INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

The 2008 decennial review by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) of Franklin Pierce University comes at a moment of great success and challenge for the institution. As the team begins its campus visit, we will have just begun our second year as a university after four decades as a small college. In those decades, we have moved from being a small, residential college in rural southwestern New Hampshire, to being a comprehensive liberal arts university firmly engaged with the local, regional, national, and international communities. At the same time, we have moved from being a college that lived and survived on educational experimentation to a university that is actively engaged in strategically planning its future.

Our path from isolated experimental college to connected entrepreneurial university is best understood as a journey on which Franklin Pierce has both come into its own and, true to our motto *Ex Umbris Ad Lucem*, come out into the light. At the time of our 1988 review, we were a fragile college, attempting to cope with declining enrollment at our Rindge campus and a burgeoning, unsophisticated continuing education program distributed across New Hampshire. By 1998, Franklin Pierce had transformed itself into a much stronger, much more agile college, able to balance its contrasting educational commitments and beginning the process of more effectively planning its educational future. Today, we are organized into two colleges, the traditional undergraduate residential College at Rindge and the multifaceted College of Graduate and Professional Studies (CGPS) with education centers in Concord, Portsmouth, Lebanon, Manchester, and Keene, and soon in Goodyear, AZ. Today, we have come to realize that we cannot try every good idea just because it might make a difference, and that we cannot sustain every existing choice simply because it was once viable. Rather, we have become a university that realizes that it needs to choose its directions carefully and to support those choices with the human and financial resources required for success.

While the fundamental assumptions and commitments of the University's Mission and Purpose remain essentially unaltered, both the University and its surrounding higher-education environment have changed. The transition from college to university status, the addition of doctoral programming, and the adoption of the online format all represent significant internal changes since 1998. This shifting landscape, along with specific developments in the University's academic programs, structure, and admissions profile, prompted two revisions of the Institutional Vision and a major re-evaluation of the University's Mission Statement over the past decade. On each occasion, the University reaffirmed its basic mission and purpose, while adjusting its Institutional Vision Statement and Mission Statement to reflect and promote new academic program initiatives, structural changes regarding relations between CGPS campuses, and evolving admissions profiles. In so doing, we have also refined our mission to more clearly focus on the intersection of liberal learning and professional preparation. This focus has always been the core of our graduate and professional studies, but it has now become essential to our conception of our institutional mission.

Franklin Pierce has preserved and enhanced its financial resources since the 1998 decennial review. The Endowment has grown from $5.8 million to $11.2 million. The net assets of the University have grown from $11.98 million to $16.53 million, the unrestricted net assets have

grown from $9.7 million to $11.1 million, and the permanently restricted net assets have grown from $1.18 million to $2.43 million. The land, buildings, and equipment net of depreciation has increased from $30.76 million to $50.18 million as the physical plant of the College at Rindge has undergone a major transformation and expansion.

As noted in the five-year interim report, the University has allocated significant resources to building a strong CGPS online presence in both graduate and undergraduate programming. This investment has yielded substantial gains for the institution. Online undergraduate programming has grown from a total of 166 student seats in 2004-2005 to a total of 1,917 student seats in 2007-2008. Online graduate programming has grown from a total of 193 student seats in 2004-2005 to a total of 725 student seats in 2007-2008. The growth in online enrollment is steadily replacing in-class registration and has helped to stabilize and grow CGPS net revenues.

As a consequence of these actions, Franklin Pierce is more financially stable than it was at the time of the 1998 self-study. However, the University remains carefully balanced and dependent upon the development of new revenue flows to sustain existing programs while growing the endowment and its net assets. This reality continues to limit the institution's ability to be more effective with contingency planning and institutional preparation for unexpected capital and operational expenditures. The University is working to manage these constraints.

