The components of my talk about our Middle States Reaccreditation review, which took place during this past academic year (2007-08), are the following:

1.) Preparing for the Visiting Team Visit
2.) Developing the Self Study Document
3.) Understanding the MSCHE Standards for Accreditation
4.) Reviewing the Recommendations of the Visiting Team
5.) Conveying the Commission Action
6.) Acting on the Recommendations of the Visiting Team
Preparation for the Accreditation Review

- Background
  * Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
  * Last affirmation of accreditation in 2003 through the (midpoint) Periodic Review Report
  * Last decennial review and affirmation of accreditation in 1998

GW is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which is one of the nation’s regional accreditors.

Last affirmation of accreditation took place after our submission of the required MSCHE Periodic Review Report. The Periodic Review happens in the 5th year of a ten-year accreditation period. Specifically, this review took place for GW in 2003.

The last decennial review took place in 1998, at which time we chose and were approved to use the Self Study format.
Preparation for the Accreditation Review

- Steering Committee (25 members)
- Steering Committee Chair – Forrest Maltzman, Chair and Professor of Political Science
- Co-chairs: Initially – Craig Linebaugh
  From 9/17/07 – Cheryl Beil
- Selected Topics model of the MSCHE

For the current reaccreditation review, we again requested to use the Self Study format and were granted permission to do so. To oversee the project of completing the Self Study project, we formed a University-level Steering Committee. The chair of the Steering Committee was Forrest Maltzman with Craig Linebaugh and Cheryl Beil sequentially sharing the co-chair position of the committee.
Preparation for the Accreditation Review

- Self Study focused on the implementation of the University’s *Strategic Plan for Academic Excellence: Sustaining Momentum, Maximizing Strength (SPAE)*
- Self Study design that mapped the six goals of the *SPAE* against the *four* planning and assessment standards of the MSCHE’s *fourteen* standards
- Six working groups to address each of the six goals of the *SPAE*

The Self Study project focused on the implementation of and the progress made on the goals of the University’s Strategic Plan for Academic Excellence.

Four of the fourteen MSCHE standards were addressed through the work on the six goals of the SPAE.

Each working group produced a detailed report on the goal they were reviewing. These six reports became six chapters in the final Self Study document.
Self-study Document

- **Self Study** has eight chapters that include an introduction, one chapter for each of the six SPAE goals, and a chapter on conclusions, challenges, and recommendations.
- **Each of the chapters** addressing an SPAE goal was the work product of a committee composed of faculty members, administrators, staff, and students.
- Each of the chapters reflects **the work of a group of individuals** who were committed to an in-depth analysis of where we stand with respect to the accomplishment of the goals and associated objectives as measured against the metrics of the SPAE.

The Self Study document is an extensive review of the progress made on the SPAE. The six core chapters address all six of the goals of the SPAE. The content of each of these chapters is thorough in its depth and frank in its presentation, especially with respect to what has been accomplished, what remains to be done, what needs to be done for future work, and what resources should be provided to fully attain the stated goal and objectives.

Many positive comments were received from the visitation team members about the extensiveness of the Self Study document, especially related to the completeness and directness of the presentation of material.
MSCHE Standards

- The four applicable standards addressed by the GW’s MSCHE Self Study
  * Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal (2)
  * Institutional Resources (3)
  * Institutional Assessment (7)
  * Assessment of Student Learning (14)

MSCHE has a set of fourteen standards that must be met to be reaccredited. The four standards we addressed through the Self Study document are standards 2, 3, 7, and 14. These four standards are focused on Planning, Resources, and Assessment (Student Learning as well as non-academic metrics).
• The remaining **ten** MSCHE Standards

* Mission and Goals (1)
* Leadership and Governance (4)
* Administration (5)
* Integrity (6)
* Student Admissions and Retention (8)
* Student Support Services (9)
* Faculty (10)
* Educational Offerings (11)
* General Education (12)
* Related Educational Offerings (13)

The remaining ten metrics are given on the current slide [slide 7]. They cover the gamut of what occurs at a major, tertiary educational institution like The George Washington University.
MSCHE Standards not addressed within the Self Study

- Visit by Generalist Evaluators on 19 December 2007
- The ten standards of the previous slide reviewed by documentation provided by GW
- GW was found to be in compliance with all ten standards.
- Important comment with regard to Standard 10 – “... useful for ... key Faculty documents to provide greater clarity regarding the faculty’s role and obligations in the assessment process.”

