

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees and Students
of

FRANKLIN UNIVERSITY SWITZERLAND
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Switzerland

by

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

**Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report
and a visit to the campus on April 11-14, 2010**

The Members of the Team:

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This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair; 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 Franklin University. 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

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I. Context and Nature of the visit

Franklin University Switzerland, more commonly known as Franklin College, was established in 1969 in Lugano, Switzerland. Middle States accredited Franklin College to offer Associate of Arts degrees in 1975. In 1986 Baccalaureate degrees (BA) began to be offered and Middle States reaffirmed Franklin's accreditation in 1990 and once again in 2000. It is notable that in 2005 the Swiss University Conference and the Swiss Organization for Quality Assurance accredited all degrees offered at Franklin, making it the first post secondary institution to have institutional accreditation in both the United States and in Switzerland. At the time of the visit Franklin had over 400 students enrolled and has a strategic objective of expanding enrollment to a capacity of 500 students. While most of Franklin's current students are Americans, the student body is quite diverse, with 65 nationalities represented. The faculty are also diverse, with 10 nationalities represented in the 24 full time faculty and 8 of the 20 degree programs are specifically "International" in their content. "Academic Travel", a signature course which all students at the institution are required to take at least 5 times in order to graduate, requires them to study abroad accompanied by Franklin faculty or staff. All of institution's degree programs are at the undergraduate level, but the current Strategic Plan calls for the addition of a limited number of post-graduate degrees in the near future; plans to start the first of these new degrees, which would be a "substantive change" for Middle States as early as 2011 have been postponed. Franklin's long-serving president has announced that he will be stepping down no later than 2013, thus a presidential search is in Franklin's near term future. Also on the near term horizon is a major capital campaign.

II. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Eligibility Requirements

Based on a review of the self-study, interviews, the certification statement supplied by the institution and other institutional documents, the team affirms that the institution continues to meet the eligibility requirements in *Characteristics of Excellence*.

III. Compliance with Federal Requirements. Issues relative to State Regulatory or other accrediting Agency Requirements

The team is not aware of any issues relative to federal or state regulatory requirements or the institution's status with other accrediting agencies.

IV. Evaluation Overview

The team concluded that Franklin College meets all fourteen standards for accreditation established by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Franklin is **commended** for the quality and honesty of the Self-Study. The Self-Study has a single voice, and is well organized, well documented and well written.

V. Compliance with accreditation Standards

Chapter One, Identity

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

Standard 2 Strategic Planning

The institution meets the standards that are covered in this chapter.

Mission and Goals

Summary of Evidence and Findings: “The mission of Franklin College is to provide a multi-cultural and international academic environment within which students acquire the essential knowledge and critical, creative, and analytical abilities necessary to attain success in their chosen careers and to live culturally and rewarding lives.” As is clear from every chapter of the self-study, Franklin is mission driven. Discussions with numerous members of the Franklin community at all levels confirm that the core values of the institution, such as student centered learning, are very widely shared. Franklin aspires to produce students who are competent in their fields, and are “articulate; exhibit cultural competency in a variety of settings; value cultures other than their own; and exhibit social responsibility.” (p. 13) In May 2007, the faculty and trustees met and re-confirmed a commitment to the mission statement; in an administrative retreat in 2008 the vision and goals of the institution were refined and care was taken to align the vision and goals with the mission. “These formal expressions of our identity are subject to regular review, discussion and dissemination at all levels of the institution.” (p. 14) Programs and activities are evaluated in light of their contribution to the fulfillment of the mission and goals, and the 2006-11 strategic plan was developed with explicit and systematic reference to the mission and goals of Franklin.

Suggestion: As a great deal has happened in the world and at Franklin in recent years, and as more change is highly likely in the future, the completion of the self-study and the forthcoming search for a new president present an opportunity to review, revise and sharpen the current mission statement. A comprehensive and inclusive discussion of the mission would also be an opportunity to engage the entire Franklin community – Trustees, administration, faculty, students, staff and alumni – in a discussion and examination of the desirability and viability of offering post-graduate programs at Franklin.

Strategic Planning

Summary of Evidence and Findings: The College has clearly demonstrated that it continuously monitors its progress towards the goals and priorities defined in the strategic plan. An annual cabinet level retreat reviews progress during the preceding academic year and sets targets for the coming year. This is then reviewed with the faculty and the trustees. As a consequence of this process of review, Franklin has modified certain expected outcomes of the plan, for example, having an enrollment of 500 by 2012. Although this particular outcome is not achievable at this time, and the College has therefore revised the goal, the institution has remained faithful to the core principles and expectations of the plan. There is sufficient evidence that the strategic plan elements have a significant relationship to institutional effectiveness and that sufficient communication regarding the plan is communicated appropriately within the college community.

Significant Accomplishment: Since 2006, Franklin has developed and implemented a mission-driven strategic plan.

Chapter Two, Student Learning

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

Standard 12: General Education
Standard 13: Related Educational Activities
Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

The institution meets the standards that are covered in this chapter.

Educational Offerings and General Education

Summary of Evidence and Findings: Franklin has had an active period of curriculum growth and reform over the past five years, all of it directed to Franklin's unique mission. Among the innovations is the new core curriculum with its FYE, Crossing Borders: A First Year Experience. This unit includes a seminar on one of many topics and integrates residential learning, the co-curriculum, mentoring, advising, the library, and the writing/learning center. It is intended to be the student's first step into the multicultural and international mission of the college. Combined with Eng 100 (Writing in the Humanities) and quantitative reasoning (any math course at or above college algebra), it constitutes the foundation level of the core curriculum pyramid. The other segments of the core are global responsibility (course choices in competencies, international engagement, and social responsibility) and finally the top of the pyramid and signature program, academic travel and modern languages. The total maximum credits for this new core is 47, slightly smaller than the old version and better aligned with the overall mission of Franklin. Many continuing students have elected to complete the new core rather than the older one.

