

## **FIT Readers – Important Notes**

\*At this stage, we have included the text for each standard and criterion so that all internal readers know what the narrative is working to support. We'll remove this in the final draft, leaving the section titles with the standard/criterion number in parentheses.

\* We have put documented evidence in blue text. Nearly all of these are underscored and hyperlinked to the document on file (we are still obtaining or developing a few documents, which will not have the underscore).

\*Please note that the final version will be formatted cleanly, with a cover page and branded footer.

**\*Thank you for reading this significant document. Please provide your comments on the form on MyFIT.**

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## I. 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. Nurturing a campus climate that is characterized by inclusivity, diversity, and civility remains a central focus at FIT, as showcased by its various 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 unit 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 and systematic 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. Increase the overall number of full-time faculty to achieve the number to which FIT has committed (Standards II, III, IV).
2. Continue to strengthen policies and procedures related to hiring, advancement, and succession planning across the college (Standard II).
3. Build processes for systematic review, renewal and strategic alignment of individual courses and student learning outcomes with institutional goals (Standards III, V).
4. Reinvigorate operational planning around strategic goals, particularly by developing strategic plans for each academic division (Standards I, VI).
5. Strengthen and support FIT's programs in continuing education, professional development, and executive education for the creative and business industries (Standards I, III).
6. Better coordinate communications across the college (Standards IV, V, VI, VII).
7. Continue to build a campus climate that prioritizes civility, diversity, equity and inclusion (Standards II, IV).
8. 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).

## Introduction

### Brief Overview of the Institution

The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) was founded in 1944 by members of the fashion and apparel industry in order to educate a new generation of industry employees. Since its inception, FIT has developed from a small institute located on the top two floors of the High School of Needle Trades into an internationally-recognized public college with an emphasis on innovation and sustainability. While preparing students for professional careers in design and business remains central to FIT's pedagogical mission, FIT now offers majors in a wide variety of specializations in art and design as well as business and technology.

Located in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood, FIT places its students at the center of the fashion, advertising, visual arts, and design businesses, providing them with exposure to their fields through internships, field trips, mentorship and industry-sponsored research, and competitions. FIT moved to a nine-story building on Seventh Avenue in 1957 and has since grown to encompass an entire city block, including four residence halls (one of which is on 31<sup>st</sup> Street) and the Shirley Goodman Resource Center, which houses the Gladys Marcus Library and The Museum at FIT, an internationally-renowned fashion museum. FIT's four academic buildings will soon become five: in 2020, FIT broke ground on a new academic building being constructed within the footprint of the existing campus and opening onto West 28<sup>th</sup> Street. This LEED silver-certified structure will incorporate sustainable practices throughout its almost 100,000 square feet of space, while its glass façade was chosen to reflect FIT's commitment to openness and community engagement.

In 1951, FIT became the second community college in the State University of New York (SUNY) system, and it received Middle States accreditation in 1957. The college began with just two majors in the Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree: Design (with programs in apparel, millinery, and textiles) and Scientific Management. In 1975, an amendment to the Education Law of New York State permitted FIT to offer BS and BFA programs, and in 1979, another authorized master's degrees. FIT remains a community college, with all first-time undergraduate students applying to enter an AAS program. Many of these students continue their education at FIT, applying to bachelor's programs at the end of their AAS degrees, a "2+2" system.

FIT currently offers 15 associate, 26 baccalaureate, and seven graduate-level degree programs, as well as 9 credit certificate programs. The college's best-known programs are its majors in Fashion Design and Fashion Business Management. FIT offers degrees in diverse subjects, including Menswear and Cosmetics and Fragrance Marketing, which are unique to the college, and others that were the first of their kind in the country, including Toy Design, Visual Presentation and Exhibition Design, and Packaging Design. Many of these programs are ranked among the best in the country and in the world. Leading authorities on the fashion industry such as Fashionista.com, The Business of Fashion, and CEOWORLD Magazine all named FIT among the best in the world for its offerings. Most recently, two of FIT's BFA degrees, in Illustration and Animation, Interactive Media and Game Design, received top rankings in the country.

FIT's degree programs are housed within four academic schools: the School of Art and Design, the Jay and Patty Baker School of Business and Technology, the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the School of Graduate Studies. In addition to its Middle States accreditation, FIT is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), which reviews all art and design programs within its purview, no matter which school they are housed within. The NASAD accreditation period coincides with the Middle States review, with its team visiting in April 2022. The Interior Design AAS and BFA programs are accredited by the Council of Interior Design and Accreditation (CIDA), with reaccreditation last renewed in 2020. One major change and highlight since FIT's last self-study is the accreditation of seven programs in the Jay and Patty Baker School of Business and Technology from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP). These programs applied for and received accreditation in 2018. This accreditation highlights the excellence in teaching, focus on preparing students for serving external industry partners, and dedication to continuous improvement of FIT's business programs.

In addition to their commitment to prepare students for their respective industries, each of the 41 undergraduate programs is built on a strong foundation of liberal arts courses. The School of Liberal Arts and Sciences itself offers two majors: Art History and Museum Professions and an interdisciplinary program in Film and Media Studies. Undergraduates from all schools have the opportunity to select from a wide array of minors offered in Liberal Arts, such as Creative Entrepreneurship, Color Studies, Ethics and Sustainability, International Politics, Mandarin Chinese, and Women and Gender Studies.

FIT's School of Graduate Studies provides students with further preparation for advancement in the fashion and creative industries. Its seven programs include MA programs in Art Market: Principles and Practices, Exhibition and Experience Design, and Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, Museum Practice; MPS programs in Cosmetics and Fragrance Marketing and Management as well Global Fashion Management; and an MFA in Illustration. In 2017, FIT launched an MFA in Fashion Design, the first such program within the SUNY system.

Through its Center for Continuing and Professional Studies, the college offers a vast selection of short courses, more than 30 non-credit certificate programs, company and workforce training programs for a large population of professionals seeking skill-building opportunities, and precollege programs for middle and high school students. Specialized English language studies are offered for international students, including FIT's intensive English Language program, co-sponsored with the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

FIT also offers a wide variety of study-abroad options, including faculty-led programs, student exchange, and international internships, and has two residential programs in Florence and Milan for Fashion Design and Fashion Business Management majors. In 2017, FIT began offering two associate's degree programs, Fashion Design and Fashion Business Management, at SUNY Korea, in Incheon, South Korea.

FIT’s faculty includes traditional academics from the liberal arts, as well as leading industry professionals from fashion and the creative industries. The 944 full- and part-time faculty include prize-winning artists and illustrators, designers, authors, entrepreneurs, and pioneers in a variety of business fields. Non-classroom faculty working in areas such as the Gladys Marcus Library and the Counseling Center provide key academic and student-support services.

In Fall 2020, FIT’s headcount totaled 8,191. Headcount has declined in the last five years, largely due to a decrease in non-degree and part-time students, and, in the last year, due to the Covid pandemic.

### Headcount 2016-2020, by Full-time/Part-time, Degree Status, and Degree Level

	FALL 2016	FALL 2017	FALL 2018	FALL 2019	FALL 2020
<b>Totals</b>					
Grand Total	9,272	8,846	8,767	8,726	8,191
<b>Full-Time Status</b>					
Full-time	7,515	7,341	7,406	7,505	7,142
Part-time	1,757	1,505	1,361	1,221	1,049
<b>Degree/Nondegree</b>					
Degree	8,344	8,108	8,150	8,258	7,915
Nondegree	928	738	617	468	276
<b>Degree Level</b>					
Graduate	176	185	212	218	232
Undergraduate	9,096	8,661	8,555	8,508	7,959

Women make up 83% of the student body. Thirty-seven percent of students come from New York City and 25% from other areas of New York State, primarily Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties. Ten percent of students are international. Of domestic students, 41% are White, 22% are Hispanic (of any race), 12% are Asian, 9% are Black, and 4% identify as multiracial.

FIT is successful at retaining and graduating the strong majority of its students. The one-year retention rate for the fall 2019 cohort of first-time, full-time undergraduate degree-seeking students was 88%. Nearly 82% of the first-time, full-time degree-seeking students who entered in fall 2017 earned an associate’s degree from FIT within three years. Of the students who continued from a FIT associates degree to one of FIT’s bachelor’s programs in fall of 2017, almost 92% earned a bachelor’s degree within three years. In graduate degree programs, 93% of students graduate within 3 years.



## College Goals, Challenges and Achievements

Dr. Joyce F. Brown was appointed to lead FIT in 1998, becoming the college's sixth president and its first woman and African American leader. President Brown has coordinated strategic and investment planning that has transformed the college. Under her leadership, the current mission statement was developed:

*FIT prepares students for professional excellence in design and business through rigorous and adaptable academic programs, experiential learning, and innovative partnerships. A premier public institution in New York City, FIT fosters creativity, career focus, and a global perspective and educates its students to embrace inclusiveness, sustainability, and a sense of community.*

Dr. Brown has led FIT's commitment to sustainability, diversity, and civility, as well as its focus on innovation and creativity. These elements are woven throughout the current and former strategic plans developed during her tenure.

FIT's Periodic Review Report (PRR) for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in 2017 provided an opportunity for FIT to reflect on its progress in the first five years after its 2012 self-study and decennial review. The PRR addressed 72 recommendations and suggestions that had emerged from FIT's 2012 Self-Study; of these recommendations, only seven had been made by the Middle States visitation team. Most of these recommendations had been satisfied by the time of the PRR, including the review of FIT's budget projections; the development of an assessment for the Academic Advisement Center; and an articulation of policies related to graduate faculty teaching. The PRR reviewers required that the School of Graduate Studies complete its strategic plan in that year; this was accomplished (**see Standard III.6**). As recommended by PRR reviewers, FIT developed policies regarding patents and trademarks (**see Standard II.1**) and, with the hiring of a new Vice President for Advancement and Executive Director of the FIT Foundation, a plan for institutional advancement was developed and implemented (**see Standard VI.1**). Several other recommendations, for a bi-annual dashboard report for the strategic plan and formal orientation for senior appointments, remain under consideration.

Some new challenges have emerged since 2017: as a result of recent demographic trends that are affecting many institutions, full-time enrollment at FIT has declined in recent years. This, in addition to lower non-degree seeking enrollment, has led to a temporary budget shortfall as the college adjusts to these trends. The Covid pandemic, which led FIT to shift to remote operations on March 16, 2020, was operationally and financially challenging, as will be discussed within the Self-Study. FIT continued to offer nearly all instruction remotely in the academic year of 2020-21. While FIT was largely successful in continuing to meet its mission, this was a period of increased stress for students, faculty, and staff. However, the swift adoption of new technologies for teaching, as well as for other operations, has presented new opportunities as well. These and other challenges are addressed here in the findings of the Self-Study as opportunities for improvement.

Despite these challenges, FIT has continued to thrive as a globally-recognized center for creative innovation. Some recent highlights include:

- **Student Projects**—In 2017, a team of FIT students and faculty sponsors won the National Geographic Chasing Genius Award for developing AlgiKnit, a sustainable fabric made from kelp. In 2019, Disney on Broadway partnered with FIT Fashion Design students to create new fashion designs for its iconic female characters, and the following year the Girls Scouts of the USA selected FIT students to re-design its uniforms and apparel. For the past 8 years FIT students have been chosen to participate in the Clinton Global Initiative University, where they have developed on-campus sustainability and diversity initiatives such as the natural dye garden and Spotlight, a creative space for Black, Indigenous, POC and LGBTQ+ artists as FIT.
- **Faculty Research**—The strengthening of the FIT Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs has led to an explosion of faculty winning prestigious grants from such organizations as the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Science Foundation, and the Council on Library and Information Resources, at a rate unprecedented in the college’s history. In 2019 FIT was named, for the first time, as one of the nation’s top producers of Fulbright Scholars.
- **New Resources for Research and Innovation**—In 2017 FIT opened the Faculty Research Space, a cutting-edge interdisciplinary laboratory where faculty can experiment with new technologies and materials. To complement the Faculty Research Space, the new MakerMinds Space in the Gladys Marcus Library supports both faculty and student projects using augmented reality, holograms, 3D software and printing technology. In 2019 FIT announced its new Center for Innovation at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a 2,000-square foot space for faculty and alumni to foster research, entrepreneurial development, and community engagement.

## **Self-Study Process**

At Convocation in the fall of 2019, President Brown announced the start of the MSCHE Self-Study process to the community. The Self-Study co-chairs and Steering Committee members had been appointed earlier in the month. In addition to the Self-Study co-chairs, the Steering Committee was comprised of the institution’s Accreditation Liaison Officer, the assistant dean of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, and the co-chairs of six Working Groups. Dr. Brown and her Cabinet provided oversight through the participation of the president’s deputy and were regularly updated via progress reports submitted by the co-chairs each semester. The co-chairs also created a dedicated webpage on the FIT website to keep the campus community and the public informed about the Self-Study process.

By early spring 2020, the Steering Committee had drafted the Self-Study Design and recommended Working Group members to the president. Dr. Brown sent letters of invitation to

serve on the committees, and nearly all selected accepted the invitations. Working Groups began meeting regularly to identify evidence, and in February 2020 FIT hosted its Middle States vice president liaison to review its Self-Study Design and prepare the campus for the process. Only a few weeks later, the campus rapidly moved to remote operations due to the citywide Covid pandemic shutdown. This transition affected all areas of the college as faculty, staff and administration pivoted to new procedures, technologies and operational modalities. While this reduced the time and resources available for the Self-Study process, within weeks of the transition the Working Groups were able to recommence their efforts, and the Self-Study document is a testament to the dedication and perseverance of all involved in this process.

In addition to demonstrating how FIT meets Middle States standards in the context of its mission, the Steering Committee determined to use the Self-Study process to strengthen the campus community through the common endeavor of evidence-based self-examination. The standards-based approach was selected as a way to engage the community with the current Middle States standards, adopted by MSCHE since FIT's previous self-study. The project brought together faculty, staff, administrators, and students across divisions and schools in different configurations than the customary task-based ones, enabling community members to learn about different aspects of the institution. As an additional intended outcome, the Steering Committee hoped to integrate the Self-Study with FIT's next iteration of its strategic plan. Due to the Covid pandemic, the completion of the college's new strategic plan was delayed. Inclusion of members of the Planning Council in the Self-Study Steering Committee and on Working Groups ensured discussions around FIT's goals and its future were in alignment with the forthcoming plan.

The Steering Committee identified the following institutional priorities to guide this inquiry:

1. Build upon FIT's exceptional professional education by enhancing academic rigor and curricular flexibility.
2. Foster an inclusive, diverse community centered around supporting the student experience.
3. Continue to grow a culture of innovation through partnerships, advancing FIT's position as a public institution both locally and globally.

These priorities are woven throughout the Self-Study.

### **Organization of Self-Study Report**

This report is organized by chapters that correspond to each of the seven Middle States Standards for Accreditation. The Requirements of Affiliation are incorporated into each chapter as appropriate to the standard. Each chapter begins with an overview that summarizes and highlights a few ways that FIT meets the standard, followed by a descriptive narrative organized by each criterion within the standard. Documents providing evidence to support the narrative are referred to throughout the chapters, in blue font; they are most commonly cited in parentheses at the end of a sentence, but are sometimes woven directly into the text. The chapters conclude with

a summary of the findings, then brief highlights of a few of the college's standard-related strengths, followed by the opportunities for improvement that were identified. The appendix includes a complete list of documents used, listed by each criterion. These will be uploaded to the Middle States evidence portal.

## Standard I. Mission and Goals

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

This chapter describes the ways in which FIT meets Standard I and Requirement of Affiliation 7.

Since its founding in 1944, FIT's mission has been to offer an affordable education to students pursuing careers in fashion, design, and business. While the college has expanded and enhanced its programs and capacities over the decades, it has always remained committed to this vision. FIT's mission guides institutional goals, as articulated in its strategic plans, as well as its priorities and its values. These include an emphasis on innovation and creativity in its academic programs, as well as attention to the global context of today's fashion and creative businesses. FIT works hard to create a sense of community among its students, faculty, and staff, through promotion of civility and valuing of diversity.

### **FIT'S MISSION (I.1 & ROA 7)**

*Criterion 1: Clearly defined mission and goals that a. are developed through appropriate collaborative participation by all who facilitate or are otherwise responsible for institutional development and improvement; b. address external as well as internal contexts and constituencies; c. are approved and supported by the governing body; d. guide faculty, administration, staff, and governing structures in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program and curricular development, and the definition of institutional and educational outcomes; e. include support of scholarly inquiry and creative activity, at levels and of the type appropriate to the institution; f. are publicized and widely known by the institution's internal stakeholders; g. are periodically evaluated.*

The college's current mission statement clearly outlines its core objectives and principles, and its vision statement describes three major goals that guide all areas of operations:

#### **Mission Statement:**

FIT prepares students for professional excellence in design and business through rigorous and adaptable academic programs, experiential learning, and innovative partnerships. A premier public institution in New York City, FIT fosters creativity, career focus, and a global perspective and educates its students to embrace inclusiveness, sustainability, and a sense of community.

#### **Vision Statement:**

FIT will be globally celebrated as the institution where students, scholars, and teachers cross traditional disciplinary boundaries to stimulate innovation, partner with creative industries worldwide, and develop innovative design and business solutions. By focusing

on the three major goals, FIT will become stronger by conscious design and be known as a strategic organization—one that applies available resources to greatest effect to achieve its vision.

1. **Academic and Creative Excellence**

FIT will provide a rigorous learning experience built on the highest standards of academic and scholarly excellence; an environment that promotes creativity and experimentation; and diverse experiential learning with a variety of industry partners.

2. **An Innovation Center**

The college will work with industries worldwide to help address key challenges, build an even stronger culture of innovation and entrepreneurship at FIT, and establish collaborations that translate creative ideas into action.

3. **An Empowering Student Community**

FIT will build an inclusive community in which students engage with, learn from, and inspire each other—discovering how their differences and similarities promote creativity, intellectual and personal growth, and understanding. ([FIT Mission & Vision](#))

Since beginning her tenure at FIT in 1998, President Brown has been dedicated to ensuring that the college’s mission statement accurately and effectively communicates FIT’s purpose and guides its planning; she has overseen revisions of the college’s mission statement and strategic plans. In each revision process, strategic planning involved constituencies from across FIT: faculty, staff, students, trustees, the FIT Foundation, college advisory council representatives, and industry leaders.

The strategic plan that recently ended, *Our Legacy, Our Future: FIT Beyond 2020*, was created through intensive discussion among all constituencies in 2012-2013 ([FIT Beyond 2020](#)). The president’s Planning Council was formed in spring 2012 and was composed of a cross-section of the entire college community, including members of the Board of Trustees and the FIT Foundation ([Planning Council Membership 2013-2019](#)). While this representative body led the planning effort, feedback from many other constituents was gathered during the process. In 2013, approximately 200 members of the community discussed a draft of the plan in facilitated roundtable dinner dialogues; details and video highlights of the discussions were posted for the community ([2013 Strategic Planning Process](#)). The Innovation Strategic Plan, developed to implement Goal 2 of the *FIT Beyond 2020* plan, included a series of pop-up prototyping sessions in 2017 with a variety of community members ([Pop-Up Examples](#)).

FIT’s revised mission statement and *FIT Beyond 2020* strategic plan was finalized and approved by the Board of Trustees in September 2013, meeting **Requirement of Affiliation 7** ([BOT minutes 9/25/2013](#)). It has guided FIT in promoting academic and creative excellence in our students, supporting innovation in the creative industries, and strengthening a cohesive, supportive community. These goals have also been communicated to audiences through a renewed branding campaign, designed around the college’s strategic priorities, emphasizing FIT’s purpose in Nurturing Unconventional Minds ([FIT Brand Launch](#)).

In September 2018, the college launched development of the latest strategic plan, at a meeting led by President Brown and attended by a new Planning Council, composed of a wide range of community members ([Planning Council 2019-](#)). This plan is designed to be a revision or updating to *FIT Beyond 2020* and will continue to advance similar goals. FIT has ensured that the current strategic planning process is participatory across all the campus constituent groups. The revised strategic plan development process was launched in September 2018. To facilitate these discussions, the college engaged a consulting firm, Kalypso, known for its concentration on innovation. In addition to the contributions of the Planning Council, four Think Tanks were charged to discuss the strategic plan themes and identify initiatives as well as actionable implementation strategies. Each Think Tank was comprised of faculty, students, and administrators ([Plan Development 2018-2019](#)). Throughout the development of the plan, over 450 individuals contributed by means of committees, roundtable discussions, Town Hall meetings, stakeholder interviews, surveys, and alumni outreach. The finalization of these processes has been delayed with the Covid pandemic and transition to remote operations in March 2020; the proposed plan is scheduled to be released for discussion in the fall of 2021, prior to finalization.

FIT's mission and strategic plans are designed to highlight FIT's unique identity as a premiere institution for the study of fields like fashion design and fashion business management and to help the institution remain dedicated to its core commitments as a community college within the state university system. FIT's goals and initiatives are broadly aligned with the Power of SUNY strategic plan's Six Big Ideas, particularly its emphasis on entrepreneurial research and innovation in a globalizing economy ([Power of SUNY](#)). They support the five priority areas of SUNY Excels, designed to strengthen the SUNY system as each institution expands five priority areas: Access, Completion, Success, Inquiry, and Engagement ([SUNY Excels](#)). FIT's strategic plans represent not just internal constituents but also respond to the demands of industry, in accordance with the mission to partner with industries both in our immediate community and worldwide. These plans are responsive to external contexts affecting higher education in the United States in their focus on supporting students to ensure they can complete their degrees and lead successful lives through practices known to be successful, such as support for diversity and inclusion, co-curricular engagement, and applied learning initiatives.

FIT's mission statement emphasizes its role as a public institution and commitment to serving the community of the New York City metro area. As part of this mission, FIT offers a vast array of programs, lectures, and exhibitions that are free and open to the public. This includes the Museum at FIT, New York City's only museum dedicated exclusively to fashion, which contains one of the most important collections of fashion and textiles in the world. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the museum draws over 110,000 visitors per year (prior to Covid). Students and scholars have access to the museum's permanent collection of 50,000 garments and accessories dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present. It supports student and faculty exhibitions by dedicating one of its three galleries to student and faculty exhibitions. In 2019, 177 classes visited the museum or used its resources.

Public programs and courses reach New Yorkers of all ages. FIT's Precollege program offers over 140 courses for middle and high school students; to ensure public access and affordability,

it charges a lower tuition than similar programs located in New York City. The Center for Continuing and Professional Studies provides evening and weekend undergraduate education for degree and non-matriculated course takers, credit and noncredit certificate programs, and noncredit and training courses for adult learners at all phases of their education and careers. In accordance with SUNY policy, local senior citizens can enroll for a nominal fee as “Senior Learners,” auditing select courses. These programs bring the community onto campus and expand the reach and mission of FIT to provide a safe and open educational environment for the exchange of ideas.

While FIT is a proud member of the SUNY family and has tremendous name recognition, much of the public does not recognize that it is a public institution. In recent years FIT has done more to publicize this, but there are further steps that could be taken to promote FIT as a public, affordable alternative to its competitors and emphasize its commitment to educating talented artists, designers, and businesspeople from all economic backgrounds. Efforts are already underway to strengthen continuing education programs so that they may contribute more to the institutional budget. It is traditionally the role of community colleges to serve this population, and FIT must ensure that it rebuilds this capacity through flexible offerings that appeal to non-traditional students and increased publicity that will help draw this demographic back to FIT.

The success of FIT is contingent on its strong relationship with industry, to ensure that its graduates enter the workforce with the most current and relevant skills. Academic programs and innovation initiatives are designed in consultation with a number of industry affiliates, many of whom advise on strategic planning at the college level as well. The Board of Trustees comprises many prominent leaders in the industries served by FIT’s programs. FIT alumni are also a significant constituency in industry and stay connected to FIT through communications, fundraising, and participation in exhibitions, as well as through continued interaction with individual academic programs.

FIT has long recognized the importance of a global perspective and infuses this perspective into all its academic programs so that students are prepared to compete on an international stage in their chosen careers in the fashion, design, creative, and business industries. The college has developed myriad international opportunities that have enriched the curriculum, the student and faculty experience, and its own reputation. In addition to a wide range of study abroad opportunities, the college offers FIT in Italy, its own semester and year-long programs in Florence and Milan for Fashion Design and Fashion Business Management students, and Fashion Design and Fashion Business Management programs at SUNY Korea in Songdo. Many other majors sponsor study abroad offerings –both in and outside of the classroom and in internships– providing unique exposure to international aspects of the broader fashion and creative arts businesses. FIT also engages in partnerships abroad with corporations and other institutions of higher learning, providing students and faculty the opportunity to teach, learn, conduct research, and consult as part of their global experience. FIT is a founding member and is represented on the executive committee of the International Foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes (IFFTI), an organization of 40 institutions from around the world. FIT faculty have been active participants at IFFTI annual meetings. FIT faculty have also incorporated virtual



teaching modules into several courses using Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), a SUNY initiative that connects students and faculty in universities abroad. This program leverages the expertise of FIT's faculty to expand the global outreach of the institution and strengthen its connections to institutions and industry partners worldwide ([FIT COIL](#)).

One important component of the college's mission is to embrace inclusivity, promote civility, and foster a campus climate that recognizes and embraces both differences and similarities across the community. A critical means of implementing these values has been the work of the FIT Diversity Council, which was created in 2008. In 2016, a subcommittee of the Diversity Council created the college's [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan](#). This plan followed a climate assessment that was conducted in 2012 and the creation of a Transgender Task Force approved by the president that same year. The goals of the DEI plan include ensuring representation of New York's diverse population at FIT, optimizing the potential and sense of inclusion of all students at FIT, and creating a system for managing diversity, equity, and inclusion at FIT. **For more on DEI initiatives, see Standard II.2 and Standard VI.1.**

Also interwoven into the strategic plan is a commitment to sustainability, which infuses all aspects of FIT's culture. This has been done through curriculum, student competitions, and the establishment of the [Sustainability Council](#) to develop and foster sustainability initiatives throughout the FIT community. Each year, the council organizes and hosts a [Sustainable Business and Design Conference](#) that connects the campus to industry, reports on best practices in sustainability, and introduces our community to larger trends in sustainability in the garment industry and beyond. The council also administers grants totaling up to \$15,000 annually (a maximum award of \$5,000 per grant) to members of the community proposing sustainability-related projects and initiatives ([Sustainability Grants](#)). FIT has worked to integrate issues pertaining to sustainability into the curriculum at all levels and across disciplines. The [Ethics and Sustainability Minor](#), which is among the college's most popular academic minors, was the result of collaborations between FIT students, faculty, staff, and administrators. The minor is interdisciplinary and presents a broad and inclusive conception of sustainability that emphasizes the concept's roots in ethics. Also, in recent years, students have spearheaded sustainability-focused projects including a natural dye garden, rooftop beehives, and textile composting. These projects were presented and refined at the Clinton Global Initiative University. Sustainability is both a value as well as means of achieving our goals for innovation and our commitment to applied learning. **For more on sustainability, see also Standard II.2.**

To fulfill the college's vision of positioning FIT as an institution where students and faculty cross traditional disciplinary boundaries in innovative ways, FIT has supported and encouraged scholarly inquiry and creative activity among our faculty and students. A central element of the college's mission and the hallmark of a FIT education is experiential learning, which provides students with opportunities to engage with the practices of their chosen industries. Internships are required in most majors and student projects, case studies, capstone courses, and industry-sponsored competitions enable students to apply their creativity in a design, business, or marketing environment. In addition, major-oriented student clubs and chapters of professional organizations extend the study of various disciplines in an informal way through field trips, guest

speakers, and attendance at professional conferences. **See Standard III.4 for more on co-curricular activities.**

Several new resources have fueled both student and faculty research and creative projects, often in collaborative environments that combine faculty expertise and student training. In 2016, FIT opened the [DTech Lab](#), an on-campus innovation lab where students team with faculty to experiment with new technologies, methods, and pedagogical approaches. From a virtual reality day in 2016, to a special viewing of the 2017 solar eclipse, to a collaboration with IBM and Tommy Hilfiger to create artificial intelligence tools for retail, the DTech Lab has become a hub for innovation at FIT. The lab is currently developing a retail project to create FIT-branded garments in a sustainable, on-demand production cycle, illustrating what is possible and positioning FIT as experts in supply chain sequencing as well as creative and sustainable design ([FIT Annual Report 2019-2020](#), p. 6). The [MakerMinds Space](#) in the Gladys Marcus Library hosts events where students train on emerging technologies, such as 3D printing, e-textiles, and augmented reality. In 2019, in collaboration with the clothing design firm Lafayette 148, co-founded by FIT trustee Deidre Quinn, FIT opened an Innovation Center in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a newly developing center for urban manufacturing and commerce that provides a unique opportunity for FIT to interact with new and emerging industries ([Alumni Incubator](#)).

To further the college's commitment to scholarly excellence, FIT has increased support for faculty to further develop and disseminate their scholarly and creative practices outside the classroom. In 2015, FIT instituted a Release Time for Research program that allows course release for scholarly and creative work ([Release Time for Research Memo](#)). The Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET) administers a [Faculty Development Grants and Awards](#) program to fund travel for conferences, research, scholarly, creative, pedagogical and industry-related activities for both full- and part-time faculty. In addition to providing internal support for faculty research, FIT has expanded staffing and resources for its Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs, including the hiring of an executive director in 2016. This has led to increased success in securing grants, including a \$100,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in 2018, a \$186,635 grant from the National Science Foundation in 2019, a \$150,000 grant from the NEH in 2021, and a \$183,750 grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources, also in 2021. The sizes of these grants are without precedent in FIT's history, and are a result of the college's increased commitment to providing opportunities for scholarly and creative inquiry. **For more on grants, see Standard III.2.**

The mission and goals of FIT are familiar to all stakeholders, communicated by the Office of Community and External Relations to both external and internal constituencies. FIT's mission and goals are referenced throughout the institution's written and oral communications, through print and electronic communications that reach both the college community and the general public, such as the FIT website, the academic catalogs, the strategic plan, and brochures ([UG Catalog Mission & History](#); [Grad Catalog Mission & History](#)). The president articulates and discusses the elements and ideals of the mission statement, such as creativity, globalism, technology, and a foundation in the liberal arts, when she speaks at board meetings, faculty meetings, college-wide functions, symposia and conferences, and annual events such as

convocation and commencement that bring together the various members of FIT (e.g. [Convocation Spring 2020 Remarks](#)).

