



**Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

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**Team Report**

**Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA, THE**

**Date of On-Site Evaluation Visit: March 1-4, 2020**

*Section A: Institutional Representatives*

**Institutional representatives at the time of the visit:**

**President/CEO**

*Mr. John Garvey, President*

**Chief Academic Officer**

*Dr. Aaron Dominguez, Provost*

**Chief Financial Officer**

*Mr. Robert Specter, Vice-President for Finance and Treasurer*

**Chair of the Board of Trustees**

*Mr. Joseph L. Carlini, Chairman*

## *Section B: Institutional Context*

The Catholic University of America is a private, non-profit university located in Washington, DC. Its Carnegie Classification is that of a doctoral university with higher research activity—four-year, medium, highly residential. It is approved to offer programs through distance education. The credential levels included in the scope of the institution's accreditation include postsecondary award (1-2 years), associate's degree or equivalent, bachelor's degree or equivalent, post-baccalaureate certificate, master's degree or equivalent, past-master's certificate, doctoral degree-professional practice, and doctoral degree-research/scholarship. The University has several additional locations in the metropolitan vicinity, as well as throughout the world.

The University is unique as the national university of the Catholic Church and the only higher education institution founded by the US bishops. Established in 1887 as a papally chartered graduate and research center, the University began offering undergraduate education in 1904. Today, the University enrolls 6,100 students. Faculty numbers stand at 377 full-time and 416 part-time.

Since the last accreditation action, reaffirmation of accreditation through the Periodic Review Report in 2015, there have been two substantive change requests in 2019 to include additional locations.

There have been substantial changes in senior leadership in the last five years. These include the provost, four vice-presidents, and several deans.

In preparation for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education team visit, the University prepared a standards-based self-study. The University chose to use the five goals from its revised strategic plan as its institutional priorities in the self-study. These priorities were to: (a) ensure that every aspect of the University is clearly and distinctly grounded in their Catholic identity, (b) aim for the highest standards of academic and professional excellence, (c) provide a vibrant, challenging, and uplifting collegiate experience, (d) offer a demanding, efficient, productive, and rewarding work environment, and (e) use their distinctive identity as a basis for securing the resources needed to fund the strategic plan.

Ms. Estelle Mathis-Lloyd, Commissioner with the Higher Education Licensure Commission, Government of the District of Columbia, joined the team for selected meetings during the visit.

### **Standard I: Mission and Goals**

**The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.**

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

Based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with campus constituencies to validate and verify compliance during the on-site evaluation visit, the team draws the following conclusions relative to this standard.

#### **Summary of Findings**

- The concise Mission Statement, adopted in December 2006, aligns with the Strategic Plan goals, in particular Goal 1, and the university-wide learning goals.
  - The statement clearly identifies the University's roots regarding its historical genesis as the educational organ of the Catholic bishops of the United States with approval by the Holy See.
  - Intentional language in the statement supports scholarship by acknowledging the focus on excellence in teaching and research.
  - The University's origin and continuing responsibility as a graduate school for Catholic clergy and church personnel require a strong commitment to scholarship, research, and intellectual leadership on the part of all constituencies.
  - The related strategic goal statement is inclusive, recognizing that fulfillment of the mission is the responsibility of all members of the community.
  - Opportunities for expression of faith through liturgy and service enrich the University's identity as "Faithfully Catholic."
  - Commitment to journey with members of the community who represent diverse religious backgrounds is expressed as well.
  - The self-study proposes the development of faculty and staff performance review processes that are aligned with the institutional mission.
- The mission has driven the development of all academic programs in terms of institutional fit:

- The curriculum common to all undergraduate students entails a focus on Enduring Questions courses that require that students explore the nature of the human condition, knowledge and wisdom, freedom and justice, the good life, and God.
- The University carefully introduces new programs that are developed in support of the mission and in response to market needs.
- All of the schools and offices of the Division of Student Affairs have their own mission statements, which are informed by the University's Mission Statement.
- Likewise, non-academic units of the University have articulated their own mission statements to foster their contribution to the institution's overarching goals.
- The University reflects its alignment with major teachings and initiatives of the papacy and the bishops of the United States.
  - On-going reflection on the principles of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* forms part of faculty discussion and mission focus.
  - The University has demonstrated commitment to environmental sustainability congruent with Pope Francis's encyclical letter, *Laudato si*.
  - The University's efforts to include members of the student body, staff, and faculty in planning and self-study processes reflect its self-description as a community.
  - Numerous interviewees, including faculty, staff, and students, have noted a culture of caring and a sense of community at Catholic University.
  - Programs that support non-traditional students, e.g., veterans, first-generation students, and Hispanic students, as well as Campus Ministry's effort to support students who experience food scarcity, reflect a commitment to Catholic social teaching.
- Campus Ministry has documented a high degree of student involvement in ministries and service.
  - This unit has, in fact, seen a dramatic increase in need/demand for its programs and services.
- The team supports Catholic University's own recommendation that the University's Catholic identity and mission continue to more deeply inform and drive the work of the University, and that it pursues periodic review of the mission.

### **Collegial Advice**

- The team suggests that academic departments and programs articulate mission statements in support of their school's and the University's missions.
- The team suggests that the institutional assessment plan provides for regular examination of awareness of and influence by the university mission among students, staff, and faculty.
- Successful mission integration might be increased by the assignment of certain functions of campus education/formation to designated mission officers or teachers.

### **Team Recommendation(s): None**

### **Requirement(s): None**

### **Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- The clergy sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church has heightened the community's resolve to promote stricter compliance with legal and ethical requirements, as well as transparency, accountability, and healing. The Catholic Project and the new certificate program in Child Protection are examples of these efforts.
- Faculty and staff are asked to articulate how their work at Catholic University will support its mission upon hire and, for tenure-track faculty, tenure review.
- Over the past decade, Campus Ministry has grown its outreach to students, including diverse student populations, faculty, as well as staff, particularly in areas related to mental health and crisis intervention.
- The area of immigration is a curricular and extracurricular focus for a partnership that includes Campus Ministry, the Law School, and other units across the University in support of a priority of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- The Enduring Questions general education curriculum ensures that all undergraduate students engage with core issues related to the University's mission.
- Knowledge of the document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* is a goal of continuing faculty and staff education.

## Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

**Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.**

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

Based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with campus constituencies to validate and verify compliance during the on-site evaluation visit, the team draws the following conclusions relative to this standard.

### Summary of Findings

- The University draws upon its Catholic identity to inform its policies and actions related to ethics and integrity.
- The Academic Freedom Policy, found in Part I of the Faculty Handbook, provides adequate academic freedom protections and also incorporates special considerations needed for those engaged in theological disciplines. Intellectual property rights, found on the University's policy site, cover all aspects commonly needed by university constituents, including copyright and copyright ownership, patents, and trademarks.
- The University's campus ministries team provides programming and services that help to enhance a campus climate of respect, caring, and concern. The campus has adequate policies to ensure all are welcome, as students, faculty, and staff.
- The University has a code of conduct for faculty and staff, as well as a document that outlines conduct expectations for students. The grievance policies and procedures appear to be thorough and sufficient for a campus of this size and complexity. Anonymous reporting is possible, and there are policies for both faculty/staff and students. Formal investigative procedures are promulgated on the University's policy site. Other required policies, such as conflict of interest, and fair employment practices, are present and appear to be sufficient. In addition, there have been several improvements to policies and employee hiring procedures and benefits. The University ensures compliance with mandatory training and reports.
- The University provides required consumer information on its public website that also provides evidence of adherence to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Requirements of Affiliation. The University has adequate information on its tuition and financial aid pages on the public website to demonstrate that it works to ensure affordability. Options for students seeking to fund their studies are clearly explained, and costs are transparent.

- A robust policy site includes expected content for a university of this size. A cycle of evaluations strengthens commitment to high standards. Risk assessments take place every four years, and policy reviews are done every three years. In addition, the University has a policy committee that meets regularly.
- In meetings with faculty and staff, it was evident that there were systemic concerns about internal communications. Comments centered on a lack of communication about how decisions are made and especially decisions related to the allocation of resources. The reported lack of transparency was stated multiple times, causing great concern to the visiting team. Issues related to communication and promulgation of policies, procedures, and other information to internal constituencies deserve careful study. The institution's success and continued improvement will depend upon the restoration of open and honest communication.

