Report to
the Faculty, Administration, Trustees and Students
of The University of the District of Columbia
4200 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Prepared following and analysis of the institution’s
Periodic Review Report

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I. Introduction

The Periodic Review Report of The University of the District of Columbia (2010) spells out a number of significant accomplishments of the University over the past five years. Among these are the launching of a new vision by a new administration, the development of The Community College of the District of Columbia, the revitalization of the University’s Flagship undergraduate and graduate programs, the accreditation (and re-accreditation) of academic programs by discipline-specific agencies, the opening of the David A. Clarke School of Law and the beginning of the Counseling and Career Development Center. However, the University continues to face significant challenges in meeting a number of Middle States standards. The second chapter notes that the University has responded to the recommendations from the 2005 Self Study Report, yet the Periodic Review Report does not indicate that these two recommendations, which dealt with fulfilling Fundamental Elements for Standards 2 and 3, have indeed been adequately addressed. Furthermore, chapter three lays out the development and implementation of The Community College of the District of Columbia, yet it is not clear that the University has fully complied with Standard 13 since the new location for The Community College does not appear as an approved additional location on the Middle States Institutional Profile. And finally, among the many ways in which the programs of the University’s Flagship have been revitalized has been the launching of a new core curriculum; chapter five of the PRR does not, though, explain how this new core is assessed, thus calling into question whether Standard 12 is indeed fulfilled.

Besides these above concerns as to whether the University meets some of the fundamental elements found in standards 2, 3, 12 and 13, the PRR of UDC notes a number of challenges that it faces. Most important among those listed seem to be enrollment, retention and persistence to graduation. Hence while the PRR paints a portrait of a University with a strong mission and vision to meet the educational needs of the District of Columbia, as well as describing a dynamic strategic plan to enhance the academic reputation of the University, it also portrays UDC as needing to more clearly give attention to some of the Middle States standards.

II. Responses to Recommendations from the Previous Decennial Evaluation

Chapter One: Executive Summary of the PRR briefly summarizes the major changes and developments that have occurred at the University since 2005. Then, a half page is devoted to Chapter Two: Institution’s Response to Recommendations from the 2005 Self Study. The first recommendation was that “the University link the annual budgeting and resource allocation process to the strategic planning process,” a key component of Standard 2. The second chapter notes that the University “has strengthened its planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes through a series of initiatives” which include its current engagement in strategic planning, the expansion of staff in the Office of Finance and Planning along with the appointment of a Managing Director of
Finance, and the implementation of the Banner System. The reader is then referred to Chapter Four for details of “budget data and resource allocation for 2010 to 2015.” Yet at no point in Chapter Four is there any mention of the linkage between strategic planning and budgeting. In *Chapter Six: Linked Institutional Planning and Budgeting*, it is noted that the University budget team meets regularly “to make sure that the budget meets changes in academic/administrative programs and reflects the pressure and priorities of the strategic plan.” This is the only statement that can be construed to show the linkage between planning and budgeting. Hence it is difficult to assert that UDC has in fact responded to this recommendation. Evidence is lacking to verify compliance with Standard 2. Perhaps further explanation of the work of the “University budget team” along with documentation of funding for items in the strategic plan is all that is needed to underscore the University’s compliance to this standard.

The readers require that UDC submit evidence that demonstrates the linkage between the annual budgeting and resource allocation process and the strategic planning process.

The second recommendation from the 2005 Self Study, as described in Chapter Two, was that “the University perform multi-year budget projections for at least three years, [and that] these projections should be included in UDC’s next Periodic Report.” The reader is then referred to Chapter Four of the PRR for budget projections for the next five years. Yet Chapter Four does not include budget projections for either the years 2006-2009, as recommended or for the years 2010-2015 as indicated in Chapter Two. Moreover, Chapter Six explains that “the University is developing longer-term financial models and plans to support the University strategic plan, [and] to support this effort, the University hired a Manager of Financial Planning and Analysis in FY 2010. This person is responsible for developing a five year projection model for the University that will integrate the budget and projections.” Evidently, then, UDC has not yet developed multi-year budget projections and is not in compliance with Standard 3. Perhaps, however, the newly hired Manager of Financial Planning developed multi-year budget projections after the submission of the PRR.

The readers require that UDC submit evidence that shows multi-year budget projections for at least the next three years.

### III. Major Challenges and/or Opportunities

Despite the University’s seeming failure to respond adequately to these two important recommendations from the 2005 Self Study, the University has made significant progress in a number of areas as described fully in *Chapter Three: Challenges and Opportunities*, which comprises the largest section of the PRR. The leadership of UDC is to be commended for the development of a vision statement which guides its new strategic plan: “The University of the District of Columbia will be a diverse, selective, teaching, research and service university in the land-grant tradition, serving the people of Washington, DC and the Nation.” This vision, introduced in 2008, has guided the reorganization and expansion of the university. Hence the University Flagship will consist of one college and seven schools; a community college was also created.
Chapter Three notes that planning for the Flagship University began in summer 2009. As a part of this planning, a number of challenges facing the University were noted, chief among them being enrollment, retention and persistence to graduation. While these are daunting challenges, they are not insurmountable. Yet the PRR does not indicate that any planning has been done in regard to these issues. In fact, Chapter Four: Enrollment and Finance Projections paints a rosy picture of future enrollments that seems to belie this stated challenge.

The readers recommend that UDC develop a realistic enrollment projection model based on past performance rather than on the hope that future improvements will spur enrollment growths.

