MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Empire State College
Self-Study Design

September, 2018

I.   **Institutional Overview**

This section provides contextual information about the institution, including a brief relevant history, the institution's mission statement and institutional goals, and descriptions of the student populations served by the institution.

Information in this section also contains a brief description of key institutional strengths and opportunities for improvement and important institutional developments as revealed through planning and assessment processes. Ideally, information in this section points to initial areas upon which the institution might focus based upon these strengths, opportunities for improvement, and institutional developments that can be appropriately addressed in the Self-Study.

Institutional Context

SUNY Empire State College is one of 64 campuses that comprise the State University of New York (SUNY) system. With 34 locations across New York State, SUNY Empire State College is the non-traditional SUNY institution, established in 1971 as a distinctive statewide institution focused on innovative teaching and learning, where faculty mentors guide learners through design of individualized degree programs. Accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the college serves mostly working adults pursuing associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees onsite, abroad and online. The college has a coordinating center in Saratoga Springs where administrative offices are housed.

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York is the college's governing body. Like all SUNY institutions, the college has a College Council appointed by the governor and charged with advising the college's president and administration. The New York State Education Department has final authority on the approval and registration of the college's degree programs.

The undergraduate degree programs are structured around 12 Areas of Study and one registered program in accounting. Students work closely with a faculty mentor and, using Area of Study guidelines and overall degree requirements, plan their degree based on transfer credits (transcript and prior learning credits) and SUNY Empire State College courses to meet the goals of their chosen degree area. The Areas of Study guidelines are similar to competency statements, around which students choose courses and individualized learning contracts to be used within their program to meet the degree requirements. In this way, students are able to customize their studies to meet their personal and professional goals, as well as ensure that their degrees are current for their chosen field. Empire State College has been recognized for leadership in Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and has been engaged in PLA since its founding.

The college has a School for Graduate Studies with 13 master's level programs and 26 advanced certificate programs organized into three divisions: Business; Education and Social Theory; and Liberal Studies. The MBA has professional accreditation through the International Accreditation Council of Business Education and the Master of Arts in Teaching is transitioning from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation to a new organization the Association for

Advancing Quality of Educator Preparation. The School of Nursing and Allied Health (SONAH) has online programs in nursing and allied health. The nursing degrees are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The nursing program offers a RN-BSN undergraduate degree and two graduate degrees; one in education and one in administration. A Bachelor of Science in Allied Health is also offered through the SONAH.

In 2017 the college received approval from SUNY and Middle States for a doctorate in educational leadership after extensive review of our capacity to move to the new degree level. The college is awaiting approval from the State Education Department and has submitted a master plan amendment to the state for moving to the new degree level.

In 2017-18 the college served 17,070 students, most of whom were undergraduates. The college's students represent a diverse community of learners and tend to be of non-traditional age with work and family commitments that will not accommodate a conventional college experience. Most of the college's students are between 25 and 49 years old, with a median age of 36, and are in the prime of their working lives. They are employed as professionals, managers or skilled workers. They may be anyone from the CEO of a company to a working performing artist to a veteran transitioning to civilian life. About 60 percent study part time and about 40 percent study full time. Most students are New York State residents with every county in the state represented; those in large metropolitan areas, suburbs, small towns and rural communities. The college also enrolls students from almost every state in the U.S. and from about 50 other countries. Those who are not residents of the state of New York generally enroll through the college's online programs. Overall, 61 percent of students received some form of financial aid in the years 2016-17. Seven and a half percent of the student body are active duty military and veteran students. The college has been a leader in online and blended education in SUNY and nationally, with the largest online enrollments.

Mission and Strategic Plan

With extensive college communication, the college reaffirmed its mission statement as part of its extensive strategic planning process, Going for the Gold, in 2017-2018. The mission was revised and affirmed as follows:

> *SUNY Empire State College provides motivated adult learners with access to innovative, flexible and quality academic programs that empower people and strengthen communities. We build on the diversity of our students, their work and life experiences and their individual personal and professional goals as the cornerstone for each academic program.*

Going for the Gold was launched in March 2018, and included four broad strategic themes: student success, academic engagement and innovation, expanding impact and recognition, and operational excellence and sustainability. The college community has engaged in the strategic planning process and received extensive training on a balanced scorecard approach which is being used to track the objectives of the plan.

College Administration, Restructuring and Strategic Investments

Dr. Merodie Hancock served as College President from 2013-2018. Dr. Mitchell Nesler was appointed as the Officer in Charge in March 2018 when she moved to the Presidency of a sister institution, Thomas Edison State University. A Presidential search is underway.

When Dr. Hancock joined the College she was advised of challenges of providing consistent student experiences across the state and that there was a need to strengthen the academic Areas of Study. The college experienced financial deficits from 2009 through 2013 (although the first two years' deficits were planned in order to draw down the college's reserves by making strategic investments). An initial goal of Dr. Hancock's presidency was to bring financial stability to the college, which was necessary in order to consider a desired future for the institution. A budget surplus was achieved largely through cost controls; vacant positions were held open in some cases, work was redeployed in order to realize savings, and any discretionary spending was carefully scrutinized.

The college has historically leased space for offices, classrooms and services at other SUNY locations or professional office parks. In 2011, we began plans for two owned spaces on Long Island and in Rochester. These technologically innovative spaces were opened in Rochester in 2016 and will be opened in Selden, Long Island in 2019. These added resources offer site-to-site, immersive cloud-based courses, heightened video conference spaces and enhanced work spaces for employees. Substantial improvements were also made at the college's headquarters, the most recent being the conversion of one building at 111 West Avenue to a One-Stop student service center which will open later this year or early 2019.

