

# NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

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John Sexton  
President

May 6, 2014

Dr. Elizabeth H. Sibolski  
President  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
3624 Market Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor West  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Dr. Sibolski:

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the report of the evaluation team which visited New York University as part of NYU's decennial re-accreditation.

We are pleased that the team recognized the "high degree of energy and excitement around" our interdisciplinary initiatives. As they note, we are aware of the challenges associated with such efforts, ranging from the confusing and even duplicative nature of course offerings to the tension faculty members often feel between serving both interdisciplinary programs and their home departments. Addressing these concerns will help NYU build stronger programs.

The evaluation team made two recommendations, both related to Standard 7 on Institutional Assessment:

1. The team noted, quoting from NYU's self-study, that the university has "initiated an extensive project on the use of quantitative metrics to track departmental and school-level progress in meeting academic, scholarly, and fiscal benchmarks." The team commended this effort and recommended "that NYU continue to develop these quantitative metrics and improve how colleges, schools, programs, and initiatives deploy this information in decision-making and evaluation."
2. The team said that "while there is clearly a considerable amount of data collected [from the quantitative metrics], it was not clear. . .how consistently these data are integrated into strategic planning, resource allocation, and evaluation processes. The team recommends that the university more clearly articulate and demonstrate how this is consistently accomplished."

The Provost's Office at New York University has recently expended much effort in the design and implementation of "dashboard" style metrics for departments in the sciences and in engineering. The purpose of these metrics is to provide senior university leaders with tools that are "aspirational," to offer those leaders a means of setting goals relative to the unit's past performance and the performance of peer institutions. After broad consultation, Provost David McLaughlin approved a set of metrics, drawing from university-wide and department-level data, which was made available to chairs and deans in the sciences and engineering in 2013.

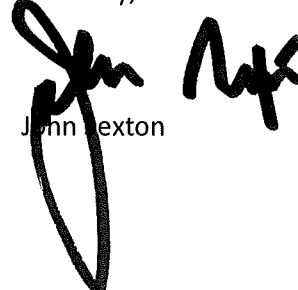
To address the team's first recommendation, we will continue to develop and tailor dashboards to meet the needs of many departments and schools, including those in the humanities and the arts. Care will be taken to include metrics that track interdisciplinary efforts as well as traditional disciplines in areas such as faculty hiring, scholarly work, research, and academic affairs generally. Areas where quantitative metrics are less easily available will be noted, so that both strengths and limitations of the dashboard approach will be clearly identified.

On the second recommendation, the Provost's Office will work with senior leaders to integrate results from departmental dashboards into strategic planning, resource allocation and other major planning efforts. The Office will seek ways to enable deans and chairs to use dashboards to track progress on top priorities such as scholarly excellence, faculty hiring and retention, student enrollments, and fiscal affairs.

We are grateful to the team for its hard work; its recommendations and suggestions will help us to address the difficult issues raised by interdisciplinary, multischool academic initiatives. As was the case following our 2004 self-study and the ensuing report of the Middle States team, we will systematically review the self-study in light of the evaluation team's recommendations and suggestions.

Again, on behalf of my colleagues, I thank the team members for their time, their insights into NYU, and their valuable comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Sexton". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

John Sexton