Decennial Accreditation Review
Self–Study Proposal, Executive Summary
Student Transitions and Integration of Technology
31 July 2006

Our next decennial accreditation review by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE, www.msche.org) will take place in 2008 with an evaluation team visit in the spring of 2008. Leading up to that visit, a campus–wide Accreditation Steering Committee and its subcommittees will produce a self–study report, which will be submitted to the MSCHE in advance of their visit.

The purpose of this document is to summarize the process, its timeline, and the key features of the self–study.

I. Background
The MSCHE is one of several regional, independent, and member–supported accrediting authorities in the United States. Both the Council on Higher Education Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education recognize the MSCHE as an accrediting authority. MSCHE is not, however, a government agency, and MSCHE accreditation, while necessary for access to government funds, is not a government process. Accreditation is a voluntary process of using peer review and established standards to demonstrate a minimum level of quality. Institutions may exceed the minimum level to varying degrees, but the accreditation process does not rank institutions.

The MSCHE accreditation process is an institution–wide process, which distinguishes it from the discipline–oriented accreditation processes like AACSB, ABET, or PA Department of Education. The 14 MSCHE standards are general in nature, and they are to be interpreted in the context of an individual institution’s mission and goals. A key consideration in the MSCHE process is the preservation of institutional identity and autonomy.

MSCHE seeks evidence of appropriate processes (e.g., faculty evaluation processes, planning processes) as opposed to specific products (e.g., faculty promotion criteria, individual plans). Even as recently as three years ago, accreditation processes were less rigorous, but the current foci on documentation, evidence, and institutionalized process lead to real accountability in the accreditation process.

The accreditation process has three fundamental objectives: (1) maintaining the public trust by confirming reliable stewardship of public funds, validity of academic programs, and credibility of those who teach in the curricula and conduct scholarship, (2) promoting accountability in the institution’s pursuit of its own mission and goals through a peer–review process based on standards and evidence, and (3) fostering institutional transformation through a self–study and peer–review feedback.
Institutional accreditation follows a ten–year cycle, and Lehigh’s current cycle will end with the publication of a self–study report and an evaluation team site visit in the spring of 2008. The possible outcomes of the accreditation process are: (1) accredited without conditions, (2) accredited with required follow–up visit, or (3) accredited with a monitoring report. If the institution fails to establish full compliance during the specified time period for follow–up or monitoring, MSCHE may withdraw the institution’s accreditation. The follow–up and monitoring outcomes are becoming increasingly common as MSCHE seeks to make accreditation a more engaging process in which authentic peer–review influences institutional processes.

II. Self–study
The MSCHE’s 14 standards are published in their Characteristics of Excellence (see Appendix 1), and each institution must demonstrate, with documented evidence, that it complies with each of the 14 standards. The MSCHE allows an institution to select an approach for its self–study report from four models. We have adopted the Selected Topics approach. Following this approach, we will conduct an in–depth study of two topics of special interest to Lehigh: Student Transitions and Technology Support for a Learning–Centered Mission. In doing so, we will demonstrate Lehigh’s compliance with six of the 14 standards. Because we must also demonstrate compliance with the remaining eight standards, our self–study report will include a compliance report that completes the documentation necessary for accreditation (see Appendix 2 for a summary of the linkages among standards, self–study topics, and subcommittee responsibilities).

Topic 1. Student transitions
The first year of college abounds with transitional experiences for students, and we are committed to a strong and purposeful first–year experience. We recognize, however, that undergraduate students experience significant transitions throughout college, and the best first year experience is one that integrates with and prepares students for subsequent transitions during their four years of college, such as declaring a major, taking an active role in discourse and original work (research, scholarship, creative effort) in a discipline, accepting responsibility for choices in personal and public life, and moving beyond college to work or post–graduate education. Successful transitions are essential for positive intellectual and personal development. Our investigation of student transitions will focus on the set of transitions that characterize the first year (defined as admission through to the declaration of a major, which for different students could take less than 12 months to as many as 30 months), including academic choices and progress, core competencies, and residential environment. This topic will also address assessment of outcomes with specific attention to how assessment advances student learning by supporting student transitions and how assessment results influence decisions, policies, and plans.

