtown Pittsburgh campus and through The Art Institute of Pittsburgh – Online Division.

The Art Institute of Pittsburgh offers bachelor's degree programs in Advertising, Culinary Management, Digital Media Production, Entertainment Design, Fashion & Retail Management, Game Art & Design, Graphic Design, Hotel & Restaurant Management, Industrial Design, Interior Design, Media Arts & Animation, Photography, Visual Effects & Motion Graphics and Web Design & Interactive Media. Associate's degree programs are also offered in Culinary Arts, Graphic Design, Industrial Design, Web Design & Interactive Media, Photography and Video Production. The Art Institute of Pittsburgh is accredited by The Middle States Commission on Higher Education and The Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS). For more information, contact the college at 1-800-275-2470 or visit artinstitutes.edu/pittsburgh.

Advertising, Fashion & Retail Management, Game Art & Design, Graphic Design, Interior Design, Media Arts & Animation and Web Design & Interactive Media programs are also available fully online through The Art Institute Pittsburgh – Online Division.

The Art Institute of Pittsburgh is one of The Art Institutes (www.artinstitutes.edu), a system of 40 education institutions located throughout North America, providing an important source of design, media arts, fashion and culinary arts professionals.

About accreditation: Accreditation is a process of peer review that the educational community has adopted for its self-regulation since early in the 20th century. It is a voluntary process intended to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of higher education, making it worthy of public confidence. Institutions choose to apply for accredited status, and once accredited, they agree to abide by the standards of their accrediting organization and to regulate themselves by taking responsibility for their own improvement.

About the Middle States Commission on Higher Education: As a regional accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education examines the entire institution, including its educational programs and curricula, student achievement, faculty, facilities and equipment, student support services, recruiting and admissions practices, the institution's financial condition, administrative effectiveness, governing boards, and several other aspects of the institution.

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that defines, maintains, and promotes educational excellence across institutions with diverse missions, student populations, and resources. The Commission is dedicated to quality assurance and improvement through accreditation via peer evaluation. Middle States accreditation instills public confidence in institutional mission, goals, performance, and resources through its rigorous accreditation standards and their enforcement.

Terms and Timing of Accreditation: Colleges and universities in the Middle States region normally are evaluated every five years, but Commission staff members also monitor each institution in the interim to determine if special circumstances require more frequent evaluations.

The most comprehensive evaluation is based upon a report that the institution prepares about itself, called a self-study report. This evaluation always includes a visit by a team of evaluators who report to the Commission. It occurs immediately before a candidate institution is granted initial accreditation, five years after that initial accreditation, and every 10 years thereafter.

Source: The Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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**Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students of**

**The Art Institute of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15219**

by

**An Evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

Prepared after a study of the institution's self-study report

And a visit to the campus on March 9-12, 2008

The Members of the Team

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This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair, and it goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission.

It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.

AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

President/CEO:

George Pry

Chief Academic Officer:

Cynthia Pierce Liefeld

Vice President for Academic Affairs

Chair of the Board of Trustees:

Marylouise Fennell, RSM, Ed.D.

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Art Institute of Pittsburgh
Middle States Visiting Team Report

I. Context and Nature of the Visit

This Middle States Team visit occurs in the context of the Art Institute of Pittsburgh's (AiP) candidacy for accreditation. The oldest of the Art Institute subsidiaries of the Education Management Corporation (EDMC) AiP enrolls more than 9,000 undergraduate (associate, baccalaureate) and certificate/diploma students in campus-based and online programs in a broad range of creative and commercial arts. AiP offers 14 bachelor of science programs, six associate of science programs, and four diploma programs.

II. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Eligibility Requirements

The Art Institute of Pittsburgh complies with the Middle States eligibility requirements.

III. Compliance with Federal Requirements; Issues Relative to State Regulatory or Other Accrediting Agency Requirements

Based on the Art Institute's certification statement and a review of documents, as well as interviews with key personnel, the team finds the Art Institute in compliance with federal and state requirements. The Art Institute also holds the following accreditations: Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (to award the Associate of Science degree, the Bachelor of Science degree, and the diploma), American Culinary Federation Foundation Accrediting Commission (to award the Associate of Science degree in Culinary Arts), and the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (campus Bachelor of Science in Interior Design).

IV. Evaluation Overview

The Art Institute of Pittsburgh presented a comprehensive self-study and extensive documentation to support the self-study's analysis and recommendations. During two and one-half days of intensive team interviews, the AiP community consistently demonstrated the commitment to quality and integrity that are the essence of Middle States accreditation. While this report documents some areas where AiP will need continuing improvement, in general, the institution has moved quickly and decisively in the last year to organize an effective response to challenges previously posed in its quest for initial Middle States accreditation.

In particular, the team found that AiP effectively addressed issues of concern regarding control and oversight of its online educational offerings; independence of its governing structure; adequacy of strategic planning; quality and effectiveness of institutional assessment and student outcomes assessment; and scope of mission. The team found AiP to be a well-resourced institution with a clear sense of direction in reaching out to serve increasingly far-flung populations of aspiring artists, graphic designers, film makers, photographers, chefs and culinary managers, game designers and fashion leaders. AiP is proud of its heritage as an artistic center whose graduates include the designers of the Microsoft Windows logo and the Starbucks logo.

Members of the Steering Committee and others within the institution affirmed the importance of the self-study process in fostering a more inclusive environment for all faculty, both online and campus-based. The Faculty Chair emphasized that the integration of all faculty with the assistance of new technologies made it possible for both online and campus-based faculty to collaborate on program development and assessment, committee work and the broad range of issues that the faculty share in common. The team sensed general agreement within the AiP community on the value of institutional goal-setting and the pervasive culture of assessment that now shapes much of the work of the faculty and staff. The team also heard staff express satisfaction with the self-study process, including an improvement of communication among all staff and faculty as a result of this effort. Perhaps most important, members of the community articulated a new sense of pride in the work of AiP as a result of their work together on the Middle States self-study.

V. Compliance with Accreditation Standards

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 1.

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:

Through the self-study process, AiP recognized a need to develop a new mission statement and new institutional goals aligned with the Middle States standard and reflecting more accurately the changing student population, including the rapid growth of the online population. The process for revision of the statements of mission and goals included broad-based campus participation. The mission, goals and objectives statements are comprehensive, including both academic and operational departments as well as faculty and staff personnel goals and objectives.

A clear objective of AiP in the reformulation of its mission statement was emphasis on collegiate-level academics, not simply career preparation. While serving workforce needs and the career interests of students is a significant value for AiP, the institution also has sharpened its focus on the creative enterprise as a force for learning and discovery of knowledge, not just job skills acquisition. Through this process, the faculty of AiP was able to clarify and improve the learning objectives and distinctive pedagogies of online learning. The team notes, however, that acquisition of knowledge itself is not explicitly stated in the revised mission statement, but rather, is implicit in the development of skills and competencies.

The team notes that the process of establishing a new mission statement and goals also created a foundation for ongoing strategic planning and institutional assessment.

The team also heard AiP's board state an explicit commitment to focus on improving institutional diversity in the years to come, among both students and faculty. The self-study also mentions diversity as implicit in the measurable objectives that support mission and goals. The team encourages the board, management and community of AiP to energize this focus in pragmatically effective ways through adopting strategies in student and staff recruiting and retention that will encourage African American, Hispanic, Asian and international students to consider enrolling or working at AiP.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

The team observes that a deep sense of mission flows through the work of AiP. The team commends the leadership, faculty and students of AiP for their deep commitment to excellence in the fine arts and creative commercial arts.