The number of majors has nearly doubled, from 11 to 20, including two that represent new initiatives and have proven highly popular, Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies (CLCS) and Environmental Studies. The entire list of degree offerings is fully congruent with the international and multicultural character of the college. Dual majors and combined majors are common. Minors had proliferated, but the curriculum committee has eliminated a large number of minors that could be pursued with certain majors. The largest majors are International Management, International Relations, and Communication and Media Studies. Every major has a set of learning goals, and most (not all) course units have a set of learning goals as well.

For a small institution with a small number of faculty members, Franklin supports a large number of majors. In addition, students will often elect combined majors that can be constructed from any two of the following: Art History, Communications and Media Studies, CLCS, French, History, Italian Studies, Literature, Management, and Political Science (Catalog, p. 121). Consequently, students may complete a unique or idiosyncratic major that is not shared by others. The Dean reports that Franklin is thinking about a truly individualized major that a student would develop under close advisement from the faculty. Initial planning to introduce a postgraduate degree or degrees has begun but is on hold at present.

The curriculum philosophy of Franklin is rooted in a model of interdisciplinary collegiality. Franklin does not have the faculty depth to offer highly narrow and vertical programs that cover every aspect of a field of study. Instead the college looks realistically at its faculty resources and tries to ration them across the present and desirable new programs. New programs tend to be a combination and integration of some new content fields and some interdisciplinary perspectives from adjacent and related fields.

The academic leaders understand the limits to this principle and recognize the eventual need to add faculty lines in order to expand the program repertoire of the institution. A new program cannot be created entirely by redistributing present resources. The new major in Environmental Studies is a case in point. It has started as a field legitimately based in the social sciences but inevitably will require students to have some scientific background that will require a laboratory as well as fieldwork.

An examination of various syllabi and course materials indicates that course units are characterized by the content, rigor, and depth associated with baccalaureate study. All learning activities are linked to the articulated goals of the program of which they are part. The courses are responsive to new research findings and the epistemologies or modes of truth-seeking that are relevant to the discipline.

Academic travel is a signature pedagogy of Franklin College, and has been since the founding. Students must complete five (formerly six) of the two-week travels for a total of five credits. Some travels are directly linked to course units or majors while others are freestanding. Franklin has “not yet articulated specific, measurable learning outcomes for this key competency” (Self-Study, p. 36). A sketch of generic competencies has been developed. Students learn to: think critically about their roles as travelers; reflect on their norms and attitudes; apply classroom learning to the field; and record their learning in a meaningful way (Appendix 2-1). The list of travel opportunities is impressive, found at <http://www.fc.edu/content/academic-travel/> Comments from many students indicate that they understand the uniqueness of this part of the Franklin experience.

The other components of the core all have competencies articulated at some greater length. Oral communication, writing, foreign language, information literacy, information technology, mathematics, scientific literacy, and creative expression each has a set of competencies. These competencies are a mixture of broad, umbrella statements (e.g., “Understand the oral communication process”) and more specific skills (“Understand graphs, tables, and charts”). The statements also represent multiple taxonomies of knowledge. They include the cognitive and affective domains, and they include statements of knowledge (various levels such as comprehension, application, analysis, and evaluation) as well as skills and attitudes. It is clear that much thinking has gone into this new core. The core unquestionably expresses the educational philosophy of Franklin College, contributes to the students’ general education, helps to develop essential skills, and is taken seriously by the faculty at large.

Another important innovation is CIELO, the Center for Intercultural Engagement and Learning Opportunities. Created in January 2009, this office is intended to support the global responsibility component of the new core. It directs students to service learning, community based learning, study abroad, internships, and other off-campus experiences whether local or global. This office will also further develop the career center. It is too soon to evaluate the productivity and effects on student learning of CIELO. Its goal is a vital one for any liberal arts college. CIELO has a broad span of responsibilities that at other institutions would be covered by three or four offices. Given the diversity of student interests and aspirations, it is likely that CIELO will move forward on a student case-by-case pace rather than by establishing large programs elected by many students at once.

Significant Accomplishment: Franklin has created a new core (always a conflicted and challenging task for any college faculty), new majors, and a new office to integrate liberal learning and engagement with real-world contexts. These are commendable efforts to advance the educational offerings of and general education at Franklin.

Suggestions: Given the importance of academic travel as a form of teaching and learning and also a central characteristic of the Franklin experience, faculty should be diligent in making sure that each course has stated learning objectives and that aggregate assessment data is collected and stored. Granted that the destinations and topics are of great variety, still some degree of uniformity should be brought to the assessment of these experiences. In Chapter 2, Franklin admits to its imperfect techniques for assessing travel. A review of some of these assessments suggests that some students take great effort to write critical and insightful comments while others do not. The Travel Course Evaluation form should be reviewed as well. It may be possible to develop a common rubric that students will use when they “Record what they have learned as travelers in a meaningful way” (fourth competency in the list of travel competencies, Appendix 2-1, p. 11).

Related Educational Activities

Summary of Evidence and Findings: The Honors Program is identified in the Self-Study as a related educational activity. A certificate is awarded to those who complete the required 18 credit hours, including one honors seminar (3 credits), one honors capstone (3), and additional seminars, courses, or tutorials designated as Honors Options (12 credits) (Catalog, p. 61). This program is embedded in the regular curriculum, and differs in that greater demands are made on students taking Honors Options. The expectation is that honors students will pursue individual research and report that research in a substantial paper or report. The Honors Program is intended for students who expect to apply to graduate study in the future.