Empire State College operates as a statewide non-residential college with a focus on innovative and flexible delivery of instruction and services. The college had developed an administrative structure based on regional locations. Faculty were organized locally and had secondary affiliations with other faculty at the college in their disciplines who were housed in other locations around the state. Regional deans oversaw local operations and had responsibility for faculty in multiple disciplines who were located at their center. Support services such as recruitment, student services, retention and academic support were also locally administered. The college has grown to include 34 locations across the state of New York. Dr. Merodie Hancock initiated a dialogue with the college community in 2013 concerning the desired future state of SUNY Empire State College that would ultimately move the institution from being administratively organized by geographic region to a focus on centralized services and faculty organization by academic area.

By centralizing the management of academic programming and enrollment/student services the college strives to eliminate inconsistencies in the student experience that were sometimes evident in the decentralized model as well as realize efficiencies by working as one integrated college. The new model moved us to facilitate more opportunities for faculty to collaborate with colleagues in their respective disciplines while retaining our focus on individualized education. This collegewide conversation called ESC 2.0, resulted in the creation of academic teams that focused on the core aspects of the college's work including: Mentoring and Advising, Educational Planning and Student Success. A Dean of Academic and Instructional Services

position was created to centralize academic support services such as the library, instructional design and academic support. Also, associate dean positions were created to provide leadership for the undergraduate academic program.   As part of the major academic reorganization, the college's twelve Areas of Study were grouped into five divisions: Science, Mathematics and Technology; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Business; Human Services; and Arts and Humanities. Each of these divisions is now overseen by an associate dean. This structure allowed for stronger academic administrative linkages and greater faculty responsibility for curriculum and closing the loop on assessment.

Throughout the reorganization, the goal has been to stay true to the mission, while responding to the demands of the current and future regulatory and fiscal environments. Following the restructuring, the college's strategic planning process, Going for the Gold: Empire State College at 50, 2021 and Beyond, built out the structures to measure and assess the work of the college and to serve as a guide for the college now and into the future. The reorganization has realigned SUNY Empire State College in order for the institution to more effectively harness collective impact and engage in student outcomes and institutional assessment. The reorganization was also paired with some transitions in our administrative computing systems, including a move from Colleague to Banner and updating other legacy systems. This combination of technology changes and institutional reorganization has caused some challenges to seamless operations which staff, faculty and the administration have been working together to resolve.

The self-study process is a useful vehicle for continuing this dialogue and overall improvements to academic programs and services in the college.

II.   Institutional Priorities to be Addressed in Self-Study

After providing the institutional overview, the institution provides a brief narrative about processes the institution employed to identify 3 to 5 specific institutional priorities. This section should include information about how:

- *Institutional stakeholders were consulted in identifying the priorities*
- *Selected priorities align with the institution's mission and goals*
- *How Commission standards align (or map to) the selected priorities.*

Through the strategic planning process, started in 2016, the college identified four strategic themes that serve as overarching pillars of our strategic plan and serve as our priorities for Middle States. These are:

- Student Success (III, IV, V, VII)
- Academic Engagement and Innovation (III, IV)
- Expanding Impact and Recognition (I, VI)
- Operational Excellence and Sustainability (II, III, IV, VI, VII).

The development of the strategic plan was a collaborative process involving stakeholders around the college. The college is implementing a balanced scorecard approach to the strategic plan; the

following groups are at the core of the balanced scorecard method and worked on the development of the plan – the Strategic Management Team, the Strategic Theme Teams, the Objective Owner Teams, and the Communications Team. The Strategic Management Team was composed of senior leadership and set the strategic direction of the institution. This team approved strategic elements developed by the other teams and integrated this work into the Tier 1 collegewide strategy map. This team also developed the four strategic themes, or focus areas, that form the framework of the strategic plan. Members of this team also included the Chair and Vice Chair of the college Senate to ensure the integration of the strategic plan with shared governance. The Strategic Theme Teams were cross-functional teams that represented a diversity of functions, locations and employee roles from across the college. These teams identified strategic objectives and developed strategy maps for each of the four strategic themes, which informed the development of the Tier 1 collegewide strategy map. Once the management team approved the final strategic objectives, the Objective Owner Teams developed performance measures and potential initiatives for each objective. These final elements populate the rest of the Tier 1 collegewide strategy map. The Communications Team was responsible for message development and outreach to the college community throughout the strategic planning process.

Prior to this, a Strategic Plan Study Group was convened in 2014 with the charge of analyzing different strategic planning methods and picking the method that would best fit our institution. The college sought a method that would aid in decision-making; engage all employees through a collaborative, team-based process; connect the dots between activities, strategy and vision; provide a road map showing how ESC will achieve its vision; and have a focus on adding value for students and stakeholders.

The President held Town Hall Meetings via ESC-TV (the college's internal broadcasting system). The Strategic Plan was a component of four Town Halls since Fall 2016. Through this medium the college community was introduced to the balanced scorecard methodology and provided updates on the process. Finally, the Tier 2 process was introduced in Spring 2018. There were presentations and discussions at All College (a face-to-face meeting of all members of the ESC Community) and the Fall Academic Conference (an ESC all faculty face-to-face meeting). The college also had various meetings and webinars after each major workshop (theme team and objective owner). The Strategic Management Team (SMT) met after each college presentation/meeting to review the results of those discussions and refine the major strategic plan elements that were developed. This demonstrates the flow of our strategic planning process – development/consultation with stakeholders across the college, and then refinement and final decisions made by the leadership groups. Participant counts at various events were 735 duplicated participants, demonstrating heavy involvement from the campus community.