Since 1998, the College at Rindge has experienced enormous change. The undergraduate student body has grown from 1495 students to 1700 students across the decade. The College has worked diligently to improve its student profile. The GPA of incoming students has risen from 2.60 to 2.87, and the SAT mean scores from 974 to 1003. Freshman-to-sophomore retention rates also compare favorably, having risen from 64% to 68% over the decade. The six-year graduation rates reported since 1998 show a steady improvement in the graduation rate from 35% to 52% for cohort years 1991-2000.

Academic programming has undergone a serious round of prioritization, with every program reviewed to ensure that it fit the university's mission and served the contemporary student population. This process introduced a decidedly dynamic approach to academic planning, and has since resulted in a number of program redesigns and innovations. One of the more high-profile results of this work was our participation as a founding institution in the *Foundations of Excellence* program sponsored by The Policy Center on the First Year of College. Franklin Pierce was chosen as one of twelve institutions to develop benchmarks by which small colleges and universities could evaluate the characteristics and effectiveness of the First Year Experience. Another indicator of excellence has been the increasing public recognition of the faculty. Since the last self-study, Franklin Pierce senior faculty at Rindge have been honored with four *New Hampshire Professor of the Year for Teaching Excellence* awards: three CASE awards and one NHCUC award, and one CGPS faculty member received the UCEA Continuing Education Outstanding Faculty Award.

The University also sought to expand its traditional programming by adding several new centers of excellence. The Marlin Fitzwater Center for Communication, the New England Center for Civic Life and the Monadnock Institute for Nature, Place and Culture were each designed to

claim and intensify interest in a specific mission-driven theme on campus and to connect that theme to the needs and interests of the wider public arena.

The University has worked actively since 1998 to engage its students with the wider world and to establish its presence internationally. The University has developed and established two new international Study Abroad experiences, *Pierce in Vienna* at the more than 260 year old Theresianische Akademie, and *Pierce in Athens* in cooperation with Hellenic American University. These programs are designed as traditional undergraduate experiences in which students study with a Franklin Pierce faculty member, with supplemental excursions and lectures provided by local scholars. A new Study Abroad program in Lyon, France, will be added this fall, and will focus on fine arts and dance. Franklin Pierce has also developed an academic relationship with Luhansk National University in Ukraine. The University established a non-credit Summer Intensive English Language Institute on location in Luhansk and also introduced its online M.B.A. program to the Ukrainian market.

There have been equally momentous innovations in CGPS. In 1998, CGPS was a vibrant continuing education division spread across multiple campuses and focused primarily on undergraduate degree completion. An M.B.A. program had been implemented but still lacked formal accreditation. Since then, CGPS has been accredited at the doctoral level with the addition of a Doctor of Physical Therapy and a Doctor of Arts in Leadership. Several academic programs have been added, including a Master's in Education, an M.S. in Information Technology Management, an M.S. in Sports and Facilities Management and a B.S. in Nursing (completion). An A.S. in Nursing program is currently working its way through the approval process.

The scope of CGPS has successfully expanded nationally and internationally with the establishment of online undergraduate and graduate education. CGPS has made great strides in migrating courses and degrees to the online format. The comprehensive 2006-2007 CGPS course schedule showed that 23% of undergraduate courses are now taught fully online, with 33% using the hybrid format and the remaining 44% still using the in-class format. CGPS has also begun to develop a new branch campus in Goodyear, AZ. The Goodyear site plans to offer A.S in Nursing, M.B.A., and Doctor of Physical Therapy programs starting in late 2008.

The Rindge faculty has become more actively engaged in shared governance in recent years. For several years previously, sometimes opposing definitions of faculty held sway at the Rindge campus: one defined faculty as members of the union and asserted that all governance issues ought to be dealt with as labor/management discussions, while the other held that it was possible to approach governance as a matter of faculty/administration relations. This disparity in perspectives has diminished. The recent vote by the faculty on promotion guidelines and faculty statement of support for a Summit Committee to develop a fifteen-to-twenty year vision statement and plan for the College at Rindge reflects a renewed sense of trust between faculty and administration.