A summer session is composed primarily of courses in the general curriculum and is used by students to reduce time to degree. Franklin also conducts English for Academic Purposes for its own students who do not have English as a primary language. This is not marketed separately as a program to unrelated, non-degree students. Franklin has no credit for experiential learning (except approved internships), no branch campuses or other locations, no substantial pre-collegiate basic skills classes, no non-credit training, and no distance education. The only contractual relationship is an approved study abroad option at Universite’ Lyon II.

Suggestion: Since the Honors Program is embedded in the regular curriculum but at a higher level of intensity, it should not be called a Related Educational Activity. Franklin can take pride in that it directs all of its human and physical resources to its primary mission of liberal arts education in an international context.

Assessment of Student Learning

Summary of Evidence and Findings: A great deal of assessment data reported and discussed in Chapter 2 is in the form of self-evaluation surveys such as SSI, CSEQ, the senior exit survey, and the alumni survey. Student comments and testimonials are quoted at length. Student opinion is helpful in assessment, especially in assessing attitudes and values. It is not a direct measure of student learning. The more helpful and vital documentation tends to be in the text and exhibits for Chapter 7, Institutional Assessment. Here can be found examples of the Course Assessment Plans (CAPs),

Major Assessment Plans (MAPs), and Department Assessment Plans (DAPs) that are the backbone of the college's efforts. The depth and quality of the CAPs and MAPs differ from course to course and major to major. The review of this documentation shows that the fundamental elements of assessment are in place:

1. Clearly articulated statements of learning goals appear at the level of the course, degree, and institution.
2. Direct evidence of student learning is included.
3. There is convincing evidence that students are achieving goals.
4. Evidence is often shared and discussed in appropriate meetings and forums.
5. Student learning assessment is part of the broader institutional assessment.

Assessment of the new core is in its early stages. At the foundation level, the FYE has been extensively analyzed by student surveys and other feedback. Assessment is one step in a four-step loop of continuous improvement expected of every institution: articulate goals, design instruction, assess outcomes, and use results to improve. Expertise is required at each step. Franklin as an institution appears to be moving successfully toward this model and must continue to do so.

Significant Accomplishment: FYE is an assessment success story. It helped to address the retention problem, engaged faculty members in studies they are passionate about, and helped to introduce students to the Franklin identity and brand. It reflects all that is best about the college: its interdisciplinary curriculum, its internationalism, and its faculty's care for its students. The mentors are an ideal addition to this activity.

Suggestions: (1) Franklin should examine the Faculty Committee on assessment of student learning and make sure that this group has the energy, expertise, and resources needed to sustain assessment and continue development of its techniques and its role in program improvement. Franklin might consider a person to direct institutional research and outcomes assessment as a full-time responsibility. (2) Academic travel is so vital to the college that it needs to be studied with the same energy that helped to create the FYE. The travels are idiosyncratic and have evolved into three forms, including service, academic subject-based, and language-based. Nevertheless, there are some universals or commonalities that exist. Outcomes should be studied and aggregated. (3) A great deal of free-floating assessment information exists in the institution. It should be distributed widely so that more and more units and offices can engage in "completing the loop" thinking that clearly characterizes the MSCHE process for assessment. Nothing is lost when too much information flows around, but much can be lost when legitimate findings are not suffused throughout the institution.

Chapter Three, Students

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard 8: Student Admission and Retention

Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution meets the standards that are covered in this chapter.

Student Admission and Retention

Summary of Evidence and Findings: Franklin College focuses on the admission of students whose interests, goals and ability are consistent with the institutional mission and utilizes appropriate strategies to retain students. Throughout print and electronic

materials, the communications regarding the policies, programs and services are consistent and provide accurate information regarding the experience and the opportunities for students.

Financial aid, and scholarship information is readily available and provides support for students in a fair and consistent manner. Financial aid expense is within tolerable levels as a percentage of tuition revenue (average of approximately 25%) and is primarily based on need with merit scholarships on a limited basis. Currently, 271 out of 434 students or 62.4% of all students receive some financial aid. For 2010-11 the tuition increase for new students is scheduled to be 4.55% and for returning students it is 8.83% with a corresponding increase of 18% in financial aid. The tuition rate was frozen for 2009-10. Financial aid as a percentage of tuition and as a percentage of the overall budget (9%) will remain constant. The budget number for enrollment for fiscal year 2011 is 422 and is consistent with the fiscal year 2010 actual enrollment.

Franklin recognizes the challenges of tuition dependency and the related struggles for establishing strong enrollment growth trends and improving retention. Since 2005 enrollment and related retention has steadily increased, though short of projections. Enrollment and retention have been effectively defined as key elements for the success of Franklin College into the foreseeable future. As such, the documentation provided assures that it is understood that improvements on both are necessary, specifically an increased number of students enrolled and a consistency of retention with a positive trend over time will be essential.

The admissions materials and website elements which focus on prospective students provide meaningful communications to prospective students. The materials and communication strategies demonstrate the tremendous resources and possibilities that could enhance the messages to interested students. Throughout the print communications and specifically the website, students are able to gather the necessary information about academic majors, options for academic travel and the academic support resources, including information about services and programs with appropriate links to policies and procedures of importance. One opportunity is the development of key messages to more precisely describe the student experience, the academic rigor and the anticipated outcomes for students.

