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RMU’s catalog is published on its website at [http://www.rmu.edu](http://www.rmu.edu). To access it, click on “Academics” near the top of the page and then on “Catalog” in the resulting dropdown menu.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Robert Morris University ("RMU" or "the University"), founded in 1921, presently enrolls 5,065 full- and part-time undergraduate and graduate students from 37 states and 14 foreign countries. The University currently has the Carnegie basic classification of "Master’s Colleges and Universities (larger programs)." RMU’s last Self-Study evaluation visit occurred in April, 2002. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education ("MSCHE") reaffirmed RMU’s accreditation in June, 2002.

The preponderance of RMU’s activities are carried out at its main 230 acre Moon Township campus, located 15 minutes from Pittsburgh International Airport and 17 miles southwest of downtown Pittsburgh. RMU’s downtown Pittsburgh Center for Adult and Continuing Education provides administrative offices, classrooms and library facilities, as well as housing the School of Adult and Continuing Education and the University’s Media Arts program.

RMU’s current Mission Statement states that “Robert Morris University is an independent, co-educational institution committed to offering high quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs that integrate the liberal arts with technical and professional programs.” The Mission Statement is being revised as part of the University’s current strategic planning process. However, the educational mission of RMU always has and will center upon offering professionally-focused, applied education.

The University has been expanding its curriculum beyond its traditional roots as a business college for the past fifteen years. That expansion continued during the five years since the last decennial Self-Study in 2002. RMU is now a comprehensive institution with six academic schools offering degree programs at the bachelors, masters and doctoral levels. These new programs have broadened and deepened the University’s curriculum, added much to the intellectual diversity of campus life, and provided growth and additional financial resources to the institution.

RMU presently offers 24 undergraduate degree programs, many of which offer multiple concentrations. Bachelor's degree programs include: the bachelor of arts (B.A.) in applied mathematics, communication, English, environmental science, media arts and social science; the bachelor of fine arts (B.F.A.) in media arts; the bachelor of science (B.S.) in actuarial science, applied mathematics, applied psychology, business education, competitive intelligence systems, computer information systems, elementary education, engineering (industrial, mechanical and software), environmental science, health services administration, information sciences, manufacturing engineering, organizational studies, professional communications and information systems, and social science; the bachelor of science in business administration (B.S.B.A.) with concentrations in accounting, economics, finance, hospitality and tourism management, management, marketing, and sport management; and the bachelor of science in nursing (B.S.N.). In addition, RMU offers preparation for state teacher certification in communication, English, mathematics, and social studies education.
RMU offers 15 masters degree programs including: the master of science (M.S.) in business education, communications and information systems, competitive intelligence systems, engineering management, human resource management, information security and assurance, information systems management, instructional leadership, internet information systems, IT project management, nonprofit management, organizational studies, and taxation; the master of business administration (M.B.A.); and the master of science in nursing (M.S.N.).

The University also offers four doctoral degrees: the Doctor of Science (D.Sc.) in Information Systems and Communications; the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Engineering, and in Instructional Management and Leadership; and the Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P., effective Fall 2007).

RMU presently employs 166 full-time and 198 part-time instructional faculty. Eighty-four percent of the full-time faculty hold terminal degrees in their fields. The full-time equivalent student-to-faculty ratio is 16:1.

The University’s fiscal discipline and alertness to opportunities in new market niches have enabled it to grow its enrollment and remain financially healthy. This has been accomplished in the face of a primary market area that is not growing in population, yet is increasingly competitive. RMU has had positive operating income for over 25 consecutive years and maintains an investment-grade bond rating from Moody’s Investor Services.

A. Preparation of the Periodic Review Report (“PRR”)

The 2007 Periodic Review Report was researched and written by a ten-person steering committee that represents the entire extent of RMU’s operations. The committee included six non-administrative members of the full-time faculty (including the Chair), one Dean, one student life administrator, one business affairs administrator, and one administrator from the Office of the President. Each of the five major chapters of the PRR was prepared by a team of two members of the steering committee.

The steering committee met and communicated frequently throughout the fall of 2006 and the spring of 2007 as its members conducted interviews and research leading up to the preparation of the individual working group reports. Three drafts of each chapter were reviewed by the steering committee. The University’s Director of Institutional Research, a member of the steering committee, produced and edited a draft of the complete PRR, which was reviewed by the entire steering committee. The edited document was given to RMU’s administration for its review subsequent to final discussion of the complete document by the steering committee.

The draft PRR was posted to the University’s website on April 8, 2007. To motivate review and feedback, an evaluation form was attached to the document and sent via electronic mail to all University employees. In addition, three community review and comment meetings were held in late April to gather feedback on the draft report from
interested parties within the RMU community. These comments were discussed by the steering committee and changes were made to the draft PRR as appropriate.

The steering committee believes that the process for preparing the PRR was inclusive and that all interested parties within the RMU community have had adequate opportunity to review and comment upon its findings.

**B. Major Institutional Changes and Developments Since 2002**

The University has had consequential changes in addition to the previously mentioned growth and increasing diversification of its curriculum. In January, 2002 RMU’s transition to university status became official. This major event in the life of the institution was recognized by internal celebrations as well as by external publicity.

The RMU community believed that the conferral of this status by the Pennsylvania Department of Education was recognition of RMU’s growth and movement beyond its roots as a business school. While business-related fields still account for about half of undergraduate enrollment, approximately 20% of RMU’s current undergraduates are seeking degrees in fields that the University did not offer only five years ago. This institutional maturation has yielded many benefits to RMU, including a more diversified stream of tuition revenue, more residential students, a doubling of full-time faculty since 1999, and the addition of a new variety of academic perspectives to campus life. Growth has also presented challenges by straining RMU’s academic and residential facilities and other infrastructure. It’s a nice problem to have, but a problem nonetheless.

Another major development in the past five years was a presidential transition in 2005. Dr. Edward A. Nicholson retired after sixteen highly successful years as RMU’s President. RMU’s Board of Trustees selected Dr. Gregory G. Dell’Omo of St. Joseph’s University in Philadelphia as Dr. Nicholson’s successor. Dr. Dell’Omo started the process of creating a new strategic plan for the University as one of his early initiatives. This effort, which is nearing completion, has engendered much self-analysis (rather akin to a self-study) as the University community contemplates the institution’s future direction. The new strategic plan will have five major initiatives: establishing a clear and focused institutional profile; improving academic quality, infrastructure, and RMU’s brand identity; and strengthening its financial position.

The University is facing a transition in its chief academic officer as of the date of this report. Dr. William J. Katip, Provost since 1999, is leaving the University after eight successful years in his position. A search for his successor will begin soon. Under Dr. Katip’s leadership 24 new degree programs were approved and launched while several degree programs with declining enrollment were eliminated.

The RMU community is also proud of its attainment of three discipline-specific accreditations since 2003 to accompany its regional accreditation from Middle States. RMU gained ABET-CAC accreditation for two of its information systems majors in 2003, followed by ABET-EAC accreditation for its undergraduate Engineering programs
in 2004, and CCNE accreditation for its BSN and MSN degrees in Nursing in 2005. The ABET-EAC and CCNE accreditations were earned in the shortest time possible for newly-launched programs in these disciplines. RMU is presently in the latter stages of candidacy for AACSB accreditation for its business programs as well as TEAC accreditation for its teacher certification program. Pursuit and maintenance of these discipline-specific accreditations is an important goal for the University.

C. Highlights of the Periodic Review Report

1. Major Challenges and Opportunities

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis conducted as part of RMU’s current strategic planning process concluded that the University’s strengths include its reputation for producing well-prepared, ready to work graduates, its market-focused approach to curriculum diversification, its focus upon communication skills as part of its core curriculum, its agility in seizing new opportunities, its commitment to student success, and its great degree of fiscal discipline. RMU’s opportunities include reaching beyond its traditional primary marketing area, building its adult and continuing education market segment, and increasing its use of educational technology to reach new markets.

The analysis also identified some weaknesses and threats for the University. RMU was perceived as being weak financially with a lack of endowment income to lessen its reliance upon tuition revenue as its main source of funds. It was noted that RMU’s alumni also do not have a culture of giving as many were commuting or non-traditional students. Further, the analysis concluded that RMU’s facilities were inadequate in several respects and that the University had not succeeded in changing its brand identity away from its traditional roots as a business school. Identified threats were the unfavorable future demographics for RMU’s primary market area, increasing competition from for-profit institutions in the adult and online markets, increasing government oversight and external regulation, and competitive fallout from the lack of a clear brand identity.

2. Enrollment and Finance Trends and Projections

RMU has been successful in shifting to a higher percentage of full-time undergraduate students. This was accomplished through a change in the University’s tuition structure from per-credit to flat rate as well as via the introduction of new academic and athletic programs of appeal to residential, full-time students. RMU also continued to successfully and aggressively expand its graduate programs. A high priority is to attract more students from outside RMU’s traditional five-county primary market area in light of anticipated declines in high school graduates in that region. The University has also introduced academic programs, such as actuarial science, that attract students with better-than-average credentials as one means of improving the overall quality of the student body.
RMU will not add new academic and athletic programs at the same rate as over the past decade. Quality improvement, geographic diversification and selected new program rollouts in high-growth fields are thus important to the University’s future financial health. Planning projections call for a steady increase in traditional full-time undergraduates while anticipating a continuing decline in part-time enrollment in that segment.

Graduate enrollment increased 21% from 2001-06 due to the introduction of an extensive number of new graduate degree programs. Healthcare has been targeted as a major area of future expansion at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. The University does not believe that areas such as Education, which has had very large enrollment increases over the past several years, will continue to grow at the same rate in the future. Total graduate headcount enrollment is projected to increase by 24% between 2006-07 and 2010-11 due to increases in many different existing graduate majors as well as to new graduate programs such as the full-time Doctor of Nursing Practice degree.

RMU’s steady enrollment and conservative budget practices have resulted in the production of an annual reserve of $2,000,000 or better in each of the last five years. Similar results are projected for the next five years. RMU’s revenues increased by 49% from 2001-06 but it also incurred significant cost increases during this period as it paid for the staff, facilities and infrastructure needed to support its expanded array of programs.

3. Assessment Processes and Plans

RMU had just completed both an institution-wide outcomes assessment plan as well as underlying unit-level plans at the time of its 2002 Peer Review Team visit. It was suggested by the Team that RMU develop a “culture of evidence” regarding its assessment effort.

It is gratifying to see the progress that the institution has made in regard to outcomes assessment since the last Self-Study. The subcommittee that studied this area believes that RMU is in compliance with MSCHE’s Standards 7 and 14 and that there is evidence that a significant number of assessment efforts have produced data that has been utilized for the improvement of teaching and learning. RMU is developing significant strengths in its application of course-based assessments as well as in its standardized and comprehensive documentation of its assessment effort.

The subcommittee took encouragement from the fact that several unit-level assessment plans have been rewritten on the basis of experience to be more realistic and manageable. It was noteworthy that the process of seeking program-specific accreditations has been a major impetus for outcomes assessment in those areas seeking such accreditation. The specialty accrediting bodies usually have very stringent and explicit assessment requirements that often require tracking specific learning outcomes across multiple courses or an entire program. Lessons learned from these experiences have been applied in other contexts, such as the general education curriculum, and in other academic units.
RMU’s focus upon applied, career-centered education has also been beneficial from an outcomes assessment standpoint. Graduates of several of RMU’s majors, including Education and Nursing, are required to obtain licensing via external examination in order to take any position in their chosen field. Results of these examinations are widely published and inferior performance would be both catastrophic to the graduates of these programs as well as embarrassing to the University. The University’s students and alumni have fared extremely well on these tests, providing some third party validation of successful learning outcomes in these disciplines.

4. Evidence of Linked Institutional Planning and Budgeting

The subcommittee found that a strong linkage exists between RMU’s planning and budgeting processes and that this linkage has been extremely beneficial to the University’s well-being.

RMU has a highly structured budget process with a strict timetable and review/approval procedures. Like most colleges, RMU’s personnel costs comprise most of its operating outlays so considerable attention has to be paid to prioritizing all other expenses. RMU is tuition-dependent and significant time and effort is expended to ensure that enrollment projections are as accurate as possible and that planning for contingencies has occurred.

The University’s priorities have traditionally been identified by a series of five-year plans that contain quantified enrollment, facilities, and fundraising goals. Progress towards these goals was regularly reviewed by the President, the Board, the President’s Cabinet and by the University Planning Council. RMU has historically had great success in meeting its five-year goals and they have been helpful in guiding the University’s direction.

The University’s new President believes that the recent growth of the institution merits a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to planning. For the past year a cross-section of the RMU community has been developing a comprehensive, five-year strategic plan to guide the University’s future development. This plan will start with a revised Mission Statement and a list of core values as its philosophical basis. Five major strategic initiatives have been established for the plan, each one of which is supported by major goals and their underlying strategies and measures.

The new strategic plan was intended from the beginning to be a source document for a makeover of each RMU operating unit’s own strategic plan. Budget allocations and priorities will flow from both unit-level and University-level plans in a coordinated way once the entire planning cycle has been completed.
ROBERT MORRIS UNIVERSITY

is seeking REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION.

The undersigned hereby certify that the institution meets all established eligibility requirements of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and the accreditation standards detailed in Characteristics of Excellence.