### **APPROPRIATE AND REALISTIC GOALS (I.2)**

*Criterion 2: institutional goals are realistic, appropriate to higher education, and consistent with mission.*

FIT's mission and goals are realistic and align both with MSCHE standards as well as the mission of SUNY and its community colleges ([Power of SUNY](#)). They are also in accord with the requirements and regulations for publicly-funded community colleges in New York State ([Article 126](#), Sections 6301 and 6303 of NY State Education Law), as FIT prepares students for professions often centered in the New York City area, while also providing them with a broad general education. FIT's aspiration to provide a premiere educational experience is reinforced and ensured by each of the three goals in the FIT Beyond 2020 Strategic Plan, as are the focus on innovation, creativity, diversity, inclusiveness, and sustainability. FIT's progress towards meeting these goals demonstrates that these goals are achievable ([FIT Beyond 2020 Outcomes](#)). The college's goals reflect a commitment to represent and serve the diverse population of the New York City metro area, as well as addressing global changes and challenges affecting the creative industries that the institution serves.

### **FIT'S GOALS FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING (I.3)**

*Criterion 3: goals that focus on student learning and related outcomes and on institutional improvement; are supported by administrative, educational, and student support programs and services; and are consistent with institutional mission;*

FIT's central purpose is to educate students for success in the fashion and creative industries, and this is the focus of its strategic goals. The first goal of the recently concluded strategic plan, *FIT Beyond 2020*, was to "Ensure academic and creative excellence" by advancing several initiatives that the community identified as important. These included building flexibility into the curriculum, encouraging participation in minors and electives, and recruiting, developing, and retaining outstanding faculty. The second goal, "Establish an innovation center for creative industries worldwide," grew from FIT's desire to put students at the center of innovations in the fashion, design, and creative business industries. Students learn the most advanced technologies in their chosen professions and even have the opportunity to be a part of developing these innovations, along with their faculty teachers. The third goal was to "Provide an empowering student experience in a cohesive community." Students learn best when they can connect what they learn in the classroom with their interests outside of particular courses, and when they feel accepted and supported by their community. Initiatives such as "promoting greater academic and co-curricular intellectual engagement for students" foster student learning as students apply their learning to new realms. The institutional goal to "build and enhance physical and virtual spaces that promote a deeper sense of community" created more opportunities for students to learn from each other and work collaboratively, a key skill in today's world.

The education of our students is designed and delivered through the academic divisions in which they are enrolled, as well as through electives and general education courses. Each of FIT's five academic divisions have their own mission statements that align with the college's overarching mission ([Mission Statements FIT Schools](#)). This includes the first mission statement for FIT's School of Graduate Studies, which was a recommendation arising from the 2012 Middle States Self-Study. All academic departments are required to write mission statements to guide curriculum and learning outcomes; they re-evaluate these statements during Academic Program Review ([Program Missions and PLOs](#)). As part of the Academic Program Review process, external reviewers are asked to comment on how well the program under review integrates with FIT's mission and goals ([APR Guidelines](#), see p. 4; [APR Scope of Work](#)). To ensure that new programs are within the scope of FIT's mission, proposals for new academic programs must submit an [Approval to Proceed Form](#) in which they explain in detail how the program aligns with the college's mission, strategic goals and priorities as well as potential budget impact (see example, [Fashion Design MFA Approval to Proceed](#)). Degree programs document these learning outcomes and their support of school- and college-wide goals through the multi-stage curriculum review process (see **Standard III.1**), and new curriculum is developed in response to college goals, scholarly development, in consultation with industry.

This coordination of the college's mission and the missions of all academic schools and programs helps unify and coordinate departmental goals with operational activities. To further ensure this cooperation, one recommendation is that all academic divisions develop or realign strategic plans once FIT's latest strategic plan is finalized. At present, the schools of Business and Technology and Graduate Studies have strategic plans, and CCPS is finalizing a strategic plan; the schools of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Art and Design are guided by the college's plan but have not developed their own specific plans.

Administrative divisions and support units at FIT also have their own mission statements, aligned with that of the college, to guide planning, decision-making, and resource allocation. Units in Academic Affairs (AA) and Enrollment Management and Student Success (EMSS) provide and reflect on these statements in the Administrative Review process discussed in **Standard V.2**. Units in these divisions also frame their annual reports each year in the context of their missions ([Memo AA Annual Report 2020-2021](#); [Student Success Annual Report Template](#)). **For more on student and faculty support, see Standards III.2, III.4 and IV.1. For more on implementation of strategies for administrative support and physical spaces, see Standard VI.6.**

## **SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF MISSION AND GOALS (I.4)**

*Criterion 4. periodic assessment of mission and goals to ensure they are relevant and achievable*

The strategic planning process ensures that FIT's mission and goals are reevaluated periodically. FIT revises its strategic plan on a cycle of approximately five years, and each new iteration provides an opportunity to assess progress, identify new areas for exploration and improvement, and respond to changes in demographics, industry, and other environmental factors. As the *FIT*

*Beyond 2020* plan was concluding, the Planning Council evaluated its progress and success while beginning to draft a revised plan ([FIT Beyond 2020 Outcomes](#)).

In 2017, the college decided to take on a major branding initiative to assess its brand positioning and to ensure that its mission and goals are widely recognized by the public. An outside consultant surveyed alumni, admissions prospects, industry leaders, and counselors, to help FIT to better understand how it is viewed externally and determine how it can better communicate its mission and identity. This resulted in the college's rebranding, with the adoption of the slogan "unconventional minds" – a focus on innovation and the FIT's pioneering curriculum in over 50 areas of study ([FIT Brand Launch](#)). The in-depth marketing research conducted as part of this initiative, from prospective and current students, alumni, and others, confirms FIT's perception that these goals are relevant and achievable, as they are aligned with how FIT is viewed ([Branding Marketing Research Exec Sum](#)).

## **Conclusion**

FIT meets the criteria for Standard I and the Requirement of Affiliation 7. 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. The mission and the goals infuse all areas of decision making and are deeply embedded in its processes and planning. FIT's academic divisions and departments embrace and are directed by this mission, and each new iteration of the strategic plan and every newly articulated project, aim, and goal have been clearly articulated to further these overarching objectives.

## **Strengths:**

- FIT's mission and goals are clearly communicated and accurately represent its fundamental commitment as a community college serving careers in arts, design, and business.
- FIT's strategic plan supports and guides the college's commitment to student-centeredness, improvement of academic programs, diversity, sustainability and civility.

## **Opportunities for Improvement:**

***Reinvigorate operational planning around strategic goals, particularly by developing strategic plans for each academic division.***

- As the college begins to implement a new strategic plan beginning in 2022, all five academic divisions should create or realign their own strategic plans, to help translate college-wide strategic goals into concrete actions at all levels.

***Strengthen and support FIT's programs in continuing education, professional development, and executive education for the creative and business industries.***

- Reaffirm FIT's status as a public institution through greater community outreach, in particular by strengthening and supporting programs in continuing education.

## Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

*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.*

This chapter demonstrates how FIT meets Standard II, as well as the Requirements of Affiliation 1-6, 8, and 14.

FIT's commitment to the highest standards of ethics and integrity is evident in the college community's activities and through effective implementation of policies. 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 United College Employees of FIT (UCE).

Nurturing a campus climate that is characterized by inclusivity, diversity and civility remains a central focus at FIT. FIT's commitment to an open and inclusive environment is showcased by its long-standing initiatives related to civility, diversity, and sustainability, and the concomitant support of the administration for such initiatives. This also 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.

### **ACADEMIC FREEDOM, EXPRESSION, AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (II.1)**

*Criterion 1: Commitment to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights.*

FIT has a number of critical policies, processes, and procedures to ensure academic and scholarly freedom and protect intellectual property rights, while maintaining standards of academic excellence. The [Collective Bargaining Agreement \(CBA\)](#) of the UCE, which covers more than 90% of FIT employees, helps ensure fairness and impartial practices. As a core principle of academic freedom, faculty tenure at FIT is based on FIT's enabling legislation ([NY Educ L § 2587](#)). While the CBA details the criteria and process for granting tenure to full-time faculty (section 17.17.0), scholarship, service, and teaching are evaluated through departmental, school, and college-wide academic committees before being approved by the president and Board of Trustees. At FIT, full-time faculty can receive tenure in just three years from hire, a shorter period than at most institutions. Tenure for full-time teaching faculty ensures academic freedom and the rigorous and diverse development and presentation of ideas in the classroom and through publication. With the security and flexibility that tenure provides, faculty can experiment without risk of retribution.

Somewhat uniquely, FIT also provides a measure of job security for part-time faculty after a certain number of teaching hours (reached after approximately six years of part-time teaching)



referred to as a Certificate of Continuous Employment (CCE). The evaluation and review of the candidate in the CCE process is detailed and extensive, comparable on many levels with the tenure process ([CBA](#), section 19.0). Like tenure, a CCE provides the part-time faculty member with a secure work environment that supports academic freedom, experimentation, and expression. Part-time faculty are only offered classes after full-time faculty are assigned a full teaching load, however; should the number of available class sections drop below this level, the CCE may no longer provide a guarantee of employment.

Perhaps even more uniquely, all full-time bargaining staff at FIT are eligible for tenure after three years of employment and an application and review process, and part-time bargaining staff become eligible after approximately six years, depending on the number of hours worked (section 20.0). As with faculty tenure, the provision for staff tenure demonstrates the college's commitment that staff be valued, integral members of the community who have an important voice in the affairs and governance of the college.

In accordance with NY State Education Law, FIT faculty have input in the development and operation of academic standards and policy. In addition to the Tenure and Promotion Committee, FIT's Faculty Senate has committees for Academic Standards and Academic Assessment ([Faculty Senate Bylaws](#)), both of which promote academic freedom and provide shared governance in FIT's commitment to academic excellence. The work of the College-Wide Curriculum Committee ensures that a broad range of faculty have input on the academic curricula adopted at the institution, while also ensuring that teaching faculty are empowered to create and experiment with new curriculum. A range of policies and faculty support services, including paid sabbaticals, release time for research, and the strengthening of the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs have strongly supported academic freedom and excellence by guiding and assisting faculty in their research and creative projects (**for more on this topic, see Standard III.2**).

FIT also nurtures academic freedom for students. In the 2018-19 academic year, FIT assisted the Student Government Association (SGA) in restructuring its constitution to ensure representation for all students and aid student-led advocacy ([SGA Constitution](#)). Additionally, the FIT [Code of Student Conduct](#) policy reiterates the college's commitment to support peaceful, student-led activism on campus (see p.5). FIT also supports a wide range of student clubs and organizations that stimulate diverse student participation ([Student Club List](#)).

FIT has been unwavering in its commitment to intellectual property (IP) protections. FIT's [IP Policy](#) extensively details IP rights for both faculty and students, as well as providing a process to obtain further clarification on IP matters from the college's Office of the General Counsel. This process was codified in 2017, following a recommendation from the 2017 MSCHE PRR reviewers that FIT develop official policies that clearly define institution regulations regarding patents and trademarks. Industry-sponsored student projects and contests are a hallmark of FIT. The college has developed a robust policy and process, including the creation of a contest coordinator administrative position, to protect student IP and inform students of any rights they may be asked to relinquish ([Student Contests and Industry-Sponsored Projects Policy](#)).

Further, FIT's [Social Media Policy](#) outlines, among other things, the freedoms (and limitations) of faculty, staff, and students as related to their expression on social media platforms.

## **FIT'S DEDICATION TO RESPECT, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (SILC2)**

*Criterion 2: A climate that fosters respect among students, faculty, staff, and administration from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives.*

FIT is committed to fostering a learning environment embedded in a climate of inclusion, equality, and cultural awareness. This is a core value in the college's mission ([FIT Mission & Vision](#); [About FIT Webpage](#)), and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion was added as a critical element on the [Non-Bargaining Evaluation Form](#) last year.

In 1967, FIT administration, faculty, and staff signed the first higher education union contract in New York State which established a model of shared governance. This principle carries on today beginning at the college's highest level, the FIT Board of Trustees. All board meetings are publicized in advance and open to the FIT community. The trustees' by-laws mandate that a FIT Student Government Representative sits as a voting member of the board ([BOT Bylaws](#)). The SGA representative has full parliamentary authority, with the right to make or second motions and place matters on the agenda for board consideration.

The college has undertaken a number of initiatives to foster a climate of diversity, equity, and inclusion. President Brown has elevated civility, an important aspect of ethics and integrity, through an ambitious and ongoing college-wide campaign, most prominently through FIT's [Civility Initiative](#). Beginning several years ago, this initiative sponsors college-wide events and projects promoting civil behavior and educating the community on the relationship between civility, diversity, and inclusion. The civility campaign has engaged all areas of the college through a civility pledge and an annual civility-themed week of programming led by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ([Civility Week 2020](#)). Additionally, the president's blog, *On My Mind*, addresses civility, and her public remarks and college-wide emails that respond to major national events regularly raise civility as a necessary element of ethical practice in higher education (e.g. [On My Mind Civility for the Season](#); [On My Mind Civility Begins with Us](#)). Despite this attention to civility, however, some student survey results suggest that there is more work to be done: while the 2020 NSSE results demonstrated that student satisfaction with interactions with other students and staff had improved since 2017, FIT still rates lower to comparable institutions, particularly regarding quality interactions with support staff ([NSSE 2020 Report](#)).

FIT's many policies exemplify the college's goal of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment. Policies and procedures support the reporting and remediation of instances of harassing or intolerant behavior through the [Employee Code of Ethical Conduct](#), the [Code of Student Conduct](#), the [Workplace Violence Prevention Policy](#), the [Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy](#), the [Bias Crime Prevention Policy](#), and the [Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting of Abuse Policy](#). The college's [Visa Sponsorship Policy](#) reinforces the goal of



supporting and sponsoring international scholars and artists to promote international diversity and multiculturalism on the campus and in its educational offerings. In keeping with the college's mission to provide affordable educational opportunities for all students, FIT further supports the admission and education, whenever possible in a safe manner, of those with prior criminal convictions through its [Admission of Persons with Prior Felony Convictions Policy](#). In its efforts to create a diverse and tolerant environment, the college has implemented both a [Religious Accommodation Policy](#) and a [Preferred Name Policy](#), and implemented [all-gender restrooms](#) with appropriate signage.

FIT's [Diversity Council](#) and [Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) support the college's diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic goals to create a purposefully diverse campus. Throughout the year, the council sponsors a variety of events to promote a culture of inclusion and a bias-free working and learning environment, such as civility week, discussed above, and Black History Month ([Black History Month 2021](#)). The college has developed a robust [Diversity Grants](#) program to award \$15,000 annually, up to \$5,000 per grant, to members of the community proposing diversity-related projects and initiatives. In fall 2021, the Diversity Council was replaced by the formation of a President's Diversity Collective, comprised of 15 different areas each tasked with forming their own DEI committees. This change was made after a subcommittee researched peer institutions and examined national trends; the goal is to further infuse the commitment to DEI into every area of the college ([Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Update: Reimagining FIT's Diversity Council](#)).

In addition to the programs above, FIT has had a long history of supporting diversity and personal integrity within the college. For example, in 2011, FIT began a [Safe Zone](#) training program to support the FIT LGBTQ+ community. In 2013, The Museum at FIT curated a groundbreaking exhibition entitled "[A Queer History of Fashion: From the Closet to the Catwalk](#)." Student-led exhibitions have highlighted diversity as well. With the help of a FIT Collaboration Grant, a student group curated an exhibition, For Someone Who Looks Like Me, for students of color of all majors to show their work, in fall 2019. The next semester, members of the Black Student Union curated an interactive exhibition on the evolution of Black fashion, art, music, cinema, and literature from ancient Egypt to today ([FIT Annual Report 2019-2020](#)).

In spring of 2020, the issues of diversity and inclusion gained heightened attention after an incident in which racially-offensive imagery was included in the runway show of the graduating class in the MFA program in Fashion Design. This event coincided with the intensification of the Black Lives Matter movement nationwide and led to deep and meaningful conversations regarding FIT's role in promoting diversity and inclusion not only in the curriculum but at all levels of college interactions. With the participation of students, staff, and faculty, and with the guidance of the Faculty Senate, the UCE, and especially the Black Student Union, FIT hosted several town hall meetings and other conversations with the president and campus leadership ([Dr. Brown Email MFA Show](#)). Out of these discussions came a plan to address these issues both on campus and in the creative industries ([DEI Initiatives](#)). It calls for a range of actions on campus, including mandatory [equity and inclusion training](#) for all employees, which began in fall 2020; cultural competency training; and the development of an ombudsperson position to

safeguard students against biased treatment – a search for this position will begin when the pause on hiring is lifted. Another result of these efforts was the creation in summer of 2020 of a minor in African American and Africana Studies. These are intended to bring the campus closer to FIT’s ideals of equality and integration. FIT also seeks to address the off-campus creative industries where its alumni work by creating the Social Justice Center at FIT, an initiative to change the corporate and organizational cultures so that talented people of color are hired and promoted equitably ([FIT Annual Report 2019-2020](#)). Announced at convocation in fall 2021, FIT has already raised over three million dollars from companies such as PVH, Prada, and Ralph Lauren to support this project ([Dr. Brown Fall 2021 Convocation Remarks](#)).

One concern that emerged from these discussions is a lack of diversity in the faculty body. While FIT endeavors to hire diverse faculty, administrators, and staff (**see Criterion 5**), the decline in new full-time faculty hires in the last few years has limited the college’s ability to diversify its faculty and respond to demographic changes. This is one area that is being improved on with a renewed and aggressive pursuit of full-time faculty hires and the opening of new faculty lines (17 searches in the next year) that seek expertise specifically in areas relating to diversity, equity and inclusion. Given the importance of this issue for the community, it would be useful to conduct climate surveys more frequently. The last major climate survey was conducted in 2012, and one is planned during 2021-2022.

One of FIT’s core values as expressed in its mission is a commitment to sustainability (see **Standard I.1**); this is an ethical imperative in response to global climate change and the relevance of sustainability to the industries that FIT’s programs serve. The college prioritizes sustainable practices both by making energy-efficient improvements to college facilities and functions and by incorporating sustainability into the curriculum. The college’s [sustainability website](#) includes opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to get involved; a sustainable design research guide; an ecological footprint calculator; a list of sustainability-focused courses; and information on sustainability efforts in the college’s operations. The FIT President’s [Sustainability Council](#), the [Faculty Senate Committee on Sustainability](#), and the [Ethics and Sustainability student club](#) work together to engage the community through the annual [Sustainability Awareness Week](#) and the annual [Sustainable Business and Design Conference](#), along with many other events and activities.

### **RESOLUTION OF GRIEVANCES (II.3)**

*Criterion 3: A grievance policy that is documented and disseminated to address complaints or grievances raised by students, faculty, or staff. The institution's policies and procedures are fair and impartial, and assure that grievances are addressed promptly, appropriately, and equitably.*

FIT’s grievance protocol for bargaining unit members is set forth in the CBA by and between the college and the UCE of FIT, the sole union representing faculty and staff. The CBA outlines the grievance procedure in detail, including the manner and timing of any formal grievance ([CBA](#), section 7.0). This process has, and continues to be, utilized for any grievances that are asserted as a violation of the CBA. In addition to contractual matters, the protocol for employees to report suspected wrongful or unethical actions is set forth in the [Employee Code of Ethical Conduct](#)

[Policy](#). In addition, the UCE has implemented a [Grievance Committee](#) made up of bargaining members who are not union officers. This committee meets annually and ad hoc to review potential and pending grievances.

The [Academic Honor Code Policy](#) and the [Code of Student Conduct](#), which is disseminated to students through the [Students Rights & Responsibilities](#) guidelines and New Student Orientation, provide procedural mechanisms for reporting and investigating student actions. The [student complaint resolution page](#) compiles all of the reporting procedures and processes related to student conduct matters in one comprehensive area for ease of use. The [grade appeal process](#) provides specific processes for determining grievances related to student grades, while Residential Life Policies, including the [Resident Handbook](#) and the [Residence Hall Contract](#), provide clarity and transparency regarding student housing matters.

In line with federal, state, and local law, FIT has extensive policies and procedures related to sexual misconduct. The process for students to report a claim of sexual misconduct to FIT's Affirmative Action office, and the process and procedure by which that claim is investigated by the Title IX office, is detailed in FIT's [Sexual Misconduct Response Policy](#), as well as promoted via hyperlink throughout the college's website. An increased number and range of inquiries, complaints, and grievances to FIT's Title IX Office in part reflects the heightened awareness of the ethical duty to report such instances and changes to federal and state reporting requirements. FIT will ensure that this office continues to have adequate resources and staff given the increased demands upon it – in fact, a search for a new investigator position is in process, which will add new qualified personnel to manage the increased case volume.

Health and Safety concerns are of paramount importance at the college, and related grievances can be reported to FIT's [Environmental, Health, and Safety Compliance department](#) as set forth in FIT's [Environmental Health and Safety Policy](#), or reported to the UCE of FIT's Vice President for Health and Safety. In addition, FIT has implemented an [Environmental Health and Safety Committee](#), composed of stakeholders from across the college, which meets regularly to discuss health and safety concerns. Finally, the college, for the health of all the community members, has instituted a [Tobacco-Free Campus Policy](#) and provides a number of free support services through Health Services aimed towards aiding individual smoking cessation efforts.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICIES (II.4)**

*Criterion 4: The avoidance of conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict in all activities and among all constituents.*

FIT's conflict of interest prohibitions are extensively detailed in a variety of policies and areas throughout the college. At the highest level of leadership, the bylaws of FIT's board of trustees address conflicts of interest and mandate that the board promulgate and maintain a conflict of interest policy for the college in order "to prevent trustees, officers or employees from engaging in any business or transaction, or having a personal financial or other private interest, direct or indirect, which is in conflict with the proper discharge of his/her official duties or are not in the best interest of the college" ([BOT Bylaws](#), see Article VI, sections A and B). To ensure that all

board members and senior administrators of the college (i.e., members of the president's Extended Cabinet) are aware of, understand, and remain in compliance with these requirements, they must annually complete the [Trustee Affirmation of the Absence of Conflicts of Interest](#) form. (See also **Standard VII.2**)

Under the auspices of the board mandate, FIT's [Employee Code of Ethical Conduct Policy](#) explicitly defines and prohibits conflicts of interest. This policy codifies conflicts of interest in that it specifies "no trustee, officer, or employee of the college, (paid or unpaid), shall engage in any business or transaction, or shall have a personal financial or other private interest, direct or indirect, which is in conflict with the proper discharge of their official duties or that would interfere, or appear to interfere, with their ability to make sound decisions in their official duties." The policy guards against conflicts that arise from personal, family, or romantic relationships between employees, and it prohibits romantic relationships between employees and students (with zero tolerance). It also addresses conflicts relating to the acceptance of gifts and gratuities, secondary employment by employees, the protection of confidential college information, the use of college property or equipment, the obligation to report arrests, and the requirement of employees to cooperate with any college audits or investigations. To ensure understanding of this policy, a policy implementation plan was developed and executed, which included administering an online [Employee Code of Ethical Conduct compliance training](#).

Additional policies outlining potential conflicts include the Collective Bargaining Agreement, which addresses nepotism ([CBA](#), section 23.0); the [purchasing policy](#) in relation to college vendor transactions; the [Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment policy](#) and the [Sexual Misconduct Response policy](#), which define the role of the Affirmative Action Officer in the investigation of discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct investigations; and the [Financial Aid codes of conduct](#). In addition, the FIT Foundation and the FIT Student Government Association address conflicts of interest in their respective bylaws ([FIT Foundation Bylaws](#); [SGA Constitution](#)).

## **FAIR AND IMPARTIAL PRACTICES IN EMPLOYMENT (SII.C5)**

*Criterion 5: Fair and impartial practices in the hiring, evaluation, promotion, discipline and separation of employees.*

FIT's Office of Human Resources (OHR) is responsible for implementing fair and impartial practices in the employee life cycle (hiring, promotion, discipline, and separation) in accordance with FIT policy and the collective bargaining agreement. Once a new position is approved by the president, full-time faculty searches begin, with assistance from OHR, with a faculty departmental search committee developing inclusive job descriptions and a strategic marketing and search plan. FIT's [Visa Sponsorship Policy](#) encourages inclusion of international candidates for faculty positions. FIT's Office of Affirmative Action (OAA) also assists in every full-time faculty search by training and charging faculty search committees, reviewing job descriptions, ensuring the diversity of candidate pools, and reviewing interview questions and training interviewers ([FIT Affirmative Action Employee Search Guide](#); [Affirmative Action Charge](#)).

After the applicant pool is vetted and winnowed by the departmental search committee, finalists are interviewed by the faculty of the department, as well as select students who observe an in-person teaching demonstration and provide feedback. As required by Dr. Brown since 2011, the department then selects three candidates by vote to be interviewed by the dean and vice president for Academic Affairs. Finally, the president interviews all three recommended candidates for each position and makes the final decision.

Part-time teaching faculty candidates also go through a detailed process to be hired, promoted and to receive a Certificate of Continuous Employment. Candidates for a part-time position are customarily interviewed by one member of the department (usually the chair or assistant chair) with hiring contingent upon the same level of education, proof of experience, and background checks as a full-time position.

Staff searches, for both full and part-time positions, are also overseen by OHR personnel, often providing the hiring manager with job description development assistance, search plan goals, candidate pool administrative management, and interview training and assistance. Senior level administrative searches also convene search committees comprised of stakeholders across the college, and are charged, trained, and assisted by OHR and the OAA in a manner identical to full-time faculty searches.

Once an employee is hired (except for non-bargaining positions which are categorized as employment-at-will) evaluation, tenure, promotion, and discipline are all in accordance with the CBA, which lays out equitable and impartial practices for each. Faculty without tenure or CCE are evaluated once per semester, by both peer and student reviews; these evaluations are then reviewed by department faculty, who vote each semester on reappointing all faculty who do not have tenure. Tenured faculty are required to undergo student evaluations every other academic year, and faculty promotion applications additionally require both student evaluations and a department faculty vote. While state law specifies that full-time faculty require three years of continuous employment before being eligible for tenure, the process for tenure evaluation and award is laid out in explicit detail in the [CBA](#) (section 17.0, et seq. for full-time faculty and section 20.0, et seq. for full-time staff). Additionally, FIT provides a Certificate of Continuous Employment for both part-time faculty and staff, and this evaluative process and the standards for it are set forth in the CBA (section 19.0, et seq.). The process for promotions for both faculty and bargaining staff, as well, are laid out in detail in the CBA (section 24.0 et seq., and the Staff Compensation Program addendum of the CBA, respectively).

For bargaining employees (who constitute the majority of the employee population), disciplinary matters are also governed by the [CBA](#) (section 28.28.0, et seq.). The CBA mandates that just cause be found in all cases, and it requires formal written charges and an investigation (separate and independent of any prior administrative findings) by an independent disciplinary committee selected by the college and the UCE. Excluding situations where an employee suspension (with pay) is immediately required, no disciplinary action may be taken until the disciplinary committee renders its findings and recommendations. Actions to remove the tenure of a full-time faculty member require the FIT Board of Trustees to undertake an additional independent

investigation and review, while actions to remove CCE from part-time employees are subject to final and binding arbitration.

FIT has developed a [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan](#) that informs processes for both the hiring and retention of employees. [SUNY's PRODiG](#) program for hiring diverse faculty can also guide these processes. Strategic hiring goals and trends, full-time to part-time faculty ratios, and retention and retirement losses, are all monitored. While significant time, effort, and focus are given to faculty hiring and evaluation, similar policies and procedures for the promotion and advancement of administrative (non-bargaining) hires need to be clarified. The Office of Human Resources, under new leadership, has begun efforts to strengthen policies and procedures regarding hiring, advancement, and succession planning throughout the college; these efforts should continue to ensure a stronger framework for this area.

As later discussed in **Standards III and VI**, the overall number of full-time faculty at FIT has declined in the last few years despite the continual hiring of new faculty ([Factbook 2020: HR](#)). The decline in full-time faculty necessitates an increase in part-time faculty, with less support for involvement in college governance. As the ratio of part-time to full-time faculty has increased, the full-time faculty have become increasingly over-burdened with responsibilities. Sufficient full-time faculty are needed to maintain and develop departments and to provide a crucial presence on campus for students and the work of shared governance. The college has been committed to focusing on the problem, setting a long-term goal of 300 faculty; sixty full-time faculty hires are planned for the next three years, with seventeen searches underway for 2021-2022.

## **TRANSPARENCY IN COLLEGE COMMUNICATIONS (II.6)**

*Criterion 6. Honesty and truthfulness in public relations announcements, advertisements, recruiting and admissions materials and practices, as well as in internal communications.*

One step toward guaranteeing the integrity of college communications is the existence of clear policies and procedures governing their creation and distribution. FIT has detailed and publicly accessible policies for [advertising purchasing and placement](#), [web content](#), [social media](#), and [blogging](#). Taken together, these policies codify a standard of integrity, honesty, transparency, and respect for privacy and the law throughout internal and external communications. To ensure accountability, each policy names the party or parties who are affected by it as well as those responsible for its enforcement.

Consistent external messaging is an essential component of truthful communication. To achieve consistency across official communication channels, FIT's external communications are centralized through two offices: The Division of Communications and External Relations (CER) for most official communications and the Office of Human Resources (OHR) for recruitment efforts. While internal communication is less centralized at FIT, it is nonetheless subject to the same FIT policies, where applicable, and held to similarly high standards of ethics and integrity. In terms of external communications to prospective students and families, CER works in concert with the Office of Admissions and Strategic Recruitment (which includes both undergraduate



and graduate operations) to coordinate and maintain consistency across published materials and digital communications, including recruitment viewbooks, brochures for college/graduate fairs, direct mail pieces, social media and website promotion of open houses and/or information sessions.

FIT's website is the primary venue for presenting the college to both the public and the FIT community, and the work of collecting, creating, assessing, managing, and updating information that appears on the website is done with transparency, honesty, and high ethical standards. In addition to compliance with federal, state, and municipal laws and regulations, there are a number of important ethical standards that are relevant to the website, which are overseen by CER. For example, the website must meet minimum web accessibility guidelines, and sensitive or confidential information must be safeguarded. Also, no copyright, trademark, or licensing violations are permitted on the college website or any other official communication channel ([Web Content Policy](#)).

Another mode for communications is FIT's mobile app. Available for both Apple and Android users, the app contains a variety of resources for current students, including password-protected access to grades, eBills, the FIT Campus Card, and the Student Rights and Responsibilities information. The Graduate and Undergraduate Catalogs, course schedule, academic calendar and events list can all be accessed using the app. Notifications can be set so that users receive them anytime there are important news or announcements.

FIT Newsroom is another significant communication vehicle for both internal and external communications. Every two weeks, all members of the community receive Newsroom Direct, an interactive newsletter that readers can click on to read the highlights about FIT events, faculty, and students (see [Newsroom Direct Examples](#)). The same ethical standards that apply to other college communications also apply to the practices employed by CER staff who work on Newsroom. The [FIT Newsroom webpage](#) maintains continuously updated feeds about the college, students, faculty, alumni, and The Museum at FIT. The website also contains a comprehensive event calendar; interested parties can subscribe to receive regular updates.