There also are regular Exchange (college online internal newsletter) updates provided by the communications team. The Tier 2 process is ongoing, and will involve more stakeholders from across the college. The planning of the Academic Master Plan (which is the Tier 2 plan for Office of Academic Affairs) is part of this.

III.   Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study

> *The institution provides a list of outcomes the institution intends to achieve as the result of engaging in the self-study process, considering ways the self-study process can help the institution meet its mission, can assist it in meeting key institutional goals, can enhance its overall effectiveness and lead to institutional improvement.*

SUNY Empire State College's self-study coincides with the launch of our new strategic plan, provides the chance for us to affirm our organizational goals and priorities and consider opportunities and challenges as we look towards the future. We can assess how well our practices align with our strategic directions and priorities, and will provide evidence and analysis on areas of excellence while simultaneously informing our process of continuous improvement.

Specifically, our intended outcomes are:

- Engage in an inclusive and transparent self-appraisal process that seeks involvement from the college community;
- Demonstrate how SUNY Empire State College meets the *Standards for Accreditation* with a focus on continuous improvement in order to realize our mission and goals;
- Analyze current assessment practices and their impact on improving student outcomes and institutional effectiveness;
- Document the integration of the college's strategic planning process with our assessment data and budget process; and
- Develop progressive recommendations to attain institutional goals and realize the college's vision.

IV.   Self-Study Approach

> *Identify one of the following self-study approaches to be used to organize the Self-Study Report:*

> ☒   *Standards-Based Approach*
> ☐   *Priorities-Based Approach*

> *Provide a brief rationale for using either of the two approaches.*

Given the new standards, SUNY Empire State College has chosen to take the Standards-Based Approach to our self-study design. The rationale for this decision is based on our desire to keep the process simple for both the college and the reviewers. While the priorities outlined in our new strategic plan are clear and map onto the standards well, given that the reviewers have to address how we met each standard, we felt it would be a more parsimonious process to use the standards rather than our priorities. However, the college's priorities will play a prominent role in the self-study.

V.   Organizational Structure of the Steering Committee and Working Groups

*Information in this section should include the following about the **Steering Committee**:*

- *Names and titles of chairpersons of the Steering Committee and its members, with their positions of responsibility at the institution;*

- *Information about strategies the Steering Committee will use to encourage Working Groups to interact with one another in the interest of engaging in common areas of inquiry and reducing undue duplication of effort; and,*

- *A description of how the Steering Committee will provide oversight to ensure that Working Groups will receive appropriate support for evaluation and assessment of Commission standards and the priorities selected for analysis in the self-study document.*

*For each **Working Group**, this section should include the following:*

- *Names and title of chairperson(s) and members of the Working Group with their positions of responsibility at the institution;*

- *A description of which institutional priorities will be addressed (if it is a standards-based design); or, a description of which Standards will be addressed by each Working Group (if it is a priorities-based design);*

- *Descriptions of the charge and specific lines of inquiry;*

- *A brief discussion about how relevant assessment information that will be gathered, reviewed, summarized, and used by the Working Group to accomplish its work; and,*

- *If not discussed above, initial strategies for how the Working Groups will interact with one another in the interest of engaging in common areas of inquiry and reducing undue duplication of effort.*

The self-study design at SUNY Empire State College has a tiered structure, which began with the selection of the co-chairs of the Steering Committee. During Spring 2017, the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and the college Senate Chair were appointed by the president to serve as co-chairs of the Steering Committee. The Senate Chair was selected in recognition of her leadership and the important role that governance plays at SUNY Empire State College, and given her experiences in that role, the Middle States self-study process was a logical next step in her service to the college. The ALO has extensive experience with Middle States accreditation and related processes. Subsequently, in Spring 2018, the ALO was appointed Officer in Charge (Interim President) and the (then immediate past) Senate Chair was appointed interim Associate Dean for the Division of Science, Mathematics, and Technology. Given their additional responsibilities, Interim Provost and School for Graduate Studies faculty member Meg Benke, a

Middle States Commissioner, was asked to serve a higher consulting level on the project with the Interim Associate Dean.

Once appointed, the Steering Committee co-chairs along with the Provost, the Executive Vice President for Administration, and an Associate Dean formed an Executive Committee that meets regularly. Each member of the Executive Committee also serves on the Steering Committee.

In collaboration with the President's office, the Executive Committee solicited members of the college community to serve on the Steering Committee and Working Groups. This selection process was extensive and occurred during the summer and fall of 2017. Previous participants were reviewed and the co-chairs met with the President and Provost to discuss potential members. Each college Vice President was asked to nominate potential faculty, staff and administrators from their divisions. In addition, a general call went out to the college community requesting participation. The self-study working groups include one per standard plus an editing group, a hosting group, a verification of compliance group, and an evidence inventory group. Placement of volunteers was determined by the President in collaboration with the Steering Committee co-chairs and was reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee. Generally, the working group co-chairs consist of a faculty member and an administrator, and group members include broad representation and expertise, and cut across all employee groups.

