FIT Executive Summary

An Overview of FIT
Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), a part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system, is a college of art and design, business and technology in the heart of New York City. Its specialized mission and offerings make it unique within SUNY and the nation. Founded in 1944 with 100 students and two programs as an integral part of the fashion industry, FIT now provides career training in 30 different areas of study, through an array of associate, bachelor, and master degree programs – some of them unique in the world. The College’s 10,000 students include 761 international students from 61 countries, and 2,672 out-of-state students from all 50 states. About 2,300 students live on campus in FIT’s four residence halls. FIT’s 966-member faculty includes 246 full-time faculty and 720 part-timers.

FIT has five schools – Art and Design, Business and Technology, Liberal Arts, Graduate Studies, and Continuing and Professional Studies. The College offers 43 degree programs ranging from its four largest majors – Fashion Merchandising Management, Fashion Design, Communication Design, and Advertising and Marketing Communications, to other diverse programs, such as Computer Animation and Interactive Media, Illustration, Interior Design, Photography, Toy Design, Home Products, International Trade, and Visual Art Management. Graduate programs include specialties such as Art Market, Cosmetics and Fragrance Management and Marketing, Exhibition Design, and Fashion and Textile Studies. In addition, through its School of Continuing and Professional Studies, FIT offers a wide array of programs for industry professionals, executives, and the local community.

FIT’s unique programs, connection to the fashion and design industries, location, and relatively modest cost all contribute to its growing popularity. The College has become increasingly competitive, with many more applicants than can be admitted, and students better prepared than they were five years ago. Key FIT strengths include a faculty largely made up of practicing industry professionals, and the College’s strong ties with the industries it serves. Internships are an integral part of an FIT education and the College has more than 2,500 participating sponsor companies. The FIT-industry network continues to grow as graduates join the thousands of other FIT alumni who comprise the ranks of fashion and related industries, and include top-name designers and business leaders.

The Campus
FIT’s 11-building campus occupies an entire city block on 27th Street between Seventh and Eighth avenues in Manhattan’s Fashion District. Structures include four academic buildings, a conference center, bookstore, food pavilion, and four student residence halls, the most recent of which is located a few blocks from the campus on 31st Street between 9th and 10th avenues. Campus facilities also include the Museum at FIT, housing one of the world’s most important collections of fashion and textiles, as well as dozens of specialized computer labs, workshops, laboratories, and studios. They include the recently dedicated state-of-the-art Laura and John Pomerantz Presentation Room, the College’s cutting edge computerized Stoll Knitting Lab, and the Annette Green Fragrance Foundation Laboratory, the only facility of its kind on a college campus.

Preparing the Periodic Review Report
The Periodic Review Report (PRR) constitutes FIT’s response to the Commission’s goals and to the recommendations of the Visiting Team after its visit in 2002. The process provided FIT with the
opportunity to reflect on its growth and development, assess its current status, and identify the challenges ahead. Preparation of the report was guided by a 19-member PRR Committee, co-chaired by Dr. Dympna Bowles, Dean of Curriculum and Instruction, and Robert Vassalotti, Associate Professor of Fashion Merchandising and Management. Committee membership included faculty, staff, and administrators.

The PRR Committee first met in Spring 2006 to review the PRR process and background material to its charge. In Fall 2006, it divided into five subcommittees, each preparing one section of the report. The subcommittees prepared draft outlines and submitted final versions of their reports in December 2006. In January and early February 2007, the co-chairs consolidated the sections into a single document, which was sent to the full PRR Committee in March for its review. The Committee’s comments were incorporated into the document, which was reviewed again by the PRR Committee and by the President’s Cabinet. The report was then distributed campus-wide and posted on the College web page and portal. A college-wide hearing was held on May 8, 2007, with both day and evening sessions, and feedback, where appropriate, was incorporated into the report.

**Summary of Major Institutional Changes and Developments**

The last five years have been a time of substantial growth and change for FIT – in planning, programs, curricula, and resources. The College has become increasingly competitive and its applicant pool expanded significantly. Significant changes since 2002 include the following:

**Strategic Planning Process.** Perhaps the most significant institutional change since 2002 has been the establishment of a college-wide planning process, which began in Fall 2004, and resulted in the development of FIT’s new Strategic Plan, 2020: FIT at 75. Five broad goals emerged from this process, reflecting the input of many segments of the College community. They are:

- Strengthening the Academic Core;
- Committing to a Culture of Student Centeredness;
- Strengthening FIT as a Creative Hub;
- Engaging in Strategic Recruitment; and
- Establishing a Process for Administrative Support of the Plan.