*Hue* is an award-winning magazine for the FIT community, alumni, and friends. It is read by current students, faculty, staff, administrators, and members of the surrounding community, and is an especially important way that the college keeps its commitment to communicate regularly with alumni. Published three times a year and featuring a variety of content and news, each issue profiles a diverse group of FIT alumni and showcases the contributions they are making to the creative industries (e.g. [HUE: Celebrating FIT at 75, Winter 2020](#)).

The college maintains official accounts on social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. These channels are an important piece of both internal and external communications, and the effective management and oversight of them is essential to maintain the highest standards of integrity. All social media content must be consistent with the college's mission and meet ethical standards. These standards stipulate that no unaffiliated

commercial activities, political posts, or defamatory posts are authorized and no private, confidential, or proprietary information may be disclosed.

The Office of Admissions processes over 15,000 applications per year and coordinates its Counseling, Recruitment and Operations teams to implement evidence-based strategies to attract and yield the best candidates that meet enrollment targets while supporting the mission of the Division of Enrollment Management and Student Success. The [undergraduate catalog](#) and [graduate catalog](#) are key methods for communicating directly to current and prospective students and other members of the FIT community. They are updated annually and include sections outlining the admissions process, expenses, and financial aid. They also contain a comprehensive listing of instructional programs, major requirements, and courses along with an academic calendar and directory.

The Office of Human Resources is responsible for recruitment communications. The process is standardized and centralized. The HR website features a career opportunities webpage where job candidates may search for current openings. The language on this website explicitly states FIT's commitment to attracting and retaining people of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds and provides a direct link to the affirmative action officer/Title IX coordinator should they have questions or concerns. There is also clear language describing how FIT handles and protects personal data ([Career Opportunities Webpage](#)).

More recently, FIT's Campus Restart 2021 COVID-19 website provides extensive, current, and transparent information to the college community on the state of the pandemic, in-person testing and safety protocols. The site includes general information and resources on learning and teaching during the pandemic, health and safety guidelines, the status of student services, and specific information related to campus facilities and their cleaning protocols ([Covid Restart Webpages](#)).

## **AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY (II.7)**

*Criterion 7. As appropriate to mission, services or programs in place:*

- a. To promote affordability and accessibility, and;*
- b. To enable students to understand funding sources and options, value received for cost, and methods to make informed decisions about incurring debt.*

As a public college in New York City, FIT is committed to offering an affordable, high-quality education. The college utilizes multiple channels to ensure that students are aware of all costs, understand their financial aid options, and are equipped to assess the return on investment of an FIT education. The affordability of FIT's tuition is of particular advantage to students enrolling in Art and Design programs, as many of these specialized offerings are often available only at private institutions. In fall 2020, associate-level tuition was \$2,645 per semester for in-state residents and \$7,935 for out-of-state residents. For baccalaureate-level, it was \$3,585 (in-state) and \$10,846 (out-of-state) per semester. Graduate-level tuition is also more affordable than many competitors; tuition for in-state students was \$5,771, while out-of-state was \$11,783 ([Tuition Fall 2020](#)).



FIT offers comprehensive information about costs and financial aid on its website, as covered in **Standard IV.1**. Financial aid representatives work with students on a one-to-one basis both in-person and via email/telephone, which enables students to make informed decisions and better understand debt. The Financial Aid Office has endeavored to offer a broad array of financial services and resources for FIT students. It has partnered with the Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC) to provide financial aid workshops that cover the basics of financial aid as well as assistance for managing loans and repayment. ECMC Solutions also provides free resources to help students with banking basics, budgeting, consumer credit and protection, consumer credit reports and scores, record management, and identity theft protection ([ECMC Workshops](#)). Students can speak with a student aid repayment advisor via phone, email, or webchat. Students are also directed to [SUNY SmartTrack](#) to help them make decisions about financing and understand financial aid. Links to all these resources are posted on the FIT Financial Services website.

The [Code of Conduct](#) link on the Financial Aid Services website links to the codes of conduct for the three professional associations to which FIT financial aid representatives belong: SUNYFAP (SUNY Financial Aid Professionals), NASFAA (National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators), and NYSFAAA (New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association). This reassures students that FIT employees seek to provide accurate and unbiased information.

The adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) by a portion of the faculty has reduced or eliminated the cost of textbooks and materials for some students. OER include books, videos, tests, brochures, and audios that are available in the public domain. The Gladys Marcus Library provides support for faculty to find and utilize these resources. The library connects instructors who wish to create OER materials to the larger SUNY OER effort, which allows faculty to secure editorial support through the process. While OER can be a major benefit to reducing the cost of textbooks and course materials, an issue still remains for curriculum that cannot be satisfied with the use of OER. This is of particular issue for students in programs in the School of Art and Design, where costs of materials can be significant.

FIT strives to keep tuition costs down for all students – full and part time; matriculated and non-matriculated -- as well as for adult students enrolled in continuing education programs and middle and high school students enrolled in the Precollege program (**see Standard I.1**).

#### **VERIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE (II.8 AND ROA 1-6, 8, 14)**

*Criterion 8. Compliance with all applicable federal, state, and Commission reporting policies, regulations, and requirements to include reporting regarding: a. The full disclosure of information on institution-wide assessments, graduation, retention, certification and licensure or licensing board pass rates; b. The institution's compliance with the Commission's Requirements of Affiliation; c. Substantive changes affecting institutional mission, goals, programs, operations, sites, and other material issues which must be disclosed in a timely and accurate fashion; d. The institution's compliance with the Commission's policies.*

Ensuring full compliance with all federal, state, and MSCHE reporting policies, regulations, and requirements is a complex and multifaceted endeavor requiring the contributions of all members of the college community. To that end, the Office of Policy and Compliance (OPC) was established to oversee, coordinate, and monitor FIT's compliance efforts. OPC assists in guiding and developing policy and in educating and supporting the college community in ongoing work to ensure compliance with regulations and requirements. Led by a director of compliance, the office has created a web-based college policy library that contains current official versions of all FIT policies. In addition, the OPC maintains a database of all compliance requirements. This database is routinely consulted to create reports that are used for internal audits (e.g. [Compliance Reports Sp18](#)). The database is also used to set reminders that are sent to each division regarding upcoming compliance requirements (see sample [Compliance Reminder Email](#)).

Ongoing training and education on complex legal and regulatory issues is essential for maintaining full compliance. This is provided through the OPC, which works closely with all divisions to ensure that employees understand their roles and responsibilities. Beginning in spring 2021, a twice-per-semester compliance newsletter is being disseminated to all employees. It covers timely compliance topics to further educate FIT employees ([Compliance Newsletter Sp21](#)).

FIT provides all required information under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 on its public-facing website. This information is easily found on the bottom of all of our webpages. The [Right-to-Know](#) page contains multiple links to documents that disclose the results of institution-wide assessments and accreditation reports (e.g., National Association of Schools of Art and Design [NASAD], Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs [ACBSP]). It includes student outcomes (e.g., graduation, retention, transfer-out rates, job placement), making public how well it is accomplishing its purposes in accordance with **Requirement of Affiliation 8**. Other links contain general institutional information (e.g., refund policy, transfer credit, student activities, career and job placement services), information about student financial assistance, and student health and safety.

The college has verified and demonstrated compliance with each of the Commission's **Requirements of Affiliation** throughout the Self-Study Report, the [Requirements of Affiliation Worksheet](#), and in the [FIT Institutional Federal Compliance Report](#). Documentation for the **Requirements of Affiliation 1 through 6** are uploaded in this section. The college's current strategic plan ([FIT Beyond 2020](#)), [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan](#), and [Emergency Management Plan](#) have each been disclosed in full. FIT is prepared to demonstrate in writing that it will make freely available accurate, fair, and complete information on all aspects of the institution and its operations to MSCHE, and that it describes itself in identical terms to all of its accrediting and regulatory agencies, communicating any changes in accredited status, as required by **Requirement of Affiliation 14**.

## **PERIODIC ASSESSMENT OF ETHICS AND INTEGRITY (II.9)**

*Criterion 9. Periodic assessment of ethics and integrity as evidenced in institutional policies, processes, practices, and the manner in which these are implemented.*

FIT employs a variety of procedures and processes that ensure the regular assessment of ethics and integrity. With respect to institutional policy, FIT maintains a policy library consisting of all current policies. This library is easily accessible to all through the public-facing website (<https://www.fitnyc.edu/policies/index.php> and [FIT Policy Library](#)). The [Policy Advisory Group](#) (PAG), which has cross-divisional representation, reviews and revises existing institutional policies through the perspective of each of the college's divisions. Policy implementation plans stipulate the regular, periodic review of each policy listed in the library.

FIT's Office of Internal Controls and Management Analysis conducts regular and extensive internal audits that, among other things, evaluate whether established processes and systems allow and facilitate compliance with policies, procedures, laws, and regulations. The internal audits also assess whether the information gathered and the means used to identify, measure, analyze, classify, and report such information are reliable. These audits are shared with FIT administration and the Office of General Counsel so that any problems or gaps can be immediately addressed ([Internal Controls Summary](#)).

Both the Office of Internal Controls and the Policy and Compliance Unit went through the Administrative Unit Review process in the last five years, completing detailed self-studies and hosting external reviewers for a site visit. These reviews showed that these units were functioning well, and each unit created an action plan to further strengthen the area ([Internal Controls Summary](#); [Admin Review Internal Audit](#); [Admin Review Policy and Compliance](#)).

In the context of classroom instruction, FIT administers instructor and course evaluations each semester for faculty without tenure or a CCE and once every two years for tenured and CCE'd faculty ([CBA](#), section 17.17.1 ; [Course Evaluation Form](#)). These evaluations, completed by students, provide feedback on the transparency of course requirements and grading procedures along with other criteria, giving students an important voice in assessing ethics and integrity. Student evaluations, reviewed by faculty, department administrators, deans, and administrators within Academic Affairs, form an important basis for faculty tenure and promotion. Outside of the classroom, non-bargaining employees and bargaining staff members ([Bargaining Appraisal Form](#); [Non-Bargaining Appraisal Form](#)) are evaluated for their understanding of and compliance with professional and/or technical principles and standards.

Research proposals at FIT are reviewed and vetted by the college's [Institutional Review Board](#). This ensures that all research activity involving human subjects complies with federal standards governing the ethical treatment of participants in research. IRB review is focused on justice, beneficence, respect for persons, and informed consent. Researchers who submit a proposal for IRB review must also complete training modules on the responsible conduct of research as well as the ethical treatment of participants.

## **Conclusion**

FIT meets the requirements of Standard II and the Requirements of Affiliation 1-6, 8, and 14. Across the college, it is clear that norms of transparency, honesty, civility, equity, and inclusion are widely embraced and demonstrated. Expectations for employee and student behavior are clearly articulated alongside extensive, living policies that exist to protect and promote a climate characterized by mutual respect, civility, inclusion, and academic freedom. Additionally, the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the college and UCE of FIT establishes and safeguards the ethics of shared governance, fair treatment, and academic freedom.

### **Strengths:**

- FIT's commitment to civility, diversity, and sustainability is showcased through multiple college organizations and school-sponsored activities, as well directly through its policies and communications
- FIT takes a transparent and comprehensive approach to developing and implementing college policy
- Shared governance extends well beyond traditional academic areas, with college administration leadership collaborating with broad groups of stakeholders

### **Opportunities for Improvement:**

***Increase the overall number of full-time faculty to achieve the number to which FIT has committed.***

- In order to strengthen the college's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, increase new faculty lines and emphasize diversity in faculty hires.

***Continue to build a campus climate that prioritizes civility, diversity, equity and inclusion.***

- Identify and communicate additional avenues available to report policy or other violations. Institute periodic reviews of policy issues to assess trends, identify patterns, and areas of concern to the FIT community.
- Conduct more frequent climate assessments, particularly for faculty and staff.
- While this is underway with additional positions being hired, FIT must ensure that the Title IX continues to have adequate resources and staff, as the range of inquiries, complaints, and grievances have increased in recent years.

***Continue to strengthen policies and procedures related to hiring, advancement, and succession planning across the college.***

- The Office of Human Resources should continue efforts to create a stronger framework in this area, including cross training and skill-based programs for current employees.

## Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

*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.*

This chapter describes the ways in which FIT meets Standard III and Requirement of Affiliation 15.

At FIT learning experiences are designed by academic professionals in support of FIT’s mission “to prepare students for professional excellence in design and business through rigorous and adaptable academic programs, experiential learning, and innovative partnerships.” Classroom experiences are supplemented by applied activities to provide unconventional and innovative student learning opportunities that are distinctive characteristics of an FIT education. FIT is committed to continuous improvement of its academic programming and ongoing assessment informs curriculum.

### COHERENT AND RIGOROUS DEGREES (III.1)

*Criterion 1. The institution possesses certificate, undergraduate, graduate, and/or professional programs leading to a degree or other recognized higher education credential, of a length appropriate to the objectives of the degree or other credential, designed to foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning*

Most students who come to FIT seeking degrees earn them, as discussed later in **Standard IV.1**. In 2019-20, FIT awarded 3,761 degrees: 1,944 at the associate level, 1,646 at the bachelor’s level, and 142 at the master’s level, as well as 30 credit certificates ([Factbook 2020: Degrees Conferred](#)). FIT also offers 35 academic minors, and graduates who completed a minor rose from 29% in 2013-14 to 42% in 2018-19 ([FIT Beyond 2020 Outcomes](#)).

FIT currently offers 15 associate, 26 bachelor’s, and seven graduate-level degree programs, as well as 12 credit certificate programs. All of FIT’s programs—both undergraduate and graduate—offer professional preparation for both the design and business side of the fashion and related industries, or for other creative and artistic areas. Together, they comprise a unique list of degree areas:

Academic Programs	Degrees Conferred	Accreditations
<b>School of Art and Design</b>		
Advertising and Digital Design	BFA	NASAD
Animation, Interactive Media, & Game Design	BFA	NASAD

Communications Design Foundation	AAS	NASAD
Fashion Design	AAS, BFA	NASAD
Fine Arts	AAS, BFA	NASAD
Footwear and Accessories Design	AAS, BFA	NASAD
Graphic Design	BFA	NASAD
Fabric Styling	BFA	NASAD
Illustration	AAS, BFA	NASAD
Interior Design	AAS, BFA	CIDA, NASAD
Jewelry Design	AAS	NASAD
Menswear	AAS	NASAD
Packaging Design	BFA	NASAD
Photography and Related Media	AAS, BFA	NASAD
Textile/Surface Design	AAS, BFA	NASAD
Toy Design	BFA	NASAD
Visual Presentation and Exhibition Design	BFA	NASAD
<b>Baker School of Business and Technology</b>		
Advertising and Marketing Communications	AAS, BS	ACBSP
Cosmetics and Fragrance Marketing	BS	ACBSP
Direct and Interactive Marketing	BS	
Entrepreneurship	BS	
Fashion Business Management	AAS, BS	ACBSP
Home Products Development	BS	ACBSP
International Trade & Marketing	BS	ACBSP
Production Management: Fashion and Related Industries	AAS, BS	ACBSP
Textile Development and Marketing	AAS, BS	ACBSP
Technical Design	BS	
<b>School of Liberal Arts and Sciences</b>		
Art History and Museum Professions	BS	Under review by NASAD
Film and Media	BS	NASAD
<b>School of Graduate Studies</b>		
Art Market: Principles and Practice	MA	NASAD
Cosmetics and Fragrance Marketing and Management	MPS	
Exhibition and Experience Design	MA	NASAD
Fashion Design	MFA	NASAD
Fashion & Textile Studies: History, Theory, Museum Practice	MA	NASAD

Global Fashion Management	MPS	
Illustration	MFA	NASAD

As noted in the **Introduction**, undergraduate degrees are organized in a “2+2” system. All first-time students enroll in an AAS degree program. Upon earning the degree, the majority remain at FIT to earn a bachelor’s level degree, while some enter the workforce or transfer. Some AAS programs offer bachelor’s degrees in the same field; for example, a student earning an AAS in Illustration may apply to continue to the BFA in Illustration. Or, students apply to a bachelor’s program in another area; the Illustration AAS student, for example, might apply to the Toy Design bachelor’s program, which is a stand-alone program without a corresponding AAS degree. If an AAS program is not closely related to the bachelor’s program, a student may need to take bridge classes to ensure adequate preparation ([Admissions Criteria Baccalaureate Degrees](#)).

FIT’s degree programs vary greatly in size. While FIT has historically been best known for its art and design programs, the School of Business and Technology is home to the largest number of students, housing two of FIT’s largest programs. Fashion Business Management is the largest; in fall 2020, it enrolled 1,264 students seeking the AAS degree and 769 seeking a BS degree. Advertising and Marketing Communications is second in size, with 700 AAS students and 538 BS students enrolled in fall 2020. Fashion Design is the largest program in the School of Art and Design, with 630 AAS students and 429 BFA students enrolled in fall 2020. Some of the specialized undergraduate programs, such as Toy Design, Packaging Design, and Home Products Development, are relatively small. All programs in the School of Graduate Studies are highly specialized and selective by design, such as the MFA in Fashion Design and the MPS in Cosmetics and Fragrance Marketing and Management. For complete enrollment by program, see [2020 Fact Book: Enrollment](#).

Academic degrees at FIT are well organized, purposeful and designed to facilitate learning. All degree program requirements are sequenced by semester to ensure a logical and feasible progression of course study, with each semester of undergraduate study comprising major-area coursework as well as courses in general education (see, for example, [Production Management AAS](#)). To ensure that program learning outcomes build in complexity as students proceed through the degree sequence and that all learning outcomes are adequately covered in the curriculum, each program has developed a curriculum map (e.g., [Fine Arts CMap](#); [CFMM CMap](#)). Each new program develops a curriculum map as a way to ensure proper course sequencing; programs review course sequencing as part of the Academic Program Review process.

Curriculum at FIT undergoes a rigorous process of review and revision at a variety of levels. A proposal of a new course requires development of a “course of study,” which sets the basic elements, including course description and learning outcomes, that all sections of the course must follow (Sample courses of study and syllabi: [FD 133 Materials and Construction 1](#); [FM 361 Leadership Development for Retailing](#); [HA 112 History of Western Art and Civ](#)). The first stage of review takes place at the department level, where new courses, course modality changes or



program updates are voted upon by all qualified faculty, before proceeding to approval at the school level ([Curricular Approval Process](#)). Degree and course proposals are then submitted into the digital curriculum, program inventory and workflow system, and proceed through the internal curriculum governance process led by the College-Wide Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate (see example [Curriculum Approval AD217](#)). The steps for review and approval of curriculum are time-consuming, but they enable a wide body of individuals from diverse academic perspectives to provide feedback on course and program quality, clarity and rigor, course sequencing, and synthesis of learning. One challenge that remains for FIT is to continue to streamline this process, so curricular changes can be made nimbly, as well as to standardize the procedures across all departments and schools. In addition, although Academic Affairs expects that all courses be reviewed and refreshed every five years, there currently is no system in place to monitor and implement this process, and some courses may become outdated.

FIT's specialized curriculum informs the School of Continuing and Professional Education, which provides adult, non-degree seeking learners with opportunities to learn from industry professionals in such areas as fashion, business, design, computer technology, and marketing. FIT sees an opportunity to strengthen this area, with its unique offerings, in order to increase enrollment. Over the three years prior to the pandemic, CCPS went through an internal audit, an administrative review, and engaged consultants to conduct marketing research, taking a number of actions to improve operational efficiency and enhance offerings ([CCPS Assessment Actions](#)). They developed a draft strategic plan, which is now being revised on the new opportunities and technologies available since the Covid pandemic. The graduate school is developing adult learning, executive education and professional development masters level initiatives to include non-degree/non-credit offerings organized with CCPS, as well as degree courses, degree certificates and advanced seminars.

### **FIT FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT (III.2 and ROA 15)**

*Criterion 2. Student learning experiences are designed, delivered and assessed by faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals who are a. rigorous and effective in teaching, assessment of student learning, scholarly inquiry, and service, as appropriate to the institution's mission, goals, and policies; b. qualified for the positions they hold and the work they do; c. sufficient in number; d. provided with and utilize sufficient opportunities, resources, and support for professional growth and innovation; e. reviewed regularly and equitably based on written, disseminated, clear, and fair criteria, expectations, policies, and procedures*

FIT faculty include leaders from industry, highly-regarded creative professionals, and scholars with impressive publishing and research accomplishments. Appropriate academic credentials, demonstration of teaching acumen, evidence of scholarship, and/or relevant industry experience are essential components of a full-time faculty position at FIT. The college supports faculty through such initiatives as a two-day [New Faculty Orientation](#), and both full-time and adjunct faculty are supported throughout their careers at FIT through an extensive range of workshops, training, and funding opportunities for teaching, research, and creative projects. The work of all classroom and non-classroom faculty as well as academic administrators is reviewed and



evaluated periodically as explained in the Collective Bargaining Agreement ([CBA](#), see 17.0., p.21 and 13.13, p.18).

Both the graduate and undergraduate divisions at FIT maintain qualifications for faculty hires based on criteria established for their respective disciplines. The School of Graduate Studies and the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences both require that full-time faculty possess the terminal academic credential in their fields, as well as provide evidence of scholarly achievement, professional activity, and teaching experience, depending on the discipline and unique nature of each program. The School of Business and Technology requires a master's degree at the time of hiring as well as seven years professional experience and teaching experience. In addition to a master's degree, the School of Art and Design requires substantial professional experience and teaching experience, while also considering scholarship and creative works, depending on the discipline. Requirements for part-time faculty also vary by school and sometimes vary by department; all schools set a minimum educational requirements as well as other requirements, including professional and management experience, scholarly achievement, or other professional accomplishments ([Hiring Criteria SGS](#); [Hiring Criteria: B&T](#); [Hiring Criteria: SLA](#); [Hiring Criteria: A&D](#)).

More than 70% of courses at FIT are taught by part-time faculty, and while increasing full-time faculty remains a significant priority for the college, much of the curriculum at FIT benefits from the expertise of working professionals who bring current industry experience to the classroom and are able to engage industry leaders to serve as guest lecturers, mentors, and critics in many classes. A part-time faculty member who earns a CCE is approved for a particular course or courses, helping to ensure that instructors possess the necessary qualifications, and skills.

The search process for full-time faculty recruitment is rigorous and provides for a strong, diverse pool of teaching candidates. Ultimately, all appointments to full or part-time classroom and non-classroom faculty positions at any rank, and for academic administrators at all levels, are made by the president after having been reviewed and recommended by the qualified faculty voters of the department, the school dean and the vice president for Academic Affairs ([CBA](#), see 15.0 Appointment: faculty, p.19).

In accordance with **Requirement of Affiliation 15**, FIT has a strong core of both full- and part-time faculty to assure the continuity and coherence of its educational programs. FIT possesses a sufficient number of full- and part-time faculty to support its academic programs: as of fall 2020 the number of instructional faculty was 944, with a student-to-faculty ratio of 16:1 ([Common Data Set 2020-2021](#)). Accreditation feedback from NASAD and CIDA found faculty to be sufficient ([NASAD Reviewers Report 2012 Resources Excerpt](#); [CIDA Visit Team Report](#), p. 9). External reviewers for Academic Program Review are also asked to evaluate the sufficiency of faculty in each program.

While faculty are sufficient overall, FIT would benefit from increasing its current number of full-time faculty. This is affirmed in feedback from the ACBSP accreditation awarded to the Baker School of Business and Technology in 2018, which approved of FIT's plans to increase

additional full-time lines as a way to improve the overall academic credentials of the faculty: ([ACBSP Notes and Conditions](#), Criterion 5.3). As discussed in **Standard II.5**, the number of full-time faculty has fallen below FIT's goal. The number of full-time faculty in fall of 2020 was 212, dropping from a high of 253 in 2009 ([Factbook 2020: HR](#)). A combination of factors, including budget constraints, accelerated rate of faculty retirement, and a hiring freeze imposed by SUNY during the Covid pandemic have hindered the college from effectively addressing this issue, and only an aggressive commitment to the hiring of full-time faculty, one that outpaces retirements, will lead to achievement of this goal.

The faculty who design, deliver and assess programs are supported in their work through various offices dedicated to training and development in research, creative projects, and pedagogy. The Office of Online Learning supports faculty who develop and deliver FIT's online, blended, and web-enhanced face-to-face courses. The office provides training for designing high-quality asynchronous and synchronous learning experiences in which the FIT instructor gets to know every student and encourages meaningful interaction and teamwork. All students and faculty have access to a help desk that is available for extended hours seven days per week. All online instructors attend 20 hours of training and then work with the office to certify their course according to a 45-point [certification checklist](#) based on the SUNY OSCQR rubric with categories including course overview and information, design and layout, content and activities, interaction, course technology and tools, and assessment and feedback. The number of sections offered online at FIT has been increasing: there were 546 sections offered online in 2015-2016 and 717 in 2019-2020, an increase of 31%. The number of students taking at least one online course also grew, from about 22% of students to 34% of students, increasing flexibility in student schedules. This number is likely to increase in the future as both faculty and students gained experience with online technologies during the Covid pandemic, although remote courses were offered with a synchronous format, in comparison to the asynchronous schedule in online courses ([2020 Factbook: Online; FIT Beyond 2020 Outcomes](#)).

During the pandemic, the Office of Online Learning provided a large variety of workshops and other support services to facilitate all faculty when the college transitioned to remote learning in March 2020. In academic year 2020-21, the Office of Online Learning held 132 workshops open to all FIT faculty on 31 different topics such as Blackboard Collaborate, Creating Rubrics, Mastering the Gradebook, VoiceThread, Screencast-o-matic, Padlet, Creating Visually Engaging Presentations with Adobe Spark, Digital Storytelling, Gamifying Your Course, and many more. The office also maintains a Teach Remotely website with a comprehensive selection of team-authored tutorials and recorded workshops. ([OOL Teach Remotely; OOL Annual Report 2020-2021](#))

The Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET), established in 2001 and overseen by the Office of Faculty Development, is a teaching and learning center that offers a wide range of resources and sponsors numerous faculty development events. The CET assists and supports faculty in the development, use, and assessment of effective instructional and curricular strategies. Through live and recorded events, faculty share pedagogical methods and learn and practice new techniques to add to their teaching repertoire. Additionally, the CET's Perkins-funded workshop

initiative helps faculty integrate recent technology into teaching practice ([CET Annual Report 2019-2020](#); [CET Annual Report 2020-2021](#)).

Faculty research and creative activities are supported through sabbaticals, research and innovation grants. From 2015-2018, 31 sabbaticals were funded by the college; between 2015 and 2020, FIT awarded \$498,497 Faculty Development Grants and Awards ([CET Outcomes Table](#)). The [Release Time for Research](#) (RTR) initiative was launched in spring 2015, funding course release for full-time faculty to engage in solitary or collaborative work. The Office of Grants & Sponsored Programs manages grant and fellowship applications with an emphasis on fostering innovation, collaboration, and academic rigor. Its staff provide hands-on support for faculty with concept development, prospect research, outreach to grant-makers, managing funding agreements, and post-award reporting and compliance ([FIT Beyond 2020 Outcomes; Selected Grant Awards FY19-FY21](#)). FIT faculty have been Fulbright scholars and recipients of Guggenheim fellowships, and have received substantial grant funding from the National Endowment of the Arts and National Science Foundation for research.

FIT has increased the research space available for faculty to pursue innovative projects. In 2017, it opened the Faculty Research Space, a cutting-edge laboratory. The research space helps faculty further explore wearable electronics, augmented reality, collect environmental data, and engage in interactive storytelling and game design. Faculty also have opportunities to collaborate with students on research work to augment the curriculum; one venue for this is the [MakerMinds Space](#), a collaboration between the Gladys Marcus Library and the Division of Information Technology housed in the library, which supports faculty and student projects using augmented reality, holograms, 3D software and printing technology. MakerMinds hosts an event series to expose students and faculty to emerging technologies and creative practices and to foster the DIY spirit of maker culture. The library also supports the academic and research needs of FIT faculty and the broader fashion and design communities through its [Special Collections and College Archives](#), a unique resource of rare books and periodicals, original fashion sketches, design and company scrapbooks, archives, photographs, prints, and digital resources.

The college values effective and engaged pedagogy informed by scholarship and related industry experience. Teaching, scholarship, industry currency, assessment of student learning, and service are essential components of the tenure, promotion and reappointment requirements for full-time faculty; and industry currency, coupled with teaching acumen, are essential for part-time faculty. The faculty within each school are responsible for determining the criteria and credential levels full-time and part-time faculty must possess, and/or achieve upon the date of tenure. The CET hosts annual tenure and promotion workshops as well as providing individual mentoring for candidates. Before a faculty member can receive tenure, the CBA requires a comprehensive student and peer evaluation process, including input from the chair, dean, and vice president, as well as departmental faculty through a transparent voting process. Full-time non-tenured faculty have peer evaluations at least twice per semester in their first year of service and at least once per semester thereafter. Part-time faculty are also eligible for a form of employment security similar to tenure: after 72 teaching hours (approximately six years of part-time teaching) adjunct faculty

are eligible for a “Certificate of Continuous Employment” (CCE). The review for a CCE is detailed and extensive ([CBA](#), see pp. 21-22 and section 19.0).

Student evaluations are also an important component of faculty review. All non-tenured and part-time faculty without a CCE receive student evaluations in each course once per semester. Full-time tenured faculty and part-time faculty holding a CCE receive student evaluations once every two years; there is a process for more frequent evaluations and reviews in the event an instructor receives an evaluation rating of below 4.0 (on a 6-point scale). While evaluations are used for the granting of tenure, CCE, and promotion, their purpose is primarily developmental, to improve faculty teaching. If there is evidence that the educational needs and purposes of the department are not being served by a faculty member teaching a particular class, there may be a contractual intervention, such as a developmental program with the CET ([Course Evaluation Form](#); [Types of Faculty Evaluations](#); [CBA](#), 21.2.3).

### **CLEAR AND ACCURATE REPRESENTATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS (III.3)**

*Criterion 3. Academic programs of study that are clearly and accurately described in official publications of the institution in a way that students are able to understand and follow degree and program requirements and expected time to completion:*

Prospective and current students are able to access clear and accurate information about academic programs on FIT’s website. Each academic division has its own homepage where students can find links to all undergraduate and graduate degree programs as well as offerings in the area of Continuing and Professional Studies. Each program’s academic department homepage lists curricular information about the program, employment and career details, faculty, admissions eligibility and portfolio requirements, as well as providing links to images and videos from the most recent graduating students’ exhibition, course descriptions, expenses and financial aid (see, for example, [FBM’s AAS web pages](#)). The Office of International Program website provides this information for study abroad programs. FIT’s online course catalogs provide up-to-date information relevant to the program’s learning outcomes and curriculum sequence (see example, [Packaging Design BFA](#)).