**Collegial Advice:**

- The team suggests that the university address the recommendations in the self-study regarding grievances, employment practices, communications, and compliance and assessment.
- The team suggests that the institution attend to the urgent need to enhance internal and external communication in all formats and modalities.

**Team Recommendation(s):** None

**Requirement(s):** None

**Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- The self-study process of reviewing institutional documents and interviewing key constituents appears to be an effective method of ensuring compliance. It also provides an opportunity for editing and improving documents and processes or recommending that such changes be made.
- The University has a professionally staffed compliance and ethics office, which is led by an administrator who holds both a law degree and certification as a compliance and ethics professional. The presence of this office provides important support in meeting this standard and increases confidence in various stakeholders on the campus.





### **Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience**

**An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence of all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.**

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

Based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with campus constituencies to validate and verify compliance during the on-site evaluation visit, the team draws the following conclusions relative to this standard.

#### **Summary of Findings**

- There is an impressive range of program offerings at the baccalaureate, master's and doctoral levels across the arts, humanities, sciences, engineering, nursing, law, business, classics, music, library science, social work, and religious and ecclesiastical studies.
  - There are corollary programs to complement undergraduate programs, such as First-year Experience, Liberal Arts (General Education), Honors, study abroad, and consortium participation.
  - A traditional liberal arts perspective is found throughout the undergraduate curriculum, aligned with the University's Catholic mission.
  - There is an institutional commitment to established areas of graduate study not universally found at a medium-sized university (e.g., architecture, physics, engineering, musicology).
  - Opportunities exist to participate in discovery research and creative work in many disciplines at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
  - Specialized programs have earned national and international accreditation.
- A large, well-credentialed full-time faculty is recruited, retained, and advanced through stringent criteria.
  - Clear and detailed criteria, processes and procedures exist for the evaluation of faculty for appointment, reappointment, tenure, and promotion, as well as post-tenure evaluation (Out of Classroom Activities Report).
  - Professional development opportunities are available through the Center for Teaching Excellence.

- Well-qualified faculty mentors work with students on research and creative endeavors, including training candidates in doctoral programming.
  - Participation and membership in academic, scholarly and professional associations and affiliations promote excellence in faculty work.
- A general education program that includes traditional Liberal Arts and Honors has defined student competencies that can be developed and assessed. Competencies include reasoning; critical reading; oral, written and creative expression; technological and information literacy; quantitative reasoning; teamwork; and scientific inquiry.
  - The Enduring Questions course challenges students to consider and make reasoned judgments through the lens of Catholic and other belief systems.
  - In alignment with the institutional mission, courses also attend to the development of personal character, integrity, compassion, responsibility, Christian virtue, and pursuit of the common good.
  - Respect is shown for the values, ethics, and perspectives of other persons, cultures, and faiths.
- Institutional investment and continuous renewal for facilities for scholarly work is evident.
  - Large and renowned libraries with print, electronic and special collections
  - Sufficient learning opportunities and resources to support programs and student progress
  - Opportunities and facilities appropriate for research, scholarship, creative and professional work across all disciplines at the postgraduate level
- The academic rigor of instruction is documented through detailed and comprehensive syllabi, evaluation instruments, and performance criteria for awarding graduate degrees.
  - There is a history of extensive academic assessment of instruction, including student evaluations of teaching and courses.
  - Undergraduate and Graduate Announcements (catalogs) are updated annually and describe the University's mission, goals, history, facilities, organization, calendar, curricula, support services, criteria for admissions and degree completion, and academic policies and procedures. The vast majority of this information is available on the University's website.

- The university boasts a broad and diverse network of governmental, corporate and organizational partners for extramural study and scholarship.
- Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of educational programs and units
  - A program for broad periodic educational outcomes assessment is devised by the Assessment Council and undertaken by the Office of Financial Planning, Institutional Research, and Assessment.
  - Academic program reviews for specialized program accreditations and periodic self-assessment.