The team finds that the process leading to the creation of the new mission statement and goals has created a planning dynamic at AIP that will help the institution continue to balance the focus on academic advancement and professional skills development as the student enrollment grows, particularly in the online populations.

Collegial Suggestions

The team observes that the mission statement and goals are largely silent on the specific disciplinary flavor of the fine arts, commercial arts, culinary profession and other disciplines that give AIP its distinctive character. The team suggests that future iterations of these documents would benefit from a more robust inclusion of the ways in which the specific disciplines in the creative and commercial arts shape the mission and goals of the institution.

In the same way, in order to support AiP's progress as a true academic institution, the team suggests that any future revision of the mission statement might have a more explicit statement about the discovery and acquisition of knowledge along with cultivation of skills and competencies.

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 2.

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:

Prior to 2007, with the exception of one or two key initiatives, such as the improvement in resident housing as discussed further below, AiP's planning efforts focused primarily on activities tied to annual budgeting. However, in 2007, AiP introduced the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) model to create its 2008-2011 strategic plan. Based upon SWOT, competitor, and customer analyses, and through the collaboration of students, faculty, staff, administration, and the Board of Trustees, the College crafted and embedded its Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Strategic Initiatives within the College's strategic plan. In turn, each administrative unit, such as Academic Affairs, developed its own unit-based strategic plan, linking its long-term goals, short-term objectives, and subsequent action plans to the overall College-wide strategic plan. Resources are allocated and budgets developed consistent with these plans.

For example, under the Strategic Initiative, *Academic and Professional Excellence*, through data received from students and faculty, the College allocated additional resources in the 2008 budget so that open computer laboratories hours could be extended in evenings and on Sundays. Vice-presidents or directors are accountable for the implementation of their respective unit's strategic plan. The President is accountable for the implementation and achievement of the College-wide strategic plan. These plans are assessed through the Quarterly Operation Planning Meetings. The documentation of institutional and unit improvement efforts and their results is in the early stages of development.

While perhaps not necessarily the result of a formal strategic planning and assessment process, AiP has accomplished institutional change within the last five to seven years, including:

- Supported by survey findings, AiP began offering online programs to students in 2000. Consequently, online students now comprise 74% of the student body at AiP, and AiP is one of the few collegiate-level institutions offering a full range of online courses and degrees in the creative and commercial arts;
- As a result of employer feedback, AiP began offering bachelor degree programs in 2000, and currently, 61% of students are in bachelor degree programs;

- In 2004, through a collaborative effort of student input, president involvement, and the Board approval, the College began the initiative to increase the capacity of resident housing while moving it nearer to the instructional and administrative facility; in 2007, the College completed lease and renovation projects on three of four residence units within four blocks of the College. As a result, resident students increased from 825 in 2004 to 923 in 2008;
- From a qualitative institutional renewal perspective, the College sought and achieved Middle States candidacy status.

The historical investments made to online programs are a very strong example of how the College has allocated resources as the result of institutional renewal. Due to increased enrollments, as revenues from online programs have increased 293% from 2004 to 2008, corresponding expense investments in online programs have increased 268%.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

As documented in the self-study and a review of departmental mission statements, the team commends AiP for engaging in a planning process that clearly ties the new institutional Mission Statement to the individual departmental mission statements.

The team also commends AiP for effectively linking mission, planning and assessment through the strategic planning process.

Collegial Suggestions

The team found that, in the past, the significant examples of institutional change and renewal occurred without a formal strategic planning and assessment process. The College should use the strategic planning and assessment process now in place as the basis for institutional renewal.

The team concurs with the College's recommendation that the College should blend assessment and departmental plans into the strategic plan so that all assessment supports the strategic initiatives and results in improving the quality of instruction.

Recommendations

While commending the evolution of a strong planning and assessment process at AiP, the team recommends a more systematic approach to data analysis arising from assessment within and across departments and programs, and vertically to strategic plans and goals, and documentation of institutional change and renewal as a result of assessment. Within this recommendation the team also urges AiP to undertake periodic assessment of the effectiveness of its planning and assessment models, including the use of the SCUP planning model.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 3.

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:

At June 30, 2007, as an individual College, AiP's United States Department of Education (USDOE) composite score was 2.97, which is well above the 1.5 necessary to be considered financially responsible. The compliance audit for the period ending June 30, 2007 had one finding. The related United States Department of Education final audit determination letter provided a satisfactory response to the compliance audit demonstrating that AiP is administratively capable. AiP's 90/10 Rule calculation was 64.4%, which was well within compliance. There were no significant or material internal control weaknesses per the 2007 audited financial statements.

Due to the change in ownership, which occurred in June 2006, AiP's second-tier parent, Education Management Corporation (EDMC) had a USDOE composite score at June 30, 2007 of 0.02, which is not considered financially responsible. Consequently, EDMC posted \$87.9 million in irrevocable letters of credit, which provided an alternative method for demonstrating financial responsibility. Due to the change in ownership, AiP's Program Participation Agreement is classified as provisional, which requires AiP to obtain USDOE approval prior to initiating certain activities, such as disbursing Title IV at a new additional location. Currently, the EDMC's current ratio approximates 1:1, which shows that it has the capacity to meet its current operational expenditure requirements. Because of goodwill, its debt-to-tangible-equity ratio is undefined. However, EDMC's generates approximately \$200 million in cash after taxes but before interest and debt payments, which is substantial enough to meet current debt and interest payments obligations. It appears that EDMC is meeting all its debt covenant requirements.

EDMC is currently in the process of an initial public offering (IPO). It appears that the primary purpose of completing the offering is to generate cash to reduce debt, which would further improve the financial strength of EDMC, its related subsidiaries, and collegiate institutions. Based upon written communications from the USDOE it appears that the USDOE would not classify the results of the IPO as a change in ownership that would lead to a change in control. A secondary purpose of the IPO is to begin the process of allowing the primary shareholders the ability to liquidate their investment.

The budgeting process is a corollary to the strategic planning and annual institutional effectiveness planning processes discussed in Standard 2. It is through the budgeting process that resource allocations and reallocations are made among units and programs. For example, to increase the level of communications between campus-based and online faculty, AiP has allocated \$100,000 in the budget to

establish an annual convening for both faculty groups including online faculty from all over the country. While a large investment, the team's interviews with faculty affirmed the importance of this convening as a means of developing a strong working relationship among faculty, and this relationship then serves AiP well in the full engagement of all faculty in academic governance, and the particular engagement of faculty in the same discipline, both online and campus-based, for online course development.

Benchmarking tools, such as those comparing AiP financial statements to other Art Institutes' financial statements, are not only used to assess the efficient utilization of resources, such as human resources, but are also utilized during the budgeting process. For example, the number of advisors is based upon a ratio of students to advisors that is utilized throughout the EDMC system. As noted in Standard 5, the effectiveness of AiP's most significant resource, its human resources, is assessed annually using the Performance Planning and Appraisal Review (PPAR).

While AiP currently lacks a comprehensive infrastructure master plan and its related acquisition and replacement process, approximately \$15 million has been reinvested in the College's infrastructure, for the two-year ending June 30, 2007. The facilities and equipment properly support the mission and learning atmosphere of the College. In 2007, the College completed lease and renovation projects on three of four residence units within four blocks of the College, which are neat, clean and appear to meet the needs of the resident students.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

The team notes favorably that EDMC system benchmarking analyses are used to gauge the efficient use of resources and to make budgetary decisions.