The Office of Curriculum works with faculty, chairs and deans to ensure that graduate and undergraduate catalogs are updated yearly and provide the most current and accurate information. Once students are enrolled at FIT they can review their progress using a degree audit (DARS), which assists students and their academic advisors in planning and tracking student advancement toward graduation. The audit compares a student’s academic record against specific degree requirements and reinforces students’ ability to track and to take charge of their degree progress.

Credit certificate programs offered through the Center for Continuing and Professional Studies, and overseen by the related academic departments, provide clearly stated requirements as well as learning outcomes (see [Performance Athletic Footwear](#), for example). Plans are underway to add credit certificates to the SUNY digital app in order to better manage interest, applications, and enrollment. There remain other opportunities for improvement in this area, and plans are

underway to standardize the program learning outcomes and to strengthen the advisement and continuity of course offerings necessary for successful completion of these programs.

**LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT (III.4)**

*Criterion 4. Sufficient learning opportunities and resources to support both the institution’s programs of study and students’ academic progress*

FIT’s programs of study and student academic progress are supported by initiatives, resources, and programs that enhance opportunities for learning both within and outside the classroom. Students have access to academic support and success resources that assist them in focusing on and achieving their academic and professional goals, as well as a variety of resources to aid them in the personal challenges they face. These resources include:

<b>Academic Support and Enrichment</b>	Academic Advisement Center Academic Skills Tutoring Center Career and Internship Services Writing and Speaking Studio Office of the Registrar
<b>Resources for Specific Student Groups</b>	Office of Disability Services (FIT-ABLE) Office of Educational Opportunity Programs International Student Services Office of International Programs Presidential Scholars Program (Honors) Veteran Services Phi Theta Kappa
<b>Technology and Information Resources</b>	Division of Information Technology Gladys Marcus Library Special Collections and College Archives The Museum of FIT

(For more on student support services, see **Standard IV.1**)

The wide array of support services at FIT are designed to aid academic progress while also ensuring that programs deliver on learning and program outcomes. The Writing & Speaking Studio expanded in 2019 to offer comprehensive written and oral communication support for students seeking input on communication projects and faculty teaching with writing and speaking ([WSS Annual Report 2019-20](#)). In addition to facilitating the learning experience through various resources and support programs, the [Gladys Marcus Library](#) provides students access to computers, scanners, and program-specific equipment needed for student projects. The library also offers a large number of one-on-one research consultations to students at all levels. The resources available through the library’s [Special Collections and College Archives](#), as well

as the Museum at FIT, foster original research across (and beyond) the FIT community, and are particularly important for the graduate programs.

Students and faculty have access to emerging technologies that enhance the teaching and learning experience. Both the [DTech lab](#) and the [MakersMinds](#) event series provide students with hands-on learning opportunities to explore how new technologies and practices can aid in solving design problems. At the [PrintFX](#) and [FabLab](#) students can produce professional portfolio quality prints, fabric printing and fabrication services such as 3D printing, laser cutting, vinyl cutting, custom button pins and vacuum forming. The Innovative Technology and Digital Production (ITDP) unit within FIT's Information Technology division is responsible for serving the FIT community in several areas such as maintaining student computer labs, providing digital printing and fabrication services on campus, and organizing workshops and events. Pedagogical and technological support and resources available to faculty make innovative practices and learning opportunities possible throughout the curriculum and in the various degree programs.

FIT's commitment to applied and experiential learning has been integral to its mission since the college's founding in 1947. Credit and non-paid and paid internships, interdisciplinary and innovative partnerships with industry, and curriculum related contests and sponsored projects have become fundamental parts of many programs. Partnerships and collaborations with industry enable faculty and students to research such topics as biomaterials, bio-pigments, nanomaterials, and envision and prototype sustainable solutions to real world challenges as well as explore and develop clothing concepts using advanced functional materials that incorporate 3D printing or sophisticated knitting technologies.

Internships, which in many cases are required for degree completion, provide students with opportunities to apply what they are learning in their coursework. Each year, more than 900 students participate in for-credit internship classes. FIT has strong relationships with a variety of organizations, ranging from fashion design firms to manufacturers to museums and non-profits. Students have served as interns at fashion firms such as The Row, Thom Browne, Vera Wang, and La Perla; beauty companies such as Revlon, Clarins, and Estee Lauder; television shows including The Daily Show, Saturday Night Life, and Dr. Oz; and non-profits including the MOMA and the YMCA of Greater New York. Increasingly, students are engaging in international internships, for credit, both in person and virtual, through a collaboration between the Office of International Programs and Career and Internship Services. These experiences provide students with career and networking possibilities. **See also Standard IV.1.**

Students have the opportunity to participate in curriculum-related contests and sponsored projects in local and international competitions that amplify their program of study. For example, FIT students recently took third place in the Adobe Analytics Challenge, an annual competition in which students crunch real data from major corporations and make business recommendations; they won \$6,000. In 2019-2020, students were awarded a total of almost \$100,000 in prize money from competitions sponsored by companies such as Amazon Fashion and Disney on Broadway as well as Macy's and Benjamin Moore ([FIT Annual Report 2019-2020](#), p. 5; [Recent Contests and Projects](#)). Service learning also enables students to extend and



apply their learning; examples include the curricular partnership between the Interior Design program and New York Cares, and multiple classroom partnerships with FabScraps, a textile reuse program.

FIT has many student clubs which supplement the student's academic program ([Co-Curricular Clubs](#)). The Merchandising Society club provides approximately 200 student members with opportunities to meet industry professionals and to work in the FIT Style Shop, a student-run boutique, as buyers, planners, finance and inventory managers each academic year. Recently, over 200 students from across all undergraduate schools participated in the Loop for Good project where teamwork, problem solving, photography and image capture processing, social marketing, video editing, production, design and construction of display fixtures, patternmaking and sewing of bags, working the sales floor and purchase tables were demonstrated. Such experiences produce coherence between conceptual understanding and hands-on skills, preparing students for the workplace.

Students at FIT also have numerous opportunities for study abroad. The Office of International Programs offers year-long, semester-long, and short-term courses at FIT's two campus programs in Italy; its campus in South Korea; through SUNY International Programs; the College Consortium for International Study; or at a wide variety of partner institutions whose programming support the majors offered at FIT. The office also coordinates a variety of international internships for FIT students.

### **GENERAL EDUCATION (III. 5)**

*Criterion 5. At institutions that offer undergraduate education, a general education program free-standing or integrated into academic disciplines that: a) offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field; b) offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives.*

While FIT's undergraduate programs prepare students for specific professional areas, all programs are grounded in general education and liberal arts courses that are essential components of the overall degree. General education and liberal arts courses are integrated into the undergraduate student's degree course sequence and follow SUNY General Education Requirements ([SUNY-GER](#); [FIT Gen Ed Requirements](#)), with at least 24 credits completed for a two-year AAS degree and 30 credits for a bachelor's degree.

The general education requirements provide students with breadth, introducing them to new areas of intellectual discovery. In addition to the three general education areas required by FIT (basic communication, natural sciences, and mathematics), all students must take courses from at least four of the seven general education categories: Social Sciences; American History; Western

Civilization; Other World Civilizations; Humanities; The Arts; and Foreign Languages. Courses in these areas expand students’ global awareness, provide diverse perspectives, and help students develop cultural sensitivity, as these concepts are embedded in many of the course areas due to the required learning outcomes established for each area. For example, courses in American History ask students to demonstrate “knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups.” Students completing an Other World Civilization course are expected to develop either a broad knowledge of world history or knowledge of a specific non-Western Culture, while those completing a Western Civilization requirement learn to “relate the development of Western civilization to that of other regions of the world.” All Modern Languages and Cultures courses teach students about the “distinctive features of culture(s) associated with the language.” Finally, many general education courses engage with issues of values and ethics. In the recent general education assessment of The Arts, faculty noted that these courses were a vehicle for ethical understanding, as they helped students explore moral complexities and develop empathy ([The Arts Assessment 2020](#)). These themes run through courses in the liberal arts and are intrinsic to their student learning outcomes.

Cultural and global awareness as well as cultural sensitivity and understanding of diverse perspectives are taught through the degree programs, extensive academic minors, and study abroad and other internationalization initiatives. The Baker School of Business and Technology teaches business in a global context, with globalism as a school-wide learning outcome. Minors such as African American & Africana Studies, Caribbean Studies, Ethnic Dress in a Global Context, International Politics, and Women & Gender Studies further strengthen this learning.

The general education curriculum is designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills; these are further strengthened in the degree program courses.

Essential Skills	How They Are Taught
<b>Oral Communication</b>	All liberal arts classes are discussion-based and encourage broad participation, enabling students to discuss their ideas in a safe but scholarly setting. In addition, three courses provide instruction in professional and public communication: EN 241 Professional Speech Communication; EN 242 Public Speaking; and EN 343 Advanced Public Speaking. Students in nearly all degree programs gain further practice in oral communication through required oral presentations ( <a href="#">Oral Communication in Programs Survey</a> ).
<b>Written Communication</b>	An English composition course is required; some students meet this requirement through AP or transfer credits. Most students take EN 121, which teaches first year students the academic writing skills they’ll need in other courses ( <a href="#">EN 121 Course of Study + Sample Syllabus</a> ); Presidential Scholars take EN 142, an honors composition and rhetoric course. All AAS degree students are required to take a second English course, further strengthening these skills. Many liberal



	<p>arts courses include effective written communication as a learning outcome in the course.</p>
<p><b>Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning</b></p>	<p>All FIT students are required to take courses in mathematics and natural sciences. Students taking one of the required mathematics courses learn quantitative reasoning skills, as courses in this area are designed around the SUNY Mathematics learning outcomes (<a href="#">SUNY GER guidelines</a>). All courses in the Natural Sciences area are designed to teach students scientific reasoning; FIT Science faculty developed a set of learning outcomes for all science courses that ensure this (<a href="#">FIT Sciences Learning Outcomes</a>).</p>
<p><b>Critical Analysis and Reasoning</b></p>	<p>Critical thinking skills are widely taught in general education courses; in the Critical Thinking assessment project conducted in 2018, critical thinking was assessed through student work in ten different classes, from nine different disciplines (<a href="#">Critical Thinking Assessment 2018</a>). The assessment enabled a broad group of faculty to engage in meaningful dialogue about what constitutes critical thinking and what makes a good assignment to assess critical thinking. This assessment included a CET sponsored event so faculty around critical thinking. A recent assessment of The Arts noted that all assignment directions guided students through a process of critical thinking (<a href="#">The Arts Assessment 2019-2020</a>).</p> <p>Critical Thinking is widespread throughout the degree programs. It is a school-level learning outcome for the Baker School of Business and Technology that “Graduating students will be able to define, analyze, and devise solutions for structured and unstructured business problems.”</p>
<p><b>Technological Competency</b></p>	<p>FIT students demonstrate competency in technology through general education courses that require them to use personal computers for their academic activities, such as writing papers and finding sources. This is strengthened through Library Technology Workshops.</p> <p>FIT students develop technological mastery in their degree programs, all of which embed technologies appropriate to each profession. (<a href="#">Technological Competency in Programs Survey</a>).</p>

<b>Information Literacy</b>	Information literacy is taught in many general education classes, as most classes in the humanities and social sciences include research projects. These skills are strengthened through many of the degree programs as well. For example, a new class required of all first year FBM students incorporates instruction on information literacy; FIT librarians contributed to its development ( <a href="#">Course of Study FM 108</a> ). Faculty partner with the Gladys Marcus Library to enhance student skills in research.
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As discussed in Standard V.1, FIT assesses general education areas on a three-year rotating cycle. Assessments enable the institution to conclude that the majority of students meet or exceed faculty expectations in demonstrating the desired skills ([Gen Ed Assessment Findings + Actions](#)). As discussed above in **Criterion 1**, it would be beneficial for FIT to develop further processes to ensure curricular review of general education courses, to ensure that they meet the SUNY requirements and that faculty are aware of and emphasize the learning outcomes specific to the general education designation for each course they are teaching. In the fall of 2021, the SUNY board voted on new general education requirements for the system which are expected to go into effect for students entering in fall 2023 ([New SUNY Gen Ed Framework](#)). As FIT implements the new requirements, it has an opportunity to review and improve the processes for reviewing and recertifying general education courses.

### **GRADUATE PROGRAMS (III.6)**

*Criterion 6. Institutions that offer graduate and professional education, opportunities for the development of research, scholarship, and independent thinking, provided by faculty and/or other professionals with credentials appropriate to graduate-level curricula*

Programs in the School of Graduate Studies at FIT provide significant opportunities for development of research, scholarship and independent thinking. All programs culminate in capstone projects, which may include written theses, research projects presented to industry, runway shows or exhibitions. The annual thesis capstone for Exhibition & Experience Design brings over 80 industry professionals to campus to interact with students during their day-long thesis defense. The MFA in Fashion Design culminates in a runway show that highlights each graduating student’s collection, as well as a final written thesis defended before an industry panel and a select audience. During the coronavirus, new effective presentation methods were utilized including WebEx live and recorded presentations, video showcases, and interactive presentations to industry using the Google Meet videoconferencing platform.

The [Dean’s Fellowship](#) program, launched in 2018, was designed to provide self-motivated and entrepreneurial graduate students with funding support for additional types of research. It is a one-year, non-renewable award of \$3,000. Fellows work closely with the Center for Innovation at FIT and the DTech Lab, on mentoring undergraduate students and contributing to industry projects. The fellows work on initiatives designed to bring students from all programs together as

a community for lectures, dialogues and workshops led by invited guests, and to showcase research and creative work of graduate students from across all programs. The fellowship program was one aspect of the [School of Graduate Studies Strategic Plan](#), which was in process during FIT's PRR review, which made its completion a requirement. The plan aligned with FIT's Beyond 2020 strategic plan, extending its goals into the graduate school. For example, to extend Goal 2 and promote innovation, some graduate school departments are developing individual plans for advisory boards.

Graduate Studies emphasizes field studies and experiential learning opportunities that involve research projects with peer colleges, industry practitioners and companies, both domestically and globally. Intensive seminars on three global campuses (Institut Français de la Mode in Paris, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and Centro in Mexico City) in addition to the New York campus are a defining feature of the Global Fashion Management MPS degree. Each seminar is customized to build understanding of the interrelated segments of the international fashion business and illuminate the strategic vision and technology that drive companies in the sector and includes visits to leading manufacturers and suppliers. Graduate students in the Cosmetics and Fragrances Marketing and Management MPS program are required to complete field study seminars in the United States, Europe and Asia where they conduct primary field research and secondary research, participate in meetings and problem-solving workshops, and leadership and team building activities with industry experts, consultancies and agencies, and government and industry organizations. For more information, see [SGS International Seminars, Research Opportunities & Internships](#)).

#### **Criterion 7. Third party student learning opportunities**

Not applicable. FIT does not have student learning opportunities that are designed, delivered or assessed by third party providers.

### **ASSESSMENTS INDICATE THAT ACADEMIC PROGRAMS ARE EFFECTIVE (III.8)**

*Criterion 8. Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of programs providing student learning opportunities.*

FIT has many ways of evaluating the effectiveness of its academic programs. Each academic degree program and administrative unit that supports student learning goes through a review process approximately once every seven years. The process on both the academic and administrative side includes three components:

- A comprehensive self-study that examines all aspects related to the degree or unit over a broad timeframe that examines past history and looks toward the future.
- An external review: external reviewers with expertise in the area under review read the self-study, visit the program or unit for observation and discussion, and provide feedback and suggestions. The area may revise its action plan based on the external reviewer's findings.

- Use of results stage: the degree program or unit works with IRE and its respective vice president to review and discuss the self-study and reviewers' findings to develop a final action plan that includes a timelines and a budget ([APR Guidelines](#); [Admin Review Guidelines](#)).

In addition to the academic program review process, each academic degree engages in the assessment of student learning outcomes annually, submitting an annual report due by November 1st of each year. Programs assess student learning outcomes annually since student learning is the most important part of FIT's mission ([Annual PLO Assessment 2021 Instructions](#)). Student learning outcome assessment reports are included as one component of program review. In the broad, comprehensive framework of the academic program review, programs view multi-year trends and analyze student learning achievement in the context of a variety of elements affecting the program, such as staffing levels, class size, resources available for learning, and the quality and diversity of admitted students. Many FIT programs gather feedback from students through annual exit surveys (e.g. [Photo AAS Exit Survey 2019](#); [CFM Exit Survey 2018-19](#)). For more information on assessment, including how assessment results are used to improve academic programs, see **Standard V**.

Finally, the majority of FIT programs are reviewed by specialized accreditors that look closely at a range of criteria at the program-level, including curricula, student achievement, faculty qualifications, and facilities, ensuring that each program meets the standards. The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) accredits all programs in the School of Art and Design; five in the School of Graduate Studies; and the Film and Media degrees in the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences (the Art History and Museum Professions degree is currently under consideration). NASAD reviewers will be visiting FIT's campus a few weeks after the MSCHE team. Seven programs in the School of Business and Technology received accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs in 2018, demonstrating that FIT's business students gain a broad business education in addition to their specialized areas. FIT's Interior Design AAS and BFA degrees are accredited by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA), in addition to NASAD.

## **Conclusion**

FIT offers a range of quality academic programs in design, communications, fashion, art and business that are supported by related and general education course experiences. Each major area programs its courses in a coherent sequence, weaving in general education courses that ensure that students acquire essential skills. Coursework at all levels are underpinned by values, ethics, intellectual, cultural, and global awareness and are appropriate to higher education. FIT faculty are well-qualified and ably assisted in their endeavors by academic professionals from support units within the college. Faculty and administrators work collaboratively to enhance experiential learning and innovative research opportunities for students. FIT has assessment processes in place to ensure the effectiveness of its programs.

## **Strengths:**

- FIT has expanded opportunities for funding faculty research and scholarship via grants, seed monies, and Faculty Development Grant awards, as well as the facilities in which to conduct research.
- FIT has enhanced services that support and enrich student learning, specifically through investments in technology, continued development of the Writing and Speaking Studio, and on-going support of applied learning through technology, contests and curricular-related clubs

## **Opportunities for Improvement:**

***Increase the overall number of full-time faculty to achieve the number to which FIT has committed.***

- Increase the number of full-time faculty to enhance student learning, improve faculty working conditions, and follow recommendations of accreditors.

***Strengthen and support FIT's programs in continuing education, professional development, and executive education for the creative and business industries.***

- Augment offerings in the Center for Continuing and Professional Studies to aid in recruitment and further development of continuing education programs at FIT
- Continue expansion of graduate-level professional development and executive education for mid-to-senior career levels in the School of Graduate Studies in coordination with CCPS by augmenting graduate-level non-degree offerings and expanding graduate-level certificates with shorter duration and highly targeted content.

***Build processes for systematic review, renewal and strategic alignment of individual courses and student learning outcomes with institutional goals.***

- There are no processes in place to ensure that all courses are reviewed and, if needed, refreshed every five years, as expected by Academic Affairs; systematic processes should be developed. The forthcoming restructuring of SUNY general education requirements is an opportunity to do this for the general education area.

## Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

*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.*

This chapter addresses how FIT fulfills the criteria for Standard IV as well as the Requirements of Affiliation 8 and 10.

FIT is committed to student success from recruitment through graduation. Efforts to create a student-centered environment are guided by Goal 3 of the most recent strategic plan: *Provide an empowering student experience in a cohesive community*. Initiatives have included enhancing academic advisement, expanding opportunities for student leadership, creating a collaborative wellness program, engaging international presence and perspectives, increasing scholarships, and harnessing technology to streamline services and augment programming.

In recent years, most student support services units have increasingly incorporated a variety of technologies to streamline services for students and to make more services available online. Recently this initiative turned out to be more significant than anticipated, as it enabled student support offices to provide strong support remotely during the Covid pandemic.

### **SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS AT ALL STAGES (IV.1)**

*Criterion 1: Clearly stated, ethical policies and processes to admit, retain, and facilitate the success of students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals provide a reasonable expectation for success and are compatible with institutional mission, including: a. accurate and comprehensive information regarding expenses, financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, repayment, and refunds; b. a process by which students who are not adequately prepared for the study at the level for which they have been admitted are identified, placed, and supported in attaining appropriate educational goals; c. orientation, advisement, and counseling programs to enhance retention and guide students throughout their educational experience; d. processes designed to enhance the successful achievement of students' educational goals including certificate and degree completion, transfer to other institutions, and post-completion placement.*

### **Admissions, Financial Aid, and Educational Support (IV.1 a&b)**

FIT's relationship with its students begins with the strategic recruitment process, during which FIT seeks to communicate with students about its unique academic offerings, vibrant student life, and industry-based connections. This is done through a traditional high school and community college visitation program, fall and spring on-campus admissions events, student-led campus tours, and an online and print communication plan, including social media venues. During this process, FIT works to communicate accurately about its degree programs, addressed in **Standard III.3**, as well as about financing education.

Tuition and fee information is easily accessible on the college website; the [Undergraduate Admissions webpage](#) includes links to tuition costs, Financial Aid Services, and the Bursar's Office. These pages are linked to FIT's public-facing [Cost of Attendance \(COA\)](#) webpage, on which direct costs (i.e., tuition, fees, residence hall) and indirect costs (i.e., books and supplies, meals and maintenance, personal, transportation) are clearly defined; separate estimates are provided for in-state commuter students, in-state on-campus students, and out-of-state and international on-campus students. These estimates, which are frequently updated, allow prospective and current students to see how costs vary depending on residency and other factors. Another informative tool is the [Net Price Calculator](#), which uses information provided by the student and/or their family to create personalized cost information, including estimated tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, personal expenses, and transportation. The calculator also estimates loans and out-of-pocket costs. When there are increases in tuition, all students are notified via email.

The most important source of information for prospective and current students is the college's [Financial Aid Services website](#), which includes application instructions and downloadable forms, eligibility and policy information, descriptions of all financial aid programs, descriptions of outside scholarships, warnings about scams, information about the privacy of student records (FERPA), and frequently asked questions. FIT's undergraduate and graduate catalogs also include a section on financial aid and tuition and fee refunds ([UG Catalog Financial Aid](#); [Grad Catalog Financial Aid](#)). To ensure that prospective students have accurate information, the Financial Aid Services website is linked to the FIT Admissions page. Once students have received their admission letter, they receive their financial aid package. **More information on Financial Aid can be found in Standard II.7.**

During the academic year 2020-21, \$22,518,922 in need-based scholarships and grants was awarded by FIT from federal, state, and institutional sources, in addition to \$167,000 in non-need-based institutional awards. Student loans, both need-based and non-need based, totaled \$28,941,836 ([Common Data Set 2020-21](#)). Recently, more funding for scholarships and grants has become available through a combination of fundraising, the creation of several New York State programs, and emergency funds made available in response to the pandemic. Currently, FIT offers approximately 360 endowed scholarships awarded to students based on both merit and need. Recent scholarships have been established for an array of majors and these include: Jonathan Kolber Endowed Scholarship for students in Fashion Business Management; Kate Spade Foundation NY Endowed Scholarship for students in Fashion Design; Miriam Enders Memorial Endowed Scholarship for students in Textile Design; Susan Snitzer Endowed Scholarship for students in Interior Design; and the Jay and Patty Baker Memorial Endowed Scholarship in honor of Dean Steven Frumkin for students in Business and Technology. The Prada Scholarship, Art Smith Memorial Endowed Scholarship, Social Justice Scholarship, and the Black Student Illustrators Award have all been designated for Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color (BIPOC) students at FIT, while the Erika Rohrbach Scholarship is for international students ([Scholarships 2021 Update](#)). The new Bob Fisch scholarship award program for students in the graduate school Fashion Design MFA and Global Fashion Management MPS



programs provides opportunities for students to be awarded with monies for the completion of their capstone research or fashion collections.

During the Covid pandemic, the FIT Foundation raised over \$52,000 from alumni, friends, and corporate partners in support of the FIT Student Emergency Fund, which was created to support students during the pandemic and resulting economic crisis. FIT's Student Government Association also contributed a generous \$100,000 to aid in the relief for students coping with the pandemic incurred challenges. FIT was able to receive an additional \$61,563 in funds from the SUNY Impact Foundation as part of a \$2-million-dollar challenge grant from an anonymous donor. The Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Success worked with the FIT Foundation, Financial Aid Services, and the Office of the Registrar to coordinate communication, identify eligible students, and administer the various emergency funds. More than 7,000 refunds (for housing, fees, and unused meal plans) were disbursed to students between May and July 2020 due to COVID-19 ([Bursar Process Improvements](#)). Over 195 degree-seeking undergraduate and graduate students received an FIT grant ranging between \$300- \$500 from a total of \$97,500 in emergency support as of April 2021 (FIT [Annual Report 2019-2020](#), p. 23). The FIT Student Emergency Fund remains active to help students on an ongoing basis. In addition to the FIT Student Emergency Fund, the Francine A. LeFrak Foundation provided \$25,000 to support students with demonstrated financial need with grants that covered their outstanding tuition costs for the spring 2021 semester. The college also benefited from the allocation of \$3,517,700 in CARES Act funding in both 2020 and 2021. The funds were distributed to FIT's neediest degree-seeking domestic students based on the submission of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC). Grants ranging from \$1,300 to \$1,500 were awarded to students for expenses related to Covid. The distribution of the CARES Act funding in 2020 included grants to 2,322 FIT students. The second phase of the CARES Act distribution began in early April 2021.

Several New York State programs were established over the past few years including the Excelsior Scholarship Program and the Senator Jose Peralta NYS DREAM Act. Eligible New York State residents who are US citizens or eligible non-citizens may receive up to a \$5,500 Excelsior Scholarship toward the cost of attending FIT, a State University college. The DREAM Act provides eligible undocumented and other students access to New York State administered grants and scholarships ([FIT Scholarships 2021 Update](#)).

FIT's Office of Admissions admits students who can be successful at FIT. Students apply to a specific major, enabling representatives to evaluate the potential for success within the context of a particular field. FIT looks at overall academic performance, as well as individual grades and types of courses taken. The majority of first-time students admitted have GPAs of over 3.5. FIT considers strong B students for admission, but relatively few students with below a high school GPA of 3.0 are admitted ([Common Data Set 2020-21](#)). Applicants to Art & Design majors must submit portfolios, which are evaluated by faculty and considered in the admissions process. FIT is selective; for the 2020-21 year, 59% of applicants were admitted overall. Admissions rates for AAS programs vary since admissions is done by major, from around 24% for Film & Media to

approximately 80% for a few programs. The School of Graduate Studies manages the admissions processes for its seven programs. Each program sets minimum standards for admission; some require industry-specific work experience or professional training to apply, and art and design graduate programs require a portfolio ([SGS Admissions Webpage](#)).

FIT is committed to placing students in the appropriate level of coursework to assist in their ability to excel. For undergraduate admission, students are not required to submit standardized testing, but they may submit SAT/ACT scores for placement into English and math coursework. Students who have not demonstrated college readiness based upon SAT/ACT scores, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or college-credit, are required to take the College Board Accuplacer, administered through FIT's Testing Center; during the Covid pandemic, these placement exams were done online and individually proctored. Students who have not demonstrated college-ready skills in English and math are placed in Educational Skills courses ([Placement Testing](#)). Close to 20% of associate level students are placed in developmental courses; the success rate in these classes is high, with almost 90% of students passing them ([Dev Ed Outcomes AY19](#)). International students whose first language is not English are required to take TOEFLS or IELTS tests, and are placed into English as a Second Language courses when further development of their proficiency is needed.

The Office of Educational Opportunity Programs (EOP) provides supplemental academic, financial, and personal student support services to New York State students who come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. This program requires mandatory advisement with an EOP counselor each semester for all EOP students, focusing on the students' academic and career goals. The students have access to child care, monthly group meetings that provide a sense of community, and a dedicated career counselor that is embedded in the office on a weekly basis. Prior to beginning their first semester, EOP students have access to scholarship-supported enrollment in FIT's Precollege program for high school students. Starting in 2018, the directors of Admissions, EOP, and Financial Aid have collaborated to establish new and strengthen existing feeder streams of applicants who may be EOP-eligible. This has helped FIT develop EOP prospects into applicants and then registered students, scaling up from a program designed for 35 students in 2014 to one aspiring to serve 90 students. As of fall 2019, 82 students were enrolled ([Admissions Year End 2019-2020](#); [EOP Annual Report 2019-2020](#)).

The Writing and Speaking Studio is available to all students to enhance their educational experience and strengthen their learning in oral and written communication. Faculty are required to include student support services in their course syllabi to ensure that students are familiar with these resources ([Syllabus Memo Spring 2021](#)). Both undergraduate and graduate students seek online and in-person tutoring services from staff or peers to assist with communication projects for academic, personal, or professional purposes. Students may select focus areas for their writing and speaking sessions that include: reading, understanding/addressing assignment guidelines, generating ideas, planning/outlining, drafting, research, citation, integrating source material, editing, proofreading, audience and occasion, speech anxiety strategies, presentation delivery practice, and nonverbal communication. The Writing and Speaking Studio also hosts workshops and provides classroom information sessions throughout the academic year ([WSS](#)

[Annual Report 2019-2020](#)). In 2019, the studio expanded to offer speaking and presentation services and updated the title of the program from the Writing Studio to the Writing and Speaking Studio.

The Academic Skills Tutoring Center offers walk-in services in a variety of subject areas and individual tutoring services to all undergraduate credit-bearing students enrolled at FIT. Students seek tutoring assistance in over 40 subject areas ([Academic Skills Tutoring Center Annual Report 2019-2020](#)). Undergraduate students may receive up to 30 hours of individual tutoring services at no cost throughout the academic year, allowing for one hour of tutoring sessions per week each semester. Peer tutors from a variety of majors across FIT provide consultations and group tutoring sessions that are informed by their own experiences from the classroom and individual skill sets.

The Office of Disability Support Services ([FIT-ABLE](#)) ensures equal access for students with disabilities in their curricular as well as co-curricular college experiences. The office works with students individually to assist in their accommodations, ranging from on-campus housing, on-campus dining, assistive technology, interpretive services, to services for pregnant and parenting students. To request accommodations due to a disability, a student must first self-disclose; staff then make determinations considering the individual level of functionality, disability documentation, and the pedagogical methods used in the students' classes. In 2013, FIT-ABLE satisfied the requirements to become the Gamma Theta Chapter of the Delta Alpha Pi International Honor Society, providing an opportunity to change negative stereotypes associated with disability, and recognizing students for their academic achievements.

FIT provides additional support for students who have been placed on Academic Probation to help them get back on track. The Academic Advisement Center hosts academic success workshops each semester that are required for students who have received a semester GPA below 2.0. An academic hold is placed onto the student's account by the Registrar's Office and is removed by an Academic Advisor once the student has attended the workshop and an individual academic probation advisement session. The academic success workshops highlight the academic support resources available at FIT and the individual probation advisement session is tailored to the student to address the individual's needs ([AAC Annual Report 2018-2019](#)). During the pandemic, reviews for academic probation were not processed due to the temporary adjusted grading policy ([Covid Grade Adjustment Policy](#)). Even so, the Registrar's Office and the Academic Advisement Center collaborated to continue holding academic success workshops to support the students that would have been academically dismissed after the spring 2020 and fall 2020 semesters ([AAC Academic Standing SP21](#)).