### **Collegial Advice**

- Commence the implementation of goals-based program assessment and communicate its results to the University community.
- Implement a learning outcomes-based assessment plan for Liberal Arts (General Education), Honors, and First-Year Experience programs and communicate its results to the University community.
- Leverage the Center for Teaching Excellence as a venue for training and assisting faculty and staff with the development of the academic assessment plans.
- The University should continue to evaluate its long-term ability to sustain its uncommonly broad and deep range of academic programs.

**Team Recommendation(s):** None.

**Requirement(s):** None.

### **Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- The University is to be commended for continuing to offer high-quality undergraduate and graduate educational programs consistent with its mission and commitment to maintaining its status as a research institution during a time of on-going challenges.
- The University's faculty is to be commended for their commitment to teaching and scholarship during a time of considerable institutional change and uncertainty.

## Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

**Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.**

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

Based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with campus constituencies to validate and verify compliance during the on-site evaluation visit, the team draws the following conclusions relative to this standard.

### Summary of Findings

- The Catholic University of America utilizes an enrollment management model for undergraduate recruitment and admissions. Each year, the enrollment management committee reviews the recruitment plan, and the undergraduate admissions counselors examine the recruitment and application review process. The University hosts Cardinal Preview Days and Odyssey Days for admitted student days as well as multiple Saturday visits, primarily June through August. The Office of Marketing and Communications reports to the Division of Enrollment Management and focuses on external marketing and communication to prospective students and families.
- Information and resources for both undergraduate and graduate students located on the financial aid webpages are readily available and demonstrate a commitment to transparency and student support.
- Each summer, during new student orientation, undergraduate students have the opportunity to create personal connections with peer leaders, faculty, administrators, and other new students. During orientation, students are provided with information on resources, including campus safety, student employment, study abroad, cultural programming, community service, faith formation, academic program, advising, and testing sessions. In addition to orientation, there are pre-orientation programs for students registered with the Office of Disability Services and for International students.
- There is a streamlined process for transfer credits for institutions within the *Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area*. Additionally, the transfer credit process and policies (including AP exams and IB credits) are clearly outlined on the prospective student webpages. FERPA

training is required for all employees during their onboarding with additional training annually. An advanced FERPA training is available for faculty and staff with an advanced responsibility to student records and information.

- New first-year students participate in the First-Year Experience, which is a learning community (LC) in which each cohort of first-year students are clustered in groups of 18 students and take four core classes in Philosophy, Theology, and English together. In addition to the four classes, each LC will meet for dinner once a semester, participate in a service-learning project, and have a class-based excursion.
- The University delivers programs and services that contribute to students' personal, professional, academic, and spiritual growth through various offices, programs, and initiatives. Various student support areas collaborate for a seamless student-facing support system and process.
  - Center for Academic and Career Success
  - Division of Student Affairs & Dean of Students Office: Student Health Services, Student Wellness, Fitness and Recreation, Counseling Center, PEERS (Peer education group), Center for Cultural Engagement, Athletics, Student Organizations - Office of Campus Activities (OCA)
  - Disability Support Services
  - Campus Ministry
- Center for Academic and Career Success (CACS) is responsible for academic advising and career services support for students from 'orientation to graduation.' Each new student is assigned an Academic and Career Advisor (ACA) after matriculation for their first year. After their first year, students receive a second advisor for their academic major. Advisors have a caseload of approximately 225-250 each (freshmen through seniors). Advisors and students use a degree audit tool for tracking and progress to degree completion. This office plays an integral role in supporting students for retention and graduation. CACS uses analytics for early identification and intervention of students. Data points used include high school GPA, SAT/ACT scores (optional), first-generation college status, gender, and disability status. Based on these metrics, students are assigned risk scores and matched with interventions for proactive support, including tutoring, academic coaching, and mentoring.
- Tutoring is available for all undergraduate courses and in select graduate courses, weekly subject-based group tutoring sessions, and supports the Math Center in collaboration with the Department of Mathematics. The University Writing Center serves undergraduate and graduate students in all phases of the writing process.
- The office of the Registrar is the custodian of records. Students are informed of FERPA as soon as they are admitted. The University mandates that employees complete FERPA training every two years. A new online training

system reminds employees and their managers when training needs to be completed.