___ exceptions or important qualifying comments are noted in an attached memorandum (Check if applicable)

_________________________  ______________________
Gregory G. Dell’Omo, Ph.D.    Date
President
Chief Executive Officer

_________________________  ______________________
Joseph W. Nocito     Date
Chair, Board of Trustees
I. SUMMARY OF INSTITUTION’S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS TEAM REPORT AND INSTITUTIONAL SELF-STUDY

No formal Requirements were issued to Robert Morris University by Middle States in response to the 2002 Self-Study and subsequent peer review visit. However, a number of helpful suggestions for improvement were offered by the Peer Review Team. Although RMU was required to neither adopt those suggestions nor to report on them in this document, the PRR steering committee believes that a brief discussion of the University’s response to those external suggestions provides some strong examples of RMU’s receptiveness to outside guidance regarding opportunities for institutional improvement.

A. Business Affairs

The 2002 Peer Review Team suggested: (a) continued efforts toward building RMU’s endowment by keeping benchmark data to determine whether a reduction in the current 6% spending policy could help produce a better balance between scholarship needs and preserving the endowment, and (b) that strategies be developed to ensure broad communication among committee participants about the financial planning process between resource allocation and strategic plan objectives.

The RMU Board of Trustees has approved a reduction in the endowment spending rate from 6% to 5% effective in fiscal year 2007-08 with the expectation that a better balance will be possible between offering scholarships and preserving the endowment. This action will, along with other new fundraising activities, contribute towards growing RMU’s endowment.

The linkage between resource allocation and strategic planning objectives is regularly discussed at University Planning Council meetings in which members are developing a new RMU strategic plan. It is also an important factor in the University’s annual budget discussions both with internal parties as well as with the Board of Trustees. The link between the financial planning and strategic planning processes is reinforced as development of the new RMU strategic plan continues. RMU is using the priorities set forth in the strategic plan as a foundation for fund-raising objectives for its forthcoming capital campaign as well.

B. Curriculum

The Peer Review Team suggested: “carefully, thoughtfully and collaboratively” considering new curricular changes with the objective of assuring the quality and sustainability of current programs. They further suggested clarifying roles and responsibilities and improving the communication process for faculty governance of the curricula, including keeping clear records of deliberations and decisions and thoroughly and enthusiastically communicating them.
RMU’s contract with its full-time faculty union explicitly states that its Undergraduate and Graduate Curriculum Committees are charged with “advising the University with respect to curriculum matters regarding course and program proposals…consistent with the mission of the university.” The Graduate Curriculum Committee (“GCC”) may make recommendations on standards for degrees, grading policies, admission criteria, class size, degree requirements, and applicants to the committee. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (“UCC”) is charged with considering and advising the Provost on undergraduate course and program proposals that directly affect more than one school. Two groups of elected members exist for both committees; one is University-wide and the other is school-wide. Therefore there is one UCC and one GCC for each of the six schools. Requirements and procedures for membership in the committees are clearly stated in the faculty contract.

The two University-wide committees actively address curriculum issues. Procedures for course and curricular review are posted on the University’s website and are coordinated by the committees’ chairs. Proposals, voting results and deliberations/recommendations are recorded and published in the committees’ meeting minutes, which are accessible to all faculty and staff on the RMU website. Both the faculty and the administration agreed to the operating procedures which are detailed in the contract. As the University evolves, the committees’ procedures may be revisited during the faculty contract negotiations. The curriculum is the prerogative of the administration, yet because of growth, faculty may want more roles and responsibilities in curriculum decision making.

C. Facilities

The Peer Review Team suggested that a regular replacement schedule for residential and classroom furnishings be designed and funded for the Moon campus and the Downtown Center.

The Facilities Master Plan, overseen by the Business Affairs office, includes several construction projects and renovations. Residential upgrades include new apartment-style residence halls that opened up 276 more beds for resident students. A building was acquired and renovated to add 62 more beds and administrative offices for the Information Technology Department. Importantly, funds were allocated to deferred maintenance and safety projects.

Classroom renovations and additions are ongoing: John Jay Center upgrades cost $5 million to improve space and conditions for the School of Nursing as well as the School of Engineering, Mathematics and Science. General maintenance and upgrade expenditures for classrooms and offices amount to $2-3 million per year that has yielded widespread technology improvements to RMU’s learning spaces.
D. Faculty

The Peer Review Team suggested careful monitoring of the reliance on adjunct faculty as RMU continues its rapid growth as well as greater clarity in the faculty contract regarding the structure of faculty reward and evaluation criteria and responsibilities.

RMU has closely monitored the ratio of part-time to full-time faculty throughout the rapid growth of its programs. Since 2002, it has effected a considerable reduction in the ratio of part-time faculty:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RMU has significantly expanded its full-time faculty ranks each academic year with another increase in full-time faculty expected for 2007-08. In Fall 2002 RMU employed 118 full-time instructional faculty; in Fall 2006 there were 166.

The most recent faculty union contract (2003-2007) significantly increased the organization and clarity of criteria for evaluating the merit component of salary increases, rank, and promotion. Academic ranks were specified along with specific qualifications for each of the ranks to include Assistant, Associate, and full Professor; and the new academic ranks of Lecturer and University Professor. Lecturers are awarded annual contracts for teaching five courses per semester and are renewed annually for a period of five years. The University now employs seven Lecturers. In the past, part-time faculty were renewed each semester and prohibited from teaching more than two courses for a particular department. The new rank of Lecturer provides more staffing stability for students, faculty and the administration. The new rank of University Professor was created to reward senior faculty who demonstrate outstanding career records of scholarship, teaching and service.

A comprehensive program that includes external peer reviews for promotion was instituted in the contract. In addition, criteria for graduate faculty status and merit pay as well as compensation for course overloads, internships, coop advisor; and directed study continue to be refined in each new agreement. Further, an objective teaching evaluation system using the Student Instructional Report II (SIR II) student opinionnaire by Educational Testing Service was instituted in 1999.

Further clarifications of the faculty reward and evaluation process are anticipated as part of a new faculty union contract that is presently in negotiation.
E. Leadership and Governance

The Peer Review Team suggested: (a) further efforts to increase the process of information sharing and communication throughout the University, as well as (b) adoption of a formal diversity initiative.

Robert Morris University values the process of information sharing and communication throughout the institution. The University’s new President has significantly improved information flow throughout RMU by implementing several specific measures:

- Bi-Annual Town Hall meetings open to all members of the RMU community
- Presidential visits to individual school faculty meetings
- Improvements in the quantity and quality of internal information posted on the faculty/staff areas of the website
- The establishment of University-wide task forces to assist with formulation of a new strategic plan
- Monthly open lunches with the President and students in the student dining hall

Robert Morris University has reviewed and expanded its efforts to recruit diverse students, faculty and staff since the 2002 visit of the Middle States Evaluation Team.

In February 2003, the Robert Morris University Board of Trustees appointed a Task Force on Campus Diversity with representation from the Board, faculty, staff, and the student body. During the 2003-2004 academic year, the Task Force (1) conducted an assessment (opinion survey) of campus diversity, garnering responses from students, staff, and faculty; (2) set diversity goals; and (3) established a plan to pursue those goals.

To implement its plan, the Task Force recommended the establishment of an ongoing Diversity Committee. The Diversity Committee was appointed in Spring 2004 and has been meeting regularly since that time.

During 2004-2005, with the support of the Diversity Committee, the academic deans adopted a Faculty Diversity Hiring Plan which has been successfully implemented over the past three faculty hiring cycles. A staff hiring initiative and an aggressive student recruitment plan have been implemented as well. The following table illustrates the advances the University has made in hiring a more diverse faculty:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2003</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total FT Instructional Faculty</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Women</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Minority</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual deans report that their Schools also have developed programs to encourage diversity. Robert Morris University is committed to maintaining specific scholarships for diverse students and the Office of Admissions formulated an aggressive plan to recruit a greater proportion of academically talented and culturally diverse freshmen for Fall 2006 and Fall 2007.

In 2005-2006, the Diversity Committee developed a set of goals for educating the campus community about diversity, and, most importantly, recommended a comprehensive education and training program to provide an opportunity for every employee and student to deepen his/her understanding of diversity and how the campus can welcome and support diversity in every way. President Dell’Omo accepted the Committee’s recommendation and engaged the services of Stan Johnson and Associates to conduct this year-long education and training program (Summer 2006-Summer 2007).

F. Institutional Development & Alumni

The Peer Review Team suggested that RMU incorporate three means to enhance external fundraising: (1) creating a culture of philanthropy, (2) adding development professionals to the staff, and (3) using technology to engage university alumni.

RMU’s Institutional Advancement (development) and Marketing department is in the process of being completely overhauled, starting with the recent hiring of a new Vice President, Alumni Director, Chief Marketing Officer and several other key senior staff.

A professional telemarketing consultant has been engaged to help RMU with its student-staffed, phone-based fundraising program to benefit the University’s annual fund. Quantified participation goals for the next five years are included in the new RMU strategic plan. While the annual giving campaign will focus most of its efforts on raising unrestricted annual gifts, RMU is developing a strong advancement team that will lead efforts to build and enhance the $1,000 and above giving club.

The University is in the planning stages of its next capital campaign effort, which will focus upon increasing RMU’s unrestricted endowment and defraying the costs of addressing other campus needs. The new strategic plan incorporates numerous measures to increase students’ sense of place and affinity with the University. It is hoped that this will result in the suggested “culture of philanthropy.” Improvements to technology in the Development function consistent with the Peer Review Team suggestion have been implemented and subsequent improvements are planned.

G. Library & Learning Resources

The Peer Review Team suggested that: (a) RMU put a link on its home page to the library web page to improve ease of internal access and inform visitors of the important role the library plays in the education of its students and (b) RMU incorporate information literacy efforts in its planning.
RMU has implemented the suggestion regarding placing a library link on its homepage. Robert Morris University supports the ongoing efforts of Information Literacy through the work of the University Information Literacy Committee (UILC). The UILC was charged with a number of tasks, including developing University-wide student learning goals for information literacy and beginning a formal process to assess student attainment of these goals.

Students are required to take four Communications Skills courses as part of the Core Curriculum at RMU. Each of these courses has information literacy as one of its desired course outcomes.

Last year the committee mapped the information literacy standards put forth by the Association of College & Research Libraries and Middle States against Robert Morris University’s Core Curriculum learning objectives and found that they are very similar. The UILC decided then to piggyback on the core assessment effort and use whatever data they generated to assess information literacy standard achievement in the core. The UILC plans to use this pilot program to see how the concept works and then possibly modify the plan for program-level information literacy assessment on both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Currently the Core Assessment Committee is examining the core curriculum’s information literacy goals and is trying to decide if they are best assessed at the course level, or at the non-course level.

H. Mission, Goals, Objectives & Institutional Planning

The 2002 Peer Review Team suggested that RMU improve the mechanisms and communications with faculty to involve them in a clear and more obvious way in implementing the strategic plan. The current project to formulate a new strategic plan for the University has afforded a perfect opportunity to adopt the Team’s suggestion.

The five major strategic initiatives that are the foundation of the strategic plan were formulated by a special University-wide task force in early 2006. Subsequently, the President’s Cabinet and five RMU-wide workgroups identified major goals for each of the above initiatives as well as a set of Core Values and a new Mission Statement for the University.

Employees from all levels and departments of the University are working on the strategic plan. Open communication between the administration and all RMU constituencies has been vital to the progress of the strategic plan. These initiatives have strengthened the communication between the administration, faculty, and staff regarding the progress of the strategic plan.

I. Outcomes & Assessment

The Peer Review Team recommended that RMU engage in a broad-based faculty development process about outcomes assessment resulting in comprehensive faculty participation and commitment in implementing outcomes assessments.
The University created an outcomes assessment plan in 2002 involving the use of a standardized form to report every assessment undertaken to measure student learning. It requires the name of the instrument used, what was learned, and what was changed as a result of new information about student learning. This first plan did not include substantial faculty involvement. However, since that time, significant efforts have been made towards increasing faculty-wide awareness of the need and methods for assessing at course, program, and institutional levels. Highly regarded experts in outcomes assessment and the improvement of student learning outcomes were invited to present at two faculty convocations. Richard Light spoke in 2003 about course-level assessments and Linda Suskie spoke in 2005 about the rationale and methods for implementing outcomes assessment.

The 2003 faculty contract included assessment as one of four criteria by which faculty could demonstrate excellence in teaching. Procedures for applying and documenting outcomes assessment for this purpose were added to the faculty contract in 2005 after thorough discussion in joint administration-faculty committee meetings. The new contract language calls for direct measures of student learning as a factor in faculty promotion decisions. In the current faculty contract, effective teaching is defined using four criteria. A faculty member must demonstrate excellence in two of the four areas to meet the test of "effective". If learning assessments are conducted and reported then such evidence can be used to satisfy the test; if not, then faculty can demonstrate their effectiveness via the other available alternatives. Significant faculty involvement on outcomes planning and utilization is occurring in all schools working on specialized/discipline-specific accreditations.

The Peer Review Team further suggested that RMU’s next report to Middle States describe substantial progress in implementing the 2001 Outcomes Assessment Plan including results and improvements as a result of data gathered. Chapter IV of this Periodic Review Report provides a detailed discussion of the University’s progress on outcomes assessment since 2002.

J. Students

The Peer Review Team suggested continued high levels of assessment and further refinement of assessment processes according to new guidelines published in the Commission’s Characteristics of Excellence In Higher Education regarding services to students. It also recommended that RMU’s Committee for Student Success be reconvened.