### **Orientation, Advising, and Counseling (IV.1 c&d)**

FIT's New Student Orientation is the first step in preparing students to succeed. Held each fall and spring, it facilitates the transition of new students, familiarizes them with resources designed to assist them, and introduces them to the academic setting through the Common Read program. The program follows CAS Standards (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) and has developed student learning outcomes for the orientation, which are assessed

each year to inform planning. The program has made several adjustments in response to student feedback; among the changes have been the addition of new session topics, the Common Read program, scheduling adjustments and updated training for Orientation Leaders. In fall 2019, 93% of new students agreed or strongly agreed that orientation provided useful information about campus resources, an increase of 5% from 2018 ([New Student Orientation Outcomes Exec Sum Fall 2019](#)). In response to the shift to remote learning in response to the pandemic, all orientation programming for fall 2020 and spring 2021 was provided virtually through a combination of pre-recorded videos and live webinars. One unexpected benefit of this shift is that a robust archive of videos describing student support services is now available on the [Orientation and New Student Programs](#) website ([Student Life Year End Report 2018-2019](#)).

Orientation Leaders (OLs) are part of the Tiger Leader peer mentoring program, a large network of peer mentors who elect to serve their fellow students as resources, advocates, and role models. These positions include: OLs, Cultural Fellows, Health & Wellness Peer Educators, and Resident Assistants (RAs). In addition to training with their departments for their specific duties, Tiger Leaders participate in a spring retreat and ongoing training on the Social Change Model of Leadership Development in order to develop and challenge them as socially responsible leaders at FIT and beyond. In addition to the Tiger Leaders, there are several other peer mentoring/leadership positions where students receive in-depth training and serve in paraprofessional roles at FIT; see [Peer Mentor/Student Leadership Positions](#).

The Academic Advisement Center (AAC) was established in 2013 creating a centralized location for undergraduate degree-seeking students. Academic advisors discuss academic plans with students, guiding them towards their goals. Many students make use of their services: in academic year 2019-2020, the AAC held 21,677 appointments, including walk-ins, in-person, telephone, and virtual appointments, the latter two categories increasing due to the Covid pandemic. Academic advisors assist students in creating academic plans, using the Degree Audit (DARS) system to track requirements. Advisors also discuss minors with students and facilitate minor declarations, provide academic success workshops, and work closely with students in poor academic standing to help them get back on track. The center additionally acts as a central hub to refer students to campus-wide academic and co-curricular resources ([AAC Annual Report 2019-2020](#); [AAC Appointment Numbers 2019-2021](#)).

One relatively new tool the AAC uses to identify and support struggling students is the Early Alert reports available through the Starfish platform. This system enables faculty to identify struggling students early in the semester or to acknowledge students who are performing well. The AAC piloted Early Alert in 2018 and 2019, testing it with a selection of coursework from each FIT school. In fall 2020, all faculty were introduced to the system and encouraged to make use of it, although it is not required. Thus far, the FIT faculty usage is relatively low in comparison to other institutions: FIT faculty usage rate was 20% in spring 2020 and fall 2020 compared to 34% at other 2-year institutions, and 42% at other 4-year institutions. The AAC and EMSS will continue to promote this new system and will consider how to increase faculty participation ([Starfish Review Meeting](#); [Early Alert Faculty Response](#)).

The Starfish Early Alert system is a good example of one of our main findings reviewing FIT’s support to students; since the last self-study, student support units have adopted many new technologies to assist in supporting students. The chart below lists these technologies:

**Harnessing Technology to Support Students**

<b>Program/Application</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Office(s) using</b>
Starfish	Student success management Academic advising & planning Integrated communication Early Alerts Appointment scheduling	Academic Advisement EOP Faculty Gladys Marcus Library SUNY Korea
Accommodate (Symplicity)	Documentation for disability accommodations Generate accommodation letters for faculty Faculty load exams into system Peer note takers tracked Track loaner equipment (e-readers, etc.) Track appointments, lab schedules	FIT-Able (Accommodative Services)
Advocate (Symplicity)	Academic integrity cases (AA) Academic appeals (AA) Track cases for students of concern (CT) Student Conduct Cases (DoS) Residence Hall Student Conduct (RL)	Academic Affairs (AA) Care Team(CT) Dean of Students (DoS) Residential Life (RL)
FIT Link (Campus Labs Engage)	Student engagement Clubs & Organizations Management Event planning Involvement tracking Communication tool	Student Life manages tool used by all student clubs & organizations. After outreach, 21 FIT departments now using the tool to engage students
PyraMed	Electronic Health Records <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Health care providers can coordinate care</li> <li>● Provided ability to offer encrypted e-chat and tele-medicine services when services went remote for pandemic</li> </ul>	Student Health Services Counseling Center
Argos	Enterprise reporting tool Ex: updated reporting has streamlined some processes including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● automated tuition deposits,</li> <li>● automating Financial Aid packaging</li> </ul>	Admissions Registrar Financial Aid IT
SlideRoom	Secure online system for receiving and evaluating portfolios from Art & Design applicants	Admissions Art & Design Faculty
Horizons (Symplicity)	Study abroad management	International Programs: Study

	Application management Travel tracking Appointment scheduling Communication	Abroad
Career Hub (Symlicity)	Career services platform Appointment management Student and employer engagement	Career and Internship Services
MyPhoto	Online solution for photo upload for ID card to eliminate lines and waiting for new students	AVP for Enrollment Management Public Safety

*Note: This table highlights student support services outside of the classroom and does not include the many technologies that have been added to support students in classrooms, labs, and studios. For example, Leostream was an innovative solution implemented to allow students to remotely access technologies in studios, labs, and classrooms.*

During the pandemic, this technology became essential, and FIT benefitted from the advances it had made prior to the pandemic. For example, Health Services and the Counseling Center were both able to offer encrypted e-chats and telehealth services quickly because they were already utilizing Electronic Medical Records (EMR). In other cases, projects that had been planned were expedited by the move to remote learning. Math placement exams through the Testing Center were already in the process of moving to an online option when the pandemic pushed the timeline up.

**Student Health and Wellbeing**

Student health and wellbeing are essential elements in enabling students to succeed and complete their educational goals, as FIT students are ambitious and challenged by heavy workloads. Several offices have collaborated on an integrated Wellness initiative to provide holistic support to students, including co-sponsored programming by the Counseling Center, Health Services, Athletics & Recreation, Student Life, FIT-ABLE, and Residential Life. Programming includes the creation of a Meditation Space, workshops on topics ranging from stress management to yoga, nutrition, support groups, mindfulness, eating issues, healthy relationships, study skills, and more. The health educator and peer advisors play a key role in these initiatives, and the Office of Student Life made office space available for the health educator so that they could be closer to students and student organizations. Outreach includes a Wellness Instagram account managed by the peer educators and monthly emails sent to all students that are tied to themes such as Women’s History Month or holiday stress (e.g. [Wellness Email March 2021](#)). While FIT has been remote during the pandemic, virtual workshops, support groups, yoga, and other exercise classes, etc. have all been made available and advertised through various Wellness initiative channels.

Since health issues can have a significant impact on a student’s wellbeing and their ability to succeed academically, FIT Health Services plays a role in student support by not only providing medical care but engaging in health education. Some of their specialty services include nutrition



counseling, acupuncture, massage therapy, stress management programs, management of the campus food pantry, and more. Until the pandemic they were in the process of obtaining accreditation through the AAAHC (Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care, Inc.); that effort was paused until the campus fully reopens and some necessary renovations are completed. During the Covid pandemic, Health Services has been at the center of FIT's planning and response to the pandemic by coordinating campus testing and vaccinations as well as care for community members who have tested positive. Telehealth services were available immediately and health education continued in webinar format. ([Health Services Year End Report 2019-2020](#))

The Counseling Center is a crucial service for supporting students' emotional well-being, personal development, and academic success. It offers crisis intervention, clinical risk assessment, confidential short-term individual and group psychotherapy, and workshops centered on prevention and students' holistic health. In response to a marked increase in student walk-ins and mental health needs (422 new clients/students in 2017-18 grew to 734 in 2018-2019), the center began to reorganize its treatment model to incorporate a short-term therapy and stepped-care approach for triage and case disposition. These measures decreased wait time for appointments, increased the number of students seen, and decreased the total number of sessions each student received. In 2018, a Triage/Case Manager position was created with dual reporting to Counseling and Health Services, and a second position was added in 2019-2020. Additional outreach efforts have included expanded group support programs and remote workshops. The Counseling Center conducts various programs to create and promote a sense of community and connectedness; one of the most popular is the animal therapy offering, with sessions held each semester, co-hosted by Residential Life, Student Life, and the Gladys Marcus Library. ([Counseling Center Year End Report 2018-19](#); [Counseling Center Year End Report 2019-2020](#)).

FIT's [Care Team](#) supports students in immediate distress, providing a coordinated point of contact. Chaired by the dean of students and staffed by EMSS employees rotating through an "on call" schedule, the team identifies, assesses, and assists students who display mild to extreme levels of concerning or disruptive behavior including but not limited to suicidal, assaultive, and/or self-harm. EMSS and AA collaborate to inform faculty about the reporting process and offer training sessions on "[Creating Harmony in the Classroom](#)" and addressing student behavior. In addition to the students identified through the Care process, the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) serves as a support structure, responding to student issues including illnesses, deaths in students' families, homelessness, missing students, and more ([DoS Welcome Fall 2020](#)).

International Student Services (ISS) ensures that FIT's International Students are supported in their academic programs. FIT's international student population is significant, comprising 12% of students in 2019. ISS advises all nonimmigrant students admitted to FIT degree programs in matters pertaining to their immigration status in the United States. ISS has recently broadened its mission beyond immigration support. Prior to August 2019, international student orientation consisted of a one-hour regulation-based presentation; students are now required to attend a full-day orientation which includes interactive presentations on academic success strategies, transitioning to FIT, and wellness matters for international students. The Cultural Fellows



program, established in 2016 as one of FIT's strategic plan initiatives, engages international students as well as students who have international experiences to foster cross-cultural communication with faculty, staff and peers ([FIT Beyond 2020 Outcomes](#)). ISS also offers a wide-range of events throughout each year to support international students as an essential part of the FIT community. In the academic year 2019-2020, ISS offered 28 events attended by 1,486 students, in addition to the 17 immigration status-related information sessions ([ISS Annual Report 2019-20](#)).

FIT students' educational goals often include international study, which is also part of FIT's mission; these experiences help prepare students for the global industries they plan to enter. Students with interest in studying abroad receive guidance and support through the Office of International Programs (OIP). The office had upwards of 2,000 student visits, both in-person and virtual, in 2018-2019. In addition to the individual appointments, the office held many informational, pre-departure, re-entry and social/education meetings and events for students to attend ([OIP Annual Report 2018-19](#)).

Students studying abroad at FIT's sites in Florence or Milan for a semester or a year remain supported by the New York campus while away, as well as by the local program directors. These students are advised on logistics and study abroad preparation by OIP, but continue to be advised by the Academic Advisement Center and their departments and have access to virtual sessions with FIT's Counseling Center; each Italian site also contracts with specific mental health professions who are available to the students. Students are required to carry SUNY-mandated UHC health insurance while abroad, which also provides an App to help students find providers; the local offices frequently help students make appointments. The directors at the two Italian sites work closely with FIT's OIP, the Office of Academic Affairs, and the dean of students on a wide variety of student issues, including providing accommodations to students working with FIT-able, offering tutoring services, Title IX reports, and emergency situations. Offices in AA and EMSS collaborate with OIP to provide both pre-departure and on-site orientations, as well as re-entry workshops. Students are also able to use the IT and other facilities at Polimoda, in Florence, and the Polytechnic University of Milan, where the FIT programs are located.

FIT's mission is to prepare students for professional careers, and students choose a professional field at the very start of their college education. Being prepared for and successfully finding professional employment is thus a central educational goal. The Career and Internship Center empowers FIT students to obtain internships and job placement opportunities in the global employment market. Internships provide valuable experience and often lead to job offers. In 2019, 31% of recent alumni respondents with credit-bearing internships reported that the internship led to a job or job offer with the employer ([Alumni Survey AY2018](#)). **See also Standard III.**

Career and Internship Services provides career counseling and internship search coaching on a one-to-one basis for all students and alumni. FIT provides life-time job search support to its community, with access to its counselors for guidance and an online job bank. Students may seek advisement in the creation and maintenance of their LinkedIn profile, resume and cover letter

writing, salary negotiation, job search strategies, career and job exploration, interview preparation, labor market information, career decision making, and part-time, full-time, or freelance opportunities. Additionally, Career and Internship Services hosts career development events and workshops and holds career fairs each semester to provide additional support and guidance to the students' co-curricular experience ([CIS Annual Report 2019–2020](#)).

FIT students are successful in attaining their post-graduation employment goals. The annual survey given to bachelor's degree graduates one-year after graduation consistently shows positive employment outcomes. In the 2018 survey, 86% of respondents reported being employed, with 70% reporting employment in a job related to their degree. Twelve percent were unemployed (seeking employment but not working) and two percent were neither working nor seeking employment ([Alumni Survey AY2018](#)). In self-studies written for academic program reviews, programs discuss employment outcomes for students in the major, often noting the positions and companies where students find employment. These self-studies provide further evidence of student success in employment ([Employment Outcomes Recent APRs](#)). Confirming this success, a study by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce ranked FIT as No. 100 out of 4,500 institutions for its return on investment ten years after graduation ([FIT Annual Report 2019-2020](#)).

This full range of student support services contribute to FIT's retention and graduation rates. Since FIT offers degrees in a 2+2 system, AAS and bachelor's rates are calculated separately. Many, but not all, entering first-time AAS students plan to continue in a bachelor's program at FIT; 74% of the 2018-2019 AAS graduates entered a bachelor's program at FIT in fall 2019 ([Student Success ORB](#)). The one-year retention rate for the fall 2020 cohort of first-time, full-time undergraduate degree-seeking students was 88% ([2020 Factbook: Retention](#)). Approximately 82% of the fall 2017 cohort of first-time, full-time degree-seeking students earned an associate's degree from FIT within three years. This rate has improved in the last five years, particularly for Hispanic and Black students ([Grad Rates by Race/Ethnicity](#)). Of the FIT students who then entered a bachelor's program at FIT in fall 2017, about 90% graduated within three years; almost 96% of the students who transferred into a bachelor's program at FIT graduated in that time frame ([2020 Factbook: Graduation](#)).

## **TRANSFER CREDIT POLICIES (IV.2)**

*Criterion 2: Policies and procedures regarding evaluation and acceptance of transfer credits, and credits awarded through experiential learning, prior non-academic learning, competency-based assessment, and other alternative learning approaches.*

FIT has historically attracted a large transfer student population; in fall 2020, more than 1,500 students entered as degree-seeking transfer students. Many students choose to transfer to FIT for the specialized degrees, sometimes after beginning their educational careers at another SUNY institution. Prospective students are able to view the complete transfer credit policy on the FIT website ([Transfer Credit Webpage](#)). The Registrar's Office evaluates transcripts for liberal arts credits, consulting with the appropriate Liberal Arts and Sciences departments when necessary to ensure the maximum transfer credits. For coursework toward major degree credits, the

Admissions Office forwards transcripts to the student's academic department to determine credit and advanced standing.

Recent improvements in transfer credit evaluation and acceptance include the addition of FIT's [Transfer Credit Policy](#) in 2015, improved reporting and tracking between the offices of Admissions and Registrar to expedite transfer credits during the admissions cycle, and solid partnerships with Academic Advisement Center and students' major academic departments. These efforts have improved the timeliness and applicability of transfer credit. Admitted students are given access to their transfer credits within the FIT portal allowing them to review their transfer credits prior to the admission deposit deadline. Once deposited, new students have access to their degree audits which allow them to create graduation plans and petition for any additional transfer credits with their academic advisors prior to registration.

Students who transfer from a FIT AAS program directly into one of FIT's bachelor's programs are prioritized through early advisement and registration in mid-May through a partnership between Admissions, Registrar's Office, and the Academic Advisement Center. These offices assist students with any outstanding transfer credit questions related to their major area in consultation with the academic department chair prior to the summer recess, which has allowed students to determine if their previous coursework will assist in the completion of their current and future degree requirements.

FIT has established transfer articulation agreements and increased the use of Banner transfer articulation tables to over 90 institutions locally, nationally, and internationally. External exam articulations are posted by the Registrar's office for the large numbers of students who have taken Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), and College Level Examination Program (CLEP). FIT also considers all liberal arts courses completed with a minimum "D" grade or equivalent from a State University of New York (SUNY) or City University of New York (CUNY) school for students who have earned an associate's degree from a SUNY or CUNY ([Articulation Agreements](#)).

### **SECURITY OF STUDENT INFORMATION AND RECORDS (IV.3)**

*Criterion 3: Policies and procedures for the safe and secure maintenance and appropriate release of student information and records.*

FIT takes various measures to protect student personal data. Each semester, the Registrar's Office communicates FERPA guidelines to employees through email ([FERPA Communication Spring 2021](#)). The [FERPA Policy](#) link is housed within FIT's portal MyFIT, in the college policy library and is described on the Registrar's Office website. FERPA guidelines are also published in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook, as directed by the State University of New York, which is shared in a welcome message to students from the dean of students each semester ([DoS Welcome Spring 2021](#); [Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook](#)). FERPA training is included as part of the new faculty orientation required for all new faculty members. Employees in student-facing offices such as Registrar, Financial Aid, Bursar, Admissions, Academic

Advisement, Information Technology, are required to take annual training ([FERPA Employee Training](#)). Any FERPA information requests are referred to the Office of General Counsel.

Information Technology (IT) safeguards are in place to protect electronic data. In May 2015, Information Technology implemented the [Data Custodian and Access Policy](#), providing the FIT community with guidance for protection of institutional data from unauthorized use, and in November 2017, the [Information Security Policy](#) protecting student, faculty, and staff professional and personal information inclusive of their original research and design. Having these safeguards in place allowed FIT to quickly implement online tools and provide student services remotely in the remote learning environment during the Covid pandemic. As an additional safeguard to increase the protection and maintenance of student records, IT instituted dual device authentications for logging into faculty and staff Virtual Private Networks (VPN).

#### **ATHLETICS, STUDENT LIFE, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (IV.4)**

*Criterion 4: If offered, athletic, student life, and other extracurricular activities that are regulated by the same academic, fiscal, and administrative principles and procedures that govern all other programs.*

FIT offers a vibrant array of co- and extracurricular activities for its students. These help build community at FIT, relieve stress, and help students gain important developmental skills, such as leadership. The division of Enrollment Management and Student Success (EMSS) oversees these areas, and they are subject to the same administrative procedures as other programs in EMSS and other offices at FIT, including budgetary processes, hiring practices, and assessment requirements.

Athletics & Recreation promotes health and wellbeing by overseeing seven NJCAA intercollegiate teams, managing two fitness centers, offering fitness classes, and joining campus partners in wellness education. As a member of the National Junior College Athletic Association, FIT's intercollegiate programs follow all policies and standards of the NJCAA. Although facilities were closed due to the pandemic, the department continued to offer live and pre-recorded virtual fitness classes ([Athletics and Recreation Annual Report 2018-19](#); [Athletics and Recreation Annual Report 2019-20](#)).

The [Department of Student Life](#) oversees the Student Government Association (SGA), Student Activities Board, around 65 clubs and organizations, leadership development, community service/civic engagement, New Student Orientation, special events, and social programming. Student Life is one of the many offices that has integrated technology into its practices to better support students, through its use of the digital engagement tool FIT Link (part of Campus Labs Engage). While the tool has been in place since 2011, it is only since 2017 that the department has built in more functionality and trained many FIT departments, as well as all 60-65 student clubs and organizations, to use FIT Link. *This Week @ FIT*, the weekly email to students announcing campus events is now fully integrated into FIT Link and its mobile version, the CORQ App (see examples, [This Week at FIT November 2020](#); [This Week at FIT February 2021](#)).

To engage the approximately 2,300 students living in the residence halls in a typical year, Residential Life offers educational programming. The department promotes learning in its broadest sense by fostering inclusivity, developing mutual respect, and encouraging personal growth. In the spring and summer of 2018 the department developed and implemented a residential curriculum that replaced past programming and updated Resident Assistant (RA) training and responsibilities to assist in implementing educational strategies to meet learning outcomes. Plans to develop programs further were paused when residence halls were closed to most students due to the pandemic in March 2020 (a small number of students with extenuating circumstances stayed). Halls opened again for fall 2020 but only 220 students returned to housing, leading to layoffs of just over half of the full-time and part-time professional staff and all of the paraprofessional RAs in the department ([Res Life Year End Report 2018-19](#); [Res Life Year End Report 2019-20](#); [Dr. Brown Email Res Life Oct20](#)).

**Criterion 5: If applicable, adequate and appropriate institutional review and approval of student support services, designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party providers.**

Not applicable

**ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS (IV.6)**

*Criterion 6: Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of programs supporting the student experience.*

FIT has a number of procedures in place to ensure regular assessment of its overall support of the student experience, as well as the effectiveness of each program or office. Two major surveys, the National Survey of Student Experience (NSSE) and the SUNY Student Satisfaction Survey, each given on a three-year cycle, allow FIT to compare results over time and with those of other institutions to better assess performance. The NSSE survey asks first-year and senior students questions about overall satisfaction, how they spend their time, and educational and social engagement. The SUNY Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS; formerly, the Student Opinion Survey, or SOS) collects information on satisfaction with academic experiences, student support services, and campus resources and programs. The SSS asks about particular support services, including tutoring, academic advising, career services, and financial aid services, providing assessment information for specific units. ([NSSE 2017](#); [NSSE 2020](#); [SOS 2018 Full](#); [SOS 2018 Exec Sum](#))

In several of the SOS surveys, student satisfaction with student services has ranked towards the bottom of the SUNY institutions, and students noted that communication between offices can be poor. Results have improved in selected areas where FIT has made focused efforts to change outcomes, as with academic advising. In the 2012 SOS survey, satisfaction with general academic advising was ranked low; as a result, a centralized Academic Advising Center was created, and this area ranked much higher in the 2015 and 2018 administrations. After low ratings of student services in the 2015 SOS survey, FIT conducted an internal follow-up survey for additional feedback from students ([FIT SOS 2016](#)). Staff from several student services areas,

such as registration, advising, financial aid, and internships and career services, met to consider ways to improve, particularly in terms of communications, and implemented a number of actions ([FIT SOS Review Group; SOS Completed Actions](#)). FIT has begun to see improvements in the ratings in the 2020 NSSE; while still lower than average, student ratings of their interactions with student services and administrative staff improved quite a bit ([NSSE 2020](#)).

All offices that support the student experience incorporate assessment methods into their operations. [Assessment at FIT: An Overview](#) includes a list of performance indicators used by each unit and describes assessment procedures in the two divisions that house student support offices (AA and EMSS). In both divisions, assessment has been integrated into the annual reports submitted to the divisional vice president, as units discuss progress towards achieving goals set in the previous year using assessment measures related to goal success. These units regularly make use of assessment results to inform planning. For example, in the Office of Student Life, in 2018-2019 student positions were redesigned, training for student and professional staff was revamped, the student government was reorganized and ratified a new constitution, and the format of New Student Orientation was changed in response to assessment results. Assessment data is available from Campus Labs and is used for insights about students' interests and continuous improvement. ([Student Life Year End Report 2018-2019](#), [Student Life Year End Report 2019-2020](#); [FITLink Assessment Fa19](#); [New Student Orientation Outcomes Executive Summary Fall 2019](#); [New Student Orientation Outcomes Exec Sum Fa20 & Sp21](#))

In addition to the use of assessment on a regular basis, all units supporting the student experience go through a comprehensive Administrative Review every seven to ten years. This provides a broad view of each office, as the self-study includes a variety of components, including a mission statement, student learning and development outcomes (where relevant), and assessment results. Two external experts come to campus for a site visit, meeting with students, staff, and other stakeholders, in order to provide a written, candid analysis with suggestions for improvement. External reviewers are asked to refer to the CAS standards in evaluating units. For more information, see [Assessment at FIT](#). ([Admin Review Guidelines](#); [Admin Review Scope of Work](#); see sample, [Counseling Center Review](#))

### **Conclusion:**

FIT's support of students is strong, demonstrated by student success and satisfaction. According to the most recent NSSE results in 2020, 83% of first year students and 84% of seniors would definitely or probably choose to attend FIT again -- higher than results at other SUNY campuses. In addition, an increasingly diverse student population has maintained a strong one-year retention rate.

FIT has demonstrated a collaborative approach to provide expanded student support through a combination of in-person and web-based services. Student support offices have increased their efforts to provide a student-centered environment. While FIT continues to build upon its strengths, the institution's opportunities for improvement in both academic support and co-curricular programs have become evident and are addressed in the recommendations below.



## **Strengths:**

- Student support services have harnessed technology to streamline services for students and make others more available online.
- A number of student support areas have improved services by collaborating on initiatives to enhance student services, student life, and academic support. Some highlights include: wellness initiatives, transfer student services, Cultural Fellows, EOP student recruitment, and student leadership such as Tiger Leaders.

## **Opportunities for Improvement:**

### ***Continue to build a campus climate that prioritizes civility, diversity, equity and inclusion***

- Enhance training/professional development for all employees on communication skills (with students and colleagues), mental health awareness, diversity and inclusion work. Make use of campus surveys to identify particular training and development needs.

### ***Effectively coordinate communications across the college***

- While collaborative efforts to support students have increased in many areas, communication at all levels and across divisions at FIT can be improved to proactively assist students and minimize their dissatisfaction with interactions among various student support offices. Specifically, the college must ensure that accurate information is shared in a timely manner to decrease student frustration with inconsistent communications.
- Increase awareness of and participation in student-centered initiatives such as Early Alert through enhanced communications between faculty, students, and relevant administrative bodies.



## Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

*Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their programs of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.*

This chapter demonstrates how FIT meets the criteria for Standard V, as well as Requirements of Affiliation 9.

FIT has a systemized process in place for assessing student learning and broader educational goals. Since the last Middle States review, FIT made a number of structural improvements to the assessment process, such as hiring an executive director of assessment to oversee this area and instituting a structure for annual reporting on program learning outcome assessment. In addition, the Faculty Senate Academic Assessment Committee has been strengthened. It provides strong guidance particularly for the assessment of general education, evaluating assessments using a rubric and providing feedback. These factors have combined to create a strong culture of assessment at FIT.

### EDUCATIONAL GOALS AT FIT (V.1)

*Criterion 1: Clearly stated student learning outcomes, at the institution and degree/program levels, which are interrelated with one another, with relevant educational experiences, and with the institution's mission.*

FIT's educational offerings are guided by clearly stated learning outcomes at all levels. SUNY institutions are required to follow common general education requirements for undergraduate degrees in order to ensure seamless transfers for students; each general education requirement includes student learning outcomes, which serve as FIT's institutional learning outcomes for undergraduate education ([SUNY GER](#)). As discussed in **Standard III.5**, these general education requirements teach students foundational skills, such as critical thinking, communication, and information literacy, as well as provide students with broad foundational knowledge, an important underpinning to the specific skills taught in FIT's majors. The SUNY framework provides for some flexibility at the campus level. FIT customized the SUNY framework to make natural sciences a required area, in addition to the two required by SUNY (basic communication and mathematics). In addition, FIT's science department developed additional learning outcomes for all science courses that reflect FIT's mission ([FIT Science Learning Outcomes](#)). In addition to the three required areas, students must take courses in at least five of the remaining seven knowledge and skill areas to ensure breadth. Programs can set requirements for particular courses; for example, many AAS degrees in the Baker School of Business and Technology specify that students take MA 222 Statistical Analysis for their mathematics requirement rather than other mathematics courses offered.

In fall of 2021, SUNY released a new general education framework ([New SUNY Gen Ed Framework](#)), expected to start with students entering in fall 2023, as discussed in **Standard III.5**. FIT will have some flexibility in how this operates at FIT and can use this opportunity to discuss how well the SUNY framework serves as FIT’s institutional goals and what modifications can be made to better suit FIT’s distinct mission. Some of the proposed new SUNY requirements, including competencies in global learning and diversity, are especially welcomed as they are key parts of FIT’s identity.

The general education learning outcomes are publicly available in FIT’s course catalog ([UG Catalog Gen Ed Req](#)). After assessments indicated that some courses certified for general education were not addressing the SUNY learning outcomes, FIT built in additional sections of its course proposal form for faculty proposing new courses to discuss how the course met the general education outcomes ([The Arts Assessment 2016-17](#); [CIM Example Gen Ed](#)). The new SUNY requirements provide FIT with an opportunity to rethink certification for general education courses, including how to ensure all faculty teaching a particular course are aware of the SUNY outcomes for the area.

All FIT degree programs and certificates articulate student learning outcomes; these are posted in digital catalog and on program websites. In the last five years, following recommendations FIT made in its 2012 MSCHE self-study as well improvements suggested in the administrative review of the Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness (IRE), FIT has worked to improve assessment of program learning outcomes ([Annual Report Asst and IE AY2016](#); [Assessment Reviewers Report 2015](#)). In 2015, the newly hired executive director of assessment recognized that program-level learning outcomes (PLOs) had not been revised recently and were not well known by all chairs and faculty; in addition, assessment of these outcomes was not always regularly documented. IRE oversaw a three year project to have all programs review and revise learning outcomes, map their curricular requirements, and begin to assess PLOs annually ([Memos PLO Assessment 2015-17](#)). IRE partnered with the Center for Excellence in Teaching to offer workshops to faculty and also provided written resources to support this work ([Resources 3 Year Assessment Plan](#)).

As part of the academic program review process, programs are encouraged to review and revise program learning outcomes, as well as to update curriculum maps to reflect changes since the last review. Recently, as an initial step in its program review, Fashion Design thoroughly revised the program learning outcomes for its AAS and BFA degrees, making use of surveys of student and faculty perceptions of learning ([FD Student & Faculty Survey Sp21](#)).

New courses are required to include course-level learning outcomes as part of the curricular approval process; they are part of the “course of study,” the template used for all sections of a course. FIT requires that course learning outcomes be included on the syllabi distributed to students ([Syllabus Memo Sp21](#)). As discussed in **Standard III**, FIT would benefit from a more thorough and regular review process for courses of study, to ensure they are regularly updated.