All administrative and student services programs underwent an extensive administrative prioritization review in 2002-2003. The review process required departments to assess their link to mission, use of technology, training opportunities, and possible efficiencies. This led to a

clearer connection between student service work and the mission of the University. As a result, most programs have been reorganized to better meet student academic and social needs. The creation of the Outreach Education Center, the restructuring of Judicial Affairs/Campus Safety, the reorganization of Student Involvement, the enhancement of Recreation, the increase in the number of sanctioned sports, the addition of staff in Career Services, and the reorganization of student administrative services ("one-stop shopping") to improve customer service all reflect an institutional recognition that the process of meeting student needs has changed.

The increase in enrollment and retention has created some "growing pains" in Residential Life. Since the last decennial review, the University added 15 temporary module units and a 207-bed townhouse complex (Lakeview). The addition of Lakeview (Senior Village) made it possible for Residential Life to fully implement its housing design to better provide co-curricular programs in the residence halls. All class levels are now housed as cohorts, moving from traditional room-style housing to suite-style, to apartment-style and ending with townhouses in the senior year. Even with these additions, facilities are extended beyond what would normally be considered capacity.

The Athletics department is justifiably proud that many of its teams have participated in national championships, but it takes equal pride in the fact that its student athletes are successful in the classroom. Athletics operates within NCAA Division II academic standards and meets or exceeds the academic expectations of the University. The University was awarded the NE 10 Academic Achievement Award in both 2004-2005 and 2005-2006. The success of the athletic programs has raised student participation from 150 to 350 in the past decade. Campus Recreation has been equally successful in expanding student participation. The Pre-Orientation Wilderness Adventure (POWA) program was developed to engage incoming students and help facilitate the introduction of first-year students.

Several additional capital projects have been undertaken since the 1998 self-study. At Rindge, the Marlin Fitzwater Center for Communication complex of offices, classrooms and state-of-the-art communication production facilities was added to the library building; the Lakeside Educational Center provides a beautiful setting for meetings and classes, a new academic building will be completed and open in the fall, and the Student Center has been redesigned to create the College at Rindge's first designated large meeting space. Growth, though in different forms, is no less obvious for CGPS, where we have refined the mission and focused our delivery through careful scrutiny and management of our education centers, including closing those at Salem and Nashua, the addition of the Manchester center, added resources to sustain programming for health professional education in both Physical Therapy and Nursing, and the development of a robust online course management system coordinated through the Manchester center.

This transformation since the last decennial review is a reflection of the leadership of President George Hagerty and the Board of Trustees, and especially of their commitment to a new and consistent strategic planning process that has at its core an entrepreneurial approach to program and institutional development. Under their direction, the University has invested the time and energy to reflect not only on itself and its core mission and values, but also to gaze outward and test that mission and those values against the real and emerging educational and workforce

needs. At the same time, Franklin Pierce has come to a much clearer institutional sense of who we serve and what we do best. We have targeted more clearly the undergraduate students we serve best and we have begun to refine the services they need to graduate. As a consequence, we have moved from merely giving students the chance to succeed to planning how they can achieve that success.

Our rapid growth has not been without pain and it is not without continued risk. We struggle to find and deploy the physical, technological, and human resources needed to support our grander intentions. More undergraduate students and more complex, challenging graduate programs have meant greater demands for services, for space, capital, and for staff. We know we are stretched and yet we know that we have no choice if we are to succeed and move forward.

Our great challenge, then, is to find ways to balance openness to growth and creativity with serious strategic analysis and management. As we begin this review, we know we are sailing into some stormy seas. The student population of New England and the Northeast will decline over the next decade. College costs can be held flat at best, but trends indicate that the current economic downturn stands to undercut the ability of all families to pay for higher education both short and long-term. Like many New England institutions, we are not strong enough to weather these events on our own and are not likely to find safe moorings easily. We must continue to develop our strategy of prudent risk management, while acknowledging that we cannot survive without taking risks. We believe that with discipline, hard work, and continued devotion to our Mission and Vision, Franklin Pierce University will achieve its aspirations, and indeed surpass them.