School and college planning committees were formed, and an operational plan developed, incorporating committee reports with tasks, activities and completion dates. Now in its second year of implementation, the Strategic Plan guides the College’s current operations and serves as a roadmap for the future. The success of this process resulted from a variety of factors, including the commitment of the President, the inclusion of the entire college community, and the collaboration fostered to achieve a common goal. A major challenge ahead is to build on the framework of the Strategic Plan to assess the effectiveness of FIT as an institution.

**New Programs.** New programmatic activity since 2002 has significantly strengthened FIT’s academic core, with the addition of 10 new programs, each building on the College’s unique market niche and strengths. Seven degree programs – three BFA, one BS, and three master’s degree programs – were implemented, and evening/weekend options added to nine majors. Three new certificate programs were also developed and implemented. A seamless four-year option was also made available to students in the BS in Advertising and Marketing Communications. In addition, extensive revisions have taken place in almost all degree programs, primarily to incorporate technology and keep pace with industry changes. To further strengthen and connect the liberal arts to
the majors, an Asia concentration was developed and adopted in seven majors, with a Latin America concentration to follow.

Much of this programmatic success is due to the active participation of the FIT faculty. Significant strides have been made in building the full-time faculty ranks. The President has made new full-time lines a priority, adding 20 new faculty lines in Spring 2007, bringing to 33 the number of new lines since 2001, for a total of 246 full-time faculty in Spring 2007. An additional 20 new faculty will be added in Spring 2008. While more needs to be done, the infusion of these lines has reenergized many College departments and programs.

A Global Presence. FIT’s international presence has grown substantially, with almost 400 students and 30 faculty members participating in international programs in 2005-06. Newer initiatives include: a collaborative Global Fashion Management master’s program with Institut Francais de la Mode in Paris and Hong Kong Polytechnic; dual baccalaureate degree programs in Fashion Design, and Textile Development and Marketing with Istanbul Technical University; and plans to offer an upper-division component of FIT’s BFA in Fashion Design at the Politecnico in Milan, Italy in Fall 2007. These initiatives are complemented by the many study-abroad opportunities in Europe, Canada, China, Hong Kong, and Australia.

Instructional Technology and Infrastructure. Major changes in technology infrastructure, online services, communication, and instructional computing have taken place since 2002. FIT’s core infrastructure has been transformed into a state-of-the-art network, which will increase campus computing speed tenfold (in June 2007) and has added 100 wireless hotspots. Significant advances have also occurred in the use of technology in instruction. Online courses have doubled; faculty use of FIT’s learning management system, Blackboard, is widespread, with continual training and support provided by FIT’s Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET); the use of computing software in instruction is extensive, supported by FIT’s vast network of computer labs and smart classrooms; and communication between IT and the faculty has been strengthened significantly. These positive developments are expected to continue as the College completes the transformation from traditional spaces to “smart” classrooms and hybrid-lab environments, and incorporates the new Microsoft Vista operating system, Windows 2007, and the Angel Course Management System.

Student Services. FIT has also worked hard to improve student services, an area noted for improvement by Middle States in 2002. It has streamlined operations and upgraded the Registration Center, making it more student-centered. In collaboration with IT, Student Services has computerized many of its operations, including an online degree audit reporting system (DARS), an online tracking program in Admissions, online faculty grade submissions, online student registration, and online access to grades and transcripts. As we move forward, FIT will continue its efforts to fulfill the strategic planning goal of a student-centered environment, with particular attention to academic advisement as a high priority for the college.

Campus Expansion. One of the most visible changes to FIT is the addition of three new buildings on the campus: a new 1,100 bed residence hall, a 17,000 square foot two-story cafeteria and bookstore, and a two-story multi-purpose conference center. A new 10-year campus Master Plan was developed by the award winning firm SHoP (Sharples Holden and Pasquarelli) and included a comprehensive review of all of the College’s existing space. The Plan calls for the modernization of 943,000 square feet of space and the addition of 450,000 square feet of new space when fully implemented. FIT has also made numerous renovations over the last five years, including significant upgrades to labs,
studios, classrooms, support offices, student lounges, faculty development areas and faculty offices. In spite of these developments, space continues to be a challenge. The hiring of additional faculty, for example, has required creative approaches for securing more office space. And with classroom and lab renovations in the A Building scheduled for next year, the College is planning carefully to ensure that the work is conducted with minimal disruptions in teaching.

**Fundraising.** Fundraising efforts since 2001 have yielded $28 million from foundations, individuals, campaigns, and special events. The College’s increased focus on capital campaigns, government and community relations, and on individually targeted fundraising is beginning to show a positive effect. We are especially proud of our fundraising successes, including our single largest private donation of $10 million from Jay and Patty Baker for our School of Business and Technology; $7 million raised from our ongoing *Endowing Excellence Campaign* for scholarships; and $2.66 million raised from city and state sources. FIT’s annual Golf Classic, now in its third year, has raised $750,000 and strengthened College connections with industry leaders and potential donors. Going forward, our fundraising efforts will continue to support the Strategic Plan and Master Plan, and will focus on two key priorities—strengthening our outreach to FIT alumni and improving college-wide coordination of all fundraising activities.