The Division of Student Affairs includes departments and offices charged with meeting a variety of student needs. Four objectives have driven service delivery over the 2002-2007 time period:

- Students will have opportunities to develop skills to enable them to assume leadership positions and productive careers
- Students will perceive a favorable quality of life at RMU and stay until graduation
- Students will develop values and ethics they can apply to their interactions
Students will obtain practical experiences and employment upon graduation.

Each department within Student Affairs maintains its own performance criteria and review process with overall consistency and coordination by the Dean of Students and Career Services. A summary report including status of assessment and performance, tools used, and results obtained is compiled for each division annually – 20 reports in total. RMU is one of the few universities to produce a class placement profile and annual report. Following well-attended presentations at conferences, Student Services staff have been requested to assist other schools by instructing in measures and use of results.

The Commission promotes two primary assessments of student services: Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment) and Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning). To meet Middle States Commission’s expectations, RMU’s Student Services subjects itself to an external review through the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). This process provides peer review on alternating topics, year after year, the results of which are used to develop and refine programs. In 2006-2007, Multicultural Programs, Student Leadership, Internship Programs, Alcohol & Drug Programs, Orientation Programs, and Fraternity and Sorority Advising were assessed by CAS. Recently the Career Center underwent a two-day review by outsiders. Findings were presented to the Career Center Advisory Board, which used the team’s suggestions to build on goals and guide delivery of services. Recreation and Sports, Religious, and Disability Programs will all be reviewed in the coming year, as will Judicial Affairs and Residential Life.

The Committee for Student Success was reconstituted in the fall of 2006. The committee consists of faculty and staff who meet monthly to discuss retention data and prospective means to improve student satisfaction and retention. The National Survey of Student Engagement will be administered to freshman and seniors in Spring 2007 to gauge students’ engagement with their living-learning environment at RMU.

K. Technology

No suggestions were offered by the Peer Review Team.
II. MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Like most higher education institutions, Robert Morris University faces a number of challenges as well as opportunities in the coming years. The recent change in RMU’s Presidency, and the new President’s initiation of a strategic planning process, have afforded the University community an excellent opportunity to assess RMU’s current status as well as its future prospects.

The new President, Dr. Gregory Dell’Omo, invited all members of the University community to participate in the strategic planning initiative. More than 60 students, faculty and staff volunteered to help with the formulation of the strategic plan. This working group identified various strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the University at a day-long retreat held in January, 2006. The results of that SWOT analysis will form the basis of this section of the Periodic Review Report.

The working group concluded that RMU’s strengths included its reputation for producing well-prepared, ready to work graduates, its market-focused approach to curriculum diversification, its focus upon communication skills as part of its core curriculum, its agility in seizing new opportunities, its commitment to student success and its rigorous fiscal discipline. The working group thought that RMU’s opportunities included reaching beyond its traditional primary marketing area, building its adult and continuing education market segment, and increasing its use of educational technology to reach new markets.

The working group also identified some weaknesses and threats for the University. RMU was perceived as being weak financially with a lack of endowment income to lessen its reliance upon tuition as its main source of funds. It was noted that RMU’s alumni also do not have a culture of giving as many were commuting or non-traditional students. The workgroup further believed that RMU’s facilities were inadequate in several respects and that the University had not succeeded in changing its brand identity beyond its traditional roots as a business school. Identified threats were the unfavorable future demographics for RMU’s primary market area, increasing competition from for-profit institutions in the adult and online markets, increasing government oversight and external regulation, and competitive fallout from the lack of a clear brand identity.

The balance of this chapter is dedicated to more detailed analysis of these positive and negative factors that might affect RMU’s future.

A. Enrollments (Middle States Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention; Middle States Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal)

1. Undergraduate Programs

The five western Pennsylvania counties that are the primary student market for RMU are projected to have unfavorable demographic trends beginning in a few years. Per projections prepared by the Pennsylvania State University Data Center, the number of high school seniors will decline by approximately 14% over the next decade in this five-
county area. Such trends are particularly troublesome for schools like RMU that are highly dependent on student tuition and whose student body is primarily recruited in its immediate vicinity. A significant decline in enrollment can be of major financial consequence. In 2006, 59% of the freshman class resided in RMU’s five county primary market area (Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Washington, and Westmoreland counties).

There are several strategies that will be employed to mitigate the anticipated college-bound pool declines in western Pennsylvania. To maintain enrollments, more emphasis will be placed on the wide variety of majors now available to prospective RMU undergraduate students as well as new state-of-the-art residence halls and other student amenity improvements designed to build the “sense of place” that is emblematic of the private college educational experience.

Guidance counselors and students at local high schools need to be made more aware that RMU has become a comprehensive university. Recruiters and image marketing for the University have attempted to make this point, but the perception remains in the marketplace that RMU is still largely a business school. It takes time, effort and advertising dollars to change a school’s image and during such a transitional period, it is likely that many in the region may be somewhat confused or unaware of the University’s expanded program offerings.

Hopefully RMU’s true image will come into focus as recruitment and marketing efforts continue to emphasize and reinforce the fact that while the school still offers many business programs (which continue to comprise half of RMU’s undergraduate enrollment), it also offers a widely-diversified curriculum that is focused upon practical, career-centered education. RMU now has 24 undergraduate and 19 graduate majors ranging from Accounting to Social Sciences. RMU’s new strategic plan calls for a significant boost to advertising dollars to help reinforce the University’s brand image in both traditional and expansion markets. Other brand-building measures, such as a total overhaul of the University’s website, are also in process.

Another population RMU has actively pursued is adult learners who have not finished their undergraduate degrees. The School of Adult and Continuing Education (“SACE”) offers adult learners the opportunity to start and/or complete a degree through convenient on-line and on-ground course delivery venues.

In recent years a strong emphasis has been placed on achieving national accreditations for various programs offered at the University to accompany RMU’s regional accreditation from Middle States. The rigorous, discipline-specific standards applicable to these “specialty” accreditations provide a validation of the quality of the University’s programs that are able to attain these standards.

RMU has had significant success in obtaining program accreditations since the last decennial Self-Study. The Computer & Information Systems Department in the School of Communications and Information Systems successfully achieved accreditation for two of its information systems programs from the Computer Accreditation Commission of the
Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET-CAC). RMU’s BS degrees in Engineering and Manufacturing Engineering received accreditation by the Engineering Accreditation Commission (EAC) of ABET in 2004. The Commission of Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) accredited the BSN and MSN degrees in 2005. Presently RMU’s School of Business and the School of Education and Social Sciences are in advanced candidacies for AACSB and TEAC accreditation. The new strategic plan calls for continued pursuit of these accreditations where it makes strategic sense to obtain them. Successful attainment of discipline-specific accreditations supports and validates RMU’s stated goal of continuous improvement of its academic programs.

While maintaining enrollments drawn from RMU’s primary marketing area represents a challenge, the area’s projected demographics also reinforces the need to attract students from beyond the five-county area. This is not an easy task for a university with limited resources and a mostly regional market footprint. Most students attend a college that is in close proximity for various reasons including knowledge of the school, convenient distance to home and parents, and reduction in expenses via commuting. Hence, any school without some reputation beyond its local region will have difficulty attracting students who lack familiarity with it.

Market expansion will continue to be an important RMU strategy. New or expanded recruitment areas are being targeted that present opportunities for success. These include “pockets” where current alumni reside in Ohio and West Virginia that are within a two-hour drive of the campus. Other promising areas include those that have been traditional net exporters of college students along with regions in the country that will experience rapid population growth. Enrollment administrators plan to develop a map that will identify regions with the most overlap of these criteria. These regions will then be targeted for enhanced student recruitment attention. The goal is to increase enrollments of students from outside the primary market area by five percent by 2012.

Athletics has become a significant and very successful recruiting tool for RMU by design. Presently 520 full-time undergraduate students attending RMU are participating in intercollegiate athletic programs in 23 sports, comprising about 15% of the traditional undergraduates. Using sports to attract students is not unique to RMU. A number of schools have come to utilize this option. However, the fact that the number of student-athletes has grown rapidly presents challenges in and of itself.

First, the administration must ensure that, from a financial point of view, athletics remains a net contributor to revenues. Second, the academic quality of the student-athlete should be roughly equivalent to that of the general student body, which allows for easier integration of athletes into campus life and allows the university to maintain its overall educational effectiveness.

To date RMU appears to be succeeding in regard to ensuring academic quality of its student-athletes. The average GPA of student-athletes is comparable to the overall undergraduate GPA while the student-athletes’ completion rate is consistently higher than RMU’s as a whole. The University completed a Self-Study and site visit by the National
Collegiate Athletic Association in November of 2006. The NCAA recertified RMU’s intercollegiate athletics program in April, 2007.

2. Graduate Programs

Increasing graduate enrollments have benefited RMU’s financial well-being and its prestige while simultaneously presenting some challenges and opportunities. Graduate enrollments have increased markedly over recent years as the University has rapidly expanded its program offerings. The current graduate enrollment is approximately 1,100 with 15 masters and 4 doctoral programs. RMU has been a leader in offering non-traditional delivery of graduate programs, such as offering courses in 8-week and executive-style formats.

To further increase graduate enrollments will be a challenge since RMU’s graduate students are almost all from the local area except for international students. Competition for these students is intense from both non-profit and for-profit institutions in the local area that offer similar graduate degrees. In addition, the formerly rapid growth of RMU graduate program introductions is slowing down although it has not ceased. The University continues to investigate new possibilities that could enhance enrollments in very specific new niche programs like IT Project Management and Nursing, and new online delivery technologies such as webstreaming course content.

Marketing and recruitment should focus on convincing more individuals with baccalaureate degrees to pursue graduate studies. To do so, graduate programs must be of high quality, convenient, and provide students with some tangible benefit. In this regard, the increasing number of persons in this country who have a four-year degree should continue to have a positive impact on graduate enrollments across the country and hopefully at RMU as well. If nothing else, as four-year degrees become the norm, individuals will seek to gain some employment edge by obtaining an advanced degree.

The University now has four doctoral programs that have both positive and negative attributes. On the plus side, these programs do tend to enhance the image of the University, especially one that is attempting to change its public perception to that of a comprehensive institution. On the other hand, resources dedicated to doctoral programs in particular and graduate programs in general can lead to allocation difficulties for the school’s resources, particularly in the area of faculty.

More than 80 percent of the total headcount enrollment at RMU is undergraduate students. However, many faculty prefer to work with graduate-level students as much as possible. The salary premium or teaching load reductions granted for graduate instruction are an incentive for many of the University’s most talented faculty to favor graduate versus undergraduate teaching. As a result, undergraduate sections in some disciplines rely extensively upon adjunct faculty. This is a tough issue to solve. RMU’s graduate program growth rate has been high at the same time that extensive full-time faculty hiring has been accomplished. In a sense these items work at cross-purposes.
B. Fund Raising *(Middle States Standard 3: Institutional Resources)*

Increased fund raising is another obvious way to enhance revenues. Currently 3 percent of the University’s operating revenues are derived from pledges and gifts and although the amount has increased slowly over the years, continued increases are essential for its financial well-being. This is particularly true when it comes to alumni donations where more giving is needed. On the positive side, the alumni giving rate has increased to about 12 percent over the last three years, which amounted to roughly $250,000 per year.

These figures need to continue to rise, since they are well below the percentage of what many other private schools receive. To a great extent the lack of giving can be traced to the nature of the student body at RMU. For many years students were primarily comprised of commuting and night students who came and went and formed little attachment to the school. They viewed their education as a primarily transactional experience. Hopefully, with more students living on or near campus and improved campus life, students will form a closer bond with the University, and as a result, donate more in the future. When alumni look back on their college years they tend to ask themselves, “Did I get my money’s worth?” If alumni feel they were provided a quality education, they are likely to be more forthcoming.

RMU is currently in the planning stages of a major capital campaign. As part of this important initiative the Institutional Advancement and Marketing areas of the University have been nearly completely re-staffed and revamped and outside advisors have been hired to help structure the campaign. The major areas of solicitation within the campaign will be tied into priorities identified as part of the University’s current formulation of a new strategic plan. The additional financial resources that will be provided by the campaign will be used for the direct benefit of many areas of the University as well as to bolster its unrestricted endowment.

The quest to obtain funds from the region’s foundations and businesses must also continue. The Pittsburgh area is fortunate in that it is a major center of foundation-based philanthropy. RMU has a good track record in obtaining foundation money. In 2005-2006, four foundations made gifts of over $100,000 while eight others made gifts ranging between $5,000 and $99,000. Efforts continue to recruit Trustees who can provide strong oversight and financial support to the institution.

C. Adult Education *(Middle States Standard 11: Educational Offerings and Standard 9: Student Support Services)*

Another area of both challenge and opportunity for RMU is adult education, which is administered through the School of Adult and Continuing Education ("SACE"). RMU and other higher education institutions are vigorously competing for non-traditional students since they are a major segment of the education market. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 52% of adults over 25 have some college credits but no degree. RMU has offered adult-focused educational programs for many years.
The competition for non-traditional students has become intense throughout the country. Locally, nearly all colleges in western Pennsylvania now offer programs tailored to non-traditional students. Of equal or greater consequence, RMU’s primary adult education market area has been targeted by large, profitable and well-financed for-profit institutions like DeVry Institute, the University of Phoenix and Strayer University. These for-profits compete less on academic rigor than they do on amenities such as ease of parking, class scheduling, convenient and attractive facilities, and enhanced time frames to earn a degree. For instance, at Phoenix the typical undergraduate course consists of only 20 class hours.