Chapter Three notes that the University’s College of Arts and Sciences is making headway in hiring more faculty with terminal degrees, has begun six new programs since 2005, that six of its programs have specialized accreditation, that 16 of its programs are grant-supported and that it has adopted a new general education core. This new core is indeed noteworthy for its combination of skills-building and themed courses.

The School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and the David A. Clarke School of Law were both recently either re-accredited or accredited for the first time. The University feels that both schools are poised for growth. UDC is also excited about the potential for growth and educational opportunities in its new School of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences. Also providing new opportunities for UDC is the creation of The Community College of the District of Columbia (CCDC) that officially opened in fall 2009. Located at a different site in the District, CCDC offers certificate programs, associate degrees, workforce development and continuing education. The University hopes that CCDC will become a premier community college that will fill the educational gap in the District. Since CCDC’s site is not listed in the Institutional Profile of UDC, the reviewers wonder whether the University has filed the appropriate Substantive Change Request for CCDC. Perhaps such a Request was filed but did not indicate that CCDC would be located at a different site. This calls into question the University’s compliance with Standard 13 and these reviewers can only wonder whether CCDC’s students do indeed have guaranteed access to Title IV funds.

The readers recommend that UDC file the appropriate Substantive Change Request with the Commission in order to confirm the status of CCDC as an additional location of the University and hence allow its students to be eligible for Title IV funds.

IV. Enrollment and Finance Trends and Projections

Chapter Four: Enrollment and Finance Projections first demonstrates that enrollment in all of UDC’s programs has increased only once in the past four years. Yet the University expects enrollment to increase over the next six years due to “academic improvements and campus infrastructure renovation.” This chapter also notes that while net assets decreased from 2008 to 2009, revenue increased due to an increase in student generated revenues, federal grants and other sources. The PRR explains that “revenue support from
the District of Columbia is still the most important component of the University’s revenue,” although the University is becoming less dependent on District appropriations. The University is to be commended for its efforts to diversify its revenue source and should continue to seek other sources.

The readers suggest that the University continue its efforts to diversify its revenue sources.

V. Assessment Processes and Plans

Chapter Five: Assessment and Future Plans discusses institutional assessment in terms of the role of the Office of Institutional Research, assessment of administrative services, assessment of current university challenges, assessment of changes in student affairs, faculty assessment and student satisfaction assessment. Clearly the University uses multiple measures of assessment to gauge institutional effectiveness. However, this chapter makes little mention of assessment of the university’s finances, underscoring the apparent lack in developing multi-year budget projections.

The readers recommend that the University should develop and implement multiple measures of assessment to assess the effectiveness of the University's financial health.

Chapter Five also addresses assessment of university programs in terms of program review that was instituted in fall 2009. “Reviews will be conducted on a 5-year cycle; however, in 2009-2010 all units will be reviewed.” It would be helpful if the data from these reviews is made available.

The readers recommend that the University submit data from the program reviews conducted in 2009-2010.

In addition, this chapter describes assessment in the colleges and schools and notes the wide range of professional development activities that have occurred related to assessment. These include presentations by assessment experts, workshops for faculty to develop assessment activities in their course, creation of online links to assessment models at other colleges, the establishment of a university-wide assessment committee and professional training for the assessment coordinator of each of the schools and colleges. Clearly UDC is establishing a culture of program-level assessment. The plan for assessing the new general education core includes the use of common student learning goals and rubrics and annual review of all courses in the core by the General Education Review Committee. “Course assessment will include instruments collecting student feedback, peer review, and external review.” As soon as the first cycle of this review is complete, UDC should submit data derived from the assessment of its new core.

The readers recommend that the University submit data from the first round of its assessment of the new core curriculum.

VI. Linked Institutional Planning and Budgeting
The final chapter, *Chapter Six: Linked Institutional Planning and Budgeting* begins by stating that “the University is working to build its internal financial capabilities to support the University on a strategic and financial level.” This chapter also notes that UDC is in the process of implementing Banner which should help it consolidate data and provide access to integrated data. Further, the hiring of a Manager of Financial Planning should allow the University to develop longer-term financial models that support the University strategic plan. While these multi-year budget projections have not yet been developed, the University is to be commended for developing tuition projections based on semester-by-semester enrollments in all of its programs, student fee projections, grant projections, auxiliary service revenue projections and advancement projections based on the new capital campaign.

Chapter Six also lays out an ambitious capital budget for the next six years that will replace worn-out or outdated facilities, replace obsolete equipment and modernize to extend the life of various assets. The six-year total for these capital improvements is almost $70 million. Finally, the University has developed a separate budget for CCDC, with $12.7 million in operating expenses allocated to CCDC and $18.7 million for services shared with the Flagship University.

**VII. Summary of Requirements and Recommendations**

1. *That the University is required to submit evidence that demonstrates the linkage between the annual budgeting and resource allocation processes to the strategic planning process.* (Standard 2).
2. *That the University is required to submit evidence of multi-year budget projections for at least the next three years.* (Standard 3).
3. *That the University should develop a realistic enrollment projection model that is based on past performance rather than on the hope that future improvements will spur enrollment growth.* (Standard 3).
4. *That the University should file the appropriate Substantive Change Request with the Commission in order to confirm CCDC’s status as an additional location of the University and hence allow its students to be eligible for Title IV funds.* (Standard 13).
5. *That UDC should develop and implement multiple measures of assessment to assess the effectiveness of the University’s financial health.* (Standard 7).
6. *That UDC should submit data from its first round of program reviews, began in fall 2009.* (Standard 14).
7. *That UDC should submit data from its first round of assessment of its new core curriculum.* (Standard 12).