**ORGANIZED AND SYSTEMATIC ASSESSMENTS (V.2 and ROA9)**

*Criterion 2: FIT implements organized and systematic assessments, conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals, evaluating the extent of student achievement of institutional and degree/program goals.*

- a. FIT defines meaningful curricular goals with defensible standards for evaluating whether students are achieving those goals.*
- b. FIT articulates how we prepare students in a manner consistent with their missions for successful careers, meaningful lives, and, where appropriate, further education. FIT collects and provides data on the extent to which we are meeting these goals.*
- c. FIT supports and sustain assessment of student achievement and communicates the results of this assessment to stakeholders.*

FIT relies upon several assessment processes to ensure that the education offered is effective and supports students in their educational goals:

<b>Assessment Process</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Time cycle</b>
General Education Requirements	13 required areas assessed on a rotating basis	Each area assessed every 3 years
Program Learning Outcomes	Each degree program required to assess student learning annually	Annual reporting to IRE or Programmatic Accreditor (ACBSP or CIDA)
Academic Program Review	Evaluation of entire academic program; includes feedback from external reviewers	Approximately every 7 years
Administrative Review, Student-Facing Units	Broad evaluation process for units in EMSS and AA; includes assessment of student learning and development outcomes when relevant; includes feedback from external reviewers	Approximately every 7 years

Ongoing Surveys	Regular surveys conducted to gather evidence of educational effectiveness	NSSE (every 3 years); SUNY Student Satisfaction Survey (every 3 years); Exit Survey for ACBSP (seven BS programs in B&T, annually); Exit surveys for A&D programs (annually); AAS and BFA alumni surveys (annually)
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### General Education Assessment

FIT faculty assess 13 General Education areas on a three-year cycle; projects are occasionally delayed by a year, as happened during the Covid-19 pandemic. Each assessment project is led by a faculty assessment coordinator granted a course release. The [General Education Assessment Guidelines](#) explain the process and expectations.

To begin a project, the faculty assessment coordinator prepares a proposal with input from both the Faculty Senate Academic Assessment Committee (FSAAC) and FIT’s executive director of assessment. The assessment coordinator leads the project, recruiting faculty to participate in assessing student work embedded in required courses and discussing student learning. At the end of the process, the coordinator presents a report to the FSAAC and to Academic Affairs leadership for discussion and development of an action plan for improvement.

Each faculty assessment coordinator has the flexibility to develop an assessment project that answers questions faculty have about student learning. Projects are encouraged to assess student learning directly, through work produced in the general education courses, and, when useful, to build on previous assessments so as to compare student achievement between assessment cycles. One of the most common assessment methods is for faculty to evaluate student work already assigned in classes using a rubric, in terms of whether students are exceeding, meeting, approaching, or not meeting the learning outcomes and related criteria. By and large, faculty find that most FIT students meet or exceed expectations overall, while identifying areas where students could improve. Assessments conducted during the Covid-19 shift to remote teaching helped reassure the institution that strong learning continued to occur ([Written Communication Assessment 2020-21](#); [Mathematics Assessment 2020](#)).

In addition to direct assessment of student work, coordinators often use additional assessment methods to help them and their colleagues better analyze student learning, such as including student surveys (e.g. [Humanities Assessment 2019](#); [Written Communication Assessment 2020-21](#)) and faculty surveys ([Western Civ Assessment 2017-18](#)). For example, in the Written Communication survey, ten percent of students noted that they had not completed research-based writing in their section. Also as part of the assessment, the coordinator reviewed faculty assignments and found that there was a wide disparity in research writing expectations among sections. Faculty assessment of student work had found that students were weakest at skills

related to use of sources and their citation, and these additional elements offered some possible reasons and actions to address this relatively weaker area.

Assessment findings are shared with the FSAAC, which provides an annual report to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee ([FSAAC Annual Report 2020-21](#)). After each project has been completed, IRE posts an executive summary along with the action plan on the internal MyFIT website; this information is also included in IRE's annual report on assessment, also available to the community ([IRE MyFIT Screenshot](#), [Annual Report Asst and IE AY17](#); [Annual Report Asst and IE AY18](#); [Annual Report Asst and IE AY19](#); [Annual Report Asst and IE AY20](#)). Because many faculty do not seek out information on the MyFIT page, more could be done to communicate assessment findings. The Faculty Senate Academic Assessment Committee has been considering ways to share results more broadly and developed a [General Education Assessment @ FIT Summary](#), which was sent to the Senate Executive Committee for review and distribution. This document is primarily meant to communicate the results of assessment in a way that faculty who do not teach general education courses can recognize the value of student learning in this area. If this effort is successful, the document can be updated and distributed annually. In 2018, an event was organized to present findings on projects in the Social Sciences, Information Literacy, and Mathematics ([Gen Ed Event 2018](#)); more events like this could be done.

### **Program Learning Outcome (PLO) Assessment**

In 2018, after programs spent two years revising learning outcomes, mapping the curriculum, and designing assessment plans, FIT instituted annual reporting on assessment of program learning outcomes. Prior to this, assessment of PLOs was only documented during the academic program review process. While programs were advised to assess annually and retain the information for their program reviews and for NASAD accreditation, there was variation in the extent to which this was done. IRE's task of instituting this annual process was aided by the Baker School of Business and Technology's application for accreditation from ACBSP. The school developed school-wide learning outcomes, aligned with ACBSP requirements, and the seven programs applying for accreditation revised their learning outcomes; mapped the outcomes to courses in which they were taught; and identified student assignments in the courses where they could be assessed, selecting methods to be used ([B&T Learning Outcome Ladders](#)). ACBSP requires multiple types of assessment evidence, collected annually, including formative (in the middle of the degree program), summative (at the end), and an externally-validated assessment (in this case, Peregrine Global Services' Business Administration Assessment was selected), as well as use of information for continuous improvement ([Assessment Measures for ACBSP](#)). Because the requirements of ACBSP focus on learning outcomes assessment and the use of results, these seven programs report assessment results to ACBSP rather than internally, so as to avoid duplication of efforts.

While the culture of assessment has been greatly strengthened with these new processes, further work remains to make assessment of program learning outcomes a truly ongoing and embedded process. Since 2018, when the current assessment structure was implemented, while all except a small handful of programs have participated at least once, the small minority of programs have

submitted reports each of the three years ([PLO Report Submissions 2018-2020](#)). In part, the disruption of the Covid pandemic in the third year of annual reporting meant that many faculty were overburdened with suddenly teaching remotely and were unable to write assessment reports. In addition, due to the decrease in the number of full-time faculty means, there are fewer faculty available to be charged with assessment responsibilities. In 2020, programs were encouraged to continue with their assessment plans but were given the option to adjust according to needs given the Covid pandemic ([Annual PLO Assessment 2020](#)). Some programs conducted their typical assessment methods while others provided narratives of challenges and successes with the move to remote teaching and learning; programs reported strong learning despite the pandemic (Annual Report IE and Asst AY20, p. 10-11).

Programs use different methods for assessment, as appropriate for their areas. The most common method of learning outcomes assessment is the use of rubrics by multiple faculty to assess a collection of student work, particularly from capstone courses, where students integrate skills from throughout a major at a high level. The Illustration AAS program, in addition to assessing student capstone work with rubrics, also uses surveys regarding faculty perceptions of course effectiveness and faculty evaluations of student productivity. As with some other programs in Art and Design, instructors are required to upload samples of student work for all courses each semester. Programs such as Packaging Design and Exhibition Design incorporate guest critics into assessment. For further information on methods, findings, and use of results, see [PLO Methods + Use 2018-2020](#).

The executive director of assessment provides written feedback for each report to encourage programs to continue with productive assessment methods or evolve processes as needed. For example, the Textile Surface Design (TSD) program was commended in 2018 for their analysis, while given guidance regarding their sample size and data reporting for the next assessment ([Textile/Surface Design PLO Report 2018](#); [TSD 2018 Report Feedback](#)). The 2019 assessment in the program reflected these changes ([Textile/Surface Design PLO Report 2019](#)).

Changes implemented as a result of PLO assessments are often curricular, at the level of program learning outcomes as well as individual courses. For example, as a result of assessments in 2018 and 2019, the Global Fashion Management department revised the MPS capstone project to provide more support to students struggling with research and data analysis by dividing the project into more manageable steps; the Jewelry Design AAS redesigned CAD instruction in the first year; and Toy Design added to acting improvisation workshops to improve public speaking skills ([PLO Methods + Use 2018-2020](#), see 2019 chart).

### **Academic Program Reviews and Administrative Unit Reviews**

One of the most important assessment processes at FIT is Academic Program Review (APR), a broad process that enables multiple aspects of a program to be examined together, in the context of mission and over a longer time period; this process is also discussed in **Standard III.8**. APRs have three phases, the self-study, the external review, and the wrap-up phase (formerly, “closing-the-loop”). Programs engage in self-analysis through a written self-study, which includes a program profile, analysis of five-year student data trends, review of learning outcomes and

curriculum map, assessment of student learning outcomes, and a SWOT analysis. For the external review, the program invites two reviewers, an academic in the field, and, because FIT’s mission is to prepare students for the fashion and creative business professions, an industry professional who knows what skills are needed for entry-level positions. During the wrap-up phase, the program responds to the reviewers’ report and develops a final action plan. The report and action plan are discussed in a meeting between program representatives, the school dean, the vice president for academic affairs, and other academic affairs personnel. The entire process is described in the [Academic Program Review Guidelines](#).

SUNY’s policy is that academic programs without programmatic accreditation undergo program review, using external reviewers, every five to seven years. Since the NASAD and ACBSP accreditations do not examine all elements covered by APR at the program-level, all programs except Interior Design, with its thorough CIDA accreditation, go through FIT’s internal process. Originally, reviews were on a five-year cycle; this was changed to a seven-year cycle in 2015. However, sometimes reviews are delayed for a variety of reasons, such as a change in leadership or key faculty member’s sabbatical, and the average time between reviews has increased. A proposal has been made to return to a five year cycle ([Academic Program Review Cycle Memo](#)).

Administrative Reviews are conducted for offices in EMSS and AA, which include all of FIT’s student-facing support programs. These offices are particularly important in helping prepare students for successful careers and meaningful lives. Career and Internship Services aids students with career planning, while the Writing & Speaking Studio facilitates peers to help students develop written and oral communication projects for professional and personal purposes, as well as for their courses. Areas such as Student Life and Athletics and Recreation develop leadership skills, foster campus engagement, and help students expand their personal interests. These offices extend and support student learning in numerous ways, which they articulate as Student Learning and Development Outcomes. Administrative Reviews are similar to the Academic Program Reviews, consisting of an evaluative self-study, feedback from external reviewers, and a wrap-up process including discussion of an action plan. The self-study includes the assessment of Student Learning and Development Outcomes ([Admin Review Guidelines](#); [Counseling Center Review](#)). An Executive Summary of each Academic Program Review and Administrative Review, including the action plan, is posted on MyFit (examples, [Packaging Design Exec Sum and Action Plan](#); [AAC Exec Sum and Action Plan](#)).

### Student Surveys

FIT makes use of several regular surveys focused on student learning and students’ learning experiences as well as periodic SUNY-wide and national surveys.

Survey	Timetable	About
SUNY Student Satisfaction Survey (formerly the Student Opinion Survey)	Every three years.	Student perspectives on experiences in academic and non-academic areas. FIT results



		compared to other 4-year SUNY institutions
National Survey of Student Experience (NSSE)	Every three years.	Asks first-year and senior students questions about overall satisfaction, how they spend their time, and educational and social engagement. Comparisons available for 4-year SUNY and other institutional groupings.
FIT Alumni One-Year Out Survey	Every year, given to students one-year out of the AAS and Bachelor's degree programs.	Provides information on employment outcomes, job search methods, and perception of how their FIT experience prepared them for their careers
Exit Surveys in B&T and A&D	Every year.	Exit surveys gather information on general satisfaction as well as student learning. The Peregrine Business exam for ACBSP accredited programs incorporates an exit exam. A&D students fill out surveys in person during a selected final-term capstone class in each program.

These surveys help FIT evaluate how students are prepared for successful careers and life after FIT. The alumni survey, given to students one year after graduation, asks them about their employment, including salary and benefits, and whether their employment is related to their degrees. The exit surveys in the Schools of Business and Technology and Art and Design also ask about whether students feel prepared for their careers, in addition to general questions about the programs and also about the attainment of learning outcomes. ([Photo AAS Exit Survey 2019](#); [CFM Exit Survey 2019](#); [Alumni Survey AY2018](#))

Surveys given on a regular basis are particularly useful, since FIT can note areas where ratings have increased or decreased. The NSSE, SOS/SSS, and alumni surveys look at FIT as a whole and the results are widely shared, as discussed in **Standard IV.6**. Findings from the annual alumni survey are used to provide the college with placement information, and posted on the public website ([Employment and Educational Status Page](#)). Results of the NSSE and SSS are shared with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and posted on MyFit. Exit surveys are most useful at the program level and are reviewed by each program's school dean, chair, and faculty.

Regular surveys are supplemented with additional, one-time surveys focused on particular situations or offices. For example, IRE conducted surveys of international students in 2018 and

graduate students in 2019. During the Covid pandemic, surveys regarding the impact of the pandemic provided important information for planning and confirmed that students felt high levels of support from FIT and continued to find their classes academically challenging ([SUNY Covid Student Survey Sp20](#); [NSSE Pulse Fa2020](#)).

This wide variety of assessment methods demonstrates that FIT assesses student achievement throughout its educational offerings, while the results of the assessments indicate the rigor and coherence of FIT's programs, in accordance with **Requirement of Affiliation 9**. FIT incorporates assessment across modalities and locations. Academic program reviews incorporate all degree types, including online degrees and certificates, as part of program review ([APR Guidelines](#)). Students in the two online degrees, the BS in International Trade Marketing and the one-year AAS in Fashion Business Management are surveyed regularly regarding their learning. The administrative review of the Office of Online Learning examined these results, and learning in the online modality more generally ([Office of Online Learning Self-Study](#); [OOL Appendices](#)). Student achievement in ITM's BS program is examined separately, in comparison with onsite students, as part of the ACBSP assessments. FIT has recently begun to better incorporate its overseas campuses into the assessment processes. The Fashion Design AAS program in Korea reported on assessment in 2019 ([FD Korea PLO Report 2019](#)), and samples of student work from sections in Korea were incorporated into the Written Communication assessment in 2020 ([Written Communication Report 2020-21](#)). Students who attended the Fashion Design programs in Italy provided feedback in a focus group in 2020 ([FD Florence Focus Group](#)), which was to be the first step of a broader review planned for April 2020 ([FD Abroad Review Scope of Work](#)). Unfortunately, this was canceled due to the Covid pandemic. As the programs in Italy have been on hold during the pandemic, plans for assessment have also been put on hold.

### **USE OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS (V.3)**

*Criterion 3: FIT considers and uses assessment results for the improvement of educational effectiveness. Consistent with the institution's mission, such uses include some combination of the following: a. FIT uses assessment results to assist students in improving their learning; b. FIT uses assessment results to improve pedagogy and curriculum; c. FIT uses assessment results to review and revise academic programs and support services; d. FIT uses assessment results to plan, conduct, and support a range of professional development activities; e. FIT uses assessment results to plan and budget for the provision of academic programs and services; f. FIT uses assessment results to inform appropriate constituents about the institution and its programs; g. FIT uses assessment results to improve key indicators of student success, such as retention, graduation, transfer, and placement rates; h. FIT uses assessment results to implement other processes and procedures designed to improve educational programs and services.*

Assessment processes are structured so that they focus on the use of results for improvement. Academic and administrative reviews, as well as general education assessment projects, all lead to the development of an action plan for improvement. IRE follows up on the status of action items annually, until approximately three years after the review, when a final update on actions is collected (see examples, [TDM Accomplished Action Plan](#); [CET Accomplished Action Plan](#);

[Modern Languages Accomplished Action Plan](#)). To encourage use of PLO assessment results, the annual report template for program learning outcomes asks programs how they plan to use the results, and follows up with a question as to how they ended up using the previous year's results ([Annual PLO Assessment Instructions 2021](#)). Programs accredited by ACBSP are required to show how assessment is used for improvement ([AMC Surveys and Improvements ACBSP](#); [Home Products ACBSP Asst Evidence](#)).

The aim of all student learning assessment is to increase student attainment of learning outcomes. As FIT faculty increasingly conduct and participate in assessment, methods improve and faculty are able to use the findings to make effective changes. A modern languages general education assessment project in 2018 “demonstrated marked improvement in all language categories that had been measured in the previous assessment cycle, particularly in terms of listening comprehension.” The assessment attributed at least some of this improvement to the renovated language laboratory used in most of the department's elementary-level courses, an action item from the 2014 assessment. In 2018, across language competencies, students performed least well in the area of writing skills (previously not assessed), and this finding prompted the department to revise their guidelines and rubrics for evaluating student writing. Another area of concern in the 2018 assessment were lower scores in Italian across competencies as compared to the other languages. As a result, the faculty chose to adopt a new Italian textbook which more adequately explained grammatical structures and included an online workbook and numerous multimedia resources. The report identified this as an area to monitor in the next assessment cycle. ([Modern Languages Assessment 2018](#)).

A recent assessment of Information Literacy called attention to the need to strengthen information literacy skills and further emphasize academic integrity. As a result, in the academic year 2019-2020, the Gladys Marcus Library completed a number of initiatives focusing efforts on teaching information literacy skills in and outside the library, including the development of shared learning outcomes within the Library Research and Instructional Unit and the development of information literacy and library instruction workshops. Further, the library added to its goals cultivating relationships with faculty across the disciplines to better understand course assignments and course syllabi in order to scaffold information literacy into the curriculum. ([Info Lit Assessment 2019](#); [Info Lit Action Plan 2019](#)).

Since 2016, all seven Business and Technology programs accredited by ACBSP have administered the Peregrine Business Administrative Assessment in their senior capstone courses. The fully online direct assessment instrument offers comprehensive reporting, providing information at the school-level and at the program level. One area of weakness highlighted across all of the programs in the Peregrine survey results and 2018-19 ACBSP self-study was business finance (see sample Peregrine report, [FBM Peregrine Results 2020-2021](#)). In response, MA300 (The Mathematics of Financial Life Management) was developed and has been deployed to address this weakness. The self-study also noted a weakness in the area of business law, and as a result, a new course was written and launched in Spring 2021.

Assessments often drive changes in curriculum at both the course and program level. For example, in response to the 2016 general education assessment of written communication which

found that 47% of students were either “approaching” or “not meeting” expectations in research-based writing, the English and Communication Studies (ECS) department took multiple steps including revision of the course of study for EN 121: English Composition, which was implemented and assessed in Fall 2020. In addition to organizing a series of talks on revision and research writing during 2017-2018, the department also developed a welcome packet for all first-year and professional writing faculty with a variety of process-based research and essay assignments ([Written Communication Assessment 2016-17](#); [Written Communication Accomplished Action Plan 2019](#)). The next assessment in fall 2020 noted improvements in writing quality; this assessment was conducted while classes were remote, and faculty expect to see more improvement when in-person instruction resumes. The research skills of incorporating sources and citing them correctly remain challenging for students, and the ECS committed to develop programming for faculty to address ongoing needs in relation to research writing pedagogy ([Written Communication Assessment 2020-21](#)).

Assessment of program learning outcomes has also led to improvements in pedagogy and curriculum. As a result of the Cosmetics and Fragrance Marketing and Management (CFMM) assessment of the spring 2018 student capstone project, CFMM made several curricular changes, including adding a consumer research refresher workshop to the capstone research seminar and a consumer research requirement to CF 663 Graduate Seminar: Advanced Topics in Marketing. CFMM implemented the research requirement in the fall 2018 semester and the refresher workshop in the spring 2019 semester and reported that these additions both had positive outcomes and will be continued in the program ([CFMM PLO Assessment 2018](#); [CFMM PLO Assessment 2019](#)).

The academic program review process also regularly leads to improvements. During the spring 2019 academic program review of Fashion and Textile Studies (FTS), the external reviewers identified the need for more structure around the students’ qualifying paper ([FTS Reviewers Report 2019](#), p. 6). In response, the program added a new course, FT 701: Qualifying Paper Seminar, beginning with the fall 2019 semester, in which students would be given the needed support ([FTS Review Response](#), p.2). See [Academic Program Reviews 2015-2021](#) for more examples of actions taken in response to reviews.

In the Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET), the hub for faculty development programming, formal data is gathered through yearly and event surveys, among others. The annual survey provides information on faculty needs, suggestions for new technology and requests scheduling; event surveys provide qualitative information and ideas for new workshops. Faculty input is reflected in future programming. For example, one faculty member felt the Teaching with Technology certificate program was too advanced. As a result, a pre-test now ensures that all faculty participants have the needed prerequisites. Another change made as a result of survey findings was the addition of more late afternoon workshops ([CET Self-Study 2017](#), see Section B). Similarly, Online Learning and the Writing & Speaking Studio also assess faculty participation in professional development events, using feedback to plan future programming. Feedback gathered from surveys given to audience members at the end of the Writing & Speaking Studio’s series, “Spotlight: Experts Talk Writing Pedagogy,” has directed decision-

making about the focus of future series, outreach to potential presenters, as well as modifications to the format ([WSS ECS Spotlight Panelists Surveys](#)).

FIT's IRE provides faculty development and support for assessment activities at FIT. In addition to written materials provided at workshops and on its website, IRE has partnered with CET to offer workshops, including Grading Made Easier with Rubrics, Designing a Course and Writing Effective Learning Outcomes, and Curriculum Mapping ([Assessment Workshop Materials](#)). Faculty attending CET's new faculty orientation are provided with information about assessment ([FIT Assessment for New Faculty](#)).

Assessment results are used in planning and budgeting for academic programs. While not formal part of requesting resources such as faculty lines, equipment, or space, chairs are urged to use program review findings to support such requests. The 2016 program review of Exhibition & Experience Design (EED) underscored issues that put the program at competitive disadvantage. Subsequently, two significant budgeting decisions were made: the School of Graduate Studies received institutional funding for several graduate student fellowships in 2017, a program that successfully continues to date, and the School of Graduate Studies was able to hire a Graduate Admissions & Recruitment Manager in 2017 ([EDD Self-Study 2016](#), p 28).

Assessment information is shared with the FIT community. Executive summaries and action plans for program reviews and general education assessment are posted on FIT's intranet (MyFIT) where they can be accessed by faculty, staff, and administrators. Reports on student surveys such as the NSSE, SOS, and annual alumni surveys, are posted here as well. While more could be done to share information more broadly, as discussed in **Criterion 2**, IRE seeks to ensure that programs have the information they need for decision making. Prior to 2019, program-level data related to diversity, student retention, and graduation rates was provided to programs only as part of their program reviews. In the past few years, IRE has produced complete data profiles for all academic programs and shared them annually with chairs, assistant chairs, deans, assistant deans, and selected administrators (e.g. [Illustration AAS BFA Data Profile 2020-2021](#))

As discussed in **Standard IV.6**, assessment is widely used by student support programs in Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management and Student Support. These programs are increasingly assessing not only student satisfaction, but the student learning and development fostered by the programs. In 2017, Residential Life overhauled its annual resident survey, moving from a satisfaction-based assessment to a learning outcomes-based assessment. The assessment still gathers information on key aspects of the living experience, including housing and dining accommodations, safety and security, and community building, but now focuses heavily on student learning and growth as a result of experiences facilitated by the staff in the department ([Residential Life Learning Outcomes](#); [Residential Life Survey 2018-2019](#)). Student services have also used information from the SUNY Student Opinion Survey (SOS) and the NSSE survey to make improvements, as discussed in **Standard IV.6**.

**Criterion 4: if applicable, adequate and appropriate institutional review and approval of assessment services designed, delivered or assessed by third-party providers**

Not applicable; there are no third-party providers of assessment services for FIT.

## **PERIODIC ASSESSMENT OF ASSESSMENT PROCESSES (V.5)**

*Criterion 5: FIT periodically evaluates the assessment processes utilized by the institution for the improvement of educational effectiveness.*

FIT has a variety of methods for examining the effectiveness of assessment processes and the use of results for continuous improvement. The office responsible for overseeing and promoting many of the assessments at FIT, Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE), goes through administrative review. The last review was in 2014, and included a list of suggestions for improving the structure of assessment at FIT, many of which were implemented. The office will go through its next review after all units have been reviewed in this cycle; this will be in 2022-23 ([Assessment Reviewers Report 2015](#); [Admin Review Schedule 2021 On](#)).

After this review of IRE, along with the hiring of a new executive director of assessment, processes for academic program review, administrative review, and general education assessment were altered. For the first several years, in order to monitor the effectiveness of the new processes, annual meetings were held between the executive director and Academic Affairs leadership to review issues and discuss improvements. Memos were circulated after each meeting to summarize the improvements to be instituted ([Memos PR Changes 2016-2018](#)).

The executive director of assessment and the Faculty Senate Academic Assessment Committee work to support, evaluate, and improve assessment at FIT. The executive director provides consultation and feedback on program review self-studies, general education assessment projects, and the annual PLO assessments. She provides written feedback on each annual PLO report, providing suggestions for improvements to assessments (example, [AMHP Assessment Feedback 2020](#)). To support the effort to provide point-of-need and summative feedback, IRE put out a call for [Faculty Assessment Fellows](#) in fall 2021. Under this program, faculty fellows will provide support and written feedback to their colleagues, offering timely and substantive perspectives from peers. In addition, fellows will review PLO assessment reports to note common struggles that programs have with assessment, and develop an annual workshop for their colleagues based on these issues. The assessment fellows program is expected to bring more faculty into the functional leadership of assessment at FIT and thus has full support from the Faculty Senate Academic Assessment Committee.

The Annual PLO report template encourages programs to reflect upon and improve assessment practices; programs are asked to discuss how their assessment methods worked each year and whether they think anything should be changed. For example, in 2019 Film and Media Studies determined their rubric for the BS program needed to better account for evidence of sophisticated filmmaking given expectations of students coming out of the AAS. They identified as well the need for a separate assessment of screenwriting ([Film & Media PLO Assessment 2019](#)).

Since 2017, the Faculty Senate Academic Assessment Committee (FSAAC) has assisted faculty coordinators with project development, providing advice and feedback. Committee members also



discuss the final report with the coordinator, and evaluate each report with a rubric, also providing comments for feedback. The committee's "assessment of assessment" rubric addresses the quality of the methods, data set, analysis, and action plan for each project and is meant to offer both formative and summative peer assessment for the current and future coordinators (e.g. [FSAAC Feedback The Arts 2020](#)).

This body also plays a role in more broadly evaluating general education assessment processes at FIT. In spring 2020, the FSAAC undertook a study of three years (2017-2020) of general education assessments to look at trends ([FSAAC Year End Report F19-SP20](#)). Faculty participation was a commonly noted challenge, with coordinators identifying low participation as a barrier to robust assessment. In addition, in general education areas encompassing courses in a wide variety of disciplines, several coordinators noted the challenge to develop a rubric applicable to projects collected in all areas. Notably, while participation was often cited as a concern, where faculty participation included robust discussion about pedagogy and student work, coordinators noted it was a highly impactful part of the assessment process. Following up on the concerns noted in the previous meta-analysis, during AY 2020-21, the FSAAC developed and administered a questionnaire for past and current general education assessment coordinators to solicit feedback on best practices and better understand common challenges; with results, the committee developed a document with information and recommendations to support future coordinators ([Gen Ed Assessment Recommended Practices](#)). This will be incorporated into the General Education Assessment Guidelines.

With general education assessment practices continuously evolving but in good standing, the FSAAC has gradually turned its attention to annual program learning outcomes assessment, debating how the committee could best support colleagues engaged in this process. In 2020-21, the committee decided to survey the faculty coordinating these assessments to move beyond anecdote and understand more systematically program coordinators' experiences and challenges. Widely cited challenges include time constraints, insufficient participation from colleagues, and need for greater support to plan assessments and develop assessment tools, especially rubrics. The FSAAC has recommended several key areas for development, including: develop a portfolio of supportive materials from departments across the college, including model assessment plans, high quality rubrics, strategies for using and communicating results; provide annual faculty development through the CET for both inexperienced and experienced coordinators, led by faculty; and raise participation by institutionalizing equitable value placed on service in tenure and promotion decisions ([FSAAC Report on Annual PLO Assessment](#)). A finalized report will be presented to the Faculty Senate and administrators in Academic Affairs.

The Executive Director of Assessment and the FSAAC work together to support improvement in the culture of assessment at FIT, each advocating for important changes and working to make adjustments as needed. Faculty participation and investment have increased substantially since 2017 when new systems were introduced; however, progress is still needed as participation issues persist in both the general education and annual program learning outcomes assessments, and further faculty support and development is needed to ensure that assessment coordinators



with less experience or who encounter department-specific challenges can engage in meaningful student learning outcomes assessment.

## **Conclusion**

FIT has made great strides in developing systems and support for assessment at all levels. Faculty and other educational professionals assess student learning and programmatic and institutional priorities in a variety of ways with institutionalized direction from the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness and the Faculty Senate Academic Assessment Committee. Assessments are shared and discussed among those planning and participating in a given project and with the administration. With these processes firmly in place, FIT can focus its efforts on promoting findings more widely, in order to engage in broader discussions about our students and their education. This will extend the culture of meaningful assessment.

### **Strengths:**

- Many forms of systematic assessment are in place, providing for comprehensive evidence of educational effectiveness.
- The Faculty Senate Academic Assessment Committee plays an increasingly leading role in shaping and improving academic assessment.
- Assessment of general education is particularly strong.

### **Opportunities for Improvement:**

***Build processes for systematic review, renewal and strategic alignment of individual courses and student learning outcomes with institutional goals.***

- The newly revised General Education Requirements from SUNY will provide an opportunity to discuss how to tailor the requirements to FIT, perhaps through adopting Institutional Learning Outcomes. In addition, FIT should consider new processes for ensuring that courses approved for general education are aligned with the required learning outcomes.

***Better coordinate communications across the college, ensuring that all stakeholders receive information at a similar time***

- Assessment results should be communicated more widely and regularly, with opportunities for community discussion.

## Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

*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 our programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.*

FIT meets the criteria for Standard VI and the Requirements of Affiliation 10 and 11. FIT is deeply committed to planning to ensure that resources and structures align with its mission and goals. It continuously assesses and improves programs and services, while responding to opportunities and challenges. This has been especially evident during the Covid pandemic, as the college quickly shifted to remote operations. Over the past decade, FIT has relied on a variety of processes and strategies to ensure that strategic planning is dynamic and that the appropriate oversight and support is in place to develop, implement, assess, and course-adjust as necessary on initiatives envisioned in the strategic plan.