Traditional institutions may find it difficult to compete on amenities while maintaining academic standards related to content and rigor as recommended by Middle States. All of RMU’s competitors, non-profit and for-profit alike, have dedicated significant resources to marketing their adult and degree completion programs. RMU’s adult education effort is facing intense and increasing competition from local and national competitors, all of whom command superior facilities and advertising budgets.

SACE has tailored its unique majors in accordance with the needs of adult students. The School has also introduced an 8-week format where students can enroll in courses that are offered either totally on-line or as a hybrid offering. In the hybrid format, students still meet face-to-face with the instructor on a regular basis and complete assignments using technology.

Online instruction has become the common denominator for SACE course offerings. During the Fall 2006 semester only three of 70 undergraduate sections offered by ACE were traditional classes with no on-line component. The rest were either entirely on-line or a combination of on-line and on-ground. The reason for such a high percentage of on-line courses is largely convenience for adult students and to free up classroom capacity.

RMU has also begun to offer on-line classes to traditional undergraduates outside the SACE majors. Seventeen sections that were entirely on-line or a combination of on-line/on-ground instruction were scheduled for the Fall 2006 semester, a trend that is likely to continue since these courses can further free up badly-needed classroom space.

The University also hopes to offer selected undergraduate and graduate degrees entirely on-line. Before it can do so it needs to resolve issues with its faculty including how certain general education courses that require significant oral presentation and writing components can be offered in a satisfactory manner on-line. The University’s administration and faculty are working toward the common goal of offering an academically rigorous, high quality education to its students while still making such an education convenient and competitive.

The formulation of a realistic, well-thought out strategy for adult education is an important component of RMU’s new strategic plan. The University realizes that it will have to make significant investments in SACE if it wishes to remain competitive in the important market for adult students. The School’s current facilities and marketing budget
are not adequate. RMU must also work with its faculty to arrive at an understanding regarding how to balance the demands and expectations of adult students in a very competitive environment with the preservation of an academically sound program of instruction. All RMU constituencies are dedicated to finding a balanced and realistic approach to the adult education market.

**D. Facilities (Middle States Standard 3: Institutional Resources; Standard 1: Student Support Services; Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal)**

Infrastructure and facilities is another area that represents both challenges and opportunities for RMU. An important component of recruiting is the quality of facilities available to students as well as to faculty and staff.

RMU has made significant investments in new and improved academic, housing, and athletic facilities since the 2002 Self-Study. These notwithstanding, the University’s facilities and infrastructure will require significant investment in order to address deficiencies and to remain competitive.

Student housing has become an increasingly important recruitment tool. In this regard, the need for improved residential facilities is something that the school’s administration is aware of and it has been made a top priority in the master building plan. The opening of two new apartment-style residence halls in the past five years attests to this and students find this type of living arrangement attractive. In 2005 the University purchased and refurbished Braddock Hall, an off-campus facility with single, double and triple rooms that has proven to be popular with students.

There are also plans to replace or revamp RMU’s older existing residence halls, which are not competitive with more modern and comfortable facilities that are coming online at competitor colleges. In the longer term, it is hoped that eight outdated halls can be replaced with more modern townhouse and apartment arrangements.

The cost to construct these new residence facilities is substantial. The University hopes that revenue generated from these new facilities will help to offset the costs of construction. However, care must be taken in the pricing of new facilities. If students perceive them to be too expensive then they will simply live off campus. Although students are aware of the fact that the new facilities are priced significantly higher than the older dorms, and in some instances higher than off-campus apartments, occupancy rates have remained high because many students view on-campus living as a critical part of their college experience.

Another area where additional facilities are needed are classrooms, which have little additional capacity due to increased enrollments and expanded course offerings and programs introduced over the last few years. While the campus Master Plan provides for new classroom buildings in the future, there are several near-term options available to expand RMU’s classroom capacity. For instance, two rooms in the new athletic building
are now being used as classrooms and it is possible that other meeting spaces in additional campus buildings could become classrooms.

Adequacy of academic space will be carefully monitored and appropriate additions are a high priority in the campus Master Plan.
III. ENROLLMENT AND FINANCE TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

This chapter presents the University’s enrollment and finance trends and projections from 2001 to 2011. Robert Morris University maintains its strengths in financial planning, program and enrollment planning, strategic planning, resource allocation, and its ability to project its finances and enrollment accurately. RMU has utilized data-driven decision-making to make effective resource allocations that have supported program and enrollment growth as well as the effective diversification of its program offerings.

Section 1 provides a summary of enrollment trends and projections for undergraduate and graduate programs. For enrollment analysis, 2001-2006 is considered as the trend analysis period and 2007-2011 is considered as the projection period. Section 2 provides a summary of financial trends and projections based on revenues and expenses. For financial analysis, 2001-2005 is considered as the trend analysis period and 2006-2011 is considered as the projection period. Table 2 shows the trend analysis and projection data.


The University offers baccalaureate programs, post-baccalaureate certificate programs, masters and doctorate programs. The University offers courses during fall, spring and summer semesters. Traditionally, both its undergraduate and graduate students have been recruited from the five-county area surrounding and including Allegheny County. In the last five years, the University developed and implemented strategies to recruit outside of the five counties, an initiative that will be expanded in the immediate future.

1. Undergraduate Enrollment

a. Trend Analysis

Per Table 1 on p.18, RMU’s full-time undergraduate enrollment has increased by 427 students (16%) while the enrollment of part-time undergraduate students has decreased by 295 students (26%) from 2001 to 2006. This trend has been in accordance with the University’s strategic plans, program and enrollment goals. Over the last fifteen years the University has maintained or slightly increased its overall enrollment. The composition of the student body has changed based on RMU’s strategic plan. The following are the reasons for the change in student mix:

1. A University goal is to increase the number of traditional full-time undergraduate students.

2. Another University goal is to increase its marketing region for traditional undergraduate students. New academic and athletics programs were added to help attract students from a wider area outside of the traditional five-county area.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undergrad</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>2,686</td>
<td>2,721</td>
<td>2,750</td>
<td>2,928</td>
<td>3,103</td>
<td>3,113</td>
<td>3,273</td>
<td>3,322</td>
<td>3,351</td>
<td>3,381</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part Time</td>
<td>1,127</td>
<td>1,026</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Undergrad</td>
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<td>3,747</td>
<td>3,735</td>
<td>3,861</td>
<td>3,971</td>
<td>3,945</td>
<td>4,043</td>
<td>4,055</td>
<td>4,067</td>
<td>4,081</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FTE Undergrad</strong></td>
<td>3,062</td>
<td>3,063</td>
<td>3,078</td>
<td>3,239</td>
<td>3,392</td>
<td>3,390</td>
<td>3,530</td>
<td>3,566</td>
<td>3,590</td>
<td>3,614</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part Time</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>1,081</td>
<td>1,110</td>
<td>1,124</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>1,186</td>
<td>1,247</td>
<td>1,259</td>
<td>1,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Graduate</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>1,081</td>
<td>1,110</td>
<td>1,124</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>1,218</td>
<td>1,314</td>
<td>1,354</td>
<td>1,388</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTE Graduate*</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled</td>
<td>4,737</td>
<td>4,726</td>
<td>4,816</td>
<td>4,971</td>
<td>5,095</td>
<td>5,065</td>
<td>5,261</td>
<td>5,369</td>
<td>5,421</td>
<td>5,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>3,370</td>
<td>3,389</td>
<td>3,438</td>
<td>3,609</td>
<td>3,767</td>
<td>3,763</td>
<td>3,986</td>
<td>4,049</td>
<td>4,105</td>
<td>4,140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*FTE enrollments in each category equals 100% of full time enrollment + 1/3 of part time enrollment. *Projected numbers in italics.*
Table 2. Market Recruitment Expansion

Geographic Breakdown of RMU Freshman Class
Freshmen Inside 5-County Area versus Outside 5-County Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Segment</th>
<th>Matriculated</th>
<th>Matriculated</th>
<th>Matriculated</th>
<th>Matriculated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall 2001</td>
<td>Fall 2002</td>
<td>Fall 2003</td>
<td>Fall 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen in 5-county area</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of freshmen</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Scorers</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Market Segment</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen outside 5-county area</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of freshmen</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Scorers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Market Segment</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Freshmen</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of freshmen</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Scorers</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Market Segment</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High Scorers: SAT score of 1100 or greater OR ACT scores of 25 or greater
3. Per Table 2 (p.19), of the Freshman class enrolling in the Fall 2006 semester, 59.7% are from the five-county area. This percentage is down from the 67.9% of the Fall 2001 Freshman class, consistent with University goals.

4. Twenty percent of the 2006-2007 Freshmen class are from out-of-state or are identified as international students.

5. Over the last 5 years the University has decided to phase out some degree program offerings (associate degrees, certificate programs and baccalaureate programs) to adult undergraduate students. Some of the decisions were related to professional accreditation of RMU’s programs (e.g. AACSB).

6. There has been a sharp increase in the competition for adult education students in the region.

7. The University’s introduction of the flat-rate tuition option in 1999 encouraged part-time students to become full-time students.

8. The University has made it a goal to diversify program offerings, leading to the addition of new undergraduate degree programs including:

   • BS and BA in Environmental Science
   • BS in Competitive Intelligence Systems
   • BS in Applied Psychology
   • BA and BFA in Media Arts
   • BS in Actuarial Science
   • BS in Organizational Studies
   • BS in Health Services Administration
   • BS in Professional Communication and Information Systems
   • BSN in Nursing

9. The University admitted the largest traditional freshmen class in the University’s history in Fall 2004.

b. Projection Analysis

Per Table 1 on p.18, the University projects a steady increase in its number of traditional full-time undergraduate students while anticipating a steady decrease in the enrollment for part-time undergraduate students over the next four years. This projection is consistent with the University’s strategic plans, program and enrollment goals, and past history. The University will not continue to add new programs at the same rate as it did in the last five years. The number of high school graduates in the greater Pittsburgh region is expected to decrease 14% by 2015-2016 while the number of high school graduates in Allegheny County is expected to decrease by 18% by 2015-2016. As a result, per the new strategic plan the University has implemented the following goals for the next five years:
1. Expand the University’s recruiting area beyond its traditional five-county primary market
2. Recruit students with more diverse socioeconomic backgrounds
3. Add selective new programs that will provide employment opportunities in high-growth fields including Biology, Criminal Justice, Forensics, Occupational Therapy, Pharmacy, Political Science, and Social Work.

2. Graduate Enrollment

a. Trend Analysis

The University’s graduate student population has been exclusively part-time students in executive-style programs and it will remain as such until 2007-2008. Per Table 1 (p.18), graduate enrollment has increased by 196 students (21%) over the 2001-2006 trend analysis period. This trend has been consistent with the University’s strategic plan-related program and enrollment goals which included increasing the number of masters and doctorate programs. Recent new program offerings include:

- Master of Science in Nursing
- Master of Science in Organizational Studies
- Master of Science in Human Resource Management
- Master of Science in Information Technology Project Management
- Master of Science in Competitive Intelligence Systems
- Master of Science in Information Security and Assurance
- Ph.D. in Instructional Management and Leadership
- Ph.D. in Engineering

b. Projection Analysis

Per Table 1 (p.18), the University projects a steady rate of increase in the number of graduate students. The University continues to identify programs that will meet the region’s needs. Most recently, in 2005, Robert Morris University announced plans to explore the possibility of establishing a School of Osteopathic Medicine. Since then, the University has reevaluated the ever-increasing costs associated with the creation and launch of such a program. It concluded that continuing to funnel significant resources to create a medical school at a time when the University has the opportunity to address needs in other areas of the University and the region did not make sound financial sense.

As part of that shift, the University will begin offering a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree program for advanced practice nurses who already hold masters degrees as nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, midwives or nurse anesthetists. This degree completion program will begin in the fall of 2007. Currently, there are only 25 DNP programs in existence nationwide; RMU’s program is one of just three beginning to be offered in Pennsylvania. At the same time the University will start to offer a Jewish Healthcare Foundation-funded certificate program in patient safety, with hopes of
expanding its offerings in this area to one or more graduate degrees within the next several years.

RMU also filed an application with the Pennsylvania Department of Education for the creation of a nuclear medicine technology program. The application was recently approved and instruction in this new program will begin in the fall of 2007. Other future health-related offerings will be under consideration at RMU including a Ph.D. in Health Care Administration and a Doctorate in Patient Safety.

The University projects an overall 24% increase in the part-time and full-time graduate student enrollment from Fall 2006 through Fall 2010.