Our investigation of Topic 1 will demonstrate Lehigh’s compliance with

Standard 8. Student Admissions. The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission.
**Standard 9. Student Support Services.** The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution’s goals for students.

**Standard 12. General Education.** The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college–level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy.

**Standard 14. Assessment of Student Learning.** Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional goals and that students at graduation have achieved appropriate higher education goals.

**Topic 2. Technology support for learning–centered mission**

The focused study portion of Lehigh’s *Periodic Review Report* (2003) considered the integration of technology in teaching and learning. We intend to build on that in our decennial self–study by reviewing our progress in this area and making use of technology as an even more purposeful element of our identity as a learning–centered institution. We are especially interested in how best to use e–learning technology on a residential campus where we value face–to–face interactions so highly. At Lehigh, all first– and second–year students live in on–campus residences. Of upper–class students, roughly 25% live off–campus, but the vast majority of those students (80 to 90%) live within about 4 blocks of campus, which makes the residential neighborhoods surrounding campus effectively part of the campus residential setting. In this environment, many of our courses have evolved hybrid delivery systems that include traditional face–to–face methods and new electronic methods. Our investigation of technology support for a learning–centered mission will include an evaluation of e–learning methods for both undergraduate and graduate students at Lehigh, faculty development, progress towards information literacy and academic integrity, and using technologies to foster learning communities—both physical and virtual.

Our investigation of Topic 2 will demonstrate Lehigh’s compliance with

**Standard 11. Educational Offerings.** The institution’s educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

**Standard 13. Related Educational Activities.** Institutional programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

**III. Committees**

Our goal has been to form a Steering Committee (Table 1) that is composed of individuals from major campus constituencies (faculty, students, and staff/administration), is small enough to meet regularly, and is tied strongly to the subcommittees. We are also establishing critical connections with the Board of Trustees through the Provost and the Academic Affairs Subcommittee of the Board and with the
Alumni Association through the Deputy Provost and the Executive Director of the Alumni Association. A comprehensive communication plan provides structure to critical communication with the campus constituencies, the Board, alumni, and parents.

**Table 1. Accreditation Steering Committee**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name and Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, <em>ex officio</em></td>
<td>Prof. Mohamed S. El-Aasser (Chemical Engineering)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Provost for Academic Affairs, <em>chair</em></td>
<td>Prof. Carl O. Moses (Earth and Environmental Sciences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty subcommittee co–chair</td>
<td>Prof. Edward Gallagher (English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty subcommittee co–chair</td>
<td>Prof. Barry Kroll (English)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty subcommittee co–chair</td>
<td>Prof. Vincent Munley (Economics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty subcommittee co–chair</td>
<td>Prof. Hannah Stewart–Gambino (Political Science)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At–large faculty member</td>
<td>Prof. Charles Smith (Mechanical Engineering and Mechanics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Provost for Institutional Research</td>
<td>Dr. Steven Devlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President for Finance and Administration</td>
<td>Ms. Margaret Plympton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Provost for Student Affairs</td>
<td>Dr. John Smeaton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Provost for Library and Technology Services</td>
<td>Dr. Bruce Taggart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
<td>Mr. Matthew Montgomery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate student</td>
<td>Mr. Raymond Pugh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Assistant to the Provost, <em>staff liaison</em></td>
<td>Ms. Debra H. Nyby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff support and committee secretary</td>
<td>Ms. Amy Fantasia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four subcommittees will execute the necessary research and writing to produce the self–study report (Table 2; see rosters in Appendix 3). Each subcommittee has a staff/administrator co–chair and a faculty co–chair. All co–chairs are members of the Steering Committee.
The **First Year and Beyond Subcommittee** supports work on Topic 1 of the self–study (Student Transitions). It will be responsible for designing an implementation plan that integrates key University functions - faculty, academic administration, Student Affairs, Athletics, and Career Services - into a partnership that builds a platform for student success based on the first year. The work of this subcommittee follows naturally from the recommendations of a first–year task force that submitted its report in August 2005 and the development of the Student Affairs and Career Services strategic plans, which emphasize first–year experiences in fostering core competencies and career awareness. Documentation of the process of developing the implementation plan and documentation of its outcomes as of August 2007 will constitute the subcommittee’s chief product.