### **MISSION-DRIVEN PLANNING (VI.1 and ROA10)**

*Criterion 1. Institutional objectives, both institution-wide and for individual units, that are clearly stated, assessed appropriately, linked to mission and goal achievement, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, and are used for planning and resource allocation.*

FIT's overarching priorities, linked to its institutional mission and goals and articulated in strategic and other master plans, include ensuring academic excellence; updating the physical plant and technology infrastructure; committing to innovation and sustainability; engaging the community to ensure a campus that is diverse and inclusive; and the clear articulation and messaging of FIT's unconventional brand. FIT's goals and institutional objectives are set forth most notably in its strategic plans and related operational plans ([FIT Beyond 2020](#); [FIT Beyond 2020 Operational Plans](#)). Identification and availability of resources is included in the planning process and become incorporated into the annual budgeting and resource allocation processes. Specific, measurable objectives were developed for the strategies and initiatives developed to advance *FIT Beyond 2020*. The Strategic Planning Council, which guides the college's planning efforts, meets once or twice a year to evaluate progress towards achieving specific goals and initiatives as well as to evaluate the planning process (e.g. [Planning Council 4/18/18](#)). As *FIT Beyond 2020* was sunsetting, the strategic plan outcomes report provided a final update on the plan, incorporating metrics related to the plan's achievement ([FIT Beyond 2020 Outcomes](#)).

The president's weekly meetings with her direct reports often includes discussions related to strategic goals and initiatives, as vice presidents and other executive leaders oversee the progress of initiatives in the units under them. Strategic plan goals are incorporated into the executive goal setting (see example [VPAA Performance Goals 19-20](#)) and annual [performance evaluations for executive leadership](#) in order to review plan progress, realign if necessary, and prioritize new goals and objectives for each academic year. Vice presidents and other members of the President's Cabinet ensure all goals are coordinated and aligned with the budget request and approval process.

Other notable institutional objectives are set forth in the [Campus Master Plan](#), the [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan](#), the [Innovation Strategic Plan](#), and the branding initiative (see [Branding Concept Test Results](#)). Strategic plans for [Information Technology](#) and [FIT's Foundation](#) also support the entire campus and further institutional goals. These plans reflect conclusions from assessment results in various ways. For example, in the development stage of the Campus Master Plan, the plan leaders surveyed faculty, staff, and students for feedback on space needs and analyzed space standards using guidelines from SUNY and benchmarks from other colleges. The branding initiative, led through the Communications and External Relations division, engaged an external consultant to research FIT's image and reputation among key marketplace stakeholders in order to make determinations about branding ([Branding Market Research Exec Sum](#)). All of these institutional plans integrate goals for academic and institutional improvement, as well as student learning, as informed by assessment, meeting **Requirement of Affiliation 10**.

Master plans vary in how they are assessed. The Diversity Council takes the lead in assessing the DEI Strategic Plan, providing metrics in its [annual report to the president](#) and completing a [progress update](#) on the plan goals in April 2020. The Foundation strategic plan established objectives, goals, and strategic initiatives in four distinct areas, setting quantitative assessment measures. For example, fundraising success is determined by looking at the annual operational revenue goal as well as a non-operational revenue goal each year. [Assessment at FIT: An Overview](#) provides further details on how assessment is used in planning as well as how plans are assessed.

The Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness (IRE) supports planning and assessment activities by collecting, analyzing, and sharing a wide range of data. The [Factbook](#) is shared annually with the president and Cabinet, as well as posted on FIT's public website, as are reports on major surveys including the NSSE and the SUNY Student Services Survey. Occasional Research Briefs provide analysis of select issues for the community (e.g. [Enrollment Analysis ORB](#); [Associate Degree Success ORB](#)). IRE assists with surveys across campus and provides data and analytical support to all units upon request.

Individual units engage in planning and assess progress in a variety of different ways, overseen by executive leadership. This ensures that unit plans are linked to broader divisional plans and the college's strategic plan. In the Academic Affairs and EMSS divisions, planning and assessment are incorporated into annual reports that each administrative unit submits. Annual report instructions direct these units to report on the achievement of the previous year's goals, with assessment metrics, and to set out goals and metrics for the subsequent year ([Memo AA Annual Reports 2020-2021](#)). Units in Academic Affairs and EMSS undergo Administrative Review on a cycle of approximately seven years in which they engage in analysis and planning through a self-study, visit from external experts, and development of an action plan; see also **Standard III.8** ([Admin Review Guidelines](#); see example, [Counseling Center Review](#)). From 2011-2017, the administrative review process included units in FIT's other divisions; administrative assessment efforts were refocused to favor more frequent and better integrated assessment practices that better meet divisional needs ([Admin Assessment Memo 2018](#)). For example, in the division of Communications and External Relations, many initiatives are project-

based. Each new major project is outlined in a project plan which articulates project objectives, target market, schedule, and budget. Project schedules and budgets are tracked and monitored; on-time and on-budget production delivery serve as one assessment method. Projects and major events, such as commencement, fundraising galas, and capstones, are completed with a final written report (or closing-the-loop) that analyzes results in terms of success of actual workflow, the project objectives, and relevant metrics. Final reports for recurring projects suggest lessons learned and recommendations for improvement in subsequent iterations. Recurring and mid-level projects record schedules, budgets, and contact reports for use in assessing how projects met their objectives. For more information see [Assessment at FIT](#).

## **ROBUST PLANNING PROCESSES (VI.2)**

*Criterion 2. Planning processes are documented, communicated, provide for constituent participation, and guided by assessment*

Strategic planning processes have involved broad constituent participation, as discussed in **Standard I.1**, and information is communicated widely. Dr. Brown regularly sends email memos to the community; the well-attended convocation each term also provides a forum for sharing progress on the strategic plan and other initiatives. The [strategic planning page on FIT's public website](#), as well as on MyFIT, the college's internal website, provides extensive information about planning processes, including copies of the seven memos Dr. Brown has written to the community updating them on the strategic plan since 2012 ([Strategic Plan Communications](#); [Convocation Fall 2017](#)).

Constituent involvement is central to facilities planning as well. FIT has developed a Residence Hall Master Plan that included the input of students, as well as student services, facility, and financial staff at the college. The development of the Campus Master Plan and the design for the new academic building development involved extensive discussions with students, faculty, and staff. Faculty were also central in the design of the newly expanded and renovated art and design gallery in the lobby of the Pomerantz building. The public website of the college provides the Campus Master Plan as well as information on the planning process ([Campus Master Plan Website](#)).

The development of plans to support teaching and learning during the pandemic engaged student leadership and faculty ([Covid 19 Campus Planning Taskforce](#)). Surveys given to students and faculty about their experiences teaching, learning, and working remotely provided concrete information to the planning groups ([SUNY Covid Student Survey Sp20](#); [NSSE Pulse Fa20](#); [Covid Employee Survey Sp20](#)).

Academic planning is discussed at length in **Standard III, Criteria 1 and 5**. Enrollment management planning involves continuous monitoring of data and communications with academic departments and as part of regular agenda items at the President's Cabinet meetings. Planning for fiscal and managerial operations likewise follows processes that are bottom up and top down. All initiatives utilize the strategic plan as a guide to ensure that academic departments and administrative units participate in developing strategic priorities for the allocation of resources based on the goals and strategies of the plan.

### **STRATEGICALLY-ALIGNED PLANNING AND BUDGETING PROCESS (VI.3)**

*Criterion 3. A financial planning and budgeting process that is aligned with the institution's mission and goals, evidence-based, and clearly linked to the institution's and units' strategic plans/objectives*

FIT manages an annual budget process for the college, the Student Housing Corporation, and the FIT Foundation that is centered on advancement of the college's strategic goals and objectives. The strategic planning operational plans and the college's Campus Master Plan provide a roadmap for development at the faculty/departmental level, the unit level and the administrative level to identify priorities for operational expenditures and capital projects. As FIT enrollment has dropped in the last five years, FIT has been challenged to balance revenue with expenses. FIT has worked hard to reduce expenditures to ensure the financial health of the college and to preserve funding for its highest priorities.

The annual budget process traditionally begins in the fall and ends with adoption of the annual budget by the Board of Trustees in the following June. It is important to note, however, that the impact of the pandemic has meant an adjusted budget calendar for fiscal year 2022, due to the uncertainty of both public funding and enrollment. This discussion will describe the traditional process.

In November, the president authorizes a call letter to all vice presidents that outlines criteria for new needs requests, as well as the technical budget process. Specifically, all requests for new funding must be tied to implementation of the college's strategic plan. In addition, the budget call letter requires a written assessment by each vice president of progress in the implementation of initiatives funded in the prior year.

Concurrently, the vice president of academic affairs and the president, working with the deans and chairs of the academic departments, determine the numbers of searches that will be conducted for full-time faculty lines. Because the college has focused on increasing and diversifying its full-time faculty for more than fifteen years, the plan for new faculty lines is a bedrock issue for the annual budgeting process. Because of the long lead time to hire full-time faculty, searches are launched in the late fall before the next year's annual budget is finalized.

Over the winter, divisional budget requests are developed and sent to the president. Both new needs requests and the report on prior year progress are reviewed and assessed in spring budget meetings with the president, the finance team, and each divisional vice president. Enrollment projections and expected revenues inform the budgeting process as decisions regarding funding for the next fiscal year are continually refined and built into the proposed budget to be submitted for board of trustee adoption. The funding of new initiatives to address the goals and objectives of the strategic plan are a focus of the presentation to the board ([BOT Budget Presentation FY19](#)).

Annual revenue is tied directly to the state and city budget calendars, with state aid being adopted by the legislature by April 1 and city revenue being adopted by the City Council by July 1. Tuition rates are determined in collaboration with SUNY and approval of the FIT Board of

Trustees. County chargeback revenue is based on a rate of reimbursement determined by a state-wide statutory formula administered by SUNY.

In addition to its annual operating budget, each year the college develops a multi-year financial plan that includes year-end data for the prior fiscal year; year-end projections for the current fiscal year; budgeted revenue and expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year, which is the budget year adopted by the board; and three years of projected budgets for future years. Future year projections of revenue are conservative, based on recent trends related to enrollment, revenue, and expenditures. In addition, the finance division monitors revenue production and expenditures on a monthly basis to ensure compliance with financial targets throughout the fiscal year. Prudent multi-year financial planning and on-going variance reporting and monthly review provide stability for college finances, enhancing the college's ability to move forward with its strategic goals.

Comparable timelines and strategies are followed for the development, adoption, and implementation of the Student Housing Corporation (SHC) and the FIT Foundation operating budgets. The Student Housing Corporation budget is adopted by the SHC board in April. Revenue is developed using historical occupancy rates and rental rates that increase at 3-4% annually. Although the board adopts an annual operating budget for the SHC, multi-year planning and review is critical, and considers both prior years' operational performance and projected future financial planning with assumption of two-year rental rate increases. The SHC, as an independent 501c3, is operationally independent of FIT; however, FIT's tuition revenues are pledged to ensure bond service payments, in case of insufficient revenues of the corporation.

The FIT Foundation budget, which encompasses unrestricted revenue of the Foundation, is developed and approved by the Foundation Board of Directors at its annual meeting in June. In addition, the budgeting of earnings on both permanently and temporarily-restricted funds is in compliance with the New York Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (NYPMIFA) and is consistent with investment and spending policies approved by the Foundation Finance Committee. Determination of restricted earnings to be allocated is made by the Foundation Finance Committee in December, prior to the awarding of scholarship funds by the Office of Financial Aid and prior to the beginning of a new fiscal year on July 1. Spending is based on a 60-month rolling average of endowed fund values.

### **Impact of COVID-19**

The move to remote instruction and operations in March of 2020 due to the Covid pandemic had a significant impact on the financial resources of the college and its related entities. Fees were refunded at both the college and the Student Housing Corporation; the FIT Gala, the Foundation's primary source of unrestricted fund-raising revenue, was cancelled; and all entities incurred unbudgeted costs to ensure health and safety, provide appropriate training and technology support, and ensure access to appropriate equipment and supplies. In addition, both the City of New York and the State of New York projected significant budget shortfalls, which were expected to create revenue shortfalls as high as 25% across public higher education. Finally, enrollment for the AY 2021 declined by 6%.



In the face of these challenges, SUNY mandated a strict hiring freeze and an expenditure review committee to address non-personnel expenses. The college developed three scenarios for the 2021 budget, discussed these with the board, and sought the input of a newly-created Budget Advisory Committee ([Budget and Financial Plan Scenarios Briefing](#)). In addition, the administration presented information about budget issues and risks through a college-wide town hall meeting. The college, the SHC, and the Foundation continued their strict adherence to hiring and spending constraints through fiscal year 2021.

In addition to budget cuts and spending constraints, both the SHC and the FIT Foundation made significant budget reductions, which resulted in staff reductions. At the SHC, ten residence hall employees (60% of the staff) were laid-off in the face of a 90% reduction in occupancy and 46 custodial and engineering staff were also laid off. At the FIT Foundation, payroll costs were cut in half. Further at the SHC, two residence halls were shuttered for the spring semester, and non-personnel expenditures were reduced by 50%. Even with these reductions, the SHC sought budget relief through a restructuring of its mortgage payments on its largest residence hall. The successful restructuring will provide savings to the SHC for three fiscal years.

During this budgetary period of AY 19-20 and AY 20-21, with the Covid crisis and corresponding holds on State and City of New York designated funding, the process of reviewing strategic priorities was conducted more frequently, to twice an academic year. Integrated into this review process were detailed requests that ranged from basic day-to-day office-and curricular-related needs, to larger curricular initiatives either planned or in-the-works. While some initiatives could no longer be supported due to budget cuts, FIT was able to continue to support many strategic priorities, including breaking ground on the new academic building, as well as meeting the increased expenses due to the shift to remote operations.

As FIT, New York City, and New York State move forward from the worst ravages of the pandemic, FIT is currently involved in budget planning for FY 2022 by projecting best case and worst case scenarios. FIT's objective will be a return to financial stability to allow the college to move forward with its new strategic plan priorities.

## **RESOURCES SUPPORT FIT'S MISSION (VI.4)**

*Criterion 4. Fiscal and human resources as well as the physical and technical infrastructure are adequate to support the institution's operations wherever and however programs are delivered.*

### **Human Resources**

Faculty and staff are critical to FIT's success. FIT's student-faculty ratio is 16 to 1 and all classes at FIT are 27 students or fewer, allowing students to develop close relationships with their teachers ([Common Data Set 2020-2021](#)). While FIT has enough full- and part-time faculty to support its educational mission, the number of full-time faculty is lower than the institution plans, as discussed in **Standard III**. While FIT has regularly hired new full-time faculty, the number of retirements has exceeded hiring. The strict hiring freeze required by the fiscal uncertainties of fiscal year 2021 has further exacerbated this problem. However, improved budgets at both the state and city levels and anticipated stabilization of enrollment promise that



FIT may be able to return to its focus on increasing full-time faculty; it will be necessary to develop strategies for increasing the overall number despite retirements.

FIT, like many colleges, has seen a growth in professional staff over the past ten years. FIT's staff is similar in number per student to its SUNY peers in student services, academic support, technology, and administration ([Higher Ed Employee Comparison 2019](#)).

### **Physical Infrastructure**

FIT is a small campus, largely packed into one Manhattan block. Despite its physical size, FIT is able to accommodate more than 8,000 students, as well as more than 1,600 faculty and staff, and thousands of visitors. FIT has been addressing its space shortfall; capital planning and renovations and improvements are discussed more fully as part of **Criterion 6**. One of the most significant recent undertakings is the breaking ground on a new academic building, for which the college received funding by the State of New York (\$94.3 million) and the City of New York (\$91 million), and which will help alleviate space shortfalls and provide a much-needed new teaching and learning environment. It will be the first new academic building constructed on campus in almost 50 years, and will offer almost 100,000 square feet of new classrooms, a 146-seat presentation hall, and a student learning commons. Work has begun on the building foundation in late 2020, and construction will be completed in July of 2023. FIT has been making strong progress in addressing space needs and this should continue as a priority.

Other recently completed projects that have enhanced physical facilities include extensive renovations of the Pomerantz Center lobby, including the addition of a new gallery which opened in October 2018, providing much needed additional exhibition space for Art and Design students and faculty. To further support innovation and entrepreneurial efforts, FIT added innovation space at the Brooklyn Navy Yard as part of the FIT Center for Innovation. Lafayette 148, co-founded by FIT Board of Trustees member and CEO Deirdre Quinn, operates out of this space, and Quinn donated 2,000 square feet to be co-located within the company's headquarters to foster this initiative.

FIT's programs at additional locations in Italy and South Korea are based at local institutions with adequate facilities to support the programs. FIT's Florence program is in cooperation with Polimoda, a private institution, and the Milan program is based at Politecnico di Milano, a state institution. FIT offers two of its associate degrees at SUNY South Korea, at the Songdo Global University Campus ([FIT Substantive Change Request South Korea](#)).

### **Technological Infrastructure**

FIT has made significant advances in its IT structure, as these technological resources and infrastructure are critical to achieving the college's mission and goals. Under a new vice president, the division has implemented many recommendations made in an assessment by Deloitte in 2016 ([Deloitte IT Assessment](#)), and aims to strengthen this area through a recent [IT Strategic Plan](#). Recent actions include:

- Improvements to campus classrooms, which are provided with the latest technology ([Classroom Infrastructure Improvements](#));

- An enhanced system that makes it easier for faculty to request and receive funding for procurement of new and innovative hardware or software (for example the movement from 2D to 3D design software currently underway) ([Requisition Workflow for AA](#))
- Annual Enterprise Application upgrades, as proposed in the Information Technology Operational Plan ([Enterprise Application Improvements](#))
- Client support has been enhanced by the 2019 introduction of the Cherwell ticketing system, which provides performance dashboards. Monitoring the number of IT Incidents and Help tickets are core performance indicators, reflecting a commitment to continuous service improvement ([IT Incidents Tracking & Scorecard](#); [Cherwell Ticketing IT Dashboard 2020](#));
- Enterprise Infrastructure is continuously enhanced, providing for the latest functionality and innovation across the college's infrastructure installation base ([Operational Plans Enterprise Suite 2019-21](#))
- Information Security is a critical IT activity requiring on-going monitoring and updates to all critical security patches ([Information Security 2020 QTR 2&3 Dashboard](#); [Information Security Improvements 2017-2021](#)).

FIT's fiscal resources are discussed in **Criteria 3**.

## **ALIGNMENT OF PLANNING PROCESSES AND ACCOUNTABILITY (VI.5)**

### *Criterion 5. Well-defined decision-making processes and clear assignment of responsibility and accountability*

The section of the New York State Education Law that established FIT created a Board of Trustees empowered to establish policies governing the college. Subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York, the board appoints the college president, approves curricula, approves budgets, establishes tuition and fees within legal limits, and approves sites and facilities. It is responsible for the care, custody, control and management of the college's physical facilities. The board sets policies and delegates to the president or her designees the responsibility for implementing them, including but not limited to personnel policies; the creation of divisions, departments, and administrative and academic positions; rules governing student conduct; the use of college facilities by outside organizations; the admission of students; and the preparation of the budget. The board also has such other powers and duties as provided by New York law or prescribed by the SUNY Board of Trustees. The governance structure is described in detail in **Standard VII.1**.

In brief, the Board of Trustees has final decision-making authority. As the Chief Executive Officer, the president has the authority and autonomy needed to lead and manage the university. Reporting directly to the president are the members of the President's Cabinet as well as the director and chief curator of The Museum at FIT and the executive director of the D-Tech lab. The divisional vice presidents and other senior leadership reporting to Dr. Brown are accountable for the operations of their divisions or areas. The reporting structures under these Cabinet members are represented in the [Organizational Chart](#) and reflect each unit's assigned accountabilities and responsibilities.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING FOR FACILITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND TECHNOLOGY (VI.6)

*Criterion 6. Comprehensive planning for facilities, infrastructure, and technology that includes consideration of sustainability and deferred maintenance and is linked to the institution's strategic and financial planning processes*

As noted above, FIT's updated Campus Master Plan was completed in 2015, serving as a roadmap for facilities improvements subsequent to its adoption by the board. The 2015 plan was actually an update of the Master Plan from 2005 that had already initiated major facility and infrastructure improvements, many of which were outlined in the 2012 Middle States Report. FIT has many ongoing capital projects each year ([FIT Capital Projects FY20](#)). Since 2012, FIT has invested \$xx million in facility and infrastructure upgrades to improve xx,xxx sf of instructional and administrative space. In addition to the improvements listed under **Criterion 3**, some of the renovation projects completed include:

- the renovation of three floors of studios and laboratories in the Dubinsky building;
- the renovation of xx classrooms, studios, or labs in Feldman, Pomerantz, Goodman, and at 236 West 27<sup>th</sup> for disciplines such as accessories, film and media, illustration, photography, and the MFA in Fashion Design;
- the improvement of student spaces in Goodman, Pomerantz, Business and Liberal Arts, and Dubinsky;
- the major enhancement of storage space for the Museum at FIT;
- the state-of-the-art renovation of the Library's Special Collections and College Archives space; and
- the renovation of the lobbies of Dubinsky, Business and Liberal Arts, and Pomerantz. As noted earlier, the lobby of Pomerantz was significantly expanded to create a gallery space for the college on Seventh Avenue.

In addition to these projects at the college, the Student Housing Corporation has also engaged in ambitious plans to update and renovate its residence halls, investing \$x million in facility upgrades, including the chiller plant replacements at Alumni and Coed; roof replacements at Alumni and Coed; restroom, kitchen, and closet upgrades in Alumni, Nagler, and Coed; elevator upgrades at Kaufman, and other smaller facility improvements ([Capital Projects Res Halls](#)).

FIT has made significant upgrades in its facilities infrastructure, which has allowed it to become a leader in greenhouse gas reductions in the City of New York. According to the most recent greenhouse gas production inventory, FIT has had the greatest success of any college or university in New York City, having reduced emissions by 58% since 2005. FIT's success in sustainability was featured in a case study produced by the Building Energy Exchange in 2018.

In its sustainability efforts, FIT has partnered with the NYC Department of City-side Administrative Services, receiving more than \$34 million to date for chiller plant replacement and optimization; replacement of aging air conditioning units; replacement of variable speed drives, steam traps, and other components of obsolete HVAC systems; optimization of Building Management Systems; and upgrades to lighting. Other infrastructure projects have included the

replacement of building roofs with green roofs and solar panels and the upgrade to academic building elevators and the Business and Liberal Arts escalator ([DCAS Funded Initiatives](#)).

The Division of Information Technology has been a leader in ensuring the functionality and currency of FIT's technology infrastructure, its software and supportive technology in the classroom, and its administrative and student support systems. The [IT Continuous Improvement and Governance Plan](#) ensures the prioritization of critical college projects and needs of Academic Affairs, Student Services, and Finance and Administration. In addition to the initiatives listed in **Criteria 3**, there have been several other recent enhancements and improvements. IT continues to expand its wireless networks across the college and through the residence halls. Additionally, FIT's central data center was relocated to Alumni Hall in 2019 and IT has set up redundancies to ensure the continued viability of college systems, should there be a failure in the center. Finally, IT strongly supported the pivot to remote instruction, learning, and management in the face of COVID 19, implementing many COVID-related initiatives that will have benefits to students, faculty, and administration long after the pandemic subsides ([IT Covid-Related Initiatives](#)).

### **AUDITING AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY (VI.7 & ROA11)**

*Criterion 7. An annual independent audit confirming financial viability with evidence of follow up on any concerns cited in the audit's accompanying management letter*

In accordance with **Requirement of Affiliation 11**, FIT has demonstrated a record of responsible fiscal management and has a prepared [budget for the current year](#). Its financial resources and funding base are documented in **criterion 3**. FIT ensures an annual independent audit of its financial statements, including the financial statement of the FIT Student Housing Corporation, the FIT Foundation, and the FIT Student Association (as required by SUNY). In addition, in accordance with federal regulations, the college ensures an annual single audit of all federal funds ([FY18 FIT Audited FS](#); [FY18 Foundation Audited FS](#); [FY19 FIT Audited FS](#); [FY 19 Foundation Audited FS](#); [FY 18 Management Letter FIT](#); [FY 19 Management Letter FIT](#); [FY18 Management Letter Foundation](#); [FY 19 Management Letter Foundation](#))

For the past ten years, FIT has received an unmodified opinion of its financial statement with no management comments or concerns.

With regard to financial viability, the State University of New York annually calculates a financial statement and ratio analysis for all of its colleges. Since SUNY began to complete these calculations, FIT's composite score has been consistently within the range determined to be financially responsible ([composite score report](#)).

### **ADEQUACY AND EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES (VI.8)**

*Criterion 8. Strategies are in place to measure and assess the adequacy and efficient utilization of resources*

FIT measures and assesses the adequacy and efficient utilization of resources in a variety of ways. The development of strategic and master plans often includes an evaluation of the current

adequacy, as in the development of the Campus Master Plan. Student and employee perception of the adequacy of resources are gathered in a variety of surveys, **discussed in Standard IV.6.**

Several processes also assist FIT in this task. Audits and risk assessments conducted by the Office of Internal Controls and Management Analysis (IC), discussed further in **Criterion 9**, examine whether operations are carried out efficiently and note when resources are not adequate for the functions.

The academic program review process, as well as the administrative review process for units in Academic Affairs and EMSS, includes consideration of resource adequacy in these assessments. In the review self-studies, programs and units describe physical, technical, human, and fiscal resources in terms of their adequacy for achieving program and unit missions. External reviewers weigh in on the adequacy in their reports ([APR Guidelines](#); [APR Scope of Work](#); [Admin Review Guidelines](#); [Admin Review Scope of Work](#)). Accreditation reviews by NASAD, for Art & Design programs, and CIDA, for Interior Design degrees, evaluate resources closely to determine sufficiency ([NASAD 2012 Reviewers Report Resources Excerpt](#); [CIDA Reviewers Report](#), p. 9-13).

## **PLANNING AND RESOURCE ASSESSMENTS (VI.9)**

*Criteria 9. Periodic assessments of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, institutional renewal processes and availability of resources.*

FIT continually evaluates effectiveness of planning and resource allocation, course-correcting according to opportunities and challenges. The Office of Internal Controls and Management Analysis (IC) provides independent, objective assurance and consulting services that support the college's teaching, research, co-curricular, and student service operations. Independent reviews assist senior leadership in evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of the controls, systems, and business processes of the college; they use audit recommendations to make improvements in these areas.

Internal audit assessments evaluate whether the risks relating to the achievement of FIT's (and the function under audit) strategic objectives are identified and appropriately managed. It ensures that the results of operations or programs are consistent with established goals and objectives; that operations or programs are being carried out effectively and efficiently; that established processes and systems allow and facilitate compliance with the policies, procedures, laws, and regulations that could significantly impact FIT; and that information and the means used to identify, measure, analyze, classify, and report such information are reliable and have integrity. Examples of recent audit engagements include EMSS (Financial Aid and Admissions); Finance and Administration (Bursar and Purchasing); Human Resources (Human Resources Operations and Benefits Department); and Academic Affairs (Office of International Programs and Center for Continuing and Professional Education). ([Internal Controls Audit Summary](#)).

## Conclusion

FIT has a robust planning process that spans the entirety of its organization. Furthermore, the central role of planning and assessment is the basis for decisions about the allocation of resources, the priority 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 and with resolve.

## Strengths

- FIT has been incredibly agile in its responses to the challenges of the pandemic, moving immediately to remote instruction, identifying technological solutions for both faculty and students, meeting the requirements of New York State and City oversight agencies for surveillance testing, social distancing, PPE, and other mandates; and addressing the financial threats of budget reductions and enrollment declines.
- FIT's planning process is thorough, pervasive, and continuous.
- FIT's facility planning and space management, inclusive of its commitment to sustainability, is transforming classrooms, student spaces, and presentation spaces.

## Opportunities for Improvement

***Reinvigorate operational planning around strategic goals, particularly by developing strategic plans for each academic division.***

- With the newest strategic plan being finalized in fall of 2021, FIT has an opportunity to re-invigorate its operational planning around the strategic goals as well as incorporating robust assessment. This is underway with the development of a strategic plan report card.

***Effectively coordinate communications across the college.***

- FIT has an opportunity to improve college-wide conversations about the budget and finance situation, increasing the timeliness and transparency of information provided. This will help ensure that the community better understands the budgeting process and the state of college resources, and help foster a spirit of shared commitment amongst all constituencies to best address the challenges and opportunities facing the institution.

***Increase the overall number of full-time faculty to achieve the number to which FIT has committed.***

- With faculty as the college's most significant academic resource, continue to increase hiring to approach and sustain the desired number of full-time faculty; there are 17 searches in process this year.

## Standard VII. Governance, Leadership and Administration

*The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in order to effectively benefit 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.*

This chapter addresses how FIT meets the criteria for Standard VII as well as Requirements of Affiliation 12 and 13.

FIT has a well-defined and systematic 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. In accordance with the definition of shared 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.

### **FIT'S GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE (VII.1)**

*Criterion 1: A clearly articulated and transparent governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision making by each constituency, including governing body, administration, faculty, staff and students;*

FIT is one of 30 community colleges within SUNY, one of New York State's two public university systems. SUNY is comprised of 64 campuses with 34 state-operated colleges governed by the SUNY Board of Trustees with campus-based advisory college councils and 30 community colleges governed by their own campus-based board of trustees. The SUNY Board of Trustees is the governing body of the State University of New York. It consists of 18 members, 15 of whom are appointed by the governor, by and with consent of the New York State Senate. The remaining three members are representatives from bodies in the SUNY shared governance system. They include the president of the SUNY Student Assembly, serving as student trustee, as well as presidents of the University Faculty Senate and Faculty Council of Community Colleges, who serve as ex-officio trustees. FIT, as one of SUNY's community colleges, must follow appropriate SUNY mandates, but is governed by the FIT Board of Trustees ([SUNY Shared Governance](#)).

In 1967, FIT administration, faculty, and staff signed the first higher education union contract in New York State which established a model of shared governance. This principle continues today, beginning at the college's highest level, the FIT Board of Trustees. All board meetings are publicized in advance and open to the FIT community. The trustees' by-laws mandate that an FIT student government representative sits as a voting member of the board ([BOT Bylaws](#)). The SGA representative has full parliamentary authority, with the right to make or second motions and place matters on the agenda for board consideration.



