

**Report to
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students**

Of

**Kean University
1000 Morris Avenue
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Prepared following analysis of the institution's

**Periodic Review Report
For the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

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Introduction

Kean University is to be commended for developing and submitting a comprehensive, informative Periodic Review Report (PRR) which is responsive to suggestions and recommendations contained in its 2001 Self Study Report and the report of the 2001 Evaluation Team. In addition, Kean University made available an extensive body of material in nineteen Appendices to its 60 page PRR report, dated May 2006.

Kean is a state supported co-educational institution and a member of the New Jersey State College system. It was founded in 1855 as a normal school for the preparation of teachers. Today, it is a comprehensive public university of 13,000 students, and offers 48 undergraduate programs, 27 master's degrees, and 2 post-master's diplomas through five colleges and a School of Visual and Performing Arts.

Recent developments

Since the most recent Middle States accreditation review in 2001, Kean University has installed a new president, established a new entity called the New Jersey Center for Science, Technology and Mathematics Education, reorganized several areas of the University including the establishment of a Division of Enrollment Management, and undergone substantial programmatic and physical development. At the same time, and consistent with higher education trends elsewhere, state financial support for higher education in New Jersey has deteriorated since 2001, with implications for tuition and fees, fundraising and development, sponsored funding, and other areas of University administration.

Development of the 2006 Periodic Review Report

Kean started preparing the 2006 PRR report in 2004 with the formation of a lead team, commissioning of the University Planning Council (the most broadly representative committee at Kean University), and assignment of leadership to the office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. University officials attended Middle States Commission PRR workshops, assembled relevant reports, communicated to the campus community about the work of the PRR process, and gathered data from surveys, interviews, and information systems. The group completed an environmental scan, analyzed and discussed findings, disseminated and discussed draft reports with the University community, and finalized the PRR report.

The Kean University PRR report responds to the many recommendations contained in the 2001 Evaluation Team Report.

The recommendations included the following:

- That the UPC make more explicit and widely understood the relationship of planning and budgeting at Kean University.

- That Kean consider a more integrated system of student advising for its multiple, diverse student populations.
- That Kean consider a means to coordinate student support services in support of the General Education program, and develop a systematic means to assess student learning outcomes in General Education.
- That faculty participation in assessment of student learning be improved.
- That the developments of new graduate programs systematically consider resource demands of such programs.
- That a set of recommendations for the Center for Professional Development be considered.
- That a comprehensive diversity plan for the University be developed.
- That a variety of suggestions concerning institutional marketing and enrollment management be considered.
- That a set of recommendations to improve the Library be considered.

The 2001 Evaluation Team concluded that Kean University was “*an attractive and vital university...fulfilling a valuable role in higher education.*” The Evaluation Team cited strong leadership, dedicated faculty, a supportive Board, and a strong tradition of shared governance as important Kean strengths.

The PRR report is organized in two major areas. These are “Summary of Major Changes and Developments” and “2006-2011, Planned Initiatives, Opportunities, and Challenges.” In the “Summary of Major Changes” section, the following topics are discussed:

Leadership; Academic Affairs; Student Body; University’s Employees, Administrative Structures, Processes and Technology; and Physical Kean University’s student population is admirably diverse, and has remained so during a period of rapid growth in enrollment and academic programming.

Kean reports good one-year retention and 4, 5, and 6 year graduation rates, but notes that these rates differ substantially for White students and students of color. Despite these differences, retention and graduation rates for Kean University minority students exceed rates reported by peer institutions. Kean recognizes that it must reduce the differential in these rates between White students and others, but it should be proud of its student success in comparison to other schools.

The employment profile of Kean University is also diverse, but the ethnicity of faculty and full-time staff differs markedly. More than half of full-time staff members are persons of color, while 25-27 percent of full-time faculty members are Black, Hispanic or Asian. The University is committed to improving diversity of its faculty, and reports a number of initiatives to strengthen recruitment of diverse faculty.

The formation of an Enrollment Management division of the University has enabled better coordination of student recruitment, admissions, registration, and advising and financial aid functions.

Finally, Kean has invested heavily to improve instructional technology and technology support, and has invested heavily in its physical plant and infrastructure. The School reports that it essentially out of room on its main campus, and intends to expand offerings at other locations in the future.

Plans for the future

Thinking about the future at Kean University has two primary themes.

- The first theme is relentless and ubiquitous growth – in enrollments, program offerings, student services, research activity and funding, fundraising, and all other aspects of the University's operation.
- The second theme considers the limiting condition that the University has outgrown its physical plant, and must seek growth in other geographical locations.

A new facility Master Plan in development, property acquisition near campus underway, and the establishment of a second campus in Ocean County are examples of the simultaneous effect of these themes, as is the development of a major international program in China. Consistent with the growth imperative, the University forecasts substantial enrollment growth through 2009-2010, and continued growth in academic programs, especially at the doctoral level. Full-time faculty positions are expected to increase by more than 17 percent during the same period.

As this ambitious growth plan unfolds, the University also plans to improve assessment across-the-board, enhance student support services delivery for its diverse student population, and address the continuing professional development of its faculty and staff. The University is already experiencing growth pains in student services areas – such as the Counseling Center and the Health Center – that will need to be carefully managed. Likewise, the demands of recruiting, assimilating, and retaining faculty during this growth period may be substantial, and will require diligence and commitment during a period in which marginal resources available to invest in personnel will be limited. Maintaining existing specialized program accreditations, and pursuing additional accreditations, will also tax resources.

Keeping up with technology is also recognized as a continuing challenge. Kean University plans to introduce a very broad range of information technology tools such as e-Portfolios, improved access to library databases, technology-enhanced classrooms, on-line registration and advisement, and numerous administrative software tools in the years ahead.

Perhaps even more important than the issues described above, sustaining a culture in which all members of the Kean University community feel a sense of genuine participation in the planning and resource allocation decision process, and a collective sense of direction and mission during this time of change, will require constant attention and energy by University leaders.

Finally, it is axiomatic that this broad-based growth and development will require resources, and Kean recognizes that state support has been, and likely will be, both unpredictable and insufficient for the University to achieve its goals. For planning purposes, the University assumes level state appropriations and annual 5% increases in tuition in its financial modeling. The University recognizes that differential sources of support, especially fundraising, will be critical to realizing its aspirations. The University is planning a capital campaign and expanded efforts in annual giving, grant funding and foundation support, and sponsored funding to diversify its funding base.

Summary and conclusions

In sum, Kean University's PRR reflects an institution that has changed significantly and rapidly since its 2001 Evaluation Team visit, and which envisions an increasing pace of change in the next five years.

Kean is an ambitious university that has identified broad and rapid growth as the hallmark of its planning for the future.

The challenge for Kean University will be to manage this growth so that it does not overextend itself, and to manage growth in a way that recognized the unevenness of state resources. Given its goals and plans, Kean University will be a very different institution five years from now than the Kean of today. With astute leadership, broad and deep investment by the campus community, and a measure of good fortune, Kean University will also be an even better institution in the future.

For its leaders, perhaps the most critical challenge will be sustain a sense of Kean as an academic community, and a sense of participation and ownership of change among the faculty and staff. To do so, planning will have to be highly didactic and open, and resource allocation decision making will have to be – and be perceived to be – transparent across campus.

The PRR report also suggests that Kean University is a dynamic, even exciting place to work or go to school. The University community should take pride in Kean's history, progress, and ambitious plans for the future.