Students and others articulated the challenges of the messages provided which demonstrate the beautiful positive environment of the campus and Lugano balanced with the quality of the total student experience. Students who have adapted to the campus who reported a pre-arrival perception that Franklin may be less academically rigorous reflected this in comments. A thorough enrollment management plan with key strategies for the recruitment of prospective students with an eye toward the numerous perspectives that target populations of students would be valuable. The marketing of the institution reinforces many of the unusual or significant elements of the Franklin College environment and experience, but is limited in assuring that a person new to the College, or one considering the college for enrollment, would be likely to thoroughly comprehend some of the most significant distinctive elements of Franklin College. It is these elements that students readily identify as important for a Franklin College experience.

The process to ascertain the effectiveness of communication materials allows for improvement; however, tying the key elements of this communication directly to

enrollment and retention challenges deserves a dedicated approach as marketing and communication materials and the website are thoroughly reviewed. While the location might be a selling point for many, as the primary attraction on the website for prospective students, it is evident that the size, distinctive learning opportunities such as the Academic Travel and the direct and intentional engagement between faculty and students are significant highlights worth giving greater attention earlier in the presentation of the College to prospective students. On initial views of the website it appears that Lugano is the message, when in fact finding a way to define the actual experience of students may broaden and thus enhance the sense of the place and the commendable distinctions. A resounding message from all involved is that the quality of the experience for students is extraordinary and provides a distinctive learning environment that is transformational for students. Finding ways to demonstrate this information may attract an audience that would find Franklin to be the right collegiate experience. An additional communication in recognition of the role of parents in the college decision-making process, particularly in the Middle East and China, may result in enhanced understanding of the Franklin College experience.

The College struggles with fluctuating levels of attrition that need to be examined. For example, if students are intending to attend Franklin College for one year, but are reluctant to indicate such, they may be bringing that plan to Lugano and possibly contaminating others who had intended to stay to complete a degree. Using data collection to determine if there is a substantive population who falls in this category could provide suggestions for next steps including consideration of a way to maximize enrollment of students for one or two years, intentionally.

The recruitment of new students is done with an understanding of the priorities set out to attract students from around the world. Through receptions and contacts around the world and opportunities to actually visit the campus, there are numerous means for students to learn about the institution including connections with current parents, alumni and trustees. If the yield from these events is in the 90% range as reported they may be an important recruiting strategy, but additional exploration of the benefits is warranted. Incentives to apply early and to commit to enrollment are appropriately used to enhance interest and opportunities to learn more about the institution.

The support programs developed for students provide ample responsiveness to students in academic difficulty, or who have additional needs for supplement support. There are appropriate mechanisms to identify students who are having difficulty at any point in time as well as specifically at mid-semester. This involvement of faculty and others reaching out directly to the students is reported to be very effective. The Writing Center provides academic support and serves an ever-increasing population of students with learning challenges, also posing a potential challenge in the future to effectively meet the needs of these students. The extremely personal approach to understand the student needs is very effective in reaching students, but there is a limit to human hours available to make the contacts. This is a hallmark for Franklin. As these students' needs expand, as many institutions are experiencing, the resources may need to be extended to adequately allow for increased personnel to provide attention to students to enhance their success.

Assessment is understood as an important driver of decision-making. The resources and the range of data enhance the knowledge and the perceptions about critical issues. Additional work to analyze and utilize the available data is underway and appropriate

committees and teams are prepared to extend this approach to additional elements of the student experience.

The chapters addressing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness will address various aspects of assessment; however, it is essential to note here that identification of clear learning outcomes for student success are needed and could successfully differentiate the Franklin College experience beyond the classroom opportunities. Utilization of student learning outcomes in student leadership experiences as noted under Standard 9 could result in excellent descriptions that could be used in marketing to prospective students regarding the quality and meaningful involvement opportunities students are provided. These are distinctive features and learning experiences for students in this environment that tie very closely to the academic experience.

Significant Accomplishment: The attention of the faculty, staff and administrators to the overall success of students is noteworthy and reinforces the commitment to the personal and intellectual development of each student. This targeted attention is meaningful and productive for the overall success of students.

Suggestion: In progress, but essential for future implementation, is an effort to develop an integrated enrollment management plan. The full plan needs to build on the successful marketing strategies for new students, the communication and services for current students and highlights of the success and accomplishments of students, faculty and alumni. Included may be consideration of multiple levels of marketing allowing for different outreach efforts to attract varying target populations. The focus may include development of a concrete strategy involving 3-5 primary initiatives that fulfill the enrollment plan in order to find a sustainable stream of students from multiple sources. Utilization of an external consultant who can assist the staff in this process should produce a high return on investment.

Student Support Services

Summary of Evidence and Findings: The campus of Franklin College provides a warm and comfortable environment for students to interact with one another as well as with faculty and staff. While many facilities are limited due to space constraints, location, or current quality of the space, the tenor around campus is open and encouraging. Students, faculty and staff interact regularly, and students report a very strong willingness of any faculty or staff member to make himself or herself available to students. This element of support is a priority to the students and is recited in many ways as a true benefit and key element of a Franklin College education. In addition, Franklin College provides a range of student support services that contribute to student achievement and a quality undergraduate experience. The support service personnel are notably stretched to the limit, but are willing to extend themselves to assure that the opportunities for students are available, and that services and programs are educationally and developmentally meaningful.

The campus environment, based in residential options for students and significant options for students through clubs and activities, allows and encourages students to mature and develop autonomy. Students also benefit from the concern of the faculty and administrative staff, who are committed to student success. There is an opportunity to document distinctive learning outcomes for students through co-curricular experiences. Establishment of specific learning outcomes and a meaningful set of rubrics for student

leadership roles (Student Government Association, Resident Assistants, Peer Mentors and Orientation Leaders as a few primary examples) could tie directly to the academic targets and provide clarification of what is different or distinctive about a Franklin College undergraduate experience.