- The Office of Institutional Research conducts annual assessments to inform support of the student experience. Assessments include the National Survey of Student Engagement, the Undergraduate Alumni Survey, the Graduate Alumni Survey, and the Undergraduate Senior Survey. Additionally, divisions and departments utilize various metrics to inform the delivery of student services and support.

**Collegial Advice:**

- The team suggests consideration of increased student support services for non-traditional students, commuter students, and graduate students.

**Team Recommendation(s): None**

**Requirement(s): None**

**Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- Student support has been improved through the reorganization and restructuring of offices, resulting in a streamlined student experience. Examples include enrollment and marketing, as well as academic advising and career support.
- Improvement in programming is increasingly based on the utilization of technology and data analytics in a variety of areas, including academic advising and career support, undergraduate admissions, and graduate admissions.
- The generous allowance of free counseling sessions per student is an exceptional commitment to student well-being.
- The improvements in the social climate and spirit of the campus result from the administrative leadership in recent years.

## **Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment**

**Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their programs of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.**

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

Based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with campus constituencies to validate and verify compliance during the on-site evaluation visit, the team draws the following conclusions relative to this standard.

### **Summary of Findings**

- The University has clearly articulated institutional goals explicitly linked to the mission of the University. The conceptual framework of student learning assessment at CUA ties course, program, and institutional level goals to the mission of the University
  - There is a formalized system of ensuring that course syllabi are standardized and consistent across schools and departments. The syllabi include the educational goals of individual courses.
  - The analysis of a sample of syllabi demonstrates that the majority of courses have these stated course goals that are published on their Outcomes Assessment webpage.
  - The University uses a varied and appropriate cadre of assessment measures used to identify areas for improvement, such as rubrics, capstone courses, surveys, and pre-test/post-test instruments.
  - Most degree and certificate programs have formal statements of learning goals that are described in measurable terms.
  - The team believes the extent to which the mission is actually articulated in all of these components needs to be more consistent.
  - Support areas where programs are integrated with student learning and achievement have clearly established goals, such as in the Center for Teaching Effectiveness, Student Affairs, and Academic and Career Services. Each of these areas formed clearly articulated goals and objectives taken from formalized needs assessments.
- Evidence demonstrates that each academic unit prepared annual reports of assessment of student learning outcomes. The consistency, detail, and thoroughness of the Key Assessment Findings and Major Assessment Findings reports provided excellent examples of an organized and systematic assessment.
  - These student learning assessment processes were suspended while academic self-studies were conducted as part of the Academic Renewal Process in 2016-17.

- The team did not find evidence that the deferred assessment processes had been reinstated in the years that followed the Academic Renewal process.
  - Specialized accredited programs have continued to leverage the assessment requirements within those accreditation standards as evidence of systematic and organized student learning assessment.
    - Similarly, student learning assessment is tied to professional expectations, as reflected in external professional examinations.
  - Assessment of the newly implemented general education curriculum is currently being conducted.
    - A sound plan is in place, but the assessment results haven't been fully realized since it was implemented in fall 2018.
  - Other support and service areas within the University have thorough systems to measure the student achievement of program goals.
    - Evidence of such practices was found in the appendices of the self-study, as well as documentation shared during the self-study visit.
- For many years, the University had demonstrated its use of assessment data to drive continuous improvement in multiple ways across the University. This had been thoroughly documented in the use of “Key” and “Major” Findings Assessment up through 2015-16.
  - The team did not find subsequent evidence of this in the self-study document, inventory locker, website, and focused discussions on campus during the self-study visit. This was primarily due to the purposeful plan to defer student learning assessment of the non-specialty accredited programs in 2017 during the Academic Renewal study.
  - Periodic and regular visits from external accreditors focusing on specialized accreditation have contributed to the process of program improvement. The team found substantial evidence of this in the inventory locker, as well as the self-study document.
  - CUA collects data from annual course evaluations, and this information has helped to improve pedagogy and teaching effectiveness.
  - Assessment data pertaining to key indicators of student success has been gathered, analyzed, and used consistently by the Offices of Academic and Career Services and Student Affairs.
    - The Division of Student Affairs has well-established processes to assess effectiveness.
    - The use of these results has significantly impacted key indicators of student success in such areas as retention, graduation rates, counseling services, and disability services.