The group of ten standards listed on the previous slide were reviewed by two generalists, who came to GW in mid December to review the prepared documentation for each standard in this group of 10. All conclusions and recommendations with respect to this group of ten standards were reached by the generalists after they thoroughly reviewed the extensive materials provided by GW for each separate standard.

The generalists were Charles Phelps, former Provost at Rochester University, and Brian Byrne, VP for Administration at Fordham University. They were accompanied by Tom Leblanc, the overall visitation team leader, who is Provost at the University of Miami.

Without qualification, the generalists concluded that GW was in compliance with all ten of these standards.

With regard to standard 10 concerning Faculty, the generalists made an important comment with respect to Faculty documents giving greater clarity regarding each faculty member’s role and obligations in assessment processes.
MSCHE Standards addressed within the Self Study

- MSCHE Evaluation Team visit – 30 March 2008 to 2 April 2008
- Focus of the visit on MSCHE Standards 2, 3, 7, and 14
- For each of these standards, the evaluation team found “... that GW meets this standard.” Two summary recommendations were presented as requiring “follow-up action and requirements.”

The visitation team found through the Self Study Report and supplementary materials we provided to them that GW meets the standard for each of the four standards covered by the Self Study Report. Two recommendations were given for follow-up action.

The visitation team was composed of the following individuals:
Tom LeBlanc – Provost, University of Miami
Gloria Donnelly – Dean and Professor at the College of Nursing and Health Professionals, Drexel University
Martin Dorph – Senior VP for Finance and Budget, NYU
Roger Grice – Clinical Professor of Technical Communication, RPI
Perry Molinoff – Special Advisor to the Provost on Research, University of Pennsylvania
Ralph Polimeni – Vice Provost for Accreditation and Assessment, Hofstra University

DC Representative to the team – Robin Y. Jenkins, Education Licensure Commission Manager, Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Office of the Mayor
First Summary Recommendation

"The plan (SPAE) provides a lot of detail as to what is intended but it does not include a target timeline or any estimate of cost that will be incurred to accomplish its goals. Specific targets linked to specific goals should be identified. The timeframe over which these goals will be accomplished, and the cost of accomplishing each goal, should be formally and explicitly defined."

Recommendation #1 reads as follows:

"The plan (SPAE) provides a lot of detail as to what is intended but it does not include a target timeline or any estimate of cost that will be incurred to accomplish its goals. Specific targets linked to specific goals should be identified. The timeframe over which these goals will be accomplished, and the cost of accomplishing each goal, should be formally and explicitly defined."
Recommendation #2 reads as follows:

“All schools and programs that do not have assessment of student learning in place need to develop and implement such programs as appropriate. ... Assessment of programs and learning outcomes in schools not subject to an external mandated assessment is at a very preliminary stage. In particular, the CCAS and ESIA should focus on the development of formal assessment plans.”
Commission Action

Action taken on 26 June 2008:

"To reaffirm accreditation and to request a progress letter due by April 1, 2010, documenting (1) a target timeline and the resource allocation strategies implemented to accomplish the goals of the institution’s strategic plan (Standards 2 and 3) and

The written report of the external evaluation team is submitted by the team leader to the MSCHE central office. The team leader, along with team leaders from other accreditation visits, meet with the MSCHE commission members and review their recommendations and the commission members then arrive at the final action with respect to a given reaccreditation review. The MSCHE announced their action with respect to GW on 26 June 2008.

The action of the MSCHE is published on their web site. In our case, they reaffirmed full accreditation and requested specific progress reports that derive form the two recommendations of the evaluation team. The progress reports are due on 1 April 2010. Specifically, they have requested that we document

(1) A target timeline and the resource allocation strategies implemented to accomplish the goals of the institution’s strategic plan – this is associated with MSCHE standards 2 and 3.
(2) Further progress in the implementation of a comprehensive, organized, and sustained process for the assessment of student learning outcomes, including evidence that assessment results are used for improvement (Standard 14). Further documentation on progress in meeting these standards should also be provided in the Periodic Review Report due June 1, 2013.