A review of procedures, policies, record keeping and availability of services for students affirms the Self-Study Report materials and assures that Franklin College addresses its responsibilities for students appropriately. The services allow for student growth and foster a sense of responsibility for students who take advantage of those elements provided. Appropriate mechanisms are in place for students to share complaints and file grievances when situations arise. Conversations with students reinforced that the opportunities to live in campus residences are consistent with student expectations. An example of a recent adjustment to meet students' needs is the change in the food service provider and meal plans, a change that has received very high marks from all involved.

The academic support services are utilized by a wide range of students and also provide learning opportunities for those students who are in leadership roles assisting other students. The Writing and Learning Center, Career Services, Counseling, Student Health, Student Life and Learning and other administrative areas, while limited in staffing as are many areas of the College, are responsive to students' needs and expectations and appropriately track services and determine needed adjustments. Credentials of staff are generally at appropriate levels, but identification of additional ways to enhance the professional development opportunities for staff in student service areas could be extremely beneficial. This would be most effective if sharing of expertise could occur with other institutions in international locations that have a liberal arts foundation.

The organizational structure for the various student services functions and the related areas of the Office of Student Learning has created additional direct service support to students. Students appreciate this, yet there is a need for stronger integration of the various services and assurance that cooperation and collaboration is effectively developed based on data as well as the input from students and the administrative staff. While additional positions at any level could be valuable, with limited resources, the value of an integrated communication and reporting structure, one that intentionally provides specific office services and programs to coordinate communication may be an important priority in the immediate future.

There is valuable satisfaction data regarding services and programs, but the analysis and coordination of responses to the data may be shortchanged. Establishing a plan to respond to data consistently across various lines could enhance the use of the data and the opportunities to respond effectively and in an intentional and integrated way. Academic advising of students is effectively established as a component of the First Year Seminar and evolves into a function of the major course of study. Students report that academic advisors are available and prepared to address a myriad of topics while supporting the students and directing them to appropriate resources. Assessment of the experience for students and the experience of the advisors has resulted in changes in the approach to advising.

Significant Accomplishment: The dedication of the staff, while limited in resources and time, is a strength of the Franklin experience for students. There is a commitment to

improve resources for students and to adapt services and programs to address student expectations and demands.

Suggestions: (1) Establish specific learning outcomes and a meaningful set of rubrics for student leadership roles (Student Government Association, Resident Assistants, Peer Mentors and Orientation Leaders as a few primary examples). This clarification would provide evidence of what is different or distinctive about a Franklin College undergraduate experience. (2) Create mechanisms for professional development experiences for staff to engage with colleagues on other international liberal arts campuses to enhance practices for services and programs. (3) Coordinate an integrated communication system at a level of services and programs that are directly responding to students' expectations and needs. This should include utilization of the available data and allow for shared information.

Chapter Four, Faculty

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard 10: Faculty

Standard 6: Integrity, including Academic Freedom

The institution meets the standards that are covered in this chapter.

Faculty

Summary of Evidence and Findings: Based on review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard.

The faculty is highly skilled, with all of the full-time faculty and two-thirds of the part-time faculty holding degrees at the Ph.D. or equivalent level.

A sizable fraction of the part-time faculty have been teaching at the institution for many years.

The number of faculty is more than adequate, with a student-faculty ratio of about 11:1.

One-third of the full-time faculty and one-half of the part-time faculty are women.

The faculty represent many nationalities from Europe and North America.

The faculty are excellent teachers and most are productive scholars.

Students regularly complete course evaluations and faculty submit annual self-evaluations.

The responsibilities of the faculty are clearly outlined, with teaching comprising 60% of their duties and scholarship and institutional service comprising the rest.

Applications for contract renewals and promotions are reviewed by the faculty Personnel Committee and the Dean, who then recommend action to the Provost.

The faculty oversees the curriculum as evidenced by significant curricular and co-curricular developments of the last five years (the first year experience, the core curriculum, the integration of service learning, and new major programs).

Part-time faculty are introduced to the institution through a faculty development workshop and part-time faculty are invited to attend and have a vote in the Faculty Assembly.

The institution supports the professional activities of the faculty through partially paid leaves of absence, faculty development funds, and course releases to perform research.

Significant Accomplishments: (1) Full-time and part-time faculty have been added as the enrollment of the College has increased. (2) There is sufficient faculty involvement in both research and the scholarship of teaching to be granted Swiss university recognition of its B.A. programs. (3) The curriculum has been revised in two important areas: the first year experience and the core curriculum.

Suggestions: A strategy should be developed to (a) increase the diversity of the faculty to countries and cultures other than those of Europe and North America; (b) address the need for more full-time faculty; (c) define the process by which new faculty positions are determined.

In addition, the Faculty Manual should be brought into line with the new emphasis on faculty research, including a clear description of the expectations of faculty, and the process by which research-related course reduction is assigned.

The resources available to faculty for scholarship should be made more effective, perhaps by adding a sabbatical leave program or expanding the partially paid leave of absence program, and through changes to the faculty development fund.

The communication between the Board of Trustees and the faculty should be strengthened through opportunities for both formal and informal dialogue.

The efforts to define the responsibilities of part-time faculty, to provide part-time faculty with adequate support, to involve them in the academic enterprise more fully, and to evaluate them effectively should be continued.

Integrity, including Academic freedom

Summary of Evidence and Findings: Based on review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard.