- Essential components of the strategic plan focus on promoting a culture of assessment and academic effectiveness, building excellence, and promoting interdisciplinary efforts.
  - The plan includes a description of the objective, as well as the assignment of timelines and areas of responsibility.
  - The Assessment Council is conducting a thorough review of its processes, including goal development, assessment measures, and use of assessment results to ensure that these practices are consistent, systematic, and on-going.

**Collegial Advice:**

- Increase participation and support of student learning assessment by establishing processes that clearly link strategic planning, assessment, and resource allocation.
- Establish methods for improving the communication of assessment results to stakeholders.
- Update assessment guidelines and related documentation on the University website regularly.
- Integrate professional development opportunities in the area of assessment into the Center for Teaching Excellence as part of new faculty orientation.

**Team Recommendation(s):**

- High priority must be given to the development and implementation of organized and systematic assessments that evaluate all relevant processes contributing to the academic mission. This process can utilize existing models, such as those in place prior to the suspension in 2017, as well as newly designed ones.
- Implement organized and systematic assessments for the newly designed general education (Liberal Arts) curriculum.
- The institution should provide further evidence of:
  - the development and implementation of organized and systematic assessments that evaluate the extent of student achievement.
  - the development and implementation of organized and systematic assessments that evaluate the extent of student achievement in general education.

**Requirement(s):** None

**Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:**

- The Division of Student Affairs provides a comprehensive approach to assessment that includes clear examples of how assessment is used to improve educational effectiveness.
- The consistency, detail, and thoroughness of the former Key Assessment Findings and Major Assessment Findings reports provided excellent examples of an organized and systematic assessment. They provide a strong foundation for future improvements.

## **Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement**

**The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.**

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

Based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with campus constituencies to validate and verify compliance during the on-site evaluation visit, the team draws the following conclusions relative to this standard.

### **Summary of Findings**

- The University Strategic Plan is comprehensive and well organized. As updated in 2016, it includes metrics for assessment and identification of responsible individuals, which facilitate the regular assessment of progress by the Executive Committee of the Administrative Council and the Board of Trustees.
  - There are unit plans in place for some but not all academic and administrative units in support of the University plan.
  - The University mission and Strategic Plan goals clearly informed the development of the University budget, the priorities of the Campus Framework Plan, the Proposal for Academic Renewal, and the Campaign priorities.
  - University planning and resource allocation are well integrated. Still, broader and more in-depth communication of financial decision-making and priorities is needed to build support in a climate of resource constraint. The Self-Study acknowledges this challenge.
- Catholic University of America's financial analysis, external audits, and rating agency reports indicate that current resources are adequate to continue to implement its mission and goals.
- University leadership and faculty worked collaboratively and proactively to address recent enrollment reductions.
  - Significant spending reductions, debt restructuring, and budget reallocations were made, but so were strategic incremental investments to enhance CUA's revenue generation and competitiveness.
  - The University financial forecast relies on designated funds to balance the operating budget.

- Enrollment and financial aid projections in the forecast may be difficult to achieve in this highly competitive environment, putting additional pressure on operating results.
  - Strategies are in place to assess the adequacy of and effective deployment of University resources. Internal analyses have been supplemented by the utilization of external experts in a number of reviews relating to key revenue and expense categories.
- The University is making progress in addressing infrastructure and facilities needs identified in its updated Campus Master Plan, and technology needs are regularly evaluated.
- The Comprehensive Campaign has shown impressive results, and campaign proceeds are being invested and deployed to strengthen further the University's research, teaching, campus environment, and student scholarships.

