West Campus House System Review Overview

The West Campus House System, launched with its first house in 2004 and its fifth in 2009, has as its mission functioning as “a community of students and faculty gathered in a spirit of inquiry and active citizenship.” It is described as offering “upperlevel students an actively engaged community of their own – one that fosters personal discovery and growth, and nurtures scholarship, creativity, and responsible stewardship. ... the West Campus House System emphasizes informal interaction with faculty members, self-governance, social and cultural programming, privacy, and independence. ... Bringing students, faculty, staff, and visiting scholars together to create intimate vibrant communities is at the heart of Cornell’s West Campus House System.”

The Program Goals of the West Campus House System are to:

- Develop a sense of belonging to one's House.
- Create safe, healthy, and welcoming communities.
- Build meaningful relationships between residents and faculty.
- Create opportunities for intellectual exploration that lead to a deeper understanding of one's discipline, exposure to a broad range of knowledge, and a desire to be a lifelong learner.
- Encourage student engagement in the House System and provide opportunities for the development of student leadership skills.
- Provide opportunities for students to engage as citizens in the broader community.
- Help students navigate the opportunities available to them at Cornell.

This review will help Cornell’s leadership understand how the West Campus House System (1) contributes to the learning, growth, and development of Cornell students, (2) supports faculty engagement with students and with each other, and (3) can be positioned to effectively deploy its associated resources to enhance these contributions.

West Campus House System Review Charge

- Review the current state of the West Campus House System (WCHS) to identify its strengths and challenges, and identify opportunities to strengthen the program and associated student (and faculty) outcomes within current overall budget.
  - Consider:
    - Impact on undergraduate students and the Cornell undergraduate student experience.
    - Impact on Cornell faculty.
      - Interactions with students, effectiveness as teachers & advisors.
      - Interactions with other faculty.
    - Effective deployment of budget and staffing, or redistribution of WCHS resources among its various components and priorities

West Campus House System Review Process and Timeline

- **Spring 2016**: Compile background documents; conduct background interviews with faculty, staff, students.
Include history, mission, purpose, programs, staffing, budget, assessment/evaluation information

- **Summer 2016**: Compile draft set of data and materials for external review team.
- **Early Fall 2016**: Convene an internal (Cornell) committee to refine the materials and supporting data for the external review team, and develop questions for external reviewers to consider.
- **Later Fall 2016**: Invite an external group of experts in residential college programs to review materials assembled by the internal committee and to participate in a site visit that will include interviews (with students, faculty, staff), tours, and group discussion. The review team will be asked to provide its assessment and recommendations for strengthening the West Campus House System at Cornell, within current budget parameters.
  - External review team members may be invited from institutions such as Harvard, Northwestern, Rice, University of Chicago, University of Michigan, University of Pennsylvania, University of South Carolina, University of Southern California.
  - Members invited from those institutions may include a mix of faculty (e.g., house dean equivalents), administrators (e.g., VPUE equivalents), and staff (e.g., residential life program directors).

**Draft Questions for External Review Team**

- The review team will be asked to address questions such as the following (to be refined and finalized with the assistance of the internal self-study team):
  - What are the key strengths, challenges, and opportunities facing the West Campus House System, related to programs, staffing, facilities, governance, and mission?
  - What future assessment models and approaches would be appropriate for the West Campus House System?
  - What lessons can be learned from the different approaches, programs, and styles that have been implemented in each of the West Campus Houses?
  - What “best practices” from other institutions (especially large research universities with limited on-campus housing) with residential college programs and mission might be useful to consider for the Cornell West Campus House System?
  - What actions might Cornell take, within current overall WCHS budget, to address the challenges and opportunities facing the West Campus House System? How might resources (money, staff, faculty) be deployed more effectively to enhance strengths, address challenges, and address opportunities?
  - How might the West Campus House System, within current overall budget, strengthen its contribution to academic and social success of undergraduate students and enhance the impacts of interactions among students and faculty related to academic, intellectual, and social outcomes? How might impact on undergraduate curriculum be strengthened?
  - How can Dining and other amenities/resources be leveraged more effectively to achieve the mission and goals of the West Campus House System, within current overall WCHS budget?
  - What impact do the Faculty Fellows have regarding the West Campus House System mission and student outcomes, and how can the Faculty Fellows program be deployed more effectively?
  - What impact do the staffing structure (House Professor and Dean, Assistant Dean, Graduate Resident Fellows) and associated responsibilities and accountabilities have on West Campus House System mission and student outcomes, and how can staffing be deployed more effectively?
How effective is the administration, reporting structure, accountability, and oversight of the West Campus House System at the university level, and how could it be improved? What are the benefits and challenges of having different components situated within VPUE (Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education) and SCL (Student and Campus Life)?

What is the relationship of the West Campus House System with the North Campus First-Year residential initiative, and how might that relationship be made more effective?