



Accreditation Update to the Faculty Senate

Bob Carpenter
Co-Chair, Middle States Committee
Department of Economics
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Why is this work important?

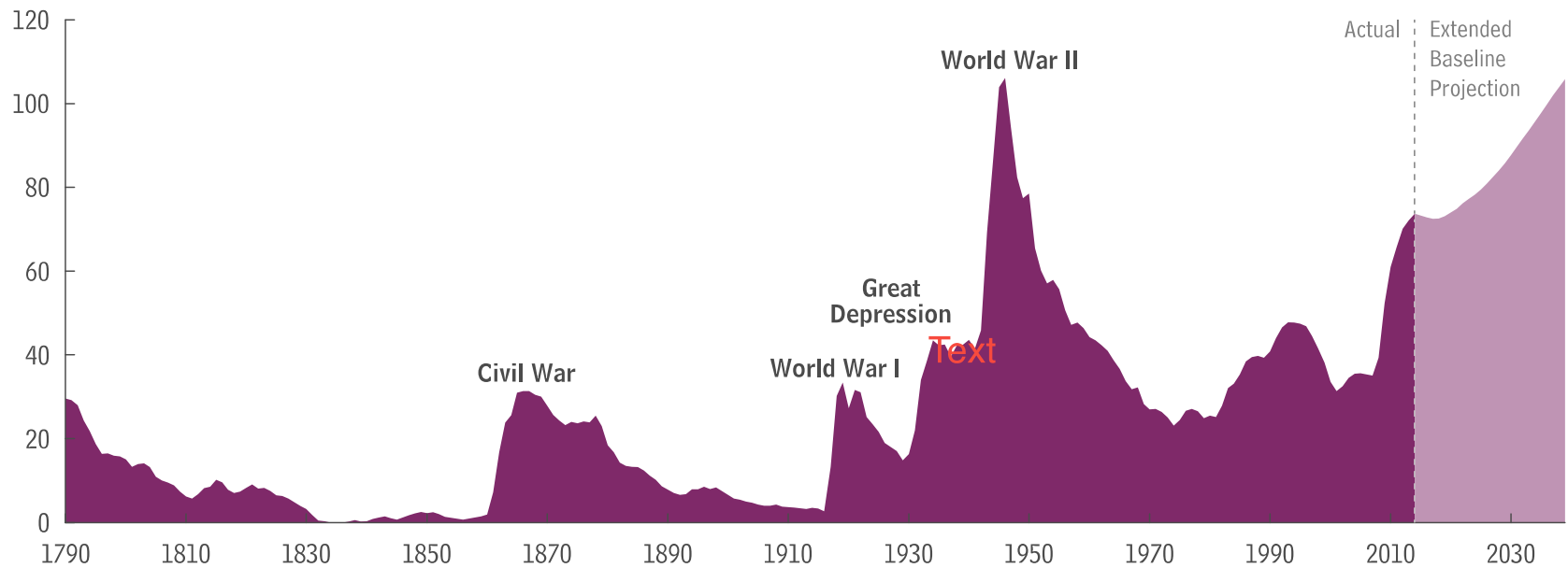
- The fundamentals of higher education, nationwide, are troubled
 - Declining state and federal support
 - Age-based entitlement spending (Social Security and Medicare)
 - Interest payments on the national debt (are going to double)
 - Funding pressure public sector pensions
 - Rising levels of student debt

Some context

Figure 1-1.