### **Collegial Advice**

- University leadership and the Board of Trustees should regularly review multi-year financial forecasts, including a range of assumptions.
  - Given the University's trends in net tuition revenue, reliance on financial reserves, and staffing and compensation needs, the University should evaluate whether the scope of its academic and non-academic programs is sustainable.
  - The University has made needed improvements in academic, residential, and athletic facilities, but should review whether the balance of investment between facilities, personnel, and programs is effectively aligned with its Strategic Plan goals.
- The University should ensure that written strategic plans are developed for all units and used to assess progress to goals regularly.
  - The team suggests that the University formalize a holistic plan to address diversity within all constituent groups (e.g., an Affirmative Action Plan).
- The Self Study reflects several recommendations that relate to employee satisfaction.
  - The University should commit adequate resources for related initiatives and openly share their progress, particularly relative to the compensation study and Gallup engagement study, to improve employee engagement and satisfaction.
  - Library resources are essential for academic excellence and scholarly work but have been given lower priority in resource allocation. Particular attention needs to be given to the restoration of resources for library services.

**Team Recommendation(s):** None

**Requirement(s):** None

**Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- The University's careful deployment of debt to help support Strategic Plan goals and its adherence to and on-going assessment of compliance with its Debt Policy is a best practice.
- The University has been proactive in responding to its financial challenges and has a robust financial planning model that supports decision making on resource allocation.
- The decision to increase advancement staffing is proving effective in providing increased gifts to offset tuition revenue losses.
- Use of external expertise to study compensation and should result in positive outcomes since it demonstrates the commitment of leadership to finding objectively validated solutions for current financial dilemmas

## Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

**The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituents it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.**

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

Based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with campus constituencies to validate and verify compliance during the on-site evaluation visit, the team draws the following conclusions relative to this standard.

### Summary of Findings

The compliance with Standard VII is described clearly, and certain recent initiatives deserve special recognition:

- Restructuring of the University's board into a two-component board consisting of a Board of Fellows and a Board of Trustees results in significant improvement in board engagement and opportunities for a more diverse membership.
  - The Board of Fellows holds the reserved powers that guarantee the preservation of the unique ecclesiastical mission of the University. The Board of Trustees is composed of both bishops and lay leaders. This board exercises full fiduciary responsibility for the institution.
  - The revised by-laws outline the new structure thoroughly.
  - Future assessments of the newly structured board will be needed.
  - Continuing board development and education take on increased importance in light of these changes.
- A newly created Administrative Council, and its Executive Committee, permits expanded communication between the president, vice presidents, and senior managers.
  - The Executive Committee of this Council manages the work of expanded consultation and communication with key constituents.
  - While the Council allows for expanded communication, to date, it remains a goal to develop its advisory or consultative potential.
- The principle of shared governance is one of utmost importance to the health of any university.

- The Faculty Handbook contains clear descriptions of the rights and responsibilities of all parties, and its policies are clear and comprehensive.
- Key committees (Benefits, Economic Welfare, Policy, Handbook) provide a place for critical consultation.
- The faculty senate has a membership that includes academic administrators as well as faculty members. This two-fold membership is viewed as diminishing the voice of “rank and file” faculty members by some while others hold that it provides stronger outcomes combining both perspectives.
- There are three faculty representatives on the board of trustees who also have direct meetings with the board chair.
- The Academic Renewal Project started in a context of enrollment decline and consequent financial difficulties. This appears to have created significant tension between faculty and administration.
  - Major reductions in faculty and staff and cuts in resource allocations resulted in a climate of continued anxiety and increased stress levels.
    - Faculty members describe an erosion of influence and reduction of direct involvement in matters of concern to them.
    - This suggests that a gap exists between formal policy and its actual application in situations in which the faculty expects consultation and inclusion.
  - This finding results from interviews and forum discussion but was not reflected in the self-study document.
- Student self-governance is the work of two councils and a student senate.
  - Student satisfaction with these structures is high.
  - Opportunities significant interaction with the Academic Senate and the president are available to student leaders.

**Collegial Advice:**

- Strengthening commitment to shared governance can be served by the identification of areas of policy or practice that require evaluation or re-negotiation.
- Alignment of communication between the board, president, and faculty senate (through its chair) will strengthen communication and transparency.
- Education of board members needs to become consistent and aligned to both mission integration and strategic goals.
- In order to guarantee the healthy growth of the new board structure, an annual assessment should be created to monitor progress and allow for early problem identification.