While meeting MSCHE expectations for accreditation review, the work of this subcommittee is critical to our goal of using our self–study effort to advance the institution. The implementation plan will include

- strategies for integrating recruitment, admission, matriculation, and first–year transitions
- a consideration of the intellectual attainments that contribute to academic success and strategies for achieving specific academic developmental goals in the first year
- strategies for retaining students through intentional support services integrated with general education and core competencies to prepare students for successful transitions throughout the college experience and beyond
- a plan to coordinate an array of transition–support activities across academic affairs (includes admissions, financial aid, academic advising and policy, registrar, library and technology services), student affairs (includes academic support, residential life, counseling, student development, fraternity and sorority affairs), athletics, and career services

The **Advancement of Student Learning Subcommittee** also supports work on Topic 1 of the self–study. It will be responsible for creating an inventory and evaluation of assessments currently or recently conducted to support undergraduate learning and academic program effectiveness and for designing a coordinated assessment process for undergraduate learning. The inventory is a crucial step, allowing us to demonstrate the effort faculty and others are already investing in assessment without explicitly having recognized the work as assessment. By utilizing existing processes, adding new processes to fill gaps, and unifying processes across educational units where appropriate, we can create a process for gathering evidence that supports faculty efforts to improve teaching.

### Table 2. Accreditation Subcommittees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year and Beyond</th>
<th>Dr. John Smeaton, co–chair</th>
<th>Prof. Barry Kroll, co–chair</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advancement of Student Learning</strong></td>
<td>Dr. Steven Devlin, co–chair</td>
<td>Prof. Vincent Munley, co–chair</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Technology Support for Learning–Centered Mission</strong></td>
<td>Dr. Bruce Taggart, co–chair</td>
<td>Prof. Edward Gallagher, co–chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compliance</strong></td>
<td>Ms. Margaret Plympton, co–chair</td>
<td>Prof. Hannah Stewart–Gambino, co–chair</td>
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</table>
In conducting its inventory and evaluation, the subcommittee will build on the work reported in Lehigh’s 2003 *Periodic Review Report*. Both the inventory and the assessment process, along with outcomes as of August 2007, will constitute the subcommittee’s chief product. The assessment process will address

- specific indicators needed for evaluating and monitoring student success at Lehigh
- how measures of those indicators will be acquired
- how those measures will be used to inform decisions about curriculum, pedagogy, and student support through transitions

The **Technology Support for Learning–Centered Mission Subcommittee** supports work on Topic 2 of the self–study. It will be responsible for reviewing and evaluating the current utilization of technology in support of learning at Lehigh, including an updated inventory of technology resources that support student learning and student development at Lehigh with an assessment of the impact of each. Considerations include e–learning in traditional courses, co– and extra–curricular programming, distance education, career awareness and planning, and developing and sustaining learning communities. The chief work product of this subcommittee will be an update to the 2003 *Periodic Review Report*, including

- a report on the master plan for technology resources
- a strategic plan for coordinating faculty development and technology utilization that supports learning, information literacy, and academic integrity
- developing a process for using technologies to build and sustain learning communities

The **Compliance Subcommittee** is responsible for researching and demonstrating compliance with the remaining MSCHE standards (1–7 and 10). This subcommittee will

- assemble all of the documents (plans, policies, procedures, etc) relevant to standards 1–7 and 10
- address the communication with, dissemination of information to, and mechanisms for engagement of relevant constituencies in standards 1–7 and 10
- ensure the documentation of processes for continuous planning, assessment, and improvement in all 14 standards (see Appendix 2)