The Steering Committee consists of the co-chairs of the working groups plus several at-large members. To facilitate communication between and amongst the groups, the co-chairs of the working groups serve on the Steering Committee. This is to promote discussion across standards, foster collaboration, and reduce duplication of efforts.   In addition, the compliance group will work with cross-over responsibilities for the requirements of accreditation with the appropriate standard group.

All faculty and staff engaged in the self-study process (Steering Committee, working groups, at large members, etc.) met for a kick off meeting on February 13, 2018 to learn about the expectations for the process and to hear from the President and the Steering Committee co-chairs about how the self-study process will unfold. The Steering Committee co-chairs reviewed the standards with the groups and discussed how relevant evidence will be identified and organized. The Steering Committee then met on April 9, 2018 to review the charges, to review each of the standards, and to discuss next steps in the self-study process. The co-chairs were then tasked with initiating discussions with their working groups. The Steering Committee also met September 21, 2018 to launch work for the fall which will predominantly be with the working groups.

Each working standard group consists of two co-chairs and six to nine members drawn from across the college. Every office at the college will be directed to support these working groups by providing the data and information relevant to their charge. The co-chairs of the working groups will regularly report progress to the Steering Committee, and the Steering Committee co-chairs will periodically meet with each working group to prioritize needs. Deadlines for submitting draft reports will be established to facilitate overall management of the self-study process.

The SUNY Empire State College intranet houses relevant documents accessible to the working groups behind a password-protected firewall. Also, a document management tool, Strategic Planning Online (SPOL) will be used to organize relevant information and serve as a repository for documents. Working group requests for additional information will be submitted to the Steering Committee for review and referral to the relevant offices, such as Decision Support, Financial Aid, the Registrar, etc. Information gathered will be referred to the relevant working group(s) and analyzed as it relates to their charge.

There are related groups working on strategic planning which are described elsewhere in this document. There was deliberate overlap in these groups to reduce redundancy.

General Charge to All Working Groups

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the mission, vision, and the strategic plan of SUNY Empire State College in the context of the MSCHE standards.
- Review the 2014 Periodic Review Report (PRR) and 2017 Progress Report in order to become aware of past successes and challenges in meeting accreditation standards, along with MSCHE expectations.
- Understand all the MSCHE standards and how they interconnect to ensure the findings are integrated across standards as appropriate.
- Identify possible recommendations for institutional renewal and transformation.
- Facilitate the development of our evidence inventory by collecting appropriate documentation.
- Generate written reports that clearly address the standards.
- Analyze the College's successes and challenges in meeting the standards and draw appropriate inferences and conclusions.
- Suggest future directions that will allow the institution to continue on its path of growth and improvement.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee provides oversight to all of the working groups and ensures that the groups have access to the information, people and resources they need.

Members
- Joseph Garcia   Executive Vice President for Administration
- John Lawless   Associate Dean of Human Services; Liaison to the Associate Deans
- Mary Mawn   Interim Associate Dean of Science, Mathematics and Technology; Middle States Co-Chair
- Meg Benke   Interim Provost
- Mitchell Nesler   Officer in Charge, Middle States Co-Chair

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is ultimately responsible for the self-study process and report.

Co-Chairs
- Mary Mawn — Interim Associate Dean of Science, Mathematics and Technology
- Mitchell Nesler — Officer in Charge

Members
- Nathan Gonyea — Interim Dean, School for Graduate Studies
- Anastasia Pratt — Associate Professor and Chair of the College Senate
- Paul Miller — Assistant Professor, Historical Studies and Undergraduate Committee for Academic Policy governance Co-chair
- Frank Vander Valk — Associate Dean of Social and Behavioral Sciences; Interim Dean of SUNY Empire Online
- Dana Gliserman-Kopans — Associate Professor, Humanities
- Lisa D'Adamo-Weinstein — Dean of Student Affairs
- Kim Stote — Associate Dean for Health Professions
- Desalyn De-souza — Associate Professor, Child and Family Studies
- Julie Gedro — Associate Dean of Business
- Joseph Garcia — Executive Vice President for Administration
- John Lawless — Associate Dean of Human Services; Liaison to the Associate Deans
- Duncan RyanMann — Professor, Business
- Tai Arnold — Chief of Staff
- Thalia MacMillan — Associate Professor, Human Services
- Eileen McDonnell — Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning
- Sadie Ross — Director of Compliance and Environmental Sustainability

At Large Members
- Meg Benke — Interim Provost and Middle States Commissioner
- Elliott Dawes — Chief Diversity Officer
- Christopher Markham — Assistant Vice President for Information Technology Services and Chief Information Officer
- Bridget Nettleton — Dean, School of Nursing and Allied Health
- Clayton Steen — Vice President for Enrollment Management

The charge for the Steering Committee is as follows:

- Develop the Self-Study Document and Evidence Inventory by overseeing the progress of the Working Groups, ensuring a timely process.
- Promote communication about the Self-Study with the college community, including an institutional-wide review of the draft Self-Study

- Promote college-wide review of and response to draft Self-Study
- Participate in visits by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education liaison, the team Chair, and the Evaluation Team.

Charges of the Working Groups for the Standards

Standard I – Mission and Goals

The Standard for Accreditation:
The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.