**Abstract of the Periodic Review Report**

**Section 1. Response to Middle States’ Recommendations**
FIT has implemented all nine of the major recommendations put forth by Middle States in its report in 2002. By engaging many of the FIT community in new and collaborative ways, this process has greatly enhanced our ability to work across the boundaries of discrete departments and programs. In addition to developing the Strategic Plan described above, we infused our plans and programs with the tenets of our revised mission, enhanced student services, increased library holdings and digital resources, made vast improvements to instructional and technological infrastructure, and strengthened our marketing, public relations, and brand identity.

**Section 2. Major Challenges and Accomplishments**
FIT has accomplished much over the last five years, keeping pace with changes in technology and the workplace. A number of these accomplishments—described earlier in this summary—include our Strategic Plan, new program development, increased global presence, and improved student services, technology, and facilities. In addition, FIT has provided funding to support faculty development, the establishment of a new Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET), and a new position in distance learning. The College has further enhanced its coveted Presidential Scholars Program, implemented a Baker Scholars program, and worked with industry sponsors to create additional competition programs for students. To strengthen FIT’s role as a creative hub for industry, we established the Center for Executive Education to provide state-of-the-art programs for industry executives, including numerous symposia and conferences. We also increased the number of FIT’s non-credit continuing education programs. Finally, the College enhanced the cultural and educational importance of The Museum at FIT by establishing the Museum’s new Fashion and Textile History Gallery, which is unique in the nation.

Challenges going forward include: securing funding to support the ever-increasing costs of library database resources; strengthening the link between the academic and expanding IT area; accommodating Continuing Education’s growing programs despite limited evening classroom space;
and supporting the Museum’s objective to win accreditation by the American Association of Museums, which will require improvements in its physical space.

Section 3. Enrollment and Financial Trends and Projections
Although FIT has grown increasingly competitive and receives far more applicants than can be admitted, the College has kept enrollment relatively stable over the past five years, largely because of limited space and facilities. Projections for the next five years also include a stable enrollment. As part of our strategic-recruitment objectives, FIT has mounted a major recruitment and marketing research study – the first in over two decades – assisted by an outside firm, Stamats, and involving various external audiences, to refine our recruitment and marketing strategies for the future.

The College’s financial condition is solid, as reflected in its revenue and expenses over the past five years. Tuition increases were imposed with caution in order to keep FIT affordable for students while strengthening the revenue stream. FIT also worked hard in other ways to optimize revenue streams, manage baseline costs, create efficiencies, and cut expenses. As a result, the College has been able to strategically add new programs, infuse new technology, and hire additional full-time faculty.

Section 4. Assessment
FIT’s progress in assessing student learning outcomes has been considerable. Its 2002 Assessment Plan in General Education continued to provide the framework for the review of 12 key general education areas. Results include refinement of assessment measures, curricula revisions, and peer reviews of final exams. In Fall 2006, FIT implemented Strengthened Campus-Based Assessment (SCBA), a SUNY initiative requiring standardized assessment measures in writing, critical thinking, and mathematics – and in student engagement in college life, which will be assessed in 2008 using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), replacing the Survey of Student Experience (SOS). FIT has also evaluated 20 of its degree programs since 2002 through its five-year review process. Recommendations resulting from these reviews addressed many areas and led to numerous curricular changes.

The College has taken significant steps in developing its institutional assessment plan. FIT’s Strategic Operational Plan, which breaks down its five overarching goals into objectives, activities, tasks, areas of responsibility, and timetables, serves as the framework for this plan. In addition to existing performance indicators, such as retention and graduation data, transfer rates to upper division programs, and student satisfaction indicators, FIT will develop metrics for a number of other goals and objectives of the operational plan. Together with assessment activities, including the performance review of administrators and an ongoing review of the College’s business and administrative processes, these metrics will constitute the final component of FIT’s institutional assessment plan. Integrating all of these components into this plan will further strengthen the College’s work in institution-wide assessment.

Section 5. Linking Budget and Planning
FIT has redesigned its budget process to align funding allocations with the five key goals outlined in its Strategic Plan. The operational plan, which provides a breakdown of the five key goals into objectives, activities, tasks, areas of responsibility, and timetables, serves as a framework for budget priorities. When proposing their budget initiatives, vice presidents and deans are expected to demonstrate a link between their priorities and the goals of the plan. Section five of the PRR includes numerous examples of FIT budget allocations that support the goals of the Strategic Plan.