As with the Steering Committee’s intention to use the self–study to advance institutional transformation, the compliance subcommittee’s work should push campus thinking toward greater integration of the university’s mission with academic innovation, resource allocation, and university–wide planning. The Steering Committee will work toward that goal by meeting with existing campus organizations and constituencies to encourage discussion and awareness of the synergies in the decentralized planning structures. Where possible, the Steering Committee aims to broaden campus discussion from verifying existing procedures to ways in which the university can strengthen a campus culture of continuous improvement based on sustainable processes of planning, assessment, campus engagement and communication, and resource allocation.
IV. Timeline
The self-study report will be completed in four stages:

1. The compliance report will be completed in spring 2007, allowing time for campus review and comment.
2. The compliance report will be finalized and submitted to MSCHE by the end of the summer of 2007. The chair of the evaluation team and a generalist evaluator from the team will review the compliance report during the fall of 2007.
3. The draft of the selected topics report will be completed in draft form by the end of the summer of 2007. The draft report will be posted for the campus community for approximately three months during which time we will accept comments from the community.
4. After the campus comment period, we will finalize the self-study report and submit it to the MSCHE in early 2008 along with a report of comments and the action taken on each comment.

The full evaluation team will visit campus in spring of 2008, and MSCHE action would be expected in the summer of 2008.

Between summer 2006 and the end of 2007, the Accreditation Steering Committee will, through the efforts of the subcommittees, construct the self-study and compliance reports. In addition, the Accreditation Steering Committee will aim to identify challenges that could be identified by the evaluation team or MSCHE as potential deficiencies that might be considered non-compliance issues. We will sort the challenges into two categories. The first category includes issues that the institution may be able to address constructively before the end of 2007, eliminating them as potential non-compliance issues. The Accreditation Steering Committee will work with the campus community and administrative leadership to develop options for ongoing improvement and internal follow-up and to undertake actions to bring Lehigh into compliance on those questionable issues. The second category includes issues that we probably cannot address effectively in the short term. For those issues, the Accreditation Steering will work with the campus community and administrative leadership to develop recommendations for ongoing improvement and internal follow-up and to plan for actions to eventually bring Lehigh into compliance.
Appendix 1

Standards for Accreditation (Characteristics of Excellence\(^1\))

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

**Institutional Context**

**Standard 1: Mission, Goals, and Objectives**

The institution’s mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and explains whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution’s stated goals and objectives, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission, goals, and objectives are developed and recognized by the institution with its members and its governing body and are utilized to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.

**Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal**

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and uses the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.

**Standard 3: Institutional Resources**

The human, financial, technical, physical facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution’s mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution’s mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution’s resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.

**Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

The institution’s system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decisionmaking. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

**Standard 5: Administration**

The institution’s administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution’s organization and governance.

**Standard 6: Integrity**

In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support to academic and intellectual freedom.

**Standard 7: Institutional Assessment**

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment plan and process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in: achieving its mission and goals; implementing planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes; using institutional resources efficiently; providing leadership and governance; providing administrative structures and services; demonstrating institutional integrity; and assuring that institutional processes and resources support appropriate learning and other outcomes for its students and graduates.

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*Educational Effectiveness*

**Standard 8: Student Admissions**
The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission.

**Standard 9: Student Support Services**
The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution’s goals for students.

**Standard 10: Faculty**
The institution’s instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.

**Standard 11: Educational Offerings**
The institution’s educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

**Standard 12: General Education**
The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy.

**Standard 13: Related Educational Activities**
Institutional programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

**Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning** Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional goals and that students at graduation have achieved appropriate higher education goals.
## Appendix 2

