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Dear Reader:

We are pleased to present West Chester University's Selected Topics Self-Study Report for your review. As will be evident from the report, our university was accorded an excellent opportunity to combine two important and resource-intensive processes. These were the development of a comprehensive self-study for reaccreditation by the Middle States Association Commission on Higher Education and the creation of a new strategic plan to guide the institution through the first years of the new millennium.

Because West Chester University undertook a Selected Topics Self-Study, with a focus on the strategic plan for the years 2000 and beyond, the organization of the report differs from that of traditional comprehensive self-study reports. Chapter 1 offers the rationale for conducting a Selected Topics Self-Study and describes the process used to complete it. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive summary of the University's state in accord with the Commission's *Characteristics of Excellence* document. This chapter is designed, in many ways, to serve as a concise version of a traditional reaccreditation self-study and is based on a thorough scan of the internal environment of the University.

Chapter 3 summarizes the results of the scan of important external-environment factors and their likely influence on the University, while Chapter 4 presents the *Plan for Excellence*, the new strategic plan. Chapter 5 addresses how the *Plan for Excellence* will be operationalized and monitored in the ever-changing higher education environment. The *Plan for Excellence*, published in fall 2000, is intended to be a living document, one open to thorough annual review and, in the face of unanticipated external forces, revision as necessary.

We wish to acknowledge gratefully the efforts of the Strategic Planning and Accreditation Council (SPAC) and many others—both within and outside our university—who helped by framing questions, defining issues, offering solutions, and above all generously sharing both time and expertise. We also thank the staff of Graphics and Printing for shaping the document to its present form.

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