They also indicate that when we do our Periodic Review Report that is due in 1 June 2013, that we further document progress in meeting the three standards – MSCHE standards 2, 3, and 14.
Addressing Item #1

- **Implement target timeline and resource allocation strategies** to accomplish the goals of SPAE per standards 2 and 3 of the MSCHE. This work must be completed by 31 December 2009 in order to prepare a progress letter to the MSCHE that is due on 1 April 2010.

We have approximately 15 months to complete the work necessary to produce the report they requested from us on the two recommendations from the evaluation team.
The work that needs to be completed to report progress on the first recommendation is as follows:

Each of the core chapters of the Self Study Report has a set of recommendations with respect to next steps in making further progress towards achieving the goal reviewed. Starting from these recommendations, we need to

1) Extract those associated with resources and suggested timelines;

2) Review the SPAE’s listed metrics along with our accumulated data to set new baselines for the major metrics;

3) Determine the resources required to achieve the optimal values of the major metrics;

4) Develop a multi-year plan using a resources-required approach within the context of the University’s budget starting with FY 10;

5) Use the FY 10 analysis within the 2008-09 budget process.
Addressing Item #2

- Document progress in the implementation of a comprehensive, organized, and sustained process for the assessment of student learning outcomes, including evidence that assessment results are used for improvement per Standard 14 of the MSCHE. This work must be completed by 31 December 2009 in order to prepare a progress letter to the MSCHE that is due on 1 April 2010.

The strength of this particular recommendation is that it can serve to drive serious rethinking of our learning goals for undergraduate education at GW, as well as graduate education. Such rethinking of how we assess learning can also have a major impact on how we teach our courses at GW and how we construct our required courses within the first two years of our undergraduate curricula.
Steps to prepare response to Item #2

- Develop and implement a campus-wide, assessment-education program that starts at the program level and filters down to the course level.
- Work with departments and programs within CCAS, ESIA, and CPS to articulate learning objectives for undergraduate students.
- Through the on-going undergraduate curriculum review, implement learning objectives connected to GCRs and define how accomplishment of these objectives will be measured.
- Support course-related assessment programs in the summer.
- Adopt a data collection approach for accumulating assessment data.

Towards that end, we have put together a set of steps towards instituting serious thinking about our aims for student learning across the curriculum and how we shall assess learning outcomes. Implementation of these steps will be led by Cheryl Beil through the component of her office dealing with assessment of outcomes. Cheryl will be assisted in this undertaking by the deans of the schools that have undergraduate students. The plan is to begin with

1) A campus-wide, assessment-education program that begins at the program level and filters down to the course level;

2) Special emphasis will be placed on working with the faculty members of CCAS, ESIA, and CPS to articulate learning objectives for undergraduate students;

3) With the current undergraduate curriculum review work as a base, we need to implement learning objectives connected to General Curriculum Requirements or Core-Course Requirements and define carefully how the accomplishment of these objectives will be measured;

4) In order to aid faculty members accomplish this work, we shall support course-related assessment programs in the summer;

5) Finally, in order to write our progress report for the MSCHE, we shall develop a data collection approach from accumulating assessment data that will be useful for showing how it is aiding in the improvement of learning.
A large thank you!

TO: All who helped bring us to this very positive and constructive conclusion of the MSCHE decennial accreditation review

- The co-chairs and members of the Steering Committee
- The leaders and members of the Working Groups
- The faculty and staff members outside of the Steering Committee and the Working Groups who critiqued and/or edited the Self Study work

In closing, I want to recognize the incredible amount of work that went into producing the Self Study Report. Many faculty members gave generously of their time to bring us to this very successful outcome. Moreover, a number of individuals stepped up to provide leadership and focus to what needed to be accomplished. To all these people, and to Forrest Maltzman, Craig Linebaugh, and Cheryl Beil, I convey to you all a very large thank you.

All who helped us in this major undertaking now know fully that we have entered a new era in accreditation by the national-level, regional accreditation agencies. What they are asking us to do with respect to assessment of our strategic plan progress and our educational learning assessment is what we can expect to see at a more intense level in the future. The good news is that GW was already on a path of assessing outcomes with metrics in our SPAE over the last five years. This effort positioned us well and helped lead us to full reaccreditation with no qualifications or concerns. Clearly, in order to be prepared for the future, we must continue and expand our assessment efforts.