RMU has been successful in attaining positive operating surpluses for over a quarter-century. Tables 3 (p.23) and 4 (p.24) show the trends and projections in operating revenues and total expenses. The University’s audited financial statements for 2004-05 and 2005-06 are provided in Appendix 2. RMU’s Management Letter for 2005-06 is also provided in Appendix 2. No Management Letter was issued in 2004-05.

a. Trend Analysis

The University’s operating revenue increased by $24.7 million (49%) from 2001-2006. RMU’s revenues were bolstered by tuition increases and larger enrollments resulting from the introduction of new academic and athletic programs. Its expenses increased by $25.5 million (54.5%) during the same period. Like every college, RMU’s employee compensation and benefits are the largest components of its operating expenses. The program expansions and a full-time faculty hiring program resulted in higher personnel costs for RMU. The University’s investments in buildings and infrastructure have also resulted in incremental operating expenses, particularly given the following facility additions or improvements:

- Improvement of the University’s infrastructure, including classrooms, technology, laboratories, and residence halls
- Development of new nursing, science and engineering laboratories
- Renovation of the John Jay Building to accommodate the School of Engineering, Math and Sciences and the School of Nursing
- Construction of the new Joe Walton Football Stadium and Concord Hall residence hall
- Acquisition of the Island Sports Center complex and the Braddock Hall residence hall
### Table 3. Financial Trends

#### Robert Morris University

**Previous Five-Year Unrestricted Funds**

**Revenue and Expenditures**

(In Thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operating Revenue:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition &amp; Fees</td>
<td>$35,585</td>
<td>$39,437</td>
<td>$43,104</td>
<td>$47,878</td>
<td>$52,819</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gov Grants &amp; Contracts</td>
<td>1,938</td>
<td>1,875</td>
<td>1,867</td>
<td>1,744</td>
<td>1,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Gifts</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>1,427</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Income</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>1,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sources</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Enterprises</td>
<td>8,109</td>
<td>8,073</td>
<td>11,297</td>
<td>13,342</td>
<td>14,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets Released</td>
<td>2,675</td>
<td>2,698</td>
<td>2,706</td>
<td>3,850</td>
<td>3,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Operating Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>50,187</strong></td>
<td><strong>53,791</strong></td>
<td><strong>60,714</strong></td>
<td><strong>69,443</strong></td>
<td><strong>74,888</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue Yr/Yr Change</td>
<td>7.18%</td>
<td>12.87%</td>
<td>14.38%</td>
<td>7.84%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Expenses:**         |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |
| Salaries & Wages      | 21,735            | 23,134            | 25,987            | 29,120            | 31,187            |
| Fringe Benefits       | 6,080             | 6,916             | 8,005             | 9,256             | 9,949             |
| Supplies              | 1,545             | 1,507             | 2,017             | 2,418             | 2,545             |
| Purchased Services    | 6,453             | 7,285             | 8,480             | 10,346            | 11,460            |
| Utilities             | 1,862             | 1,823             | 2,312             | 2,421             | 2,981             |
| Depreciation & Amortization | 3,693       | 3,994             | 4,342             | 4,642             | 4,663             |
| Interest Expense      | 1,523             | 1,450             | 1,695             | 1,692             | 2,031             |
| Other Expenses        | 3,889             | 4,281             | 4,856             | 5,964             | 7,464             |
| **Total Expenses**    | **46,780**        | **50,390**        | **57,694**        | **65,859**        | **72,280**        |
| Expense Yr/Yr Change  | 7.72%             | 14.49%            | 14.15%            | 9.75%             |                   |

| **Total Change From Operations/Reserve** | 3,407 | 3,401 | 3,020 | 3,584 | 2,608 |
| Rev Net Exp Yr/Yr Change              | -0.18% | -11.20% | 18.68% | -27.23% |

### b. Projection Analysis

Despite attaining positive operating reserves as high as $3.6 million in the recent past, the University’s projections (Table 4, p.24) call for the attainment of a conservative $2 million budget reserve annually in each of the next five years. Revenue is expected to increase by $34.5 million (43%), while expenses are expected to increase by $32.1 million (41%) from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011. This reflects additional revenue generated from the new programs projected to begin within the next five years, as described under the enrollment projections section of this document. The increase in expenses will mainly reflect program growth-related expenses and further investment in University infrastructure. The annual positive operating reserves help the University to defray its expansion and infrastructure expenses and they also help RMU to maintain an investment-grade debt rating from Moody’s Investor Services.
Table 4. Financial Projections

Current/Future Five-Year Unrestricted Funds
Revenue and Expenditures
(In Thousands)

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operating Revenue:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition &amp; Fees</td>
<td>$ 57,925</td>
<td>$ 61,323</td>
<td>$ 65,003</td>
<td>$ 68,903</td>
<td>$ 73,037</td>
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<td>Gov Grants &amp; Contracts</td>
<td>1,781</td>
<td>1,763</td>
<td>1,848</td>
<td>1,849</td>
<td>1,849</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Gifts</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>1,474</td>
<td>1,474</td>
<td>1,474</td>
<td>1,474</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment Income</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Sources</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>1,164</td>
<td>1,198</td>
<td>1,234</td>
<td>1,271</td>
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<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Enterprises</td>
<td>15,763</td>
<td>16,071</td>
<td>16,794</td>
<td>17,549</td>
<td>18,339</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets Released</td>
<td>2,937</td>
<td>2,101</td>
<td>2,174</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>2,329</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Operating Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>80,791</strong></td>
<td><strong>84,680</strong></td>
<td><strong>89,192</strong></td>
<td><strong>93,960</strong></td>
<td><strong>98,999</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue Yr/Yr Change</td>
<td>7.88%</td>
<td>4.81%</td>
<td>5.33%</td>
<td>5.35%</td>
<td>5.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenses:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries &amp; Wages</td>
<td>34,361</td>
<td>37,720</td>
<td>39,694</td>
<td>41,977</td>
<td>44,495</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fringe Benefits</td>
<td>11,155</td>
<td>12,895</td>
<td>13,660</td>
<td>14,557</td>
<td>15,576</td>
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<td>Supplies</td>
<td>2,416</td>
<td>2,520</td>
<td>2,570</td>
<td>2,621</td>
<td>2,674</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purchased Services</td>
<td>12,717</td>
<td>11,623</td>
<td>12,204</td>
<td>12,814</td>
<td>13,455</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>2,938</td>
<td>3,073</td>
<td>3,227</td>
<td>3,396</td>
<td>3,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation &amp; Amortization</td>
<td>4,870</td>
<td>5,370</td>
<td>6,015</td>
<td>6,520</td>
<td>6,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Expense</td>
<td>2,501</td>
<td>2,099</td>
<td>2,394</td>
<td>2,498</td>
<td>2,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Expenses</td>
<td>7,869</td>
<td>7,381</td>
<td>7,428</td>
<td>7,577</td>
<td>7,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>78,826</strong></td>
<td><strong>82,680</strong></td>
<td><strong>87,192</strong></td>
<td><strong>91,960</strong></td>
<td><strong>97,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expense Yr/Yr Change</td>
<td>9.06%</td>
<td>4.89%</td>
<td>5.46%</td>
<td>5.47%</td>
<td>5.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Change From Operations/Reserve</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,964</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev Net Exp Yr/Yr Change</td>
<td>-24.69%</td>
<td>1.84%</td>
<td>-0.03%</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
<td>-0.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. ASSESSMENT PROCESSES AND PLANS

A. Background

Robert Morris University had recently completed a major overhaul of its outcomes assessment process at the time of its 2001-02 Middle States Self-Study. That process resulted in the University’s first comprehensive outcomes assessment plan and accompanying procedures that the peer review team deemed to be compliant with the requirements in the then-current version of Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education. The peer review team suggested that RMU:

- Engage in broad-based faculty development about the nature of outcomes assessment and its many potential forms, with comprehensive faculty participation in the development and implementation of their school plans
- Add assessment of learning outcomes to its criteria for evaluation of faculty work in its next faculty contract
- Provide direct evidence of the use of outcomes assessment results to effect improvements at RMU

RMU’s institutional outcomes assessment plan and the unit-level plans that underlie it have been designed to help the University answer the overarching question posed by its accreditors: *As an institution, are you effectively carrying out your educational mission?* Standards 7 and 14 of the current edition of Characteristics of Excellence establish clear requirements for an outcomes assessment program. Pages 11 and 12 of Middle States’ Handbook for Periodic Review Reports provide a reporting framework for outcomes assessment for the PRR.

This section of the PRR will address whether RMU has met these tests of effectiveness since 2002 and whether its outcomes assessment process is (per Middle States) “thorough, persistent and self-sustaining” and compliant with the above standards. The University’s responsiveness to the peer review team’s suggestions for improvement is addressed in Chapter I.

B. Findings

The Subcommittee believes that the University is in compliance with Middle States’ requirements under Standards 7 and 14 and that substantial progress has been made on the University’s outcomes assessment effort during the period covered by the PRR. RMU has clearly developed the “culture of evidence” regarding its assessment efforts suggested by the peer reviewers in 2002.

The Subcommittee finds the University’s efforts laudable in regard to the substantial number of effective unit-level outcomes assessment processes, its widely-distributed use of course-level outcomes assessment that have both increased faculty involvement in outcomes assessment as well as shown significant potential for the improvement of learning outcomes, and the well-developed documentation and audit trail for outcomes assessment.
While effective processes for measuring effectiveness are in place in large portions of the organization, significant improvements can and should be made to several aspects of RMU’s outcomes assessment effort. While RMU has delegated the most critical pieces of its assessment effort precisely where they belong – to the programs or departments who carry out the day-to-day educational mission of the University - there is a substantial amount of quality variance among these individual assessment initiatives. The majority of these efforts have produced documented evidence of fully implemented assessment loops and processes: they have stated learning goals, a selection of measurement instruments, a process for reviewing assessment data, and documentation that they actually used the results to make improvements.

However, there are several organizational units of the University that do not have an implemented, formalized outcomes assessment process and/or that do not have evidence of improvements made on the basis of assessment data. Fortunately, they are a distinct minority and so notable by exception that it will be relatively easy to focus improvement efforts upon them.

The Subcommittee finds that RMU has done a thorough job of establishing plans, policies and procedures for its outcomes assessment process and that documentation of the outcomes assessment effort is excellent. Also, the Subcommittee regards it as a healthy sign that several unit-level plans have been revised to reflect RMU’s actual experience with outcomes assessment since the plans were originally adopted in 2002.

RMU has advanced greatly in the quality of the documentation used to report outcomes assessment findings. One of the University’s first priorities in 2002 was to establish standardized documentation for this purpose. This was made a high priority due to the inordinate amount of time and effort that it took during the 2001-02 decennial Self-Study to identify assessments that had been conducted prior to 2002. There was no process or procedure for recording assessments in a standardized way until the adoption of the 2002 plan.

Current procedures mandate that assessment owners report the results of their instruments on a standard report form (please see Appendix 3) to their Dean or organizational unit head. The report form contains a descriptive section that sets forth the name of the assessment, the unit/person who administered it, the date(s) of administration, a description of the instrument, the subject of the assessment, and the objective of the assessment. The form also requires disclosure of who analyzed and received the results of the assessment, the findings of the study, and how the results were (or were not) used to effect improvements. This process has been invaluable in building an organized, retrievable record of the University’s progress in its outcomes assessment effort.

The outcomes assessment reports are grouped by organizational unit and are archived by the Director of Institutional Research after review by the Provost.

During the early years of this procedure there was a high amount of variability in the quality of reporting of the results of the assessment plan. The amount of variability and
the quality of the documentation has greatly improved over time. Nearly all organizational units within Academic Affairs, where the bulk of RMU’s assessment effort is carried out, are very observant of the documentation requirements. Reporting is still not perfect but there is a clear track record of improvement. The Provost continues to work with his academic Deans and his other administrators to improve reporting in the few areas that are deficient.

The University-wide outcomes assessment plan that was praised by the peer team in the decennial review remains in place today. Several of the component unit plans that support the institution-wide plan have been updated on the basis of experience with the assessment process. Others are being considered for revision and it is clear that RMU’s plan is a living document. The most common reason for revision is that many of the original plans were simply too ambitious. Some of them had too many assessment measures and it was not feasible to either administer all of them or to make effective use of the results. One lesson that has been learned through experience is to use multiple measures of assessment but to be sparing with them. Each assessment takes up faculty and administrative time as well as the time of the assessment subjects. It is much better to do a few assessments well than many poorly.

RMU has had difficulty establishing an effective outcomes assessment process in an area that many institutions have found problematic from an assessment perspective: its general education (or core) curriculum. The core curriculum has very clear learning goals but so far no evaluation system has been established to measure attainment of the core curriculum learning objectives. No one person or entity has administrative responsibility for the core curriculum, which is composed of service courses that are dispersed among many academic departments. Until recently, this has frustrated efforts to install a measurement and improvement system in the core curriculum.

Two initiatives are presently underway to address outcomes assessment in the core curriculum: 1) RMU’s Undergraduate University Curriculum Committee (UUCC) is working with another University-wide committee in order to formulate information literacy goals for RMU that are congruent with learning outcomes for information literacy that were established for the core curriculum during its last revision in 2002. Information literacy is a common objective among many of the courses in the RMU core. 2) A faculty-led initiative is underway to implement course-based outcomes assessment in the core courses. This effort offers training to both full and part-time faculty who teach core courses regarding the fundamentals and the importance of outcomes assessment, the different direct measures of student learning that are available, and documentation of assessment results. Both of these encouraging initiatives should result in actionable data that can be used to measure attainment of core curriculum learning objectives and to guide any needed improvements.

Although RMU’s outcomes assessment process has generally worked well and for the most part is competently administered, oversight of the process has not evolved the way that the University-wide plan contemplated. In the 2001 outcomes assessment plan general oversight of the University’s outcomes assessment process was supposed to
The preponderance of assessment activities are conducted in the academic units of the University and the Deans have administrative responsibility for their respective units as set forth in the University outcomes assessment plan. The Provost and the Director of Institutional Research have borne the responsibility for (respectively) general oversight of academic assessment efforts and evaluation of plan findings and process. RMU’s Board of Trustees has taken great interest in its assessment efforts. The Provost has a goal regarding outcomes assessment as one of his list of annual goals and accomplishments that are reviewed by the Board. He makes regular reports on RMU’s progress regarding outcomes assessment to the Education Committee of the Board.