**Team Recommendation(s):** None

**Requirement(s):** None

**Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- The creation of a board structure that protects the authority of members of the Catholic hierarchy for the continuation of the University with the need for increased lay expertise and philanthropic support is a major achievement. It is sure to have long-lasting importance. We commend President Garvey for his leadership of this historic change.
- The appointment of the Administrative Council permits broader participation with senior executives and can serve to improve communications with the larger community.
- The inclusion of boards of undergraduate and graduate faculty as structures of the Faculty Senate dramatically increases faculty input on academic matters.



### *Section D: Requirements of Affiliation*

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet all of the Requirements of Affiliation based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with campus constituencies.

### *Section E: Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Compliance Requirements*

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet all accreditation-relevant federal compliance requirements. This judgment is based on a review of the Institutional Federal Compliance Report, evidence, and interviews with campus constituencies.

### *Section F: Verification of Student Achievement Data and Institutional Data*

#### **I. Student Achievement Data**

In the team's judgment, the institution's approach to implementing its student achievement goals appears to be effective, consonant with higher education expectations, and consistent with the institution's mission. This judgment is based on a review of the institution's student achievement information provided in the self-study report, evidence, interviews with campus constituencies, and the student achievement URL available on its website.

In addition, in the team's judgment, the institution's student achievement information data that it discloses to the public appear to be reasonably valid and accurate in light of other data and information reviewed by the team.

The University offers a broad range of baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral programs across the arts, humanities, sciences, engineering, nursing, law, business, classics, music, library science, social work, and religious and ecclesiastical studies. The University is deploying a program of periodic educational outcomes assessments, including academic program reviews for specialized program accreditations, goals-based program self-assessments, and learning outcomes-based assessment of the Liberal Arts, Honors, and First-Year Experience programs.

## II. Verification of Institutional Data

In the team's opinion, the institution's processes and procedures for verifying institutional data appear to be reasonably valid and effective.

The University has two areas that ensure that institutional data is valid and effective. Both the institutional research office and the university-wide compliance and ethics program provide access to data as well as ensure compliance with validity standards. Internal and external audits of the data processes are regularly conducted. Interviews with various campus constituencies confirmed the processes that were discussed in the self-study and other documentation requested by the team.

### *Section G: Review of Third-Party Comments*

- No third-party comments were received in accordance with Commission policy and procedures.

### *Section H: List of Additional Evidence*

- **Standard I**
  - Lent 2020 brochure
  - Participants in Various Campus Ministry Service Activities
  - Responding to Their Needs: A Campus Ministry Survey of Students, Faculty, and Staff
  - Self-Reported Religious Affiliation, 2018-2019
- **Standard II**
  - Institutional Data Reporting Review Detailed Report
  - Principles of Ethical & Responsible Conduct (brochure)
  - University Compliance & Ethics Program Report to the Community, March 2020
- **Standard VI**
  - Campus Framework Plan, March 13, 2017
  - Capital Budget Summary FY 20
  - Catholic University of America Monthly Investment Report, Endowment Portfolio, September 30, 2019
  - Dashboard of Critical Indicators
  - Debt Affordability and Capacity Study, January 2019

- Deferred Maintenance: 2019 Facilities Condition Assessment and Findings
- Internal Audit: Academic School Governance Review Detailed Report
- IT Plans: Project Plan and Intake Form
- Long-Range Financial Forecast FY 2023
- Moody's Investors Service Rating, November 2, 2018
- Operating Budget Summary FY 20
- S&P Global Ratings, RatingsDirect, Catholic University of America, October 29, 2018
- Treasurer's Report, FY21 Financial Performance as of September 30, 2019
- **Standard VII**
  - Assessment Council Subcommittees, Projects and Actions, 2019-2020
  - Key Assessment Findings Communications/E-mails, 2019

### *Section I: Self-Study Report and Process Comments*

The University's self-study report and accompanying evidence demonstrated a high level of detail and analysis. Preparation for the team visit was both thorough and thoughtful. Additional requests for appointments or data were quickly and efficiently handled. The members of the team appreciated the University's efforts to accommodate the team.