The team also notes favorably that since AiP is part of EDMC, a publicly traded company, the college has a strong culture of regulatory compliance, most notably the documentation of policies and procedures at all three levels of operation: EDMC, Art Institutes, and AiP.

Collegial Suggestions

The team suggests that, when using benchmarking tools to compare AiP with its sister campuses, the College should consider the impact of regional accreditation versus national accreditation when making allocation decisions.

Recommendations

The team recommends that AiP create, implement, and periodically assess a comprehensive infrastructure master plan and its related equipment acquisition and replacement process.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 4.

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:

Governance Generally

During the campus visit the full team met with the chairman of EDMC and corporate representatives, and the team had a separate meeting with the AiP Board of Trustees. The team closely questioned the EDMC team and Board of Trustees on issues concerning decision-making and governance of the affairs of AiP and the EDMC family of institutions. The team found the EDMC leadership and Board of Trustees to be open, candid and forthright in discussing the key issues of concern to Middle States, including:

- EDMC leadership clearly stated that the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, and the other Ai's in the group, have independent governance that is appropriate for each institution. This statement is incorporated in the written EDMC "Policy on Coordination and Governance for Institutions of Education Management Corporation" which states that for the institutions that EDMC owns,
 - *"Each institution is autonomous in its daily operations, in the enforcement of policies, and in the delivery of its educational programs and support services. At the same time, EDMC is responsible for coordination of the entire system of institutions on a consolidated basis. This Policy is intended to preserve the autonomy of EDMC's institutions in the manner described therein."*

The team was satisfied that this statement does reflect reality at AiP, and that the relationship is appropriate under Standard 4.

- Interviews with leadership and the Policy Statement above also confirm that EDMC has system standards setting "...system-wide standards and procedures for system planning, coordination, oversight and support services..." but these standards are "...not intended to have a direct impact on the administration or operations" of the institutions. Through interviews the team found that the collective group of Art Institutes nationally share best practices and some resources, but personnel from both EDMC and AiP appeared to be keenly aware of the need to balance this kind of sharing with independent governance.

- The AiP Board of Trustees was adamant in asserting their independence from the EDMC corporate structure on matters related to the overall governance of the academic and co-curricular affairs of AiP, and this sentiment is affirmed in the written Policy that states, regarding the institutional governing boards, *“All plans, policies and procedures for significant strategic, operational, financial, academic and support services...are reviewed and approved by the applicable governing board....the Governing Board remains independent and final authority and responsibility for the fulfillment of the mission of their respective institutions rests with these boards.”* The AiP Trustees cited as evidence of independence their role in decisions ranging from building new residence halls to the acquisition and renovation of the current AiP building to exercising the appropriate board role in presidential review; the team found this group to be “an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission...” (see Standard 4).
- Both the EDMC corporate leadership and members of the Board of Trustees characterized their relationship with each other, and relationship with management, as analogous to the governing relationships among institutions within a public state system of higher education, or analogous to the two-tiered board structure that exists in some private religiously-affiliated institutions. These analogies suggest that AiP is no more or less constrained in the independence of its decision-making about curricula, faculty hiring and credentials, student admissions and related academic decisions than many other institutions of higher education with complex governance structures. The team finds merit in the analogies while acknowledging that the for-profit relationship with the parent corporate entity bears continued monitoring to ensure that AiP’s governance retains the necessary academic independence required in the Middle States standards, and that all financial decisions related to AiP continue to support the resource needs of the institution consistent with Middle States standards.
- The president and management team of AiP described the EDMC relationship as harmonious and helpful, and, while acknowledging the need for continuous attention to coordination and communication, did not indicate any particular concern about infringement on the kinds of management and academic decisions that would normally run to the institution itself.
- The president specifically indicated that EDMC wants AiP to be as competitive as possible, hence, resource issues have not arisen when AiP requests additional investments during the annual budget process. The president of Ai International reinforced EDMC’s view that investments in

personnel and infrastructure are essential to ensure AiP's quality and competitiveness.

- To foster coordination and communication among the group of Art Institutes within the EDMC system, the president participates in a monthly conference call for the Council of Presidents, i.e., all of the institutional presidents of the Ai group; Board Chair Fennell participates in a semi-annual conference call among the board chairs of the same group.

Online Governance

The team closely questioned all parties --- EDMC leadership, Board of Trustees, president, academic vice president, academic management, online management, faculty --- on the authority and responsibility for development and management of the online programs of AiP.

The team found that AiP's leadership, management and faculty have acceptable levels of authority and responsibility for the development and management of the AiP online programs.

Much discussion focused on the role of OHE (Online Higher Education), the EDMC unit responsible for the "back office" functions of recruiting, admissions, enrollment, faculty recruiting, online course design, and related issues in support of AiP's online programs. Both EDMC and AiP leadership stressed that there is no governing authority in OHE, but rather, OHE (which grew out of AiP Online) is a separate company that processes the voluminous tasks associated with conducting an online program of the size and scope of AiP's online enterprise. More than 450,000 inquiries come in annually for these programs; a team of several hundred OHE assistant directors of admissions works with these inquiries to convert them to applications at a rate of about 3%, or more than 10,000 applications annually. These applications are batched and sent to AiP for the actual admission decision, following which the enrollment process begins.

At the same time, OHE also is in a continuous process of recruiting potential faculty to teach online. Acceptable candidate credentials are then forwarded to the Academic Vice President and her team for action at AiP. The Vice President retains authority for online faculty hiring.

OHE also employs teams of course designers who work with AiP faculty to translate existing campus-based courses into online courses. No academic decisions can be made without review and approval of the appropriate AiP personnel. Campus-based faculty indicated a high degree of engagement with their online counterparts in the development of the online courses.

Through these discussions and explanations, the team concluded that the OHE services to AiP's online programs are appropriate, and do not have negative implications for the governance of AiP's academic enterprise. However, the team also believes that this relationship warrants continuing monitoring to ensure that AiP retains ultimate control over the curricula, faculty and admissions decisions for online education.

Leadership Team

The team observes that AiP's leadership team is appropriately credentialed, experienced and most enthusiastic in expressing their commitment to AiP. The team notes that the president has long experience both at AiP and within the EDMC system, and he appears to manage the system and corporate relationships well. Within the last year, the addition of an experienced academic vice president from a more traditional institution has strengthened the ability of AiP to respond to the challenges that clearly exist in moving AiP out of the former "trade school" sensibility into a more robust identity as a true academic institution with a liberal arts platform as well as strong professional programs in the creative and commercial arts.

The Executive Committee in general appears to be appropriately credentialed, experienced and clearly focused on the strategic issues necessary to move AiP forward.

Academic Governance

The team observes that the faculty feel satisfied with the Faculty Assembly and they feel that their voices are heard. The committees seem to work. There is good participation of the online faculty, now facilitated through the use of teleconferencing and eCompanion software to make it possible for faculty regardless of location to participate in the work of committees, program reviews, course design and all related faculty activities. Faculty expressed a great deal of satisfaction with their increasingly strong sense of community across the modalities.

The Faculty Assembly is responsible to "...make recommendations on matters relating to education, curriculum, academic policies, faculty development, educational technology, library, admission, marketing and retention in academic programs and as an advisory body to the Educational Leadership and Executive Committee." (Faculty By-laws) The team found this policy statement to be true in practice.