**Guiding Principle 1: Existing Culture**

Outcomes assessment is firmly rooted throughout the University at both the institutional and the unit level. Significant effort has been expended since 2001 to implement outcomes assessment plans and processes that engage all constituencies in the evaluation of institutional effectiveness and fulfillment of the University’s mission and vision. There are clear objectives for the measurement of learning and other outcomes and the quality of academic and non-academic student support services. This evolution has proceeded at a different pace in various organizational units of the University. Some are much further ahead than others but all have some ongoing level of assessment activity. Efforts continue to encourage improvements in all assessment processes.

During 2002, unit-level plans were written that set forth each unit’s desired outcomes/objectives, the methods to be used to assess attainment of these objectives, the performance criteria for the objectives and procedures for documenting the review of assessment results, the use of assessment findings for institutional improvement, and the reporting of the assessment process to the Director of Institutional Research. The latter and the University’s Committee on Outcomes Assessment are charged with evaluating RMU’s overall outcomes assessment process. A copy of the University’s outcomes assessment plan is included in Appendix 4.

2002-03 marked the first complete year of the implementation phase of the revised RMU Outcomes Assessment Plan. RMU made a strategic decision that its outcomes assessment effort would be managed by each school’s Dean for its academic operations and by the senior administrator of each student support or non-academic area. All academic outcomes assessment plans were to be formulated, implemented, managed and monitored with substantial faculty involvement. The University has now gone through four complete annual reporting cycles for its outcomes assessment plan – 2002/03 through 2005/06.
The nature of RMU’s curriculum and the University’s overall effort to improve itself facilitate performance measurement. The University’s focus upon technological and professional education means that the students in, and the graduates of, many of its academic disciplines are subjected to rigorous external assessment in the normal course of degree completion. This is manifested by either requirements that graduates pass externally formulated, nationally normed assessments as a condition of employment or by adherence to the usually stringent outcomes assessment requirements of national specialty accrediting organizations.

For example, all students who are seeking teaching certification are required by state law to pass the PRAXIS examination as a condition of certification, and therefore, employment. Similarly, the Engineering program is required to prove that its students are competent in a defined set of learning outcomes across all of their degrees as a condition of its ABET-EAC accreditation. Outcomes assessment reports are created by all Engineering faculty at the conclusion of the semester. Results are then tabulated across all courses for these outcomes, allowing the program to easily identify areas of strength, weakness and concern. Other disciplines, such as Accounting, have post-graduate testing programs such as the CPA examination that graduates must pass in order to work in their fields. It is difficult for the University to gather information on the success rate of its students in post-graduate assessments, but the validation process for many of its students in other disciplines occurs within the aegis of their studies and these data are available for analysis and action.

The School of Business, which accounts for nearly half of RMU’s undergraduate enrollment, has made considerable progress in implementing outcomes assessment. The School has developed specific learning goals and objectives for all programs and has related the content of each course in their curriculum to these goals and objectives, thus ensuring that all School-level goals and objectives are covered by their course offerings.

At the course level, the School of Business has also developed a two-stage reporting process with separate forms for each stage:

- A planning form, which is submitted to a department committee for review, and
- A final report form, which is submitted at the end of the course and provides data on actual student outcomes.

This two-stage process has at least three advantages: (1) it enables committee members to provide feedback to instructors before they implement their assessment measures, thus helping to ensure that course-level measurements will be relevant to program and University goals and objectives; (2) the process also enables the department to encourage instructors to adopt a “less is more” strategy that prevents instructors from devoting inordinate amounts of effort and course time to measurements that may or may not be relevant; (3) finally, the two-stage process helps in the mentoring of newly hired faculty members, clarifying the purposes of outcomes assessment in the RMU context.

This is not to say that the entire RMU curriculum is covered by such assessment programs. Many majors are not covered or the assessment results occur externally and cannot be captured by RMU. The external assessments are not the be-all and end-all of
whether the University is fulfilling its educational mission; other outcome perspectives, such as employer and alumni satisfaction, also have to be assessed in order to get a true picture of institutional effectiveness. RMU continues to work hard to fill in these gaps in the outcomes knowledge base via continuing development and review of its assessment processes.

**Guiding Principle 2: Realistic Plan with Appropriate Investment of Resources**

Consistent with Middle States’ advice, RMU set out in 2002 to implement an outcomes assessment plan that could be accomplished without unduly burdening the University or its human resources. This objective was to be accomplished by: 1) making better use of existing assessments, 2) by relying upon internally-developed, processed and analyzed instruments, and 3) by being extremely selective in taking on commitments for new measurements. The 2001-02 decennial review revealed that RMU already had a fairly widespread assessment program; it simply lacked the means to track and record the results in a central location as well as a management structure to insure that the results were a) analyzed and b) used to effect improvements.

This is not to say that existing measurements were solely adequate for the purposes of the new outcomes assessment plans. Indeed, those documents called for the addition of a significant number of new assessment instruments. The plan writers were encouraged to focus their efforts upon a limited number of promising assessments rather than going for quantity. Some accepted this advice and others did not.

One of the salient findings of this review of the University’s assessment process is that several overambitious plans were scaled back after one or two academic years. The fact that this occurred is a validation that attention is being paid to the management of the assessment effort at RMU. The existing set of plans is more consistent with the organization’s capacity to administer and analyze the assessment results and to effect necessary improvements identified via the assessments. The original 2001 outcomes assessment plans called for 123 different measures; 64 were actually administered in 2005-06, a much more reasonable and manageable number for an institution of RMU’s size and resources.

Significant resource-sharing has also been characteristic of RMU’s assessment effort. For example, RMU has administered the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory twice in the past five years as a joint venture between the Offices of Institutional Research and Student Affairs. This instrument produces feedback on student satisfaction regarding nearly the entire gamut of University services, including teaching, advising, and student support services. The joint venture facilitates sharing the Noel-Levitz findings with a wide number of beneficiaries.

RMU has also participated in consortial assessment opportunities. The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP) frequently offers collective data-gathering projects, including an alumni survey several years ago. Alumni surveys are prohibitively expensive and troublesome to conduct for a single institution.
but RMU’s participation in the AICUP group “buy” produced valuable results at relatively modest cost and effort. RMU also participated in the recent Project SAILS assessment of information literacy coordinated through Kent State University. This has produced data that is helping with the development efforts for Core Curriculum outcomes assessment.

**Guiding Principle 3: Involvement of Faculty and Students**

The Peer Review Team’s 2002 report contained suggestions for heightened faculty training and involvement in the assessment process as well as the possible addition of assessment as an additional criteria for the evaluation of faculty work in the faculty union contract. While it is not the intent here to belabor the analysis of the Peer Review Team’s recommendations contained elsewhere in the PRR, it is important to note that the University has embraced these suggestions in a number of ways.

Extensive faculty training and consciousness-raising has occurred at RMU in regard to outcomes assessment. Two well-known speakers, Dr. Richard Light of Harvard University and Ms. Linda Suskie of MSCE, addressed the faculty at two different semi-annual faculty convocation days during the past four years on assessment and on the improvement of student learning outcomes.

Several academic schools now have their own internal outcomes assessment committees that decide upon appropriate learning outcomes, select or design measurement instruments, evaluate findings and implement improvements based upon them. These efforts involve a significant number of faculty in these schools. At least four schools have gotten their faculties involved via their pursuit of specialty accreditations (AACSB, ABET-EAC, CCNE and TEAC). These accreditations have stringent and explicit outcomes assessment requirements and the faculty has made a concerted effort to formulate appropriate learning outcomes and to coordinate the assessment measures and procedures necessary to satisfy the accreditation requirements.

One of the greatest inducements for faculty to join the assessment effort was a recent change made to RMU’s labor agreement with its faculty union regarding course-level outcomes assessment. Faculty members who use direct measures of student learning, and who follow the process for documenting their findings and any improvements made on the basis of such, can use these reports to support their case for the teaching effectiveness performance required for merit increases and for promotion in academic rank. This has proven very popular with the faculty and there are a significant number of participants in this process, which addresses one of the suggestions made by the 2002 peer reviewers. One of the faculty members who negotiated the contractual change that codified course-level outcomes assessment into the contract presented the rationale and mechanics of the new process at the January, 2006 Faculty Convocation. This presentation was very helpful to the faculty in regard to training them in specific tools for course-level assessment as well as reinforcing the general importance of outcomes assessment as a means for improving student learning outcomes.
The aforementioned training, school-level planning, pursuit of specialty accreditations and contractual inducements have done much to increase the percentage of faculty who have routine interaction with the outcomes assessment initiative at RMU. There has not been significant student involvement in this initiative, although they are, of course, the subject of nearly all assessment instruments.

**Guiding Principle 4: Clear Goals**

RMU’s institution-wide outcomes assessment plan speaks mostly to the overarching purposes of assessment at the University and to the scope and responsibilities for the effort. Details on requirements for student learning and associated measurements are contained in the unit-level plans for each academic school. Most schools that have multiple departments have outcomes assessment plans for each department, or for the individual programs within a department. Each school’s plan reiterates the University’s Mission and Vision statements, sets forth the school’s own mission and vision in support of the University plan, states several desirable school-wide outcomes and then gets into details of its unit-level assessment efforts.

Copies of a sample unit-level plan and its associated annual reports for the School of Engineering, Mathematics and Science are provided in Appendix 5. While there is not room in the PRR for a comprehensive analysis of the details of every unit-level plan, some examples will illustrate the dynamics of outcomes assessment within specific organizational units of the University. This specific example illustrates how the University’s mission is supported by coordinated school-level plans, as well as how individual assessment measures are documented at the course and department levels.

For example, the School of Engineering, Mathematics and Science has four school-wide desired outcomes for all of its graduates: understanding contemporary issues and ethical responsibilities, being able to communicate effectively, recognizing the need for life-long learning, and employment or graduate education. There are similar school-level goals in the other assessment plans.

Targeted student learning outcomes are addressed in the departmental or program-level plans that support the school-wide plan. For example, students in the Applied Mathematics with Teacher Certification concentration are expected to: 1) meet state requirements for certification as teachers of mathematics in grades 7-12; 2) understand the mathematical theory and concepts necessary to teach at the secondary level; and 3) understand and have experience with appropriate technology.

The outcomes assessment plan for this program calls for six outcomes assessment instruments: a survey of the teachers who supervise the student teachers, a survey of administrators from the schools where the students perform their teaching practicums, regular five-year program reviews conducted for the Pennsylvania Department of Education (“PDE”), a portfolio kept by each certification student, PRAXIS scores, and a survey of outgoing program graduates.
Success or failure in achieving the specified learning outcomes is measured by very specific performance criteria. The Mathematics teaching certification program is required to meet all state statutory requirements for approval as part of the PDE review, students in the program must have a 3.0 GPA in order to student teach, student portfolios must be presented to peers and are subjected to faculty review using a rubric, and of course the students must pass the relevant sections of the PRAXIS examination in order to accept a teaching position. In academic year 2005-06 19 of 23 students (83%) did so. Great success was noted in fall 2005 when RMU enjoyed a 100% pass rate of all 10 program completers.

In order to close the assessment loop, the Mathematics Department faculty, working in conjunction with their colleagues in the Department of Secondary Education and Graduate Studies, meet regularly to evaluate the findings from PRAXIS and the other assessments in order to discuss attainment of learning outcomes and to discuss possible improvements that could boost students’ learning and assessment performance. In the example cited above, it was decided that a more intensive cycle of review sessions would help the students to better prepare for the PRAXIS examination and this improvement has been implemented. The faculty will re-examine the data after the next cycle to see if the additional measures have been effective and if not, how they should be changed.

This is only one example of a number of similar initiatives underway in both academic and student support areas at RMU. As previously mentioned, the focus of programmatic assessment in many of the academic areas of the University appears to be shifting to the course-based use of direct measures of student learning as a means of determining a) student learning and b) outcomes that are consistent with program or school-level outcomes. This effort is supplemental and, in many instances, complementary to the numerous external assessments of student learning employed to satisfy specialty accreditation or statutory requirements.

### Guiding Principle 5: Appropriate Methods

The Subcommittee believes that RMU’s outcomes assessment processes are systematic, thorough and self-sustaining in most, but not all, organizational units as set forth in the Findings section of this report. There is clear evidence from the annual reports filed with the Director of Institutional Research that the required mixture of quantitative and qualitative measures, formative and summative assessment, multiple measures, and assessment at different levels of the organization is taking place in units with fully implemented outcomes assessment processes.

An interesting evolution is taking place regarding the diversity of assessment instruments employed at RMU. The original unit-level assessment plans were heavily weighted toward summative and quantitative assessment. There was very little emphasis placed upon qualitative and formative assessment. The current course-level assessment initiatives fostered by the new union contract change, and by strategic shifts by some academic schools towards course-based assessment, have significantly increased qualitative and formative assessment at RMU.
Faculty have increasingly chosen to gauge student attainment of learning outcomes via direct measures such as minute papers, rubric-based portfolio evaluations, and outside evaluation of student work. These measures enrich the universe of assessment data by lending additional perspectives regarding how and how much students are learning during the duration of a course. The accumulation of such findings is a valuable addition to more quantitative and overarching assessments employed to gauge the effectiveness of an entire program, department or school.