Co-Chairs
- Nathan Gonyea   Interim Dean, School for Graduate Studies
- Anastasia Pratt   Associate Professor, Historical Studies

Members
- Anna Bates   Associate Professor, Historical Studies
- Andrea Hennessy   Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management Marketing
- Megan Mullen   Associate Dean of Arts and Humanities
- Richard Savior   Assistant Professor, Management
- Peggy Tally   Professor, School for Graduate Studies
- Gina Torino   Associate Professor, Psychology

The charge for the Standard I – Mission and Goals Working Group is as follows:

- Understand SUNY Empire State College's mission and goals.
- Examine how the mission and goals guide aspects of the College's actions.
- Examine how successful the College is in fulfilling its mission and goals.
- Examine how the institution's mission and goals are defined, communicated to internal and external stakeholders, and assessed.
- Assess the extent to which the college's goals, as outlined in the college's strategic plan and divisional plans, are appropriate and consistent with its mission and are being achieved.
- Assess the extent to which SUNY Empire State College is achieving the MSCHE criteria, identify our successes, and provide suggestions for improvement.

Standard II – Ethics and Integrity

The Standard for Accreditation:
Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful

to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.

Co-Chairs
- Paul Miller — Assistant Professor, Historical Studies and Undergraduate Committee for Academic Policy governance Co-chair
- Frank Vander Valk — Associate Dean of Social and Behavioral Sciences; Interim Dean of SUNY Empire Online

Members
- Dee Britton — Associate Professor, Social Science
- Sue Epstein — Associate Professor, Human Resource Management
- Diane Gal — Associate Professor, School for Graduate Studies
- Suzanne Orrell — Director of Academic Support Services
- Karen Tanski-Hewison — Senior Director of Marketing and Creative Services
- AmyRuth Tobol — Associate Professor, Social Science
- Brooke White — Human Resources Associate
- Debra Monte — Coordinator of Student Academic Services

The charge for the Standard II – Ethics and Integrity Working Group is as follows:

- Understand how the mission of SUNY Empire State College is enacted in all activities with integrity.

- Examine how SUNY Empire State College has clearly articulated policies, procedures and practices that guide internal and external activities in an ethical manner.

- Assess the extent to which SUNY Empire State College is achieving the MSCHE criteria, identify our successes, and provide suggestions for improvement.

Standard III – Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

The Standard for Accreditation:
An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence at all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, level, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.

Co-Chairs
- Dana Gliserman-Kopans — Associate Professor, Literature
- John Lawless — Associate Dean of Human Services, Liaison to the Associate Deans

Members
- Justin Albohn — Instructional Designer
- Kimberly Balko — Assistant Professor, Nursing

- Cynthia Bates   Associate Professor, Arts and Media
- David Caso   Retention Services Director
- William McDonald   Assistant Professor, Public Affairs
- Sarah Morehouse   Librarian
- Lynette Nickleberry   Assistant Professor, Human Services
- Christine Paige   Director of Instructional Design

The charge for the Standard III – Design and Delivery of the Student learning Experience Working Group is as follows:

- Understand how the mission of SUNY Empire State College is reflected in the range of programs offered.
- Examine how SUNY Empire State College's programs at all levels demonstrate rigor, quality and coherence.
- Assess the extent to which SUNY Empire State College is achieving the MSCHE criteria, identify our successes, and provide suggestions for improvement.

Standard IV – Support of the Student Experience

The Standard for Accreditation:
Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

Co-Chairs
- Lisa D'Adamo-Weinstein   Dean of Student Affairs
- Kim Stote   Associate Dean for Health Professions

Members
- Anita Brown   Career Development Coordinator
- Dana Brown   Academic Advisor
- Carl Burkhart   Director of Student Academic Services
- Michele Forte   Associate Professor, Human Services
- Joshua Gaul   Director of Educational and Emerging Technology
- Seana Logsdon   Director of Academic Support Services
- Thomas McElroy   Director of Prior Learning
- Laura Wait   Program Aide, Support Staff

The charge for the Standard IV - Support of the Student Experience Working Group is as follows:

- Understand how SUNY Empire State College's mission informs student recruitment and admission in all programs and how the college supports student success and retention.
- Examine how SUNY Empire State College's commitment to learning and student success is reflected in effective support services.
- Assess the extent to which SUNY Empire State College is achieving the MSCHE criteria, identify our successes, and provide suggestions for improvement.

Standard V – Educational Effectiveness Assessment

The Standard for Accreditation:
Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their program of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.

Co-Chairs
- Desalyn De-souza   Associate Professor, Child and Family Studies
- Julie Gedro   Associate Dean of Business

Members
- Shantih Clemans   Director of the Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation
- Antonia Jokelova   Coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction
- Linda Jones   Associate Professor, Natural Sciences
- Audeliz Matias   Associate Professor, Natural Sciences
- Tina Wagle   Professor, Graduate Education

The charge for the Standard V – Educational Effectiveness Assessment Working Group is as follows:

- Understand how the mission of SUNY Empire State College is reflected in student learning and achievement.
- Examine how SUNY Empire State College demonstrates a culture of evidence-based processes and outcomes with regard to assessment of student learning.
- Demonstrate continuous improvement of teaching and learning based on outcomes assessment process recommendations.
- Assess the extent to which SUNY Empire State College is achieving the MSCHE criteria, identify our successes, and provide suggestions for improvement.