Each academic department has at least one representative on the Assembly. Departments that offer both on-campus and on-line programs have two representatives. The whole Assembly meets twice each quarter. Its subcommittees include: Curriculum, Academic Policies and Procedures, Faculty Development, Dean's Advisory, and Admissions Acceptance, Technology, Library, and Community Relations. This range of committees has allowed the faculty to address openly any

area of concerns or suggestions they have. Through this structure, the faculty engage in lively discussions that demonstrate collegiality across departments and include those teaching on campus and on-line. The Faculty Assembly's role as support and avenue for the faculty is culturally established.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

The team commends the AiP Board of Trustees for its vigorous focus on the quality of the institution's programs and services, and for its high level of engagement with the AiP community. The team also commends the Trustees' strong sense of responsibility and accountability for the independent management of the affairs of AiP.

The team commends the faculty initiative in creating an inclusive, organized structure and processes that facilitate participation in decision-making and communication across faculty modalities, online and campus-based.

Recommendation

Mindful of the ongoing concern for independence in academic governance, particularly for the online education environment, AiP should create a formal mechanism that comprehensively and consistently documents that the College maintains oversight and responsibility for the activities carried out by Online Higher Education on behalf of the College, with particular emphasis within the areas administered by the Vice President for Academic Affairs through the Associate Dean of Distance Education.

Standard 5: Administration

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 5.

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:

AiP's administrative structure includes the Board of Trustees, President, Executive Committee, and Key Management Team.

The President directly reports to the Board of Trustees and indirectly reports to the Group Vice-President for The Art Institutes. The President has primary responsibility for administration of the College to ensure that goals are achieved and the College's mission is carried out.

Toward that end, the Executive Committee, comprised of vice-presidents or directors who lead the administrative units, supports the President. Typical of most institutions of higher education, these administrative units include Academic Affairs, Admission, Career Services, Student Affairs, Academic & Support Services Online, Human Resources, and Administrative and Financial Services. Managers throughout these units comprise the Key Management Team. Among these managers and units there is a clear delineation of organization, authority, and decision-making mechanisms.

Based upon a sample review of manager employee records, the President, Executive Committee, and Key Management Team representatives have the appropriate academic background and professional experience necessary to carry out their specific duties and responsibilities. The effectiveness of these individuals and units is assessed through the Performance Planning and Appraisal Review (PPAR) and the Quarterly Operation Planning Meetings. To supplement these approaches the College utilizes various surveys such as the Noel-Levitz survey to gauge the qualitative performance of these units. The College benchmarks its administrative structure and related resources against the other colleges within the EDMC system, especially some of the other 38 Art Institutes who are similar in scope and size.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

The visiting team commends the Executive Committee and administrative staff of AiP for managing the institution through a period of challenges and opportunities, notably, the dynamic growth in the online program, the self-study process through many iterations, and the ongoing primary work of ensuring that the programs, services and infrastructure of AiP serve the students well and meet the needs of employers and other communities of interest.

Collegial Suggestions

The team suggests that, as AiP continues to grow, and particularly as the online delivery grows, the institution should pay careful attention to the management design of the administration, including position descriptions and titles, departmental responsibilities and relationships and effectiveness in delivering operational services and policy administration.

Standard 6: Integrity

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 6.

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:

In general AiP demonstrates “adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.” Among specific Middle States elements of institutional integrity, the team notes these issues for AiP:

Academic Freedom and Intellectual Property:

As an institution devoted to higher learning in the creative as well as commercial arts, academic freedom is of particular importance to AiP. The team found that the institution values and protects the climate for freedom of expression along with the protection of intellectual property rights of students and faculty alike. Recent clarification of policies about the ownership of student and faculty artwork underscore the institution’s respect for individual creative ownership and provide important models for students to learn about intellectual property issues.

The team also wanted to assess the state of academic freedom in relation to the creation of online courses. While online courses are necessarily standardized, faculty who teach online seem pleased with their overall engagement in the course development process. The faculty create the courses based on best practices using the same text books, assignments, and rubrics for grading creates consistency across different sections of the same course. There is freedom and individuality within the classes in terms of how discussions are led. Several online faculty members stated that they place great value on the creativity allowed in course creation.

Academic Honesty:

AiP has clearly stated policies regarding plagiarism in both text and image. Students are fully aware of these policies which are conveyed through the student handbook, each course syllabus and the freshman studies course.

Conflicts of Interest:

A recent clarification of the policy on professional working relationships between faculty members and students is an important step in sustaining an environment that protects student interests in a variety of possible working situations that could also have academic implications.

Members of the Board of Trustees also sign annual statements on conflicts of interest, and members of the faculty and staff sign the Code of Business Ethics and Conduct when hired, including the conflict of interest policy.

Personnel Processes

In general, the team observes that AiP Human Resources processes are fair and transparent. One major source of concern surfaced in the self-study related to faculty participation in the performance evaluation (PPAR) process. The team heard the vice president for academic affairs indicate that a major initiative will start in Summer 2008 to review faculty personnel issues and consider new approaches.

Public Information About AiP:

Websites, catalogue and student handbook all provided accurate and consistent treatment of constituencies. Statistical data is now available on websites for potential and current students. The Art Institute of Pittsburgh's electronic and print publications provide an array of information to students, faculty, staff and other constituents, and these publications are fair, accurate and consistent.

Admissions materials are also accurate, fair and consistent, and honestly reflective of the programs and services of AiP.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

The team commends AiP for attentiveness to the elements of integrity set forth in Standard 6. The team also comments the college for the collegial, supportive atmosphere among students, faculty and staff that was evident throughout the institution, and is evidence of the good health of integrity at AiP.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 7.

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:

Like many other institutions of higher education, AiP is in the middle of a long-term process of learning how to develop comprehensive institutional assessment practices consistently and effectively in all parts of the institution. The team found numerous good examples of institutional assessment at AiP, and evidence that assessment is producing the kind of useful data that leads to more effective budgeting and change in programs or services. Faculty and staff interviewed frequently cited the emerging "culture of assessment" that has created more data-driven, systematic frameworks for decisions.

AiP has a written Institutional Assessment Plan based on the institutional mission statement and unit statement tied to the institutional mission and goals. External benchmarks and external assessment instruments are incorporated as appropriate, including an employer satisfaction survey used with employers of AiP graduates, an internship supervisor survey, the Noel-Levitz student satisfaction survey, an employee satisfaction survey, the IDEA survey of student satisfaction with faculty teaching. AiP uses TracDat software to centralize and link all assessment plans and to aggregate and analyze data. AiP has also adopted the Nichols & Nichols framework for assessment reporting.

The vice president for academic affairs (VPAA) has exerted strong leadership in creating the culture of assessment. The VPAA effectively used the process of creating the new institutional mission statement as a basis for establishing goals, objectives and strategic initiatives that now form the backbone of institutional assessment, using the SCUP model previously discussed. The self-study provides numerous examples of the way in which AiP has integrated planning, assessment, budgeting and renewal, and the team found administrators and faculty highly conversant with the integrated process.

To make the institutional assessment process truly effective, departmental goals link to one or more strategic initiatives, and then department heads establish benchmarks, action plans, timelines and assessment on an institutional calendar. The related institutional assessment plans were guided by a set of very specific guidelines (Assessment Plan 2007). An example of this process noted in the self-study is the use of a formal assessment modality within the technology plan leading to significant investments in upgrading the PC lab for Game Art & Design as well as Media Arts & Animation.

The Steering Committee indicated that AiP has collected data for many years, but the Middle States process has changed the ways in which AiP organizes and uses the data. EDMC and the Art Institute system require production of data for analysis of institutional compliance with goals for enrollment, persistence and placement, but that data did not begin to assess the qualitative fulfillment of goals that the Middle States standard requires. The addition of a new Institutional Researcher has also improved the ability of AiP to collect and use assessment data.

