EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UMBC's Self-Study focuses on institutional assessment and effectiveness, student learning outcomes, and the student experience through addressing a select group of Middle States' standards:

- Standard 1: Mission and goals
- Standard 2: Planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal
- Standard 3: Institutional resources
- Standard 7: Institutional assessment
- Standard 14: Assessment of student learning

The other nine standards that the Middle States Commission on Higher Education applies to UMBC or any other institution will be covered in the document review.

The Self-Study begins with an introductory chapter that provides an overview of UMBC, including notable achievements in the 10-year accreditation cycle that is just ending, and a description of how we went about the Study. Chapter 6 offers overarching recommendations. The intervening chapters give evidence for our compliance with the five standards listed above and make recommendations for additional action.

Findings and Conclusions

Chapter 2

Chapter 2, "Advancing Excellence Through Strategic Planning," addresses standard 1. It finds the following:

- UMBC has a strong and sustained culture of formulating and building consensus around strategic goals rooted in our mission. This work has been aided by exceptionally strong shared governance and annual university-wide leadership retreats.
- UMBC's mission, vision, and goals are regularly reviewed and formally updated to reflect changes in the environment.
- UMBC has documented the investments made to support our goals and we periodically update the campus on those investments.
- UMBC is committed to moving forward in accordance with our mission as interpreted through the goals of our strategic plan.

Chapter 2 includes the following recommendations:

- Strengthen our commitment to a culture of continuous improvement and periodically review progress toward success through data galleries at annual campus retreats.
- Develop and assess policies designed to improve performance in the areas of:
  - Student learning, retention, and graduation
  - Resource allocation
  - Research and creative achievement
  - Community connections, alumni connections, and strategic partnerships.
- Build UMBC's analytics and assessment capabilities, including an effective organizational structure for assessment, to allow University leaders to use analytics

- o Proactively
- o Across divisions and offices
- o In the service of evidence-based decisions that advance our strategic plan's goals.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3, "Providing a Foundation for Effective Results: Assessing our Planning and Budgeting Process," addresses standards 2 and 3. It finds the following:

- UMBC has a well-established track record of planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal in pursuit of our mission and goals that is collaborative, inclusive of all stakeholders, and transparent.
- UMBC has developed comprehensive, consistent, valid, and reliable assessments of the effective use of resources.
- UMBC implements controls governing financial, administrative, and auxiliary operations that ensure all University expenditures are properly recorded and comply with applicable regulations. Annual audits and additional internal and external audits are a part of this process.

Chapter 3 includes the following recommendations:

- Design a formal, documented, and shared process to monitor and assess the impact of resource allocations made to priority initiatives. This work began with the planning for the FY 2017 budget when Vice Presidents and Deans reported on 2010-2016 expenditures, outcomes, and metrics. Metrics must be clear and specific.
- Create a "rainy day" fund or central, pooled fund to address renovations, equipment and furniture replacement, and other periodic or unanticipated expenditures.
- Identify and implement next steps in achieving more efficient space use, including improvements in class scheduling, ways of recapturing unused space, and creation of long-term plans for renovation.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4, "Improving Our Institutional Effectiveness by Enhancing Our Assessment Capabilities," addresses standard 7. It finds the following:

- UMBC's new strategic plan recognizes the importance of connecting goals, strategies, and objectives to measures of success.
- Each academic unit undertakes its own Academic Program Review (APR) every seven years and the results guide the unit's development. Nonacademic units are performing regular assessments, collecting data on the performance of key activities, and taking action based on analysis of that data.
- Making use of the mechanisms of shared governance and the annual campus retreat, units regularly share assessment information with each other.
- UMBC has the opportunity to lessen the burden of data collection by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the data-collection process and leveraging the power of our well-developed data warehouse (REX).

Chapter 4 includes the following recommendations:

- Ensure units' assessment plans reflect the new strategic plan's implementation blueprint and metrics.

- Building on current efforts to share assessment information, develop a formal communication plan for assessment results to document best practices across the University. To better identify longer-term trends, encourage units to make formal presentations of assessment results to the Council of Vice Presidents and Deans, the President's Council, and other shared governance groups.
- Create a college- or campus-wide process that compiles the results of APRs across units. Such higher-level synthesis will help with tracking assessment in the academic units and planning, budgeting, and accountability.
- Align the review process for academic centers with the review process for academic departments and programs.
- More fully use the data from REX to identify problems and possible solutions and to improve decision making.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5, "Providing a Foundation for Effective Results: Assessing Learning Outcomes and Student Success to Enhance Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Improve the Learning Experience," addresses standard 14. It finds the following:

- Most UMBC departments are effectively using learning-assessment data to improve student learning, and student learning is a prominent concern of faculty, staff, and administrators.
- UMBC has made substantial progress in using direct measures of student learning. In each of the colleges, at least half of the departments are translating insights from assessments into changes to curriculum and pedagogy.
- UMBC is committed to supporting faculty ownership of assessment programs, ongoing professional development, administrative encouragement of assessment, and assessment of overall institutional effectiveness.
- UMBC has used assessment to meet the learning needs of a diverse student body, designing, implementing, and assessing programs aimed at retaining students and making sure they graduate.
- UMBC has a culture of pedagogical innovation, which has resulted in improvements in course pedagogy and curricula and includes the need for assessment.
- To increase access to student learning data, faculty and staff are collaborating to find ways to aggregate direct measures of student learning from our Blackboard Learn learning management system at the course, program, and institutional levels.
- Our Faculty Development Center (which will become the Center for Teaching and Learning) fosters student learning through consulting services, workshops, faculty learning communities, and the Provost's Teaching and Learning Symposium as well as by leveraging the pedagogical expertise on campus.

Chapter 5 includes the following recommendations:

- Build on our work so far to ensure that meaningful assessment of student learning is conducted for all of our programs.
- Establish a method for systemized data collection across all units of the University (e.g., percentage of students achieving each functional competency) for comparison.
- Continue to systematically examine trends in aggregated data that reveal learning challenges for particular groups in order to address them. The detail available in direct-measure data will allow us to design even more effective interventions for these students.

- Consider expanding our institutional learning outcomes beyond the cognitive in response to our mission to prepare students for productive work and leadership in an increasingly complex society.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 includes the following overarching recommendations:

- Improve our ability to assess the results of strategic-planning and resource-allocation decisions with improved digital and organizational infrastructures.
- Make routine use of multiyear financial forecasts for better planning.
- Commit to an assessment process that is as periodic and formal as the strategic planning process.