While space does not permit a detailed recounting of the specifics of every unit’s outcomes assessment plan, a review of the sample unit-level plan and associated assessment reports provided in Appendix 4 will provide the reader with a detailed example of the types of assessment measures contained in the plans as well as with the documentation that records the assessment results and their disposition.

**Guiding Principle 6: Useful Data**

The Subcommittee believes that significant changes have been made at the University on the basis of assessment data and that the process continues to ramp up in regard to both the quality of actionable information as well as its actual use for improvement. There are assessment-driven indicators of overall institutional effectiveness present and a clear indication that assessment results will drive future strategic initiatives of the University regarding student learning and the effort to further overall institutional improvement. There are numerous manifestations of RMU’s efforts to document effectiveness and to improve its overall quality that in their totality present an increasingly complete picture of RMU’s effectiveness and the quality of the educational experience offered to its students.

Attainment of specialty accreditation for its academic programs has been and remains a major strategic priority of the University. These accreditations provide external validation of the quality of RMU’s undergraduate education via stringent requirements for faculty credentials, class loads, curriculum, institutional support, and explicit student learning outcomes proven via assessment.

At the time of the decennial peer review visit in 2002 RMU did not possess a single specialty accreditation. Since then RMU has gained accreditation for two of its undergraduate information systems degrees from ABET-CAC; for its two undergraduate Engineering degrees from ABET-EAC; and for both its undergraduate and graduate Nursing degrees from CCNE. All of these specialty accreditations were awarded to RMU in the shortest possible time permissible under the guidelines of these accreditors. The University is presently an accreditation candidate for two additional programs: AACSB accreditation for its School of Business and TEAC accreditation for its teacher certification programs. These are later-stage candidacies and RMU will know the outcome of both processes within the next two years. The outcomes assessment requirements of these specialty accreditation organizations have provided a major impetus to the assessment efforts of the organizational units pursuing these accreditations, which if attained would cover the preponderance of RMU’s enrollment.
High pass/success rates are being attained in programs whose students and graduates are subjected to comprehensive external evaluation. For example, RMU’s institutional PRAXIS pass rate in its teacher certification programs was 97% in basic skills and 96% in academic content areas in 2004-05. RMU’s Nursing students achieved a 100% pass rate on the NCLEX-RN exam for the year ended September 30, 2006. RMU was one of two programs with a 100% pass rate among the 82 reporting Nursing programs statewide. High pass rates were also recorded for Actuarial Science students on their professional examinations.

RMU also participates in institution-level assessments in order to gain insight into its overall effectiveness.

Although not all of its measurement criteria are outcomes, RMU’s performance in the *US News* college rankings has been encouraging to the University’s various constituencies. RMU has jumped 41 places in its category (Universities – Masters – North) over the past five years. This leap in the standings propelled RMU from near the top of the fourth tier of colleges in its category to very near the top of third tier, a very large and rapid improvement.

The University’s improvements spanned nearly the entire gamut of criteria used by *US News* – academic reputation, retention, faculty resources and alumni support. RMU’s administration has paid careful attention to the evaluation criteria used by *US News* and their qualitative guidelines have helped RMU make management decisions that have both benefited the learning environment while positively affecting the University’s US News ranking. For example, RMU has decreased its class sizes and increased its proportion of full-time faculty. A number of the University’s 2007-12 goals have been structured to increase emphasis upon qualitative targets that provide the same dual benefit. RMU hopes that continuous improvements in its educational outcomes will help it to attain a better future standing in its US News ranking.

Results from the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (“SSI”) have also been used to effect improvements at RMU. The Offices of Institutional Research and Student Affairs administered this comprehensive, nationally-normed survey to RMU undergraduates in the springs of 2003 and 2005. The survey had also been given in 1998. The SSI measures the degree of student satisfaction with an extensive list of services provided by the University. Longitudinal comparison of the survey results shows significant increases in student satisfaction due to construction of the new Student Center and investments in the University’s technology infrastructure. The overall gap between RMU students’ expectations and their actual experience vs. those recorded nationally narrowed significantly between 1998 and 2003 and again between 2003 and 2005.

The survey results have been reviewed with the operating units covered by the survey and some areas of greatest student dissatisfaction, such as parking and dormitory conditions, are being proactively addressed via realignment of priorities in the University’s master facilities plan. RMU’s SSI results show significant strengths in student satisfaction with
the quality of their educational experience. Quality of instruction in the major and other teaching-related questions scored high on both importance and satisfaction on the 2003 and 2005 SSIs. RMU is about to embark on a major customer service improvement initiative and student service-type functions hope to learn from the RMU Library, which had the highest levels of student satisfaction in all three renditions of the SSI.

RMU’s residence halls are an interesting case study of how assessment data have helped the University prioritize its plans for its facilities. All residential students were surveyed with a locally-developed assessment in 2003 regarding their degree of satisfaction with RMU’s residential facilities after the 2003 SSI results showed increasing dissatisfaction with residential living conditions. The Office of Residence Life decided to solicit more specific student input by administering the Association of College and University Housing Officers (ACUHO) Resident Student Study in spring 2003. The results of both assessments showed general satisfaction with Residence Life staff but several aspects of the facilities, including physical condition and Internet connectivity, were criticized. The students asked that residence hall renovation and new construction be made a priority. This message was communicated to RMU’s officers and the campus master plan priorities have been reshuffled to move residence hall construction up the list.

The University understands that there is a crucial difference between student satisfaction and student learning but the former has some relationship with the latter. Documented improvements in both are highly important and will continue to be pursued.

Early returns from various course-level assessment initiatives are starting to yield discrete and actionable data that can be used for the immediate improvement of student learning. Most of these measurements are formative and can either be used to make real-time adjustment to courses, or else identify problematic concepts or approaches that can be addressed the next time that a course is taught either by the same faculty member or one of their departmental colleagues. The annual assessment reports contain instances of adjustments made to course content or instructional methods to address weaknesses identified via outcomes assessments.

RMU will broaden its assessment program in spring 2007 via first-time participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement (“NSSE”).

C. Process Changes and Improvements

RMU has learned through its experience with outcomes assessment theories, processes, measures and implemented improvements. There are several notable changes that have occurred as part of this learning process. Some of these have been previously discussed in the PRR but will be briefly summarized here.

The most important lesson learned to date is that successful implementation of outcomes assessment cannot take place without the unswerving support from the top, continuous reinforcement at the bottom, and a process imbued with direct responsibility in between.
RMU’s two Presidents who have served during the term of this PRR have made their commitment to outcomes assessment clear to both administration and faculty. Dr. Dell’Omo often speaks of finding ways to use outcomes assessment as a means for securing a competitive advantage for RMU. The Provost and both academic and non-academic Deans are held accountable for the implementation and reporting of assessment results in their organizational units.

RMU has conducted outcomes assessment training and consciousness-raising for its faculty. As previously discussed, the assessment requirements of specialty accreditation agencies and the new course-level assessment process have fostered a widespread sense of the importance of assessment among most of the members of the faculty. Their help has been invaluable in scaling back and focusing some of the original, overly ambitious assessment efforts to a more manageable and insightful set of measures.

The Subcommittee believes that it sees three indicators that speak to the fact that outcomes assessment is alive as a process at RMU. The first is that many of the original set of outcomes assessment plans have been revised based upon experience. They are now leaner and more meaningful and produce data that are actually used to effect improvements. The second is that non-conforming organization units are now conspicuous by their presence rather than being hidden among many units struggling to find their way on assessment. The third is that it is now rare to encounter assessment efforts whose results were ignored or underutilized. These were dishearteningly prevalent in 2001 but are now rare.

Robert Morris University set out in 2001 to do a better job on outcomes assessment and it has done so. There is still much to be done and pockets of the University that still have not “gotten it.” Its process and its use of assessment results for improvement are not perfect, but RMU has come a long way since the decennial Self-Study.
V. EVIDENCE OF LINKED INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING

Over the last twenty years Robert Morris University has achieved strong operating results due to planned growth and fiscal discipline. Costs are aggressively managed and the University is flexible, alert, and responsive to opportunities as well as threats arising in its always-changing operating environment. The introduction of new academic and athletic programs, cost management and a very disciplined annual budget process are the key contributors to RMU’s success.

RMU implements annual budgets based on long-term strategic goals. Each area of the University determines their own annual needs while simultaneously ensuring that the University is progressing towards its overall goals per the strategic plan.

A. Robert Morris University’s Budgeting Process

The annual budget process begins in mid-October and is completed by early March with final approval from the full Board of Trustees. At the beginning of the annual budget process the Financial Planning and Analysis team communicates a timeline and provides all departments with Budget Request Files which include instructions, last year’s data for comparability, and requirements for explanations of budget requests.

Individual departments develop their requests for needed resources, including all new programs, which are then reviewed by the department heads and/or directors. Once a realistic prioritized budget request is prepared and approved by the chief administrator of a particular area, the data is submitted to the Financial Planning and Analysis team.

The Financial Planning and Analysis team consolidates the total University needs and determines the affordability of the submitted requests. The Internal Budget Committee reviews all submissions and determines the final budget funds. The Internal Budget Committee members are: the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Senior Vice President for Business Affairs, the Vice President for Financial Operations, and the Director of Financial Planning and Analysis.

As seen in Figure 1 on page 39, approximately 76% of the University’s educational and general budget is committed to personnel expenditures and other fixed costs, leaving 24% for all other discretionary expenditures. Discretionary items such as student employment, office supplies, non-capital equipment, consulting fees, non-committed services, dues, subscriptions, etc. are reviewed by the internal budget committee. This committee will determine if the requested expense is justified as an item that will help achieve the University’s strategic goals. It will be included in the department’s annual budget if it is deemed to be a needed cost.
The Financial Planning & Analysis team and the Human Resources Department prepare the personnel cost based on current employees, projected promotions, market adjustments, annual merit increases, and increased benefit costs. Each department requests new faculty and staff needs and gains the appropriate Senior Vice President’s approval before the requests are submitted to the Financial Planning & Analysis team. As with the discretionary spending items, all new positions are reviewed by the Internal Budget Committee.

Revenue projections are developed by the Financial Planning & Analysis and Academic Affairs teams. Anticipated student enrollment and appropriate rate increases are projected and submitted to the Internal Budget Committee. This is accomplished by looking at historical trends of incoming new students and the retention of returning students in order to project the future enrollment growth of the University. External data, such as general market trends, unemployment statistics, etc., are also utilized to determine the university’s enrollment budget. The two teams meet several times to review this data and also plan enrollment for any new programs. Enrollments for the new programs are set based on submissions to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). At this time, the room and board utilization is calculated using a similar process as tuition enrollment just described. Residence and dining hall usage changes from year to year based on the total available occupancy on campus due to new resident hall structures.

The Internal Budget Committee ensures that the annual budgeted revenue exceeds the requested expenses by a predetermined goal. Once the goal is achieved then the budgets are finalized and submitted to RMU’s Audit & Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees for approval. After gaining the final approval from the Audit & Finance
Committee, the annual operating budget is presented to the full Board of Trustees for formal approval.

B. Evidence of Linked Planning and Budgeting from Division Level Strategic Plans

In the past RMU established University-wide goals via a series of five-year plans. The eleven 2002-2007 goals will be evaluated for the purposes of this report. A chronological summary of RMU’s progress towards its 2002-07 goals is provided in Appendix 6. The University currently is in the process of establishing a new comprehensive five-year strategic plan which will include five strategic initiatives with goals, strategies, and outcomes assessments accompanying each of the initiatives. The strategic plan will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The 2002-2007 University-wide goals encompass four areas of its operations: Enrollment Management, Academic Affairs, Facilities, and Institutional Advancement. Separate goals for Student Affairs will also be evaluated within this report.

1. Enrollment Strategic Plan

As an institution, Robert Morris University is very goal-oriented and budgeting and resource allocation is tied directly to enrollment. Strategic planning is a collaborative process involving key administrators and academic personnel at the University. Enrollment Management’s goals are set at the program level and are based on criteria such as: student demand for the major, local competition, and projected growth in the related job market.

Enrollment Management surpassed all four of their 2002-2007 goals by fiscal year 2005. These goals were:

- Total credit hour enrollment will reach 56,500 for Fall 2006
- Full-time undergraduate enrollment on the main campus will exceed 2,800
- The freshman class will reach 625 first time students with an SAT at or above national average
- The percentage of undergraduate enrollment outside of the business school will increase from 38% to 44%

Three main factors contributed to Enrollment Management’s success in achieving its goals over the last 5 years. The first was the introduction of niche programs such as a BS in Actuarial Science, BS and BA in Environmental Science and other programs. Second, five new NCAA Division 1 sports were added including men’s and women’s ice hockey, women’s field hockey, and men’s and women’s lacrosse. Lastly, the amount of institutional merit-based aid that has been awarded to students has increased over the last 5 years although RMU’s discount rate remains much lower than the average for Pennsylvania private master’s colleges. Robert Morris University has enjoyed a period of growth over the last five years, increasing both its enrollment and the breadth of its academic offerings.
Nearly 60% of RMU’s current freshman class is recruited from the surrounding five-county area - Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Washington, and Westmoreland counties. Because the high school population in this primary recruitment market is expected to decline by 14% over the next several years, the University is interested in expanding its regional presence in the higher education arena and broadening the geographic area from which it draws its prospective students.

