Accreditation with Middle States Commission on Higher Education
University Accreditation

• A process of peer review
• Carried out through private, nonprofit organizations rather than a government entity
• Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) serves as the accrediting agency for educational institutions in the mid-Atlantic region of the US
University Accreditation

• Accreditation is voluntary but
• It is required in order for students to gain access to federal funds including federal grants and loan programs
University Accreditation

- Accreditation is voluntary but
- It is required in order for students to gain access to federal funds including federal grants and loan programs
- Cornell’s accreditation review covers the breadth of the university, including Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City and instructional activities around the world
- Cornell has been accredited by Middle States since 1921
Standards for MSCHE accreditation

I - Mission and Goals
II - Ethics and Integrity
III - Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience
IV - Support of the Student Experience
V - Educational Effectiveness Assessment
VI - Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement
VII - Governance, Leadership, and Administration
Recent accreditation activities

- Last visit was in Spring 2011
  - 2010 self-study reflected on Cornell’s response to global recession: structural deficit, Reimagining Cornell, creation of a new budget model
- 2016 reaffirmation of Cornell’s accreditation
- Spring 2019 – Chose a fall 2020 visit (rather than spring 2021)
- April 14-15 – Evaluation Team Chair conducted a virtual preliminary visit
Preliminary Visit on April 14-15

Eric Barron, President of Penn State University

• Met with selected members of the BoT, in addition to the President, the Provost, the Accreditation Steering Committee, and student representatives

• Read the draft self-study and provided helpful and consistent feedback on how to improve the document
Next steps

• Six other members of the evaluation team will be identified by MSCHE
• Completed self-study goes to evaluation team before September 1
• Evaluation team visit is scheduled for October 11-14… currently fall break on the academic calendar
But what about COVID-19?

- The self-study was drafted before the pandemic developed.
  - MSCHE and evaluation team chair agree that accreditation should not be about how we have responded to the pandemic; a major revision of the self-study is not required
  - Self-study may include a brief appendix to describe key features of our pandemic response
  - MSCHE was not eager to change the visit date
  - It is conceivable that the visit could be a virtual one
More information

- http://accreditation.cornell.edu/
- https://www.msche.org/
Self Study

Draft of the Self Study

The Accreditation Steering Committee completed a draft of the Self Study on March 9, 2020 in the early stages of what would become the COVID-19 pandemic.

The subsequent day, March 10, President Martha Pollack announced that Cornell classes would convene virtually after Spring Break (on April 6th). On March 13, President Pollack announced that in-person instruction would end that day, and she encouraged all students to leave campus as soon as possible.

In communication with our accrediting body, we determined that we would stay the course despite the unprecedented events and retain our original timeline. Accordingly, our March 9th draft document was submitted to the chair of Evaluation Team, Dr. Eric Barron, the President of Pennsylvania State University on April 3, 2020 in preparation for a “visit” of Dr. Barron to our campus on April 15th. By mutual agreement of all involved parties, the campus visit became a “virtual visit.”

The 145-page self study draft can be viewed here.
March 9, 2020 draft

Cornell University
Self Study
http://accreditaton.cornell.edu/

Introduction About Cornell University ........................................................................................................... 5
Colleges and Schools ......................................................................................................................................... 6
Cornell’s Leadership ........................................................................................................................................... 11
Selected Recent Initiatives ............................................................................................................................... 11

Chapter 1 Mission and Goals
Mission and Vision .............................................................................................................................................. 12
Inclusion ............................................................................................................................................................. 13
Excellence .......................................................................................................................................................... 17
Collaboration .................................................................................................................................................... 18
Engagement ....................................................................................................................................................... 19

Chapter 2 Ethics and Integrity
Academic Freedom ............................................................................................................................................ 27
A Culture of Respect and Inclusion ................................................................................................................ 30
Fair Employee Practices and Grievances ....................................................................................................... 33
Conflicts of Interest ......................................................................................................................................... 36

Chapter 3 Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience
Undergraduate Learning ................................................................................................................................. 45

The 145 page self study draft can be viewed here.
Steering Committee (Faculty led)

- **Michael Fontaine**, co-chair, Associate Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education and Professor of Classics in the College of Arts & Sciences
- **Marin Clarkberg**, co-chair, Associate Vice Provost of Institutional Research & Planning and Accreditation Liaison Officer
- **Lisa Nishii**, Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education and Associate Professor of Human Resource Studies in the School of Industrial & Labor Relations
- **Kathy Edmondson**, University Assessment Project Manager and Assistant Dean for Learning & Instruction in the College of Veterinary Medicine
- **Alan Mathios**, professor in Policy Analysis & Management in the College of Human Ecology and a Commissioner for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- **Nick Matolka**, undergraduate in the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences
- **Caroline Levine**, chair of the Mission & Goals Working Group and Professor of English, College or Arts & Sciences
- **Louis R. Hyman**, chair of the Ethics & Integrity Working Group and Associate Professor of Labor Relations, Law & History in the School of Industrial & Labor Relations
- **Scott Peters**, chair of the Design & Delivery of the Student Learning Experience Working Group and Professor of Development Sociology in the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences
- **Durba Ghosh**, chair of the Educational Effectiveness Assessment Working Group and Professor of History in the College of Arts & Sciences
- **Stephan Schmidt**, chair of the Support of the Student Experience Working Group and Associate Professor of History in the College of Architecture, Art & Planning
- **Sean Nicholson**, chair of the Planning, Resources & Institutional Improvement Working Group and Professor of Policy Analysis & Management in the College of Human Ecology
- **Bruce Lewenstein**, chair of the Governance, Leadership & Administration Working Group and Professor of Science & Technology Studies in the College of Arts & Sciences