Standard VI – Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

The Standard for Accreditation:
The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

Co-Chairs

- Joseph Garcia   Executive Vice President for Administration
- Duncan RyanMann   Professor, Economics

Members
- Bidhan Chandra   Professor, International Business
- Roselyn Dow   Associate Professor, Management
- Michelle Fountaine   Director of Financial Aid
- Joseph King   Director of Institutional Effectiveness
- Rosalyn Rufer   Interim Associate Dean, School for Graduate Studies
- Christopher Whann   Interim Executive Director
- Nathan Whitley-Grassi   Assistant Director for Educational Technologies
- Maureen Winney   Director of Alumni Affairs and Student Relations

The charge for the Standard VI – Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement Working Group is as follows:

- Understand how processes, resources and structures align to fulfill the mission of SUNY Empire State College.
- Examine how SUNY Empire State College engages in reflective practices that allow ongoing improvement.
- Examine the alignment of strategic planning, assessment and resource allocation.
- Assess the extent to which SUNY Empire State College is achieving the MSCHE criteria, identify our successes, and provide suggestions for improvement.

Standard VII – Governance, Leadership, and Administration

The Standard for Accreditation:
The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

Co-Chairs
- Tai Arnold   Chief of Staff
- Thalia MacMillan   Associate Professor, Human Services

Members
- Nicola Allain   Associate Professor, Arts and Media
- Katherine Dorsey   Senior Institutional Research Specialist
- Himanee Gupta-Carlson   Associate Professor, Historical Studies
- Alan Mandell   College Professor of Adult Learning and Mentoring
- Kyle Rhude   Budget Analyst
- Nicole Shrimpton   Dean of Academic Services
- Toby Tobrocke   Director of Development

- Dongho Kim   Associate Professor, Business

The charge for the Standard VII – Governance, Leadership, and Administration Working Group is as follows:

- Understand how the mission of SUNY Empire State College is actualized through its governing and administrative structures.
- Examine how SUNY Empire State College prioritizes its academic purpose and functions with autonomy at all times.
- Examine how the governance of the college facilitates goal attainment.
- Explain the nature of the relationships between the SUNY Board of Trustees, The SUNY Empire State College College Council and the college President in their respective roles in governing the institution.
- Assess the extent to which SUNY Empire State College is achieving the MSCHE criteria, identify our successes, and provide suggestions for improvement.

Charges of Additional Working Groups

Editing Group
The Editing Group is charged with reading and evaluating the written documents that will become part of the Self-Study and evidence inventory and providing feedback on their clarity in addressing the standards.

Co-Chairs
- Ian Reifowitz   Professor, Historical Studies
- Diana Centanni   Academic Advisor

Members
- Alice Franke   Student Information Center Representative
- Darlene Hapka   Specialist for Academic Support
- Thomas Kerr   Enrollment Specialist
- Gerald Lorentz   Visiting Professor, Historical Studies
- Allison Moreland   Educational Technologist/Project Coordinator
- Jennifer Nettleton   Coordinator of Curriculum and Instructional Design, Nursing
- Kathryn Usher   Project Coordinator

The charge for the Editing Group is as follows:

- Provide feedback in a timely manner, in accordance with the project timeline.
- Develop familiarity with the criteria for the relevant sections.
- Suggest ways in which findings can be synthesized and integrated across standards as appropriate.
- Provide editorial suggestions taking into consideration explaining the college to external audiences.

Hospitality Working Group

The Hospitality Working Group is charged with planning the logistics for the site visit, including site visits by the visiting team to one-third of SUNY Empire State College's locations. The Hospitality Working Group will work closely with the Executive Committee, the Steering Committee Co-Chairs and the President's Office to ensure the visit runs smoothly.

Co-Chairs
- Nan Travers   Director of Center for Leadership in Credentialing Learning
- Christopher Whann   Interim Executive Director

Members
- Lisa Johnson   Project Coordinator, Administration
- Sophia Mavrogiannis   Director of Academic Support
- Kelli Scarlett   Lecturer
- Tanya Scime   Executive Assistant to the President

The charge for the Hospitality Working Group is as follows:

- Suggest appropriate and relevant individuals to meet with Visiting Team members
- Address logistical and environmental needs

Compliance Group

The Compliance Group reviews the requirements of affiliation and writes the compliance report. The group also reviews what was found with the co-chairs of the related standard.

Co-Chairs
- Eileen McDonnell   Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness Planning
- Sadie Ross   Director of Compliance and Environmental Sustainability

Members
- Leslie Ellis   Director of Academic Review
- Anjeanette Emeka   Academic Review Associate
- Bonnie Farrell   Instructional Designer
- Ashley Mason   Student Success and Development Coordinator
- David Mathis   Lecturer, Part-Time Faculty
- Brett Sherman   Director of Support Services
- Bernard Smith   Director of Academic Support Services

The Compliance Group is charged with verifying and documenting the college's compliance with federal regulations in eight required areas:

- Student identity verification in distance and correspondence education
- Transfer of credit policies and articulation agreements
- Title IV program responsibilities
- Institutional records of student complaints
- Required information for students and the public
- Standing with state and other accrediting agencies
- Contractual relationships
- Assignment of credit hours

Evidence Inventory
The Evidence Inventory group manages and curates the evidence inventory.

Chair
- Jane Greiner   Instructional Designer

Members
- Sarah Hull   Librarian
- JoAnn Kingsley   Lecturer

The charge for the Evidence Inventory Group is as follows:

- Assist Steering Committee in creating, documenting and organizing the college's resource room/evidence inventory, using the best practices of information management.
- Become proficient in the use of Strategic Planning Online (SPOL) and use it to organize the evidence inventory.

Be available to the Visiting Team during the site visit to support information retrieval.