Significant Accomplishments

The team commends AiP for creating a “culture of assessment” focused on data-based decision making arising from the integration of mission, goals and strategic plans. An expanded “assessment toolbox” along with a web page on assessment and period newsletter help to build broad community understanding of the importance of assessment.

Collegial Suggestions

AiP will sustain the culture of assessment by emphasizing the links through mission, strategic planning and the budget. However, in their initial enthusiasm for assessment, the faculty and staff of AiP may find that too much information is being collected and too many assessment activities are being implemented. The team suggests that AiP should plan for assessment sustainability by deciding which questions are most important, and then determine a reasonable cycle of assessment at each level and in each unit that allows for thoughtful development and implementation of assessment plans as well as the careful analysis and interpretation of assessment results.

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 8.

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 Art Institute of Pittsburgh has experienced rapid population growth in recent years due to the growth of the online component of the college. The growth has created a dichotomy in the student profile, with two distinct student populations in attendance. The student profile reveals that students who are enrolling online are predominantly part-time, female adult students, while campus students are likely to be full-time, younger male students. While the self-study expresses an assumption that the increased population of women online will make it possible for them to enter career fields once considered male-dominated, the team did not find placement data that supports this assumption at present.

The self-study indicates that the admission criteria for selecting students are congruent with that of peer colleges. A required entrance essay provides qualitative evidence of student desires to meet creative educational goals. Standardized tests that are used to determine placement in college level courses English and Math reveal that 34% of incoming students require at least one transitional course. AiP recognized that high school GPA's, transfer credits and academic success must be monitored to evaluate refinements of admissions criteria to improve student success.

During meetings with the Admission Directors, the team found evidence that the congruence between marketing and admissions and enrollment as stated in the self study is a result of the best practices adopted in Admissions. Ensuring that students are connected to the college from the time they apply to AiP through the first few weeks they are in class is evidenced in the 87% persistence rate of campus students from the first to second quarter. A 73% online persistence rate while slightly lower is expected to increase as some of these best practices are further integrated into the online modality.

Transfer of credit policies are published in admission documents, College catalog and the student handbook and are reviewed periodically.

AiP disseminates information about the college to prospective and current students through a variety of media including the College catalog, the Student Handbook, and two websites. Policies and procedures for admissions, financial aid and other relevant information for students are substantive, clear, and consistent. Evidence of periodic review of these publications is evident in the timetable for the schedule of review provided in the self study.

The college anticipates significant enrollment growth during the next three years. Extensive ongoing training for admissions staff will be critical. The self study indicates online enrollment growth will be supported by growth of the online admissions staff. Ongoing training and performance monitoring have also been incorporated into the online admission staff training.

Consolidated retention rates for the college are estimated at 57% for full time students and 34% for part time students. The College recognizes the need to differentiate between the full time online students and the part time campus students to determine how these groups are retained in the next year.

The team has some concern about the location of responsibility for enrollment management, particularly with regard to retention analysis and strategic retention management for both campus-based and online students. While many faculty and department heads indicated some engagement with retention analysis or student satisfaction data collection, the responsibilities are diffuse through many levels of the institution. Such diffusion is good evidence of a pervasive concern about student success and persistence, but also runs the risk of fragmentation of effort and a potential failure to analyze data and trends in a timely way.

A recently developed Student Success Committee, including many of the faculty and administrative leaders responsible for various dimensions of enrollment management, may well be the appropriate coordinating body. The team urges AiP to ensure a systematic, consistent and formal approach to enrollment management, including confirmation of a permanent cross-functional management team with specific responsibilities, goals and objectives in this area.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

The team commends AiP for developing an increasingly nuanced profile of the total student population, differentiating campus-based students and online students, providing baseline information to evaluate and match the students with the institution's mission, programs and necessary support services.

The team found that AiP's comprehensive websites for current and perspective students are a valuable resource. The websites are user friendly and provides clear and concise information to both online and campus students.

The team commends AiP for the initiatives already in place to improve student retention, including faculty intervention for at-risk students, academic persistence workshops and online workshops. The team urges AiP to conduct regular assessment of the effectiveness of these initiatives for improving retention results.

Collegial Suggestions

The team suggests that AiP create a more focused management design for enrollment management emphasizing retention analysis and strategies to ensure student persistence and completion. Within this design, the team further suggests that AiP's enrollment planning effort include targets for quarterly student retention improvement to support enrollment goals, as well as a more thorough ongoing analysis of attrition factors.

Standard 9: Student Support Services

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 9.

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 indicated in the self-study and reinforced through campus interviews, AiP recognizes the need to serve two distinct student populations consistently. The range of student services for each population is relatively consistent, with differences appearing naturally in the delivery modalities. Following are the key student services delivered to each population:

Academic Advising:

The college's academic advising system is intended to provide students with the assistance and resources to better navigate through the college system, and advising is available to both campus-based and online students. Online advocates also work with campus-based students who take online classes (termed PLUS students).

The self-study revealed some student dissatisfaction with the largely transactional nature of advising (largely as a registration tool) and pointed to a need to create a more developmental approach. AiP added one advisor, as well as a Director of Academic Services, to address some of this concern. However, given the large number of students in the caseload for each advisor (470 to 540 for campus-based advisors), AiP may well need to add more advising personnel, per the self-study's acknowledgement that, "...The number of advisors will continue to increase in order to meet the expanding focus of advising with the needs of the students." The team encourages this direction and notes that this is the kind of institutional change that good assessment practices have made possible at AiP.

Online advisors support an average of 375 students, a notable and commendable decrease from the caseload of campus-based advisors. The self-study indicates that AiP has made a decision to provide more advising oversight to online students, including a requirement that the advisor must facilitate the student registration at all credit levels, because online students need greater attention to stay on track. AiP also provides specialized advising for new online students in response to persistence issues arising out of a need to help these students build better skills in

work/life/academic balance. A small increase in new student persistence was evident after Winter II 2007, and AiP continues to monitor the effectiveness of this system.

Tutoring:

As a result of basic skills assessment through the General Education Department, AiP has identified a need for focused tutoring support in math and English. These needs are fulfilled through open math session and the Writers Center for composition skills. To date, not enough data exists to demonstrate clear progress in student skill improvement and persistence, but such assessment is in progress.

Online students have access to a variety of online tools for learning skills support, organized through a portal (Campus Commons) to link students to tutoring services, instructional demonstration, and other support including the vendor-provided tutorials of *smarthinking.com*.

Counseling:

Counseling is provided by counselors on campus and an outside contractor addresses the needs of online students. Disability support services are provided for all students; however, the institution recognizes the need to monitor and increase the type of services provided with the increase growth of the online population.

Residence Life, Student Organizations:

AiP has addressed the need for closer proximity to the College with additional residence halls that include facilities to incorporate increased student life for resident students. The institution provides an array of student clubs and organization that address the diversity of interests of the online and campus student populations. The Student Council provides feedback to administration to address student concerns in a variety of formats.

Career Services:

The Career Services Department provides job opportunities for graduating students and surveys are conducted annually to determine employer satisfaction of the quality of the graduates. While job placements remain moderately stable, the additional graduates from the online programs may present additional challenges to placing graduates.