- Formal procedures for the hiring of faculty and the promotion of faculty are clearly outlined in the Faculty Manual
- Faculty members, the Faculty Assembly, and Dean have clear responsibilities in the establishing of new faculty lines and the hiring of faculty.
- Faculty members, the Personnel Committee, Dean, and President have clear responsibilities in promotion decisions.
- The advertising of faculty positions carefully explains the qualifications sought and includes a clear statement on equal opportunity and affirmative action.
- The roles and responsibilities of Faculty are clearly enumerated and the process of faculty evaluation state clear responsibilities for the Faculty, Personnel Committee, and the Dean.

Significant Accomplishment: Since the last Middle States review, the institution has recognized the importance of formalizing procedures for hiring, evaluating, and promoting faculty. This process is ongoing with all constituencies playing proper roles.

Suggestions: (1) As the discussion of an increased expectation for scholarship and research by the faculty continues, the institution should keep the dialogue open and forthright, with institutional documents updated carefully to reflect the changes. (2) The present efforts to formalize procedures in establishing new faculty lines, and hiring, evaluating, and promoting faculty should continue to involve a dialogue among the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees. (3) The present effort to revise official documents to include the new position of Provost should be completed in a timely manner.

Chapter Five, Governance and Organization

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

Standard 5: Administration

Standard 6 Integrity

The institution meets the standards that are covered in this chapter.

Leadership and Governance

Summary of Evidence and Findings: Discussions took place with the president, faculty members, administration, staff, students and trustees. All constituencies are involved in governance but to varying degrees. The primary governance structure for the faculty is the Faculty Assembly with its committees: Curriculum; Student Learning Outcomes. Faculty also participate in college-wide committees like the Budget and Priorities Committee and the Committee on Admissions and Academic Standards. Faculty Assembly recommendations are processed through the Dean, the Provost and, if not determined at that level, may be determined at the Cabinet level. Feedback is processed back to the Faculty Assembly, but this feedback loop often takes more time than is anticipated. Discussion with staff members vis-à-vis governance revealed that staff members have felt somewhat neglected in not having a more structured and patterned governance process. They indicated that an optimal structure would be one that replicates the Faculty Assembly with its committees and definitive process for review of recommendations. Although the current staff meets monthly, the sense is that a more structured process would be more productive. As stated in the Self-Study, “staff meetings need to find new and effective means of communication and shared decision-making models” (p. 132).

Governance structures at the administrative level are clearly evident in the President’s Cabinet. The President has established his Cabinet with two structures, the Inner Cabinet (Provost and VPAA; VP for Finance and Administration; VP for Marketing Communications; and VP for Advancement) and the Extended Cabinet (Inner Cabinet, with the Dean of the College, Special Assistant to the Provost, Dean of Admissions; Dean of the CIELO, Registrar, Associate Dean of Student Support). The President alternates these groups week-by-week thus establishing a governance structure that is broad and establishes up-to-date information that all members can share with their staff members.

Students have their primary group for governance, the Student Government Association. There is also a student representative to the Faculty Assembly, the Board of Trustees, and a student who served on the Self-Study Steering Committee. The Student Government is made up of a group of approximately 30 serious and dedicated students who want to advance Franklin College, strengthen academics and provide an effective forum for student governance. In conversation with this large group of students, it was very clear that they feel listened to and have a collective student voice that is listened to and acted upon.

Board members who were interviewed have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in development of policy and in resource development. Board members have a clear and current knowledge of current institutional issues and the challenge of planning for a presidential search within the near future. Years ago, the then chairman of the Board

established the Faculty-Trustee Dialog in May of each year, an opportunity for trustees and all faculty members to meet and discuss issues of mutual importance. This opportunity for dialog continues today. Chairman Paul C. Lowerre and Vice Chairman Angela W. Fowler, both graduates of Franklin College, have provided dedicated service to their alma mater.

A faculty member also serves as a representative to the Board of Trustees, thus providing another opportunity for open governance of the College. The Board committees should be reviewed for the membership rosters that are very important for effective institutional governance. The Self-Study notes the progress in effective governance components but also the need to “make a more deliberate attempt to enhance the feedback loop through articulation of specific outcomes that can be measured to ensure the satisfaction of all constituencies.” (p. 131) This will require a continuing commitment to governance processes across all constituencies. The two-tier Cabinet structure is an effective model for broad representation and communication in the administration and staff. These individuals are responsible for “enhancing the feedback loop” providing accurate and timely information to those who report to them.

Suggestions: The Board of Trustees should establish a self-assessment process to include a critical analysis of the Board committees and their membership rosters. Close the feedback loop to establish a more effective and integrated governance process. For governance to be fully effective, clear and full information must be transmitted throughout the organization.

Administration

Summary of Evidence and Findings: Franklin College has been very fortunate to have strong and dedicated leadership in its President, Dr. Erik Nielson, for the past 15 years. Faculty and trustees acknowledge his achievements. Faculty noted the improvement in student quality and the advancement of the College during his tenure. Dr. Nielsen’s planned departure in the next couple of years poses a challenge for the Board of Trustees, already involved in considering elements of the future search. During 2007-2008, the College restructured its executive administration to best achieve its strategic objectives. In 2008, the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Kris Bulcroft, was hired. Provost Bulcroft has reorganized offices in Academic and Student Affairs “with the goal of enhancing the holistic development of students.” (p. 118) This emphasis on student development and engagement is appreciated by students.

The Self-Study notes another administrative position that is essential and needs to be filled, that of Human Resources Manager (p. 138). The vacancy has resulted in a heavy workload for the Vice President for Finance and Administration and personnel under his supervision. The Self-Study notes that the position should be added in the next strategic plan, but that should be reconsidered. The staff members interviewed during this team visit noted that this is a critical position that needs to be filled.

The administrative members that constitute the Inner and Extended President’s Cabinet are individuals with appropriate credentials and experience to fulfill their responsibilities. Position descriptions are contained in the Faculty Manual, though this document is being revised and does not include all positions.