## **FIT BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND GOVERNANCE (VII.2 & ROA12 and 13)**

*Criteria 2. A legally constituted governing body that:*

- a. serves the public interest, ensures that the institution clearly states and fulfills its mission and goals, has fiduciary responsibility for the institution, and is ultimately accountable for the academic quality, planning, and fiscal well-being of the institution;*
- b. has sufficient independence and expertise to ensure the integrity of the institution. Members must have primary responsibility to the accredited institution and not allow political, financial, or other influences to interfere with their governing responsibilities;*
- c. ensures that neither the governing body nor its individual members interferes in the day-to-day operations of the institution;*
- d. oversees at the policy level the quality of teaching and learning, the approval of degree programs and the awarding of degrees, the establishment of personnel policies and procedures, the approval of policies and by-laws, and the assurance of strong fiscal management;*
- e. plays a basic policy-making role in financial affairs to ensure integrity and strong financial management. This may include a timely review of audited financial statements and/or other documents related to the fiscal viability of the institution;*
- f. appoints and regularly evaluates the performance of the Chief Executive Officer;*
- g. is informed in all its operations by principles of good practice in board governance;*
- h. establishes and complies with a written conflict of interest policy designed to ensure the impartiality of the governing body by addressing matters such as payment for services, contractual relationships, employment, and family, financial or other interests that could pose or be perceived as conflicts of interests;*
- i. supports the Chief Executive Officer in maintaining the autonomy of the institution.*

FIT's local sponsor is the Department of Education of the City of New York and, in accordance with [Article 126](#) of the Education Law of the State of New York, is governed by a Board of Trustees responsible for establishing policies and delegating the administration and execution of those policies to the administrators employed by the college. By state law, there are 16 trustees: eight are appointed by the college's local sponsor, through the New York City Panel for Educational Policy; seven are appointed by the governor, but must reside in New York City. The remaining seat is assigned ex-officio to the FIT Student Government Association president. All trustees appointed after August 5, 2003 have seven-year terms, with the exception of the student trustee, who serves for one year. The chair and vice chair of the Board of Trustees are elected annually and the treasurer and board secretary, positions filled by FIT employees, are appointed by the board. Newly appointed members receive individual orientations regarding the college's mission, finances, and academic programs ([Trustee Orientation Book](#)).

Because the trustees represent a variety of industries relevant to the FIT mission, they can effectively govern the college and carry out their duties and responsibilities ([List of FIT Trustees](#)). Consistent with **Requirement of Affiliation 12**, FIT fully discloses its legally constituted governance structure and duties of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees section of FIT's website sets out the responsibilities of the board. It provides links to the [Bylaws](#), meeting procedures and dates, as well as agendas and minutes of past meetings. Finally, it provides the public with information for contacting the board ([Board of Trustee Webpages](#)).

The duties of the FIT Board of Trustees are detailed in [New York Education Law Section 6306](#), in Section 604.2 of the SUNY Code of Standards and Procedures for the Administration and Operation of Community Colleges under the Program of the State University of New York, and in the college's bylaws. Under New York Education Law, the board has the authority to appoint a president of the college, subject to SUNY approval, and to establish the fundamental role and mission of the college. Trustees consider the selection and reappointment of the president one of their most important duties. The president has the power, on behalf of the trustees, to take action and execute documents to make effective the actions of the board or its Executive Committee ([President's Job Description](#)). The president reports on the condition and affairs of the college at regularly scheduled board meetings, communicates with trustees on a regular basis, and performs all the duties pertaining to the office and other duties as the board may direct. The board conducts a yearly evaluation of the president as well as a more extensive "360" evaluation every five years, which includes interviews and discussions with representatives from all college constituents. The board also approves policies and actions recommended by the college and approves the operating budget each year.

The Executive Committee and Audit Committee are long standing board committees. In 2011-2012, additional committees were established to cover several relevant topics. Recently in 2021, with the election of a new chair and vice chair, a revamping of the board committees was again proposed, and the result is a new streamlined set of three committees.

The Board of Trustees meets at least four times a year. All meetings are open to the general public, except for closed executive sessions for one of several purposes specified by the New York Open Meetings Law. Notice of each meeting is prominently displayed in all college buildings, on the FIT website and public notices are sent to key media. The public may attend meetings and listen to discussions. The board allocates time at the beginning of each meeting for public comments. The secretary of the college is responsible for taking minutes at all meetings of the Board of Trustees, which are available in the Office of the Secretary of the College and are posted publicly on the FIT website.

In accordance with **Requirement of Affiliation 13**, members of the Board of Trustees are bound by the board's Conflict of Interest Policy, which states that no trustee, officer, or employee of the college, whether paid or unpaid, shall engage in any business or transaction, or shall have a financial or other private interest, direct or indirect, which is in conflict with the proper discharge of his/her official duties. Board members must sign an affirmation statement at the first meeting each academic year ([Trustee Affirmation of the Absence of Conflict of Interest](#)). The only members of the Board that are employed by FIT are the president, the vice president for Finance and Administration (who serves as treasurer), and general counsel (who serves as secretary); all serve ex officio in accordance with the Board of Trustee bylaws.

Since trustees are appointed by, and therefore accountable to either the governor or the mayor, a formal assessment program is not in place. However, the board periodically engages an external consultant to facilitate a retreat devoted to developing ways in which the board can work more effectively and better support the college. In addition, board bylaws are regularly assessed and

were amended in 2012 to better reflect its mission and now in 2021 were just put through a review and revision to be presented to the full Board for official amendment and vote.

As evidence and testimony to trustee support of the institution and commitment to their roles, trustees have been generous in providing funding for institutional renewal. This is evidenced in the Jay and Patty Baker School of Business and Technology, Baker Scholars Program, George S. and Mariana Kaufman Residence Hall, Peter G. Scotese Computer-Aided Design and Communications Center and the Scotese Innovation Fund, and the Fred P. Pomerantz Art and Design Center – all named as a result of gifts from current and former trustees. Other significant gifts have been received from trustees with the request for anonymity and, for the past decade, all trustees made donations to the college’s annual fund.

The FIT trustees also serve as trustees of the [Student Housing Corporation](#), a separate 501(c)(3).

The FIT Foundation, formerly known as The Educational Foundation for the Fashion Industries, is the fundraising arm of the college. Founded in 1944 in cooperation with the State Board of Regents, it is a designated tax-exempt 501(c)(3). Restructured in 2010 with new bylaws to strengthen FIT’s fundraising efforts, its directors hold leadership positions in the fashion, design, and fashion-related industries. FIT’s president serves as its president, FIT’s vice president for Advancement is its executive director, and FIT’s vice president for Finance and Administration serves as its chief financial officer. Foundation directors, all of whom are elected, are bound by conflict of interest policies set by the state and the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s board meets four times a year and maintains four standing committees – Audit, Gala, Finance, and Nominating – on which its directors serve. Additionally, as referenced in the FIT Board of Trustees section, there is a Joint Development Committee with the FIT Board of Trustees made up of equal representation from both boards. ([Revised Foundation Bylaws](#); [Foundation Board of Directors](#); [FIT Foundation Conflict of Interest Policy](#))

### **Internal Governance**

FIT’s internal governance is similar to other community colleges within and outside the SUNY system. The college adheres to New York State Education Law as well as the standards for SUNY community colleges. The key governance bodies include the Faculty Senate, the FIT Student Government Association, and the United College Employees (UCE) at FIT.

In accordance with Section 605.1 of the SUNY Community College Code and the college’s bylaws, the Faculty Senate, through its duly authorized officers and committees, plays an active part in the governance of FIT. As outlined in the [Faculty Senate Bylaws](#), all classroom and non-classroom faculty, both full- and part-time, are voting members of the Faculty Senate; it can, however, be more difficult for part-time faculty to participate in governance since they are not on campus as frequently or compensated for voluntary participation. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee includes the president, the president-elect (in the final year of the president’s tenure), a secretary, and members who represent various areas of the college community. The Executive Committee reviews resolutions from each individual committee and brings them to vote before the wider senate body. The Executive Committee also includes one elected representative to SUNY’s Faculty Council of Community Colleges (FCCC), and through this representative the

entire Faculty Senate votes upon recommendations and statements adopted by the FCCC. Dr. Brown holds three meetings per semester with the Faculty Senate president, monthly meetings with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, and upon invitation, with the full Faculty Senate.

In response to a recommendation FIT made in its 2012 Middle States self-study, the Faculty Senate recently restructured their committees to better align with those of comparable SUNY community colleges, by combining committees, moving some to ad hoc, and eliminating a few altogether. In response to the increased student participation in minors and a greater need for assessment and regulation of minors, in spring 2021 the senate voted to create a new ad-hoc committee on academic minors ([Faculty Senate Minutes 2/18/21](#)). The senate now has eight standing committees and six ad hoc committees, with members who are elected annually by all members of the Faculty Senate via electronic ballot ([FS Committee Elections 2020-2021](#)). Through these committees, the faculty present recommendations to the president regarding appointments, reappointments, tenure, certificates of continuous employment, promotions, and sabbaticals. The College-Wide Curriculum Committee reviews and votes upon all new curricula submitted by academic departments. The Committee on Academic Standards recommends measures related to academic standards and also reviews and votes upon all formal student appeals regarding academic dismissal and re-admission. The Faculty Senate also assigns members to serve on search committees for appointments for academic administrators.

Students participate in the college's governance through FIT Student Government Association (SGA), which promotes student welfare through a system of responsible student governance ([SGA Constitution](#)). The FIT student body elects a student president, who also serves as a member of the FIT Board of Trustees with full voting powers. In addition, the student body elects an executive council, and a 25-member senate, representing specific program areas and interest groups throughout the college. FITSGA governs more than 60 clubs and student organizations and allocates and manages a budget of approximately \$1 million. Its responsibilities include nominating and electing the Executive and Programming Board and holding monthly Student Council meetings. Working with the Student Activities Board, FIT SGA may request or recommend changes to the student activities fee, athletics fee, and health fee for approval by the President and the Board of Trustees. FIT's President meets regularly with the FIT SGA President and attends council meetings on an ad hoc basis. In addition, students serve on the Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate and have been influential in such initiatives as the development of a college-wide no-smoking policy, a student ambassadors program, and sustainability initiatives such as residence hall recycling and composting programs.

In 1967, FIT administration, faculty, and staff signed the first higher education union contract in New York State which established a model of shared governance. United College Employees of FIT is the bargaining unit for nearly all staff, as well as full- and part-time classroom and non-classroom faculty, covering more than 90% of FIT employees. While the Board of Trustees sets policy, the terms and conditions of employment are covered by the [Collective Bargaining Agreement \(CBA\)](#) negotiated between the administration and the UCE of FIT in accordance with the New York State Taylor Law. Collective bargaining agreements are approved by vote of the membership of the UCE, the Board of Trustees, and the City of New York. Bargaining

agreements are usually two to three years in length and generally accept similar terms to those negotiated by other New York City public unions. The most recent contract expired at the end of 2017; negotiations for a successor agreement were delayed by the pandemic but are now underway.

All staff, full- and part-time faculty, and non-classroom faculty are eligible to join the union by signing a membership card and become voting members of the bargaining unit. The vice president for human resource management and labor relations along with the deputy to the president hold regular meetings with the officers of the UCE, while other senior administrators also meet with UCE leadership on an ad hoc basis. The president meets with the UCE president at least once per semester. The CBA provides for contractual participation of faculty “in the formulation of policy for graduate and undergraduate education in relation to curriculum, academic standards, student affairs, and tenure and promotion, through elected committees of the Faculty Senate...” (section 9.0). It determines how department chairs are selected, terms of office and eligibility, and who is eligible to vote. In addition to establishing procedures for the appointment, evaluation, promotion, and job security of faculty, it establishes procedures for how particular courses and class sections are assigned to faculty. It also establishes procedures for appointing directors as well as academic administrators.

Two councils set up by FIT’s president further the goals of shared governance, as students, faculty, staff and administrators work together around two issues central to FIT’s mission: diversity and sustainability.

- The [Diversity Council](#) – This council was established by the president in 2008 and is an advisory group that assists the president and the affirmative action officer in matters concerning discrimination, equal educational access, and employment opportunities regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation. It has been led by the chief diversity officer since FIT first created this position in 2015 as part of a SUNY mandate. Its mission is to “foster a climate of inclusion within the campus community, working to enrich an understanding and respect for each of its members.” The 26-member council is representative of the campus community and includes members from all divisions of the college, as well as students and alumni. The council also administers the president’s [Diversity Grant Fund](#) and establishes and conducts an annual [Civility Week](#) program of events, with an emphasis on diversity and social justice issues. As discussed in **Standard II**, as there is now a Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Office as well as a Chief Diversity Officer, and to better infuse a commitment to DEI across the college, this body is being replaced with a President’s Diversity Collective ([Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Update](#)).
- The [Sustainability Council](#) – This council was established by the president in 2009, and is a 22-member advisory group whose mission is to develop and foster sustainability initiatives throughout the FIT community. The council is comprised of faculty, students, staff, and administrators. The council administers the president’s [Sustainability Grant Fund](#) and hosts the annual [Sustainable Business and Design Conference](#), discussed in **Standard I.1.** and **Standard II.2.**



## **ROLE AND QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (VII.3)**

*Criterion 3. A Chief Executive Officer who:*

- a. is appointed by, evaluated by, and reports to the governing body and shall not chair the governing body;*
- b. has appropriate credentials and professional experience consistent with the mission of the organization;*
- c. has the authority and autonomy required to fulfill the responsibilities of the position, including developing and implementing institutional plans, staffing the organization, identifying and allocating resources, and directing the institution toward attaining the goals and objectives set forth in its mission;*
- d. has the assistance of qualified administrators, sufficient in number, to enable the Chief Executive Officer to discharge his/her duties effectively; and is responsible for establishing procedures for assessing the organization's efficiency and effectiveness;*

Dr. Joyce F. Brown is President of FIT. Appointed in 1998, she is the college's sixth president and reports to the Board of Trustees. Her responsibilities are defined by New York State law, the SUNY Community College Code, and FIT bylaws. Dr. Brown is highly qualified for her position, having held a number of senior administrative posts at the City University of New York (CUNY), including Acting President of Bernard Baruch College, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, and Vice Chancellor for Urban Programs. Immediately prior to her FIT appointment, she was Professor of Counseling Psychology at the Graduate School and University Center of CUNY, where she is currently Professor Emerita. She earned her master's degree and doctorate in counseling psychology from New York University and her bachelor's degree from Marymount College in Tarrytown, New York, where she served as a trustee from 1994 to 2000. She also received a certificate from the Institute for Educational Management at Harvard University. Further information on Dr. Brown's background and prior achievements is prominent on FIT's website ([Dr. Brown Profile](#)).

The powers and duties of the president are outlined in the bylaws ([BOT Bylaws](#)). The president is established as the chief executive officer of the college with "all the powers and duties normally incident to the office of the president." The president has the power of appointment for all employees, which enables her to hire qualified senior administrators to enable her to assist her to carry out her duties; her administration is discussed in **Criteria 4**. The president has an active presence at FIT, modeling leadership and setting the tone for a warm community that embraces diversity and civic communication. In addition to communications on subjects such as policy and FIT initiatives, she regularly communicates about external events that affect the community. Moreover, she holds periodic town hall meetings; speaks at innumerable internal community events, from sustainability conferences to fashion shows to museum openings; holds regular open-door sessions for faculty and staff; and hosts regularly scheduled faculty and staff meetings. The president periodically attends student presentations, hosts the annual student award events, and the FIT SGA officers' inaugurations. In addition to email, the FIT website, and FIT's social media platforms, her blog, "[On My Mind](#)," also carries the president's messages.

## **FIT'S ADMINISTRATION (VII.4)**

*Criterion 4: an administration possessing or demonstrating:*

- a. an organizational structure that is clearly documented and that clearly defines reporting relationships;*
- b. an appropriate size with relevant experience to assist the Chief Executive Officer in fulfilling his/her roles and responsibilities;*
- c. members with credentials and professional experience consistent with the mission of the organization and their functional roles;*
- d. skills, time, assistance, technology, and information system expertise required to perform their duties;*
- e. regular engagement with faculty and students in advancing the institution's goals and objectives;*
- f. systematic procedures for evaluating administrative units and for using assessment data to enhance operations*

The president has appointed an 11 member Cabinet to assist in setting the strategic direction of the college as well as to manage the daily operations of the institution. The college is comprised of seven divisions, each led by a vice president who reports to the president. These are Academic Affairs, Advancement and Alumni Relations, Communications and External Relations, Enrollment Management and Student Success, Finance and Administration, Human Resource Management and Labor Relations, and Information Technology. The seven vice presidents, along with the chief diversity officer, general counsel, director of strategic planning and innovation, and the deputy to the president, serve on the President's Cabinet. The president also has an Extended Cabinet, comprised of the Cabinet as well as all deans, associate and assistant deans, associate and assistant vice presidents, the director of The Museum at FIT (who reports to the president), director of the Gladys Marcus Library, the internal auditor, and the executive director of the Center for Continuing and Professional Studies. ([Organizational Chart](#))

Several Cabinet members have had long tenures at FIT, providing stability and long-term leadership to the institution. These include the vice president of Finance and Administration, the vice president of Communications and External Relations, and general counsel. Other Cabinet positions have been successfully filled in the last five years, including the vice presidents for Information Technology and for Human Resources and Labor Relations. Other areas are in a period of transition. The vice president of Academic Affairs retired in June, 2021; an associate vice president of Academic Affairs is now serving in an interim position. In addition, the vice president of Enrollment Management and Student Services has been filled by an interim vice president since 2019. These two positions will be important hires to ensure FIT's future.

All vice presidents are recruited nationally through a broad search process. They are thoroughly screened by a six- to eight-member search committee to ensure they possess the appropriate skills and background to carry out their assigned duties. The credentials of these senior leaders are impressive; the qualifications and background of each is highlighted on FIT's website ([Senior Administrators Profile Webpages](#)).



Administrative decision-making is guided by FIT's mission and goals as well as by statutory and local laws and regulations. Decisions are vetted through several bodies. The president's Cabinet, which meets every two weeks, consults with the president on a variety of matters and ensures that the interests and concerns of various internal and external stakeholders are taken into account. Since all divisions are represented in the Cabinet, decisions made within this body are collaborative. The president also meets individually with Cabinet members throughout the semester.

The vice president of Academic Affairs (VPAA) has oversight of academic administration. The Academic Council meets biweekly, reporting to the VPAA and includes the associate vice president for Academic Affairs, the deans, the executive director of the Center for Continuing and Professional Studies, and the director of the Gladys Marcus Library. The council supports college-wide priorities, develops academic policies and procedures, and approves new programs and curricula prior to submission to the president and board of trustees. School deans conduct biweekly or monthly meetings with their chairs/faculty, and each school holds faculty meetings monthly. The VPAA is advised by a [chair's council](#) which meets several times a semester.

Each vice president holds divisional meetings with his or her staff. Over the past few years, joint divisional meetings have been held between Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management and Student Success; Finance and Administration and Information Technology; Communications and External Relations and Enrollment Management and Student Success; and Communications and External Relations and Advancement/Alumni Affairs, with the goal of sharing information and drilling down on issues of common interest and concern.

The president and her administration engage with faculty and students in a variety of ways to advance institutional goals. The president holds a minimum of two faculty meetings a year, in the fall and in the spring, and also has open office hours on a periodic basis throughout the academic year for anyone in the college who wishes to meet with her. In addition to the Diversity Council, Sustainability Council, and Strategic Planning Group, which have wide representation including faculty and students, FIT has a number of other standing and ad hoc committees with representation drawn from throughout the various divisions of the College to ensure a wide range of perspectives. These include the [Enrollment Management Committee](#), Policy Advisory Group, Brand and Image Consortium, and a [Flexible Learning Think Tank](#). While these committees comprise a broad range of college constituencies, the campus community at large is not always aware of their existence or of the initiatives they are undertaking – although there are round table discussions and townhall meetings that happen annually to share the work. One improvement the institution can make is to publicize the composition and activities of these committees more regularly to help coordinate efforts and increase transparency.

As at many academic institutions, many at FIT find that there can be “silos” in which divisions or offices primarily interact with and share information internally. While progress has been made through some of the committees and interdivisional meetings, more attention needs to be paid to increasing collaboration and communication across the units. In particular, the timing of

communications needs to be more closely managed, as discussed in **Standard IV**, so that students, faculty, administrators, and staff receive information at the appropriate time.

FIT has a variety of ways for sharing information to keep faculty, chairs, administration, and staff more closely connected to the daily academic and operational decision-making processes. For example, the Communications and External Relations (CER) division is a major developer and distributor of internal communications to students and employees, utilizing a variety of tools and platforms, including publication of print (as needed), social media, electronic newsletters published by individual units with CER oversight, and maintenance of internal and external events calendars for both the FIT community and the general public. The Office of Human Resources (OHR) maintains a website with user-specific pages for prospective employees, new employees, and current employees ([HR Website](#)). Further, three types of information are disseminated to employees via three email channels in order to identify levels of importance; these include OHR information and issues requiring immediate attention, general information, and position postings. Critical information, such as changes in health benefits, is distributed via email and hard copy in order to ensure receipt by employees. While communications across campus have greatly improved over the last ten years, the college must continually review communications, update information systems and workflows, and better share policies and procedures in order to ensure effective operations.

#### **Evaluating Administrative Units and Using Assessment Data (VII.4.f.)**

Each division establishes its own procedures for evaluating administrative units. Several divisions, such as OHR, CER, and Advancement, operate as a single collaborative unit; while administrators and staff in these divisions have distinct job duties, they are not organized into separate office structures. For these divisions, the annual performance review process, entailing the evaluation of previous goals and setting of new goals and discussed in **Standard VI.1**, is important for evaluation. Most administrative units are located with EMSS and AA, which both require annual reports incorporating data and use of assessment as well as Administrative Program Review; see **Standard IV**.

Administrative divisions and units use assessment data to enhance operations in a variety of ways. Computer systems and reporting tools such as Banner, Hyperion, Enterprise Financial System, Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS), Raiser's Edge, and ePortfolio to store critical data and produce reports regularly used by administrators and staff. In addition, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE) assists administrative units and divisions by maintaining data and conducting analyses needed for reporting, decision making, assessment, and planning activities. It produces the annual [Factbook](#), shared on FIT's website, so any employee can easily access key information, such as current enrollment, graduation rates, and more. IRE also provides data in response to requests from FIT community members. [Assessment at FIT: An Overview](#) provides details for each division, including metrics and data used in operations.

### **ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION (VII.5)**

*Criterion 5. periodic assessment of the effectiveness of governance, leadership, and administration*

There are a variety of assessment methods in place to assess governance, leadership, and administration. As noted in **critterion 2**, the board of trustees evaluates FIT’s president annually, and conducts a broader, 360 evaluation every five years. In 2007, the college launched a performance appraisal process for administrators, which includes vice presidents, deans, assistant deans, and other administrative (non-bargaining) personnel ([Non-Bargaining Appraisal Form](#)). The president places considerable emphasis and priority on this process for her direct reports, which includes establishing annual goals, reviewing outcomes, and conducting mid-year status meetings with direct reports. While this process has proven to be valuable, greater effort by direct reports needs to be made to ensure that goals set are aligned with the strategic plan and other mission-critical priorities.

The Faculty Senate Committee also has a review process for administrators, including members of the Academic Affairs Office and Deans. Each position is reviewed on a three-year rotating cycle (see [Faculty Senate Bylaws](#), p. 7). The Faculty Senate Committee to Evaluate Administrative Personnel solicits evaluations from the FIT community, submitted anonymously ([Email Invitation to Evaluate 2020](#)). The committee reviews the evaluations and uses them to write an overall evaluation of the effectiveness of performance and provided to the president at least three months prior to a proposed reappointment.

## **Conclusion**

FIT meets the requirements of Standard VII and the Requirements of Affiliation 12 and 13. The college operates within a framework of policies and structures established by New York State law and by SUNY. It also maintains its own set of administrative units and governance bodies, whose collaborative and productive relationships stem from a common interest in advancing the institution and its mission. 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. FIT’s strategic plans have been developed by a committee of representatives from a cross section of all college constituent groups in the FIT community and drives significant decisions of the college. 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.

## **Strengths**

- Key hires and strategic reorganization of units such as The FIT Foundation and Human Resources have led to greater efficiencies and consistent leadership in those areas.
- The Faculty Senate restructured and refined its standing and ad-hoc committees to improve functionality and more closely align itself with models from other SUNY community colleges.

## **Opportunities for Improvement**

*Effectively coordinate communications across the college.*

- Improve communications in the following ways: a) increase transparency by regularly and widely disseminating information regarding ongoing committee work, initiatives, and discussions taking place at various levels; b) better coordinate timing of communications so that units can respond effectively and accurately, particularly in student-facing areas.

# **Middle States 2022 Self-Study Team**

## **Self-Study Co-Chairs**

Rebecca Bauman, Associate Professor, Modern Languages and Cultures  
Carolyn Comiskey, Executive Director of Assessment

## **Steering Committee**

Joanne Arbuckle, Deputy to the President for Industry Partnerships & Collaborative Programs  
and Acting Dean, School of Graduate Studies\*\*

Daniel Benkendorf, Associate Professor, Social Sciences, and chair of Institutional Research  
Board (IRB)

Sarah Blazer, Assistant Professor, Writing and Speaking Studio

Todd Blumenthal, Assistant Professor, Fashion Business Management

Sherry Brabham, Treasurer, and VP for Finance & Administration

Darrell Glenn, Assistant Dean of Institutional Research & Effectiveness

Brooke Carlson, Interim Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

Patrick Knisley, Dean, School of Liberal Arts

Jennifer LoTurco, Deputy to the President

Eric Odin, Associate General Counsel

Deborah Klesenski-Rispoli, Interim Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs

Suzanne McGillicuddy, Assistant Dean of Students

Brad Paris, Associate Professor and Chair, Photography

Robin Sackin, Professor and Chair, Fashion Business Management, and current President,  
Faculty Senate

Devon Vidal, Interim Assistant Dean of Curriculum

Yasemin Jones, Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs, ALO

## **Working Group I/VII: Mission and Goals/Governance, Leadership, and Administration**

Co-Chair Patrick Knisley, Dean, School of Liberal Arts

Co-Chair Jennifer LoTurco, Deputy to the President

Co-Chair Robin Sackin, Professor and Chair, Fashion Business Management

Members Amy Garawitz, Director of Alumni Engagement\*\*

Tardis Johnson, Associate Dean, Student Support Services

Loretta Keane, Vice President for Communication & External Relations

Anne Kong, Associate Professor, Communication Design Pathways

Giacomo Oliva, Vice President of Academic Affairs\*\*

Deirdre Sato, Dean for International Education

Daniel Levinson Wilk, Associate Professor, Social Sciences

Student representative: Katie Prior, Art History and Museum Professions

## **Working Group II: Ethics and Integrity**

Co-Chair Daniel Benkendorf, Associate Professor, Psychology, and chair of IRB

Co-Chair Eric Odin, Associate General Counsel  
Members Mark-Evan Blackman, Assistant Professor, Menswear  
Anna Blume, Professor, History of Art  
Shawn Carter, Associate Professor, Fashion Business Management  
Andrea Casson, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Modern Languages  
Erika Coble, Senior HR Generalist  
Bonnie Duke, Special Assistant to the VP of Enrollment Management and Student Success  
Griselda Gonzalez, Director of Policy & Compliance  
Ron Milon, Chief Diversity Officer  
Lucy Collins Payne, Assistant Professor, Social Sciences  
Terrence Peavy, Assistant Vice President, Enrollment Management\*\*  
Gwendolyn Ferguson Pugh, Executive Director for Academic Affairs Personnel Administration  
Jonathan Vatner, Staff Writer, Communications and External Relations

### **Working Group III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience**

Co-Chair Todd Blumenthal, Assistant Professor, Fashion Business Management  
Co-Chair Deborah Klesenski-Rispoli, Interim Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs  
Members Mary Capozzi, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Fashion Design  
Brenda Cowan, Associate Professor, Exhibition and Experience Design  
Tamara Cupples, Executive Director, Online Learning and Academic Technologies  
Brian Fallon, Associate Professor-Director, Writing Studio  
Helen Gaudette, Assistant Dean for International Education  
Jacqui Jenkins, Acting Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Innovation  
Nomi Kleinman, Associate Professor, Textile/Surface Design  
Elaine Maldonado, Professor-Director, Faculty Development and the Center for Excellence in Teaching  
Michele Nagel, Center for Continuing and Professional Studies  
James Pearce, Manager Emerging Technologies  
Troy Richards, Dean, School of Art and Design  
Carli Spina, Head of Research and Instructional Studies, Gladys Marcus Library  
Melissa Tombro, Professor, English and Communication Studies

### **Working Group IV: Support of the Student Experience**

Co-Chair Suzanne McGillicuddy, Assistant Dean of Students  
Co-Chair Devon Vidal, Interim Assistant Dean of Curriculum  
Members Frantz Alcindor, Director, Career and Internship Services

Amber Carpenter-Lagattuta, Assistant Director, Registration & Records  
 Christie Graziano, Counselor, Student Life  
 Deborah Levine, Coordinator, Academic Skills  
 Yasemin Levine, Professor, Political Science and Executive Director, Presidential  
 Scholars Program  
 Jeffrey Manning, Associate Director, Residential Life\*\*  
 Taur Orange, Director, Educational Opportunity Programs  
 Ajoy Sarkar, Professor, Textile Development and Management  
 Student representative: Katherine Trasker, AMC BS

**Working Group V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment**

Co-Chair Sarah Blazer, Assistant Professor, Writing and Speaking Studio  
 Brad Paris, Associate Professor and Chair, Photography  
 Members Eric Daniels, Associate Professor, Interior Design  
 Christina Diggs, Director of Residential Life  
 Naomi Gross, Professor and Assistant Chair of Fashion Business Management  
 Meg Joseph, Associate Professor, Global Fashion Management  
 Su Ku, Assistant Professor, Fashion Design  
 Maria Rothenberg, Associate Professor and Instructional Services & Assessment  
 Librarian  
 Nadean Wilson, Counselor Associate, Academic Advising  
 Marc de Jong, Associate Professor, Sociology

**Working Group VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement**

Co-Chairs Joanne Arbuckle, Deputy to the President for Industry Partnerships Collaborative  
 Programs and Acting Dean, School of Graduate Studies\*\*  
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 Members Laurence Baach, Acting Vice President, Information Technology & CIO  
 Roberta Elins, Professor, Advertising and Market Communications, President of  
 UCE  
 Darrell Glenn, Assistant Dean, Institutional Research & Effectiveness  
 Shelci Graham, Controller  
 Sydney Grimes, Associate Vice President of Academic Operations  
 Cynthia Glass, Vice President of Human Resource Management and Labor  
 Relations  
 Bayard King, Acting Associate Vice President for Finance  
 June Ng, Director, Space Management & Planning  
 Esther Oliveras, Coordinator of Faculty Services  
 Emre Ozsoz, Associate Professor, Social Sciences  
 Nancy Su, Director, Budget



## **Verification of Compliance**

Chair: Griselda Gonzalez, Director of Policy and Compliance  
Members: Rita Cammarata, Director of Records and Registration  
Tamara Cupples, Executive Director for Online Learning and Academic  
Technologies  
Gwen Ferguson-Pugh, Executive Director for Academic Affairs  
Harold Lederman, Internal Auditor  
Terence Peavy, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services\*\*  
Shadia Sachedina, Associate Vice President for Student Services and Dean of  
Students

\*\* No longer at FIT

We mourn two cherished colleagues who began this project with us but passed away before its completion:

Steven Frumkin, Dean, Jay & Patty Baker School of Business and Technology (Standard VI)  
Erika Rohrbach, Professor-Director, International Student Services (Standard IV)