V.   Guidelines for Reporting

To guide the efforts of the Working Groups, this section of the Design includes a description of the processes the Steering Committee will utilize to ensure that they stay on task, such as scheduled discussions and updates within the Working Groups, with the Steering Committee, and among the Working Groups; the form and frequency of such interactions, and the format of interim and final reports. At a minimum, information in this section of the Design should include the following:

- *A list or description of all products to be completed by the Working Groups and Steering Committee, such as initial outlines, Working Group reports, preliminary drafts, and final reports.*

- *Deadlines for the submission of various draft documents and reports*

- *A template for the preparation of Working Group Reports.*

ESC MSCHE Steering Committee Expectations

- Each committee will work to complete their reports monthly.

- Reports should be comprehensive and concise and are written for external reviewers to easily understand and digest.
- The committee co-chairs are in constant communication with the Executive Committee to report status updates and to ensure any barriers or concerns are addressed promptly.
- Monthly meeting minutes will be posted into The MSCHE SharePoint site.
- Each committee/Standard Co-Chairs are responsible for drafting their final standard report

Communication

The expectations of the seven committees' co-chairs will be to submit monthly progress reports to the Executive Committee outlining the progress in their respective areas.

Documentation

The importance of appropriate note taking at all relevant meetings is paramount to evidence gathering for our report. Please refer to Appendix B, Documentation Roadmap of the MSCHE Self-Study Creating a Useful Process and Report that states:

> *"The Design should include an annotated inventory of recent and current accreditation reports, assessment and planning data, enrollment and financial information, policies, procedures and other resources that the Working Groups will use as they conduct their inquiry and analysis. The institution should organize these resources using the format of the Documentation Roadmap. Although this inventory will change and develop throughout the Self-Study process, the Design should include an early version of the final range of documents, demonstrating that adequate information will be made available to the Steering Committee, the Working Groups, and the Evaluation Team. . . ."* [1]

VI.   Organization of the Final Self-Study Report

This section includes an outline of the organization, format and structure of the final Self-Study Report, including information that will be found in the document's introduction and initial indications of the focus of each chapter. In cases where the institution employs the priorities-based approach, this section contains a description of which Commission Standards will be addressed in a separate chapter of the Self-Study Report.

I. Executive Summary
    a. A brief (1-5 pages) description of the major findings and recommendations of the study
II. Introduction
    a. A brief overview of the institution and description of the self-study process
III. Standard Chapters
    a. A heading indicating the standard or topic under consideration

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[1] https://www.msche.org/publications/SelfStudyGuideVersion13A.pdf

b. A description of the topic(s) under review and analysis of the evidence considered, with appropriate reference to the standards

c. Cross-references to relevant materials in other parts of the report

d. Analysis of relevant strengths and challenges, with appropriate reference to standards.

e. Recommendations for improvement

IV. Conclusion

    a. A summary of the major conclusions reached and recommendations offered in the report

Editorial Style and Format

Word Processing Program: Microsoft Word
Microsoft Excel for spreadsheets and graphs (separate files)

- Fonts/Style: Times New Roman, 12 point
- Headings: Heading 1
- Paragraphs: Block Style, left-justified
- Margins: One inch
- Spacing: Single-spacing, 1.15, Left-justified
- Pages: Use page numbers, bottom right-hand side
- Space between paragraphs, do not indent new paragraphs
- Length: Maximum number of pages for subcommittee reports—10-20 pages (entire Self-Study is 100 pages, excluding any graphs)
- Required Information List of the standard covered: Overview of charge and any additional questions addressed. Any connections and collaboration with other working groups? Analysis of data and findings based on results and outcomes, including strengths, challenges and relationship to standards. List of recommendations for improvement

Acronyms
- Write out in full upon first usage, indicating the acronym in parentheses
- Thereafter use the acronym

Documentation of Sources

- Parenthetical (by author) citation in the text body with a section at the end entitled ―List of References - where the full reference is noted

Editing Process
- All reports will be combined to produce the Self-Study document by both the co-chairs and an editing team, which will be approximately 100 pages in length. There will be some editing of content from the seven individual subcommittee reports to produce the Self-Study. A single writer/editor will be used to give the document one voice, and some portions of subcommittee reports may appear in different chapters or sections of the Self-

Study document, as appropriate. As the Self-Study document is being produced, there will be multiple opportunities for input into the editing process in an effort to accurately reflect the major themes and recommendations of the subcommittees and the greater ESC Community.

VII. Verification of Compliance Strategy

Each institution is required to complete a Verification of Compliance process. The Design includes a description of what strategy(ies) the institution will employ to successfully complete this process, including:

- *What groups, offices or individuals will be responsible for the process? In cases where a separate Working Group has been organized to lead the institution through this process, the Design should contain a listing of these*

- *How those responsible for the Verification of Compliance process will communicate with the Working Groups and Steering Community*

A template for providing information relating to the Verification of Compliance process is available on the Commission website.

There is a compliance working group. Each Steering Committee meeting will have a report out. The compliance working group will be responsible for reviewing what is found with the appropriate standard working group. The group will report monthly to the Steering Committee.

VIII. Evidence Inventory

This section contains a description of the institution's strategies for populating and managing the Evidence Inventory, from the beginning of the self-study process forward. Strategies might include designating a separate Working Group, assigning the refinement of the Evidence Inventory to members of the Steering Committee, among others. An initial Evidence Inventory, containing appropriate documentation, should be attached to the Design.

The evidence inventory group, which includes a librarian and an instructional designer, will manage and curate the evidence inventory using a SPOL repository. An attachment contains the initial evidence gathered so far.