The campus career services have integrated with the online career counselors to utilize technology that can provide the support service to both online and campus based graduates. This is evidenced in the unit strategic plan to develop a *Virtual Career Advisor*, which was implemented since October 2007. Development of "interview streams" for live online interviews and the development of online job fairs will further integrate resources for innovative career placement strategies for both campus and online career placement

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

The team commends the AiP advising and student services staff for adapting creatively to the changing needs of the growing student population.

Collegial Suggestions:

The team encourages AiP to move ahead more quickly with its plans to augment the size of the campus-based advising team, and to move that team into a more developmental mode for student advising.

Consistent with the previous suggestion about developing a more clearly defined enrollment management group, the team also suggests that AiP continue to refine its management design for delivering co-curricular programs and services to its broad range of students.

The team also encourages the AiP student services team and others working in advising and student support to continue to develop effective assessment tools that support the kinds of structural changes necessary to continue to provide effective services to a much larger and more far-flung student population.

Standard 10: Faculty

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 10.

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 faculty at AiP have both academic credentials and professional experience. This is essential to AiP's goal of integrating theory and practice in every course. Professional experience becomes essential to programs such as The Art of Cooking and Interior Design.

Faculty are selected on the bases of education, experience in the professional field, teaching experience, references, and an interview process. Ninety-four per cent of the faculty hold graduate degrees; of the 21.7% of the on campus faculty whose highest degree is a bachelor's degree, most are enrolled in graduate studies. Most of the programs also require advanced knowledge of one or more software applications. Profiles of faculty age, gender, education, and years of service at the college show a faculty well matched to the student population.

AiP faces a particular challenge to maintain the quality of the faculty in light of the rapid expansion of the online programs. The college recognizes the imbalance in full and part-time faculty between the on campus and online programs. AiP through its partnership with EDMC Online is undertaking an aggressive hiring campaign. The

number of full-time online faculty in 2008 is expected to be almost four times the number in 2006.

Faculty have a well defined and significant role in designing, maintaining, and updating the curricula through the academic departments, through committees, and collectively through the Faculty Assembly as an advisory body. The faculty are clearly committed to creating, reviewing, and revising both course and curricular content. They invest a great deal of time in this effort. An on-campus faculty member, for instance, described working with an on-line member, meeting twice a week, creating one class period a week in order to construct the on-line version of the on campus course. The instructors, both a "subject matter expert" and a developer, all contributed to the process of working on this course. Recently, the faculty have developed a significant practice: when a course is offered on-line for the first time, the instructor teaching this course is often the instructor for the same on-campus course. This allows a direct comparison between the two modes of delivery.

Faculty Development is primarily construed as development in teaching practices. Full time faculty are required to complete 24 hours of training per year while part time faculty are expected to complete twelve. The institution offers significant financial support for in-service training and workshops. Often, experts are brought in from outside the institution, though it is also common to have AiP faculty members lead workshops on how they teach. The latter has led to invigorating discussions of best practices across disciplines. All of these training workshops are open to all, and are well attended by full time, part time, and adjunct faculty members. A faculty member offered this pithy statement in support of this practice: "It makes you better, so you're better."

Course evaluations occur every quarter so that the College can monitor teaching effectiveness. Each faculty member identifies one course for evaluation using a standardized instrument. Individual Development and Assessment (IDEA) is the standardized assessment tool used. In addition, all full and part time faculty have an annual Performance Planning and Appraisal Review. While improvement has been made instrument and in the understanding of the process, more than 50% of the faculty are not satisfied that the PPAR accurately and impartially evaluates their performance.

Tuition, subscriptions to professional journals, professional memberships, and conference expenses are examples of the College's support for faculty development. Sabbaticals are also part of the professional development opportunities at AiP. Because many who teach at the Art Institute are professionals or practitioners in creative arts, faculty development is often not traditional research, but rather is work for private clients in their own design firms or their own creative endeavors like paintings for art gallery showings. When AiP moved to offer bachelor's degrees in 2000, the institution invested \$2.5 million in advanced education for faculty to earn graduate degrees.

AiP has established an orientation program that each new faculty member must complete as well as a mentoring system that is well developed.

Academic freedom statements are published and most faculty feel comfortable that their rights are protected by the institute.

The EDMC system has a uniform evaluation template for all employees, the PPAR. This evaluation system addresses all aspects of faculty responsibility relative to MSCHE standards: teaching, research, professional advancement and development, and service. While there is a uniform PPAR procedure, there is a high level of dissatisfaction among the faculty regarding this process.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

The team commends the faculty of AiP for their great investment in sharing best practices on campus and online, and ensuring consistency of content, objectives, standards and outcomes across delivery modalities of the same course. Faculty have established effective mechanisms for inclusive faculty conversations.

Recommendation:

The team recommends that AiP fully involve faculty in a review and evaluation of the PPAR form and process to assure "...articulated and equitable procedures and criteria for the periodic evaluation of all faculty" as stipulated by the Characteristics of Excellence. The team further recommends that AiP should educate faculty about the criteria to be used. The procedure, in its totality, should be transparent.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 11.

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 mission of the Art Institute of Pittsburgh “to provide distinctive creative and collegiate education” was evident to the visiting team throughout the self-study review and campus interview process. From the beautifully-designed self-study materials to the Faculty Art Show in the first gallery the team encountered to the numerous examples of student and faculty creative work in all media throughout the visit --- including delicious meals prepared and served by students in the Culinary Arts Department --- the team was immersed in the myriad outcomes of the daily work of teaching and learning at AiP.

AiP offers a range of innovative, creative art programs. From graphic design to culinary management, to Game Art and Design, the institute has established cutting-edge courses and curricula. Even with such diversity, there is a common educational core and philosophy that unifies the academic offerings. Each program flows from the institutional mission and draws upon the expertise of academicians and professionals.

The team understands that each academic program is structured around three components: general education, foundations, and a creative core, and the team found the level of integration among all three to be remarkable. Each program constructs a coherent grouping of courses across these three areas. For example, Media Arts and Animation majors are required to take physics as their math/science requirement in their general education program. Moreover, the creative core courses incorporate the competencies from the general education program. In Editorial Illustration, as an example, students must use critical analysis and reasoning in order to interpret text and create an associated illustration. This continuous development of skills and competencies is solidified in the capstone and portfolio courses. The student learning objectives stated in the portfolio courses draw upon all three areas uniting them.

AiP has pioneered the delivery of art courses on-line, with a still nearly exclusive online presence for higher learning in the creative and commercial arts. AiP has mapped out a very careful process for the construction and assessment of on-line programs. The team observes that AiP faculty have continuous and frequent discussion among on campus and on-line instructors to insure continuity and quality across the programs.

Perhaps the best evidence of the success of the educational offerings is the work produced by the students. The walls and galleries of AiP are filled with photography, graphic design, advertising projects, and examples of interior design. On the institute's website (which won the 2007 WebAward from the Web Marketing Association for the best college or university site) one can view the latest animation shorts and motion graphics. In such a rich artistic environment, people from different disciplines are inspired by each other and accomplish remarkable achievements. Recently Interior Design and Industrial Design students collaborated with students at Carnegie Mellon to design, build, and operate a fully functioning, energy-efficient, solar-powered house for the 2007 Solar Decathlon in Washington, D.C. A Media Arts & Animation student produced an award-winning domestic violence comic book for Womansplace. An illustration alumnus won a CLIO award for Best International Beer Packaging. The work of AiP students is seen daily across the nation.

The team found AiP to be well aware of the distinctive qualities of its student population and eager to meet their needs satisfactorily. For example, many of the students in diploma programs are professionals who have been working in the field and are enrolling to enhance their skills. The curricula are developed to target this population. One such culinary student, who had been working in the field for quite some time, remarked that in her first semester at AiP she, "learned things I didn't even know I needed to learn."