As discussed in the “Issues and Opportunities” chapter, RMU’s primary expansion strategy going forward is to identify out-of-region market segments for development over the next three to five years and to create targeted marketing plans for each market identified.

Test markets have been identified and the budget for 2007-2008 which is currently in process will include funding for:

- Expanded travel of admissions counselors
- Advertising efforts in new markets
- Targeted communication plans for students in these regions
- Outreach efforts for parents/guidance counselors of prospective students in new markets
- Increase volume of direct mail names purchased

2. Academic Affairs Strategic Plan

Academic Affairs is currently completing its three goals from the list of 2002 – 2007 University-Wide goals while at the same time contemplating, analyzing, and completing its portions of the new 2007-12 strategic plan for the University.

Prospective programs and degrees at Robert Morris University are subject to several separate reviews before they can begin to enroll students. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (“PDE”), has granted Robert Morris University a “Limited Charter” that requires RMU to make a formal application to the PDE for all new programs and degrees. Prospective new academic programs are thus subject to both internal and external review. A development plan for a new academic program is presented to the Board of Directors and, once approved, is then submitted to the PDE for regulatory approval. The curriculum of each new degree program is also reviewed by internal faculty and administrative committees of the University. These extra steps are a useful exercise as a full blown cost analysis is completed as well as research to confirm that there is a market for the new program or degree. As a result, the necessary unit level budget steps are already completed when the budget process begins.
The 2002-2007 Academic Affairs Strategic Plan included the following goals:

- At least two new Doctoral and five new Masters degree programs will be implemented
- Over 85% of the faculty will have terminal degrees
- Two research centers will be established and funded externally

Strategic plans for each of RMU’s six academic schools were developed to align with the 2002-2007 University-wide goals. These division-level strategic plans were then utilized to determine budgeting for each year. For example, both faculty and facilities had to be considered when developing the budgets for the two new Doctoral programs and five new Masters programs.

An increased emphasis upon the hiring of full-time, terminally qualified faculty has been one of the main strategic goals of the University, and as such, has been a driving force in the budgeting process. New faculty needs are determined in June and July of one year for the start of an academic year 14 months in the future. The overall budget creation process does not normally begin until October, well after the faculty hiring plans have been submitted. Remaining budget considerations are then built around the faculty hiring plan. RMU hired 99 new full-time faculty over the 2002-2006 time period although this number has been partially offset by early retirement incentives and natural attrition. As of Fall 2006, 84% of the full-time instructional faculty are terminally qualified, a significant improvement from 2002.

Two research centers, the Massey Center for Business Innovation and Development and the Center for Applied Research in Engineering and Science, are both up and running. Both centers are very close to self sufficiency on an annual basis.

3. Student Affairs Strategic Plan

The Division of Student Affairs develops and coordinates student services that are designed and managed with specific student learning and personal development outcomes in mind. Departments within the division coordinate programming efforts in teams that include career development, personal growth, and civic responsibility. Departments within the division strive to meet specific student needs and provide general student direction and guidance, including referrals to resources available both internal and external to the University. With primary emphasis on the development of the whole student, the division includes the departments of:

- Campus Ministry Association
- Career Services
- Center for Student Success
- Health Services
- Residence Life & Judicial Affairs
- Student Activities/Intramural Club Sports/Band
Student Affairs developed four overall objectives for the 2002 – 2007 time period.

1. Students will be provided with the opportunity to develop social, personal, and professional skills and competencies that enable them to assume leadership positions in productive and satisfying careers.
2. Students will view their quality of life as favorable and meaningful, and will choose to remain at and graduate from Robert Morris University at rates higher than the national average.
3. Students will be provided with the opportunity to develop coherent values and ethical standards and will be able to apply them effectively to their academic learning, social development and career.
4. Students will obtain relevant practical career experiences, professional employment, and graduate/professional enrollment comparable to benchmark institutions.

Student Affairs’ responsibilities cover many aspects of the student-learning environment. This multiplicity of activities and initiatives calls for a decentralized approach to outcomes assessment within the umbrella of the four governing objectives above. Responsibility for Student Affairs’ outcomes assessment shall be vested within its individual organizational units. Each organizational unit has its own appropriate objectives, assessments, performance criteria, review process and timetable. Appropriate procedures, overseen by the Dean of Students and Career Services, are in place to assure overall consistency and coordination of the outcomes assessment plan, review and use of assessment results and reporting of assessment activities to the Director of Institutional Research. The unit-level plans follow the template established by the Committee on Outcomes Assessment for all unit-level outcomes assessment plans.

A few of the major initiatives taken during the last five years include:
- Construction of a major new apartment-style dormitory
- Addition of seven club sports
- Expansion of the “First-Year Experience” Program
- Doubling the size of the fitness center
- Purchase of a major off-campus sports complex

4. Facilities Master Plan

In the Fall of 1993, RMU retained an outside firm to prepare a Facilities Master Plan for the University. The Master Plan document states, “The goal was to set the site improvements, space and physical facilities programs in place to allow Robert Morris to continue its growth, improve all aspects of its campus, and position the University for continued excellence in the Twenty-First Century.”

The Master Plan was discussed and agreed upon with input from RMU’s leaders, the Facilities Committee of the Board of Trustees, and the Board of Trustees as a whole. The Business Affairs area oversees the Facilities Master Plan. The University budget has supported several projects contained within the recommended plan. The Master Plan is
Currently being updated and revised to reflect the facilities priorities established in RMU’s new strategic plan.

Capital projects amounting to $55 million undertaken pursuant to the current Master Plan have been funded via the issuance of $27 million in debt, with the remaining balance having been paid via the University’s annual operating surplus and donations over the past decade. RMU possesses an investment-grade bond rating which allows it to access the capital markets at advantageous tax-exempt rates. Progress to date on the Facilities Master Plan since 2002 includes multiple building renovations and construction projects, broken out below by area:

- **Athletics**
  - $10 million was allocated to the on-campus football stadium and athletic complex which included a $1.5 million anonymous gift.
  - The Island Sports Center purchase & renovations included allocations of $14 million. Five new NCAA Division 1 sports were added after the purchase of this facility.

- **Academic Affairs**
  - John Jay Center was renovated for a total cost of $5 million to house the School of Engineering, Mathematics and Science, founded in 1999, and the School of Nursing, founded in 2004.
  - Other classroom renovations, Faculty/Staff offices, and general repair and maintenance amount to $2 to $3 million per year.

- **Student Life**
  - $10 million was spent on a new apartment style residence hall with state-of-the-art, contemporary living spaces, adding 152 beds.
  - A former assisted living facility near the campus was purchased and renovated for $2 million, adding 62 beds and additional administrative offices.

- **Infrastructure/Life Safety**
  - $2 million was allocated to critical life safety and other deferred maintenance projects (see below for more details.)

In fiscal year 2006-2007 RMU developed and implemented an Internal Capital Committee to help ensure the University’s budget would continue to sustain the affordability of supporting the Facilities Master Plan. This ensured tighter controls between the budget process and the strategic mission of the University. The Internal Capital Committee meets monthly to review current funds available and new requested projects from the University. The committee includes members from both academic and business affairs including the Senior Vice Presidents from both areas as well as the Director of Athletics. The Internal Capital Committee generally approves capital spending of $250,000 and below with most requests being less than $100,000. Capital expenditures above $250,000 are scrutinized during the annual budgeting process and are reviewed and approved by the Trustees’ Facilities Committee and subsequently by the full Board.
Capital projects were budgeted as part of each department’s operating budget prior to the advent of the Internal Capital Committee. Just in the first year of implementation of the Internal Capital Committee the following improvements have been noted:

- There is now a sense of priority in capital spending
- There is more flexibility to make decisions for capital spending throughout the year as needs arise
- The new process has helped manage spending during the lean summer months before fall tuition arrives
- The new process has begun to change the way department managers think about spending in their areas vs. overall priorities of the University. However, as with any pooled resources, not all departments feel that their requests are given adequate consideration.

A Ten Year Summary of Capital Cash Flows was developed in the spring of 2006 which includes total routine maintenance, total deferred maintenance, and total major projects (per the Facilities Master Plan) as the three categories of capital spending. A total inventory of deferred maintenance was taken for inclusion into this summary. In the past, deferred maintenance was completed by the University on an as needed basis, not always on a regular routine scheduled basis. This has led the university to develop the above mentioned ten year plan to address the needed deferred maintenance that has accumulated.

The University is committed to prioritizing facility needs and to address them over the next several years. Remediation of critical life safety systems deferred maintenance was taken to the Board of Trustees in May of 2006 and approved (~$1.2 million.) This included the domestic & fire water loop (in progress), replacement of fire alarms in the traditional dorms (completed), and electrical system reliability testing within all campus buildings (completed). Other deferred maintenance performed in FY 06-07 includes roof and HVAC equipment replacements (~$700,000.) Once RMU is caught up on all deferred maintenance, the Ten Year Summary of Capital Cash Flows will only include total regular maintenance and total major projects.

The University is committed to supporting the continued growth of its campus. The Facilities Master Plan is currently in the process of being updated for the next 10 years in coordination with strategic plan priorities. Once completed, financial and non-financial resources will be prioritized and allocated towards the approved projects.

5. Institutional Advancement/Fundraising

RMU’s first comprehensive capital campaign, the 1994 – 2004 “Campaign for the 21st Century,” raised $24 million for targeted priorities of the University. RMU is in the earliest stages of the "quiet phase" of its next capital campaign effort. Recently, the University hired a new Vice President for Institutional Advancement who has over 24 years of fundraising experience. The new Vice President has begun to build a team of experienced, energetic professionals who will help RMU attain its fundraising goals. The
new strategic plan has established goals for fundraising that, if attained, will help lessen RMU’s present high amount of reliance upon tuition and student housing revenue.

The 2002-2007 University-wide goals for Institutional Advancement consist of three main goals:
1. $3 million to be raised for the renovation of the John Jay Center
2. Annual alumni giving will increase from 7.5% to greater than 15%. Alumni giving will increase from $175,000 to $300,000 per year
3. Annual giving will average $2 million per year

Renovations to the John Jay Center took place and were completed in 2004. Originally, Institutional Advancement had a goal to raise $3 million for these renovations. Donor interest in other projects on campus, specifically the building of a 3,000 seat football stadium and athletic complex on campus, took priority over this goal. The John Jay Center renovations were completed and paid for with other University funding.

RMU’s annual giving effort is presently being evaluated and overhauled. The University has engaged IDC, a professional telemarketing consultant, to help with the new student-staffed mail/phone solicitation program. A "lead" letter is sent to alumni and friends that makes the case for giving and announces/validates the students' upcoming phone call. Utilizing this method, as well as strong database development and maintenance, the mail/phone program is expected to increase alumni participation in RMU’s annual fundraising effort. The University is confident that its goal of 15% alumni participation will be met and exceeded in the near term.

While the Annual Giving department will focus most of its efforts on raising unrestricted annual gifts, RMU is also developing a strong advancement team which will lead its efforts to build and enhance its $1,000 and above giving club. As part of this effort, a program of cultivation events, personal visits and local and regional alumni activities will be aimed at the growth and long term development of what RMU calls its "President's Council." This program has a goal of securing an average of $2,000,000 annually.

Budget requests for the new initiatives discussed above are being included in the 2007-2008 budget. Institutional Advancement has been targeted as a major priority in both the annual budgeting process as well as the forthcoming strategic plan. RMU will be investing significant resources into the growth and resources of the Institutional Advancement Department.

**C. New 2007 - 2012 Strategic Plan**

The University is presently in the process of developing a new five-year strategic plan. The plan’s development process has four phases with a targeted completion date of May, 2007. Development of the new strategic plan is on schedule and the implementation of plan initiatives, including the unit-level plans and budget priorities that support the overall RMU strategic plan, will commence in fiscal year 2008-2009.
The President, President’s Cabinet and the University Planning Council formulated five major strategic initiatives for the new strategic plan in January, 2006 as Phase 1 of the planning process. Subsequently, administrators, faculty, students and staff have been furthering the plan development process by participating in five work groups that were assigned to develop three – five major goals that will support each of the five initiatives. This Phase 2 work was completed on schedule early in 2007. The subsequent Phase 3 of the strategic planning process, which involves the formulation of specific strategies and measures of success for each objective, is presently nearing completion.

An ad hoc committee of the RMU Board of Trustees has provided guidance and served as an information conduit to the remaining Trustees during the course of the strategic planning process. The draft strategic plan and its component parts has been reviewed several times with the complete Board of Trustees and several of its committees. The plan development timetable is targeting its final approval by the Board on May 17, 2007. A draft of the new RMU strategic plan is included as Appendix 7 of this report.

The process for developing the new strategic plan has been much more comprehensive in scope and inclusive than the one used to develop the five year University-Wide Goals which have been used for the past 15 years. The five year University-Wide Goals were developed with input only from RMU’s senior leadership. The new strategic plan has had input from all RMU constituencies. Several additional community review and comment opportunities are planned to gather more feedback before the final version of the strategic plan is presented to the Board for ratification.

RMU’s timetable and implementation process for the new strategic plan was designed from the beginning to flow through from the institution-wide level to school, departmental and unit-level strategic plans and budgets. The President made it clear from the beginning that the new strategic plan will drive the University’s budgeting and resource allocation decisions at all levels effective with the 2008-09 budget. The framework of the new strategic plan will allow these resource allocation decisions to be made in a rational way with the University-wide priorities as a guide and the plan’s outcomes assessments attached to its various strategies serving as guideposts along the way.