**Linkages Among Topics, Self–Study Topics, and Subcommittee Responsibilities**

*(as of July 2006; these linkages will be revisited in November 2006)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>1. Student Transitions</th>
<th>2. Technology Support</th>
<th>Compliance</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subcommittee</strong></td>
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<td>Student Learning&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>1 Mission, Goals, and Objectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal</td>
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<td>3 Institutional Resources</td>
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<td>5 Administration</td>
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<td>6 Integrity</td>
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<td>7 Institutional Assessment</td>
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<td>8 Student Admissions</td>
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<td>9 Student Support Services</td>
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<td>10 Faculty</td>
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<td>11 Educational Offerings</td>
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<td>12 General Education</td>
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<td>13 Related Educational Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Assessment of Student Learning</td>
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<sup>a</sup> full name: First Year and Beyond

<sup>b</sup> full name: Advancement of Student Learning

<sup>c</sup> full name: Technology Support for Learning–Centered Mission (same name for topic and subcommittee)

<sup>d</sup> 1=principal responsibility

2=secondary responsibility
Appendix 3
Subcommittee Rosters

First Year and Beyond
John Smeaton  co–chair, Vice Provost for Student Affairs
Barry Kroll  co–chair, Professor of English, CAS
M.J. Bishop  Assistant Professor of Education and Human Services, CoE, (beginning 1/07)
Lori Bolden  Assistant Dean of Students, First Year Experience
Roseann Bowerman  Team Leader for Arts and Sciences, Library and Technology Services
Erica Caloiero  Director, Study Abroad
Joan DeSalvatore  Associate Dean, CBE
Allison Ragon  Coordinator, First Year Experience
Michael Raposa  Associate Dean, Professor of Religion Studies, CAS
Joseph Sterrett  Dean, Athletics
Robert Storer  Professor of Industrial and Systems Engineering, RCEAS
Alta Thornton  Interim Assistant Dean of Students, Office of Multicultural Affairs
Students – TBD  2 first years
  2 upperclass

Advancement of Student Learning
Steven Devlin  co–chair, Vice Provost for Institutional Research
Vincent Munley  co–chair, Professor of Economics, CBE
Richard Brandt  Director, Iacocca Institute
Stephen Buell  Professor of Finance and Law, CBE
Ward Cates  Associate Dean, Professor of Education and Human Services, CoE
John Coulter  Associate Dean, Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Mechanics, RCEAS
James Hall  Associate Professor of Accounting, CBE
Gerard Lennon  Associate Dean, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, RCEAS
Linda Lowe–Krentz  Professor of Biological Sciences, CAS
Kenneth Sinclair  Professor of Accounting, CBE

Technology Support for Learning–Centered Mission
Bruce Taggart  co–chair, Vice Provost for Library and Technology Services
Edward Gallagher  co–chair, Professor of English, CAS
Anna Chupa  Associate Professor, Art and Architecture (Design Arts), CAS
Lynn Columba–Piervallo  Associate Professor of Education and Human Services, COE
Tim Foley  Director of Client Services, Library and Technology Services
Jean Johnson  Team Leader for Education, Library and Technology Services
Jacob Kazakia  Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Mechanics, RCEAS
Jack Lule  Professor of Journalism, CAS
Chris Mulvihill  Assistant Dean of Students, Office of Student Conduct
David Myers  Professor of Practice in Finance, CBE
Greg Reihman  Director of Faculty Development, Library and Technology Services
Christine Roysdon  Director of Library Collections and Systems, Library and Technology Services
Evan Spark–Depass  Undergraduate student
Todd Watkins  Associate Professor of Economics, CBE
TBD  Graduate student
### Compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Plympton</td>
<td>co-chair, Vice President for Finance and Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Stewart–Gambino</td>
<td>co-chair, Professor of Political Science, CAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon Basso</td>
<td>Associate Vice Provosts and Dean of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin Bodnar</td>
<td>Budget Analyst, RCEAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat Chase</td>
<td>Director, Facilities Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Beth Deily</td>
<td>Associate Professor of Economics, CBE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Lutz</td>
<td>Professor of Education, CoE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Meischeid</td>
<td>Director, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janice Stoudt</td>
<td>staff support, Finance and Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara Traister</td>
<td>Professor of English, CAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marvin White</td>
<td>Professor of Electrical Engineering, RCEAS</td>
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</table>