AiP uses several different processes to ensure that all programs remain current and on the cutting edge of developments in the respective industries and disciplines. Program reviews occur on a 3-5 year timetable, but many industry developments require more rapid response. As a result, programs also have Program Advisory Committees that meet twice a year, and these groups include representatives from the respective industries that hire AiP graduates. In addition to the program review processes and program advisory committees, the respective disciplinary groups within the Art Institute system nationally have periodic meetings to discuss industry trends and best practices. The Art Institute's use of input from all components of the Art Institute system in developing and reviewing the programs assures that programs will remain current and competitive.

Some notable examples of the ways in which the disciplines are changing in response to changes in various industries and new technologies:

- Photography: the digital photography revolution has a significant impact on academic photography programs. At the same time, the online learning revolution also challenges academic photography to consider new forms of pedagogy. At AiP, this revolution is sparking discussions around the future of wet darkrooms and the place of digital photography in the curriculum.

- Industrial Design: automated manufacturing and the ability to create 3-D models are just some of the trends that have rapidly changed this discipline, and these kinds of trends are the focus of discussions during the twice-yearly Program Advisory Committee meetings with industry representatives. AiP students in this field today can learn how to output 3-D computer models to actual physical models, and how to create tool paths according to industry specifications.
- Interactive Media Design: according to faculty in the disciplines, AiP graduates populate dozens of media design companies and studios in the region, and the feedback from these employers has underscored the vital importance of the integration of the technical disciplinary instruction with general education skills and competencies, notably writing.

The process of curriculum development from the department through the faculty curriculum committee with input from practitioners and industry experts on the Program Advisory Committee controls the integrity, rigor, and relevance of the offerings. The same process on the program level assures that programs are designed to progress in rigor and complexity. The curriculum development model begins with the program mission statement, then considers program exit competencies. The model continues to work back to the individual syllabus.

In undertaking the accreditation process, AiP committed to a thorough review of the educational offerings to assure clearly articulated, appropriate, and measurable learning goals for all. Course descriptions and syllabi incorporate measurable learning outcomes. The efforts of AiP faculty and academic administrators in this direction are admirable. While it is too early to gauge the success of these efforts, the team found that the foundations and the structures now in place seem solid.

Library

The library offers a range of resources that is sufficient to meet the curricular needs of both the subject and general education courses. The library facility is small, but welcoming. The staff is dedicated to providing high quality service and instruction in support of students and faculty, with survey results demonstrating that the library is valued and utilized by both groups. The librarians provide initial library orientation to all new freshmen and, upon request, library instruction. In the course of the visit it was determined that information literacy concepts are introduced in entry level courses (CPU 101 and Eng 1010) and that students are expected to successfully utilize a variety of information and technology resources, some of which are very discipline specific and quite unique.

The team suggests that including the Library Director as a member of the Curriculum Committee would provide enhanced opportunities for collaboration with the faculty for information literacy, library instruction, and collection development.

Technology

The broad, skills-based curriculum of AiP presents significant technology challenges. The institution has responded with admirable support, integrating faculty, administrative, and even student input into the planning process for technology capital needs, which itself is part of ongoing strategic planning.

AiP's commitment to providing state of the art technological preparations and resources for effective student learning and career preparation is evident in recent initiatives such as the High Definition Video Xsan project and the upgrade to a gigabit network to support it.

While AiP takes advantage of the support and economies of scale that are provided by the parent corporation, they also have demonstrated, as with the high-def project cited above, the ability to make technology decisions that are consistent with AiP's curricular needs when those differ from the standards set by EDMC.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

The team commends the faculty for the way in which the three components are integrated in the academic design.

The team also commends the quality of the student work presented on the AiP website (e.g., the Student Gallery).

The team also commends the placement statistics for graduates of AiP programs.

Collegial Suggestions

While finding a good deal of integration and synergy among faculty, the team urges AiP to continue to work on consistency between on-line and on-campus programs in terms of content, student learning outcomes, student satisfaction, and faculty satisfaction, control, and preparation.

Standard 12: General Education

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 12.

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:

- *Scope:* The general education requirements are at least 30 percent of all degree programs. There are other courses which, without the current program-specific prefix, might be considered general, such as A313, “Writing for the Spoken Word.” Program requirements are structured to present students with various disciplines and approaches at progressively higher levels of complexity as defined by Bloom’s Taxonomy.
- *Application:* “The “core general education” required of all provides basic communication and computation skills. The selection of electives is of appropriate breadth and scope to provide critical thinking abilities and appreciation of diverse viewpoints and perspectives graduates need for professional success. While many programs include specific requirements from the general education offerings and others recommend courses (e.g. Spanish for Culinary management), care is taken to allow students the widest possible latitude to choose from among the offerings. Recent reviews have led to restructuring of some of the offerings to allow students to pursue a specific line of interest, such as Psychology, through 1000, 2000, and upper levels.
- *Faculty responsibility:* The collaborative process of general education development from with the department with the Academic Department Directors as an unofficial Advisory Committee assures that students have choices that can complement and augment their career preparation.
- *Online:* The online general education requirements are comparable to those on campus. Course assessments are used to compare the levels of competencies achieved in both delivery modes. An example of action taken is that the intervals and steps in the assignments in ENG 1010 were changed in the online courses when it was noted that online students did not meet the desired competency level in “Writing as a Process.”
- *Clear and accurate description:* The mission of the general education program is communicated through Open Houses, Orientation, academic advising, individual program flowcharts and the college catalog. In fact, the explanation in the course catalog is exemplary:

“General Education’s most important role is helping students to develop both professionally and personally. Some important areas of emphasis include: learning to work responsibly in diverse social and professional environments, recognizing the potential impact of local, national, and world events on both a career and personal life, valuing and applying quantitative and critical thinking skills to everyday experiences, and communicating effectively to the many audiences.” (Catalog text)
- *Assessment:* AiP’s General Education assessment process is in the formative stages. The college’s willingness to undertake assessment of creativity extends to

assessing difficult to quantify competencies like analytic reasoning. One early effort is a course-based competency in ENG 1010. A comprehensive applicable to both on-campus and online courses has been developed, administered, and revised. Student portfolios and capstone courses hold the greatest promise for full assessment of student outcomes, including the competencies from the General Education courses. In fact, a pilot study has been undertaken to correlate portfolio overall scores with final grades in ENG 1010.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

The team commends AiP for creating an atmosphere in which students not only understand but also embrace the integration of general education into their major programs.

The team also commends the faculty for creating general education courses that support the specific learning objectives of each major program.

Collegial Suggestions

The team urges the faculty to continue to develop the Gen Ed assessment process, reaching beyond the level of course competencies to the program level and begin to “close the loop”, apply what is learned through assessment to make changes in programs. Continue with the 3-6-9 review of student portfolios.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 13.

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

AiP provides transitional courses for students who meet the admissions requirements but need additional preparation as identified by placement courses. Success in the basic skills courses is assessed through pass/failure rates, failures due to low attendance and use of the Tutoring Center

Diploma programs

The College's 4 year-long diploma or certificate programs—Web Design, Residential Planning, Digital Design, and The Art of Cooking—are governed by the same criteria and follow all the processes of degree programs. In fact, they are designed to transfer into a related degree program. They are overseen by the same Department Directors.