IX.   Self-Study Timetable

Institutions include in the Design a timeline for each major step in the process, beginning with early preparation to completion of the process. In this section, institutions indicate whether they prefer a Fall or Spring visit by the Evaluation Team, list major milestones in the self-study process and when they will be achieved.

Commission Related Schedule

February - April 2018	Assemble Working Groups and two convening meetings
June - September 2018	Revisions and final approval of Self-Study Design
September 2018 – February 1, 2019	Working Group Reports due February 1, 2019. Monthly Reports to Steering Committee.
October 15, 2018	VP Liaison Self-Study Prep Visit to campus (October; draft design submitted two weeks before visit)
September - December 2018	Working groups gather and analyze data and submit progress reports
January - May 2019	Team Chair chosen; Visit dates chosen; Self-Study Design sent to Chair; Self-Study drafted and shared with campus community
May - September 2019	Self-Study revisions and campus review
September 26, 2019 and October 3, 2019	Self-Study Draft sent to Team Chair (two weeks prior) Team Chair Preliminary Visit
January 2020	Verification of Compliance submitted
March 2020	Collegewide Discussion at All College. Self-Study finalized based on Chair feedback and shared with campus
March 2020	Final Self-Study/Evidence Inventory uploaded to MSCHE portal (six weeks before visit)
April 5-8, 2019 OR April 19-22, 2019	Visiting Team on Campus; Team Report; Institutional Response
June 2020	Commission meets to determine action

Working Group Schedule

Date	Tasks
Fall 2018	- Committees and working groups meet monthly - Executive Committee Meets Monthly - Steering Committee meets every six weeks - Training of committees on SPOL - Identify and gather data (all groups) - Site visit by MSCHE liaison - Analyze data and draft initial reports - Design and populate the Evidence Inventory - Engage the college community (FAC, etc.) - Incorporate feedback and revise working drafts - Working Group reports submitted by February 1
Spring 2019	- Editing Group prepares working group reports for discussion at All College - Continue work on the Evidence Inventory - Engage the college community (All College) - Incorporate feedback and revise working drafts
Summer 2019	- Final working draft reports due May 1 - Co-chairs draft Final Self-Study Document - Editing Group prepares final report for discussion at FAC and Webinars - Share with community via Webinar for feedback in June - Steering Committee revise for Final Document Submission
Fall 2019	- Report submitted to team chair September 1 - Team Chair preliminary visit October - Engage the college community (FAC after Team Chairs Visit) - Finalize the Self-Study Report - Submit the Verification of Compliance Report in December
Spring 2020	- All College discussion of Full Report - Submit the Self-Study Report and Evidence Inventory - Prepare for, and meet with, the Site Visitors April - Receive and respond to the Team report - Await announcement of Commission action (June)

X.   **Communication Plan**

An initial Communication Plan with a listing of intended audiences, communication methods, and timing. This plan is used to guide the Steering Committee and its Working Groups in gathering feedback from institutional stakeholders and updating them about major developments related to the self-study process. This may be integrated with the Self-Study Timetable (Section X) if desired.

Objectives	Audiences	Methods
To update Campus Community about the Self-Study Process and Updates	Students and Alumni	MS SharePoint Student Academic Conference; SAC Alumni Federation Board
	Faculty and Staff	MS SharePoint Town Halls Fall Academic Conference All College Conference
	Governance	Updates at each senate meeting
	College Council and Foundation Board	Updates at each meeting
To gather feedback for working Groups	Students and Alumni	MS SharePoint Student Academic Conference; SAC Alumni Federation Board
	Faculty and Staff	MS SharePoint Town Halls Fall Academic Conference All College Conference
	Governance	Updates at each senate meeting
	College Council and Foundation Board	Updates at each meeting

To gather feedback about the self-study	Students and Alumni	MS SharePoint Student Academic Conference; SAC Alumni Federation Board
	Faculty and Staff	MS SharePoint Town Halls Fall Academic Conference All College Conference
	Governance	Updates at each meeting
	College Council and Foundation Board	Updates at each meeting
To engage in the site visit	Students and Alumni	Process to invite students to participate through SAC and Alumni Federation, different locations
	Faculty and Staff	Engagement of faculty and staff from the self-study groups and beyond, different locations.
	Governance	Updates at each meeting
	College Council and Foundation Board	Updates at each meeting

XI.   Evaluation Team Profile

It is important that the Commission obtain sufficient information about the institution to organize an Evaluation Team that can evaluate the institution's compliance with Commission standards and give meaningful feedback to the institution relating to the institution's selected priorities. Along these lines, provide the following information:

- *Summary of notable characteristics or demographics of the institution that the Commission should consider when selecting a chairperson and members of the evaluation team;*
- *Institutions that are considered comparable peers, preferably within the Middle States region;*
- *Institutions that are considered aspirational peers, preferable within the Middle States region; and,*

- *If necessary, institutions whose representatives might present conflicts of interest should they serve on the self-study evaluation team.*

Although the institution's expressed preferences will be given careful consideration, the final decision about team membership remains with the Commission and its staff.

It is important that the team have an understanding of an institution working primarily with adult students such as other non-traditional colleges and community colleges. Comprehensive colleges with significant adult serving programs might also be appropriate. Specialized colleges also share features of Empire State College.

Our peer institutions include:

- University of Maryland University College
- Thomas Edison State University
- Pennsylvania State University (World Campus)
- Excelsior College
- University of Massachusetts (Lowell)

No conflicts of interest are known, other than SUNY schools.