The evaluation of each administrative position occurs in January each year and takes the form of a self-report with a meeting with the respective supervisor following. Professional development opportunities are available with a special fund dedicated to staff members.

Suggestions: Franklin should consider hiring a Director of Human Resources.

Integrity

Summary of Evidence and Findings: The importance of Integrity is evident in its description in the Characteristics of Excellence. Integrity is “the hallmark of effective higher education institutions, and it can manifest itself through the institution’s conduct within each of the other standards” (p. 21). In many ways, integrity is evident throughout Franklin College. In discussions with the President, trustees, faculty, administration, staff and students, it is evident that there is an atmosphere of respect among constituencies at the college. Students report that relationships among the students are positive. They speak of the diversity and cultural differences among students and the unique and enriching experience this provides to them as undergraduates.

Faculty, administration and staff members respond to the needs of students. The Registrar’s Office, so important to smooth and efficient processes for both students and faculty, has fair and sound policies in place and staff readily respond to the needs of students in meeting their program and graduation requirements. Faculty support one another and appreciate the work and achievements of their colleagues. Faculty members acknowledge academic and intellectual freedom. Different points of view are accepted and appreciated as part of a rich academic environment that faculty provide students. Policies and procedures are published in handbooks and catalogs that are readily available to all who need them.

Chapter Six, Institutional Resources

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard 2: Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The institution meets the standards that are covered in this chapter.

Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation

Summary of Evidence and Findings: As part of its corporate culture, Franklin has demonstrated that it consistently links resource allocation decisions to its strategic planning and assessment processes. The College has identified seven priorities within its Strategic Plan that guide such decisions. The President and Board of Trustees have set financial stability as the primary goal of the institution defined as deficit-free yearly operations, acceptable reserves and mortgage indebtedness.

The Business Operations of the College are well managed and are led by an experienced professional who provides timely and accurate information at both the tactical and strategic levels to inform decisions made throughout the year by a variety of constituencies. External auditors have certified that internal controls are sound, no material deficiencies exist, and that all governmental requirements have been met. The College’s risk assessment is comprehensive in scope, realistic, and assigns logical risk tolerances to its identified exposures. FY10 financial projections indicate a modest

surplus despite actual enrollment being less than the original budget (422 vs 437) illustrating the College's flexibility in operations enabling Administration to respond promptly and efficiently to unanticipated or adverse conditions.

As the College accumulates permanent endowment restricted to scholarships, increased merit aid will be available to allow the College the opportunity to increase its selectivity and to promote its distinctiveness in its admissions efforts.

The College follows a conventional budget process approach by creating preliminary projections and assumptions that are developed at the senior administrative level and then promulgated throughout the institution in various forms and iterations until the President accepts the final version to propose to the Board of Trustees for ultimate approval. Meetings with various on-campus constituencies have validated that there is satisfaction and consensus with the process and its outcomes.

As one of its strategic goals, the College has identified Advancement as a key component of financial stability. Given the high dependence on tuition revenue and limited endowment, Advancement must play a critical role in the development of annual, capital, endowment, and planned giving revenues. The comprehensive plan prepared by the Chief Advancement Officer is realistic and articulate. It consists of a robust plan to develop a "culture of philanthropy" among all constituents with a realistic timetable for achievement. The College should be commended for adopting this plan and for committing to its success.

Suggestions: The College may wish to (1) investigate seeking alternative sources of revenue beyond traditional tuition. (2) Utilize the time and talents of the newly constructed Budget & Priorities Committee to integrate tactical and strategic financial planning throughout the College.

Institutional Resources

Summary of Evidence and Findings: In regard to physical facilities, a visual inspection of the campus reveals magnificent grounds, well-maintained facilities and no outward signs of significant deferred maintenance.

The Physical Plant Department Assessment Plan is sound and realistic. It describes a reasonable approach to negotiating the fine balance between the physical needs of the campus and the reality of budget constraints. The addition of classroom, office, and residential space has been well received and additional space will be forthcoming when funding becomes available.

The College has delivered consistent budget surpluses for many years and Administration clearly understands the necessity of increasing its self-generated wealth through fund raising. However it must firmly articulate its identity to prospective students, donors and others who will understand the College's distinctiveness, what it is trying to sell and to whom.

Comments:

Operations are good relative to enrollment and the balance sheet is stable but fragile. The College has good debt coverage and good cash flow to support operations. There is a need to increase net tuition relative to student population and to increase annual and

endowed giving and emphasize a planned giving program. Franklin should provide a thorough cost/benefit analysis of graduate and other revenue generating programs. Consideration should be given to net asset composition relative to future borrowing.

Commendations: The College should be commended (1) for its continued and significant investment in its physical plant (2) a commitment to aggressive debt reduction to provide capacity for borrowing for future capital projects.

Chapter 7, Assessment

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution meets the standard that is covered in this chapter.

Institutional Assessment

Summary of Evidence and Findings: Sound institutional assessment is based on the articulation of goals at all levels across the institution and the integration of valid and reliable methods to evaluate programs and services. Qualitative and quantitative data provide evidence of institutional effectiveness and inform decision-making and resource allocation. Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with administrators, faculty, staff, and students, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard.

At Franklin, a clear and focused institutional mission informs the student-centered President's Vision and Goals statements. These documents are central to the college's current strategic plan and provide a framework for assessment of all institutional programs and services. Assessment is integrated into the plan in several ways. Each year the President and his Cabinet review and update the plan, followed by presentations to faculty, staff and trustees where relevant assessment information is shared. The Institutional Effectiveness Report (IER) is closely connected with the strategic plan and allows Franklin to track progress on key strategic goals. Assessment results inform institutional decision-making. Examples include the approval of a new Honors program to increase student retention, the addition of the EAP coordinator to support at-risk students, the creation of the FYE program, and the hiring of a new Development team to address unmet goals for total giving.

At the institutional level, a variety of tools are used to evaluate student and alumni perceptions of programs and services. Standardized instruments such as the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and the College Student Experiences Questionnaire allow for comparisons with select peers, while in-house instruments such as the Senior Exit Survey, the Alumni Survey, and targeted surveys (e.g., Student Withdrawal Survey, Orientation Survey, Resident Assistant Evaluations) allow the institution to tailor measures to specific sub-groups, programs or services. Franklin has used findings from these assessments to evaluate program effectiveness and guide revisions, thus "closing the assessment loop." Examples include changes to the orientation program, furniture additions for Falcon's Nest, and the decision to maintain a new presentation format for the IT resource fair.

Across the curriculum, each instructor develops a Course Assessment Plan (CAP) that outlines goals, outcomes and methods for evaluating student learning. The Committee on the Assessment of Student Learning reviews all CAPS and provides a summary of their findings to the faculty. Workshops on outcomes assessment have provided faculty development opportunities that support this work. There appears to be widespread faculty involvement and investment in course-level assessment.

Most majors have developed Major Assessment Programs (MAPs) outlining goals, outcomes, and assessment tools and the majority of programs have completed at least one assessment cycle. The Committee on Assessment of Student Learning also reviews MAPS with descriptive findings communicated to the faculty at large. While many majors have yet to reflect on these results and/or to use findings to revise curriculum or pedagogy, assessment at this level has led to changes in the name of programs and their requirements (e.g., Creative Writing and Literature), the elimination of a major due to lack of student demand and overlap with another major (e.g., European Studies) and the revision of learning objectives which led to course additions and eliminations in a major (e.g., Communication and Media Studies).

Administrative departments at Franklin create individual Department Assessment Plans (DAPs) which model the MAPs in that department mission, goals, activities, and assessment tools are described. Each unit is expected to complete this annual assessment process, proposing recommendations for department changes, as well as outlining future goals. The DAPs are closely linked to Franklin's Strategic Plan and often incorporate findings from institutional assessments such as the Student Satisfaction Inventory. While the majority of departments have developed a DAP, only five of fifteen areas have completed one or more assessment cycles. Greater emphasis should be placed on using assessment findings in these administrative units to provide a feedback loop for revisions to department services and programs. Assessment of services and programs under the Office of Student Life and Learning should be a specific priority given the importance of these areas in fostering a sense of community among students and in supporting student personal and social development. While the office does carry out some assessment, staff need to better integrate these findings in annual reports and share results with a wider audience.

Significant Accomplishments: In the past five years, Franklin has made significant progress in integrating assessment at all levels of the institution. Assessment tools and practices are consistent with best practices. Faculty development workshops have routinely focused on assessment topics (e.g., the creation of student learning outcomes, developing and applying rubrics). Both academic and administrative units are expected to develop assessment plans to evaluate department and program goals. In some cases, multiple measures are used to evaluate the effectiveness of these units in fulfilling the institutional mission. Institutional data are shared annually with the college community in a variety of forums and assessment evidence is integral to decision-making, specifically in regard to institutional initiatives and resource allocation.

Suggestions: Franklin collects a significant amount of student survey data at the institutional level. While these results are shared with the college community in presentations to campus constituencies and on the internal college website, they do not appear to be used in an intentional and comprehensive manner to assess specific

curricular and co-curricular programs (e.g., the CORE curriculum and Academic Travel). The College might find it useful to review the current types of student surveys that are administered and to develop a plan to better align survey administration, both the type of survey used and the time-line for administration, with specific assessment priorities. For example, questions could be added to the Senior Exit Survey that directly evaluate student perceptions of the CORE curriculum such as the Global Responsibility learning objectives. Moreover, it may not be necessary to administer all surveys on an annual basis. The development of an intentional time-line for survey administration may eliminate survey fatigue and increase student response rate, thus strengthening the reliability of the results.

Recommendations: Franklin has established the foundation for a culture of institutional assessment and has structures in place (e.g., the Committee on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes, the Academic Affairs Analyst, the work of the Special Assistant to the Provost) that have facilitated the development of assessment. However, resources need to be directed to support systematic and sustained assessment practices, better coordination and dissemination of findings, and most importantly, the development of direct measures to evaluate student learning across the institution. While major programs are using direct measures to evaluate student outcomes, aggregated direct assessment is not being used to assess institutional learning outcomes, particularly the effectiveness of the new core curriculum and the signature academic travel program in fulfilling the stated objectives.

The Report on Assessment Practices at Franklin notes that the efficiency of the Committee on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes declined when the associate dean resigned from his role as chair of the committee. The Committee's ability to evaluate the academic assessment process (specifically the CAPS and MAPS) and to determine the extent to which these methods result in usable data that inform course and program revisions appears to have lost momentum. As noted in the Self-Study, the addition of a full-time Institutional Researcher and the creation of an Office of Institutional Research and Assessment is an important priority as Franklin works to deepen assessment practices across the campus. The position should be filled by an individual with broad social science training in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies; someone who has the skills to interpret and integrate multiple measures to create a comprehensive story about the institution. This individual should be given responsibility for sustaining and synthesizing current assessment efforts, as well as for supporting academic programs and administrative departments as they further develop and refine assessment plans.

VI. Summary of Recommendations for Continuing Compliance

The team recommends that Franklin continue its emphasis on assessment-based strategic planning and decision-making. The Self-Study represents a very useful guide for the future development of the College.