Experiential learning

Credits for life experience are determined by the appropriate Director on case-to-case basis and are limited to 25% of the student's credits. The requirements and process for obtaining life credits are clearly communicated.

Study abroad

AiP is the host college for the Art Institutes Study Abroad Consortium. Currently full-quarter study abroad programs are available in 5 countries. Course syllabi and academic oversight are the responsibility of AiP.

Distance education

Since its creation in 2000, the Art Institute of Pittsburgh Online has expanded exponentially. The program is now serviced through a contractual agreement with OHE (Online Higher Education, a division of EDMC. As previously discussed in this team report, the agreement between AiP and OHE specifies that:

1. The Art Institute of Pittsburgh is responsible for academic control, regulatory compliance and oversight of the online programs offered.
2. The online programs are aligned with and comparable to existing on-ground programs offered by the Art Institute of Pittsburgh.

Onsite investigation confirms that the development and oversight of the academic courses, requirements, and support for the online offerings is indeed firmly under the control of the Academic Department at every stage of the process and in every aspect of the educational experience. Courses are standardized and closely monitored to assure consistency. Online faculty who met with members of the team were unanimous in their enthusiasm about their experience, frequently comparing it favorably to their traditional classroom experiences. Each online course has a “Share-point,” which one faculty member compared to an online virtual faculty lounge.

Students enrolled in online courses are supported in several key ways:

1. Students “are required to complete an online orientation that reinforces the expectations and rigor offered through this modality.”
2. New students without the requisite online educational experience enroll in a program called “Strategies for Online Learning.”
3. Students receive academic support and guidance from an academic advisor specific to their discipline.
4. An online student space, “The Campus Common” provides online students with opportunities for interaction and involvement comparable to what is available on campus.
5. A Student Support Center handles student issues.
6. Campus college counselors, career services counselors, and library personnel are available, as well as four dedicated online career services advisors.

The rapid growth of the online program is an area of concern. AiP has demonstrated a sincere commitment to maintaining the quality and integrity of the online program, but the magnitude of the undertaking is considerable. For example, during FY 07, the full-time online faculty increased from 39 to 82, with an additional 53 full-time positions planned for the first three quarters of 2008. The online program directors designate experienced full-time faculty members to mentor new hires, who must teach at least two quarters under a mentor before becoming full-time. The question is how effective these mentors can be while still performing all their regular duties of teaching and professional development.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Exemplary Practices

The Art Institute of Pittsburgh Online provides a creative, comprehensive education in art areas that would otherwise not be available to many of its students.

Collegial Suggestions

As indicated elsewhere in this report, AiP must continuously reinforce its governance oversight and management responsibility for the academic quality, curriculum faculty and student services of the online education environment.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

The team finds that AiP meets Standard 14.

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:

By the very nature of the subject matter in all disciplines at the Art Institute, the teaching and learning process is profoundly competency-based with student learning outcomes tangibly present throughout the college. Because continuous assessment of student work is so integral to learning in the arts, AiP's challenge has been not to create a learning outcomes assessment program, but rather, to tie that natural climate of assessment back to institutional mission and goals, and program goals flowing through individual course syllabi. The Nichols assessment model has been particularly helpful in creating this assessment flow from mission through program to individual courses and assignments and outcomes analysis. This approach has also made it possible for student assessment to be normalized across delivery modalities.

AiP faculty identify course outcomes in their syllabi, and then each class assignment has rubrics for scoring specific student learning within the objectives. Data from the assignments is aggregated into student formative assessments, and these contribute to the summative assessment along with the capstone projects or portfolios. So ingrained is the rubric-driven system that, according to faculty interviews, students now ask about rubrics at every step in the learning process.

Both general education and each academic program have identified general education components that are assessed either directly or indirectly in their courses. This provides for the vertical integration of assessment across academic units.

The Self-study includes a number of examples where the Nichols and Nichols five column approach is used as the basis for academic program assessment. In addition, there are detailed spreadsheets for data collection that demonstrate how individual course competencies contribute to overall program competencies. It is clear that both summative and formative assessments are conducted in order to guide continuous improvement and, as a result, assessment and program planning are becoming more closely integrated.

AiP is finding innovative ways to assess on-line students, e.g., oral communication where student video tape speeches and upload them for other students and the teacher to critique. A 30% sample is reviewed by experts for the purpose of program assessment. In addition, the 3-6-9 quarter assessment paradigm (and a modified version for online) has been established for the formative evaluation of

student progress. This allows them to accurately evaluate student progress, identify problem areas to address, and correct the student “trajectory.”

While ample evidence exists to demonstrate that AiP is engaged in thorough and rigorous processes to measure student learning outcomes, the college still has a distance to travel in producing actual aggregate, analyzed data that shows student learning progress and change over time among the myriad disciplines and general education. AiP, like many other colleges today, recognizes the need to continue to refine student assessment process in order to produce increasingly meaningful reports in the future. The team is satisfied that AiP is taking the right approach to student learning outcomes assessment, and encourages AiP to follow-up on the institution's own recommendations for improvement in this area.

Significant Accomplishments

The team is encouraged that a number of tools that are available for assessment planning including eCompanion, TackDat, and locally developed rubrics (e.g. for portfolios). eCompanion facilitates assessment because it helps them to track student achievement and program effectiveness.

The team commends the ways in which students can use the capstone course evaluation rubric to see for themselves whether they have achieved the key learning outcomes. There is a list of artifacts, that is, student work over time that they can use to judge instructor influence. There is also a rubric that ties each artifact to each class where a competency should have been achieved.

The team also commends the level of faculty commitment to assessment. There is a general feeling that AiP has learned the benefits of assessment and has the momentum to sustain it.

Collegial Suggestions

The team endorses the self-study's key recommendations for standard 14, including (1) further developing internal models for data collection, (2) conducting research across delivery modalities, and (3) adoption of a national survey instrument on student cognitive and affective growth, and satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Tapping deep roots into the creative wellsprings of the human spirit and soul, the Art Institute of Pittsburgh is that rare learning community where the progress of students and faculty both is manifest each day in the most tangible forms: a revolutionary machine tool model, a stunning photograph, a beautifully draped figure, an impeccably prepared and served meal, a devilishly complex new online game, a brilliant commercial logo, a haunting watercolor painting, a masterful new documentary. While creative expression in some form is the hallmark of all higher education, traditional text-based research and scholarship rarely hangs so whimsically, delights the eye, or tastes so good.

This Middle States visiting team has found much to commend at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, most notably, your passion for the best in creative expression. Such passionate commitment to your crafts and your learning community made it possible for you to persist in your quest for Middle States accreditation.

While offering commendation, this report also provides forthright statements of the areas in which the Art Institute must continue to improve according to Middle States standards. While this team believes that the Art Institute has made considerable progress, in fact, we must also be clear that many challenges remain for this college.

Chief among these challenges is the need to marshal the energy and resources that were brought to bear on this accreditation process in the last nine months to sustain your progress in developing plans and assessment methods that will satisfy accreditation standards over the longer term; to continue to affirm and manifest clear oversight and academic ownership of the online programs; to address ongoing issues in faculty personnel, staff design and overall infrastructure that will be necessary to serve well the anticipated voluminous growth in the student body, particularly online.

The team must be clear in stating that accreditation expects continuous quality improvement and evidence of sustainable plans, policies and practices to meet all of the standards not only today but well into the future.

This team thanks the community of the Art Institute of Pittsburgh for your hospitality, cooperation and serious attentiveness to the requirements of the Middle States accrediting process. We wish you well in your continuing creative endeavors.