

Executive Summary

The Fashion Institute of Technology is an internationally recognized college for design, fashion, communications, and business located in New York City. FIT prepares students for professional careers in design and business through rigorous academic programs that emphasize experiential learning and partner with creative industries. One of New York City's premier public institutions, FIT became the second community college of the State University of New York (SUNY) in 1951, and received accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in 1957.

The institution presents this Self-Study in support of reaccreditation by Middle States. For the past two years, despite significant disruptions from the Covid pandemic and move to remote operations, a diverse group of faculty, administrators, staff, and students worked together to examine our institution in terms of the *Middle States Standards of Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation*. After an introduction to the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), the report includes chapters for each of the seven Standards, in which we present findings and suggest opportunities for improvement. A summary of the findings is below.

Standard I: Mission and Goals

FIT's mission and goals are centered around educating students for success in the fashion and creative industries, as well as promoting the values of inclusivity, sustainability, civility, creativity and innovation. The college's mission and goals are clearly stated, created in collaboration with a broad campus constituency, communicated at all levels, and continually reviewed and revised. They are realistic and align both with MSCHE standards as well as the mission of SUNY and its community colleges. The mission and the goals of the college infuse all areas of decision making and are deeply embedded in processes and planning. FIT's academic divisions and departments embrace and share the mission, and each new iteration of FIT's strategic plan seeks to further these overarching objectives. This chapter also demonstrates compliance with Requirement of Affiliation 7.

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

FIT's commitment to the highest standards of ethics and integrity is evident in the college community's activities. College policies are both transparent, through the centralized FIT Policy Library, and collaboratively developed, particularly with support from the Policy Advisory Group, the Faculty Senate, and the collective bargaining unit that represents FIT faculty and staff, the UCE of FIT. Nurturing a campus climate that is characterized by inclusivity, diversity, and civility remains a central focus at FIT, as showcased by its long-standing initiatives in these areas and the support of the administration for them. This includes strong protections for students, faculty, and staff to an environment free of bias, discrimination, and harassment, through extensive and transparent policies and procedures designed to effectively investigate, intervene, and correct such harmful incidences. This chapter also demonstrates compliance with Requirements of Affiliation 1-6, 8, and 14.

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Experience

FIT offers student learning experiences that support its mission of preparing students for professional excellence, with an emphasis on experiential learning. All programs are designed to

be coherent and rigorous, integrate global awareness and issues of values and ethics, and ensure technological competency in a professional field. General education and liberal arts courses, in addition to those in majors, ensure that undergraduates develop essential skills such as communication and critical thinking. A strong core of effective faculty delivers courses, demonstrating compliance with Requirement of Affiliation 15; they are supported by the institution in their teaching as well as scholarship and creative projects.

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

FIT is committed to student success from recruitment through graduation, providing strong support to ensure that students succeed. FIT communicates clearly with students about costs and financing of education and has increased scholarships and support, particularly during the Covid pandemic. FIT admits students who can—and do—succeed, particularly with the support of a wide array of services to support them both academically and in terms of their health and wellness. One strength noted by the self-study is the increased incorporation of a variety of technologies to assist with support. FIT has several processes in place to ensure student support is effective, and services regularly use assessment information to continually improve.

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

FIT has built strong processes for assessing student learning and broader educational goals. All programs, as well as general education requirement areas, have clear learning outcomes that are regularly assessed to ensure that students accomplish them. Academic program reviews and administrative reviews for student support units provide for broad evaluations; the processes include external feedback and creation of action plans. The Faculty Senate's Academic Assessment Committee plays a prominent role in developing and supporting the culture of assessment. This chapter also demonstrates compliance with Requirements of Affiliation 9.

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

FIT has a robust planning process that spans the entirety of its organization, providing for the prioritization and allocation of resources in terms of programs and initiatives, the development of facilities, the installation of technology solutions, and the hiring of faculty and staff. FIT's mission and goals are at the core of its operations, allowing the college to adjust to changing circumstances, meeting both challenges and opportunities creatively. All areas of the college set goals and evaluate them through a variety of metrics and processes, using the information to make changes and improvements. This chapter also demonstrates compliance with Requirements of Affiliation 10 and 11.

Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

FIT has a well-defined system of governance that is appropriate to its status as a community college within the State University of New York (SUNY) system. Its administrative leadership and governance structure support attainment of its mission and goals. The president and administrators bring depth of experience to their positions. Sharing governance, the governing board, faculty, professional staff, administration, students and staff participate in the development of policies and in decision-making related to the functioning of the institution. Administration and other governance bodies are bound by a shared commitment to college policy, a responsibility for setting high standards, and a determination to achieve FIT's goals and objectives. The college has been dedicated to making improvements and expanding efficiencies

across administrative units, and is continuing to pursue measures to enhance shared governance across all constituencies. This chapter also demonstrates compliance with Requirements of Affiliation 12 and 13.

Opportunities for Improvement

As a result of this self-study process, we make the following recommendations to strengthen the institution:

1. Continue to enhance FIT's image and reputation by promoting the institution as an affordable and accessible college of the State University of New York that educates learners from middle school through the executive level (Standard I).
2. Increase the overall number of full-time faculty to achieve the number to which FIT has committed (Standard II, III, VI).
3. Continue to strengthen policies and procedures related to hiring, advancement, and succession planning across the college (Standard II).
4. Build processes for systematic review, renewal and strategic alignment of individual courses and student learning outcomes with institutional goals (Standards III, V).
5. Reinvigorate operational planning around strategic goals, particularly by developing strategic plans for each academic division (Standards I, VI).
6. Strengthen and support FIT's programs in continuing education, professional development, and executive education for the creative and business industries (Standards I, III).
7. Better coordinate communications across the college (Standards IV, V, VI, VII).
8. Continue to build a campus climate that prioritizes civility, diversity, equity and inclusion (Standards II, IV).
9. Continue the progress in addressing space needs on campus in order to improve the learning and working environments for students, faculty, staff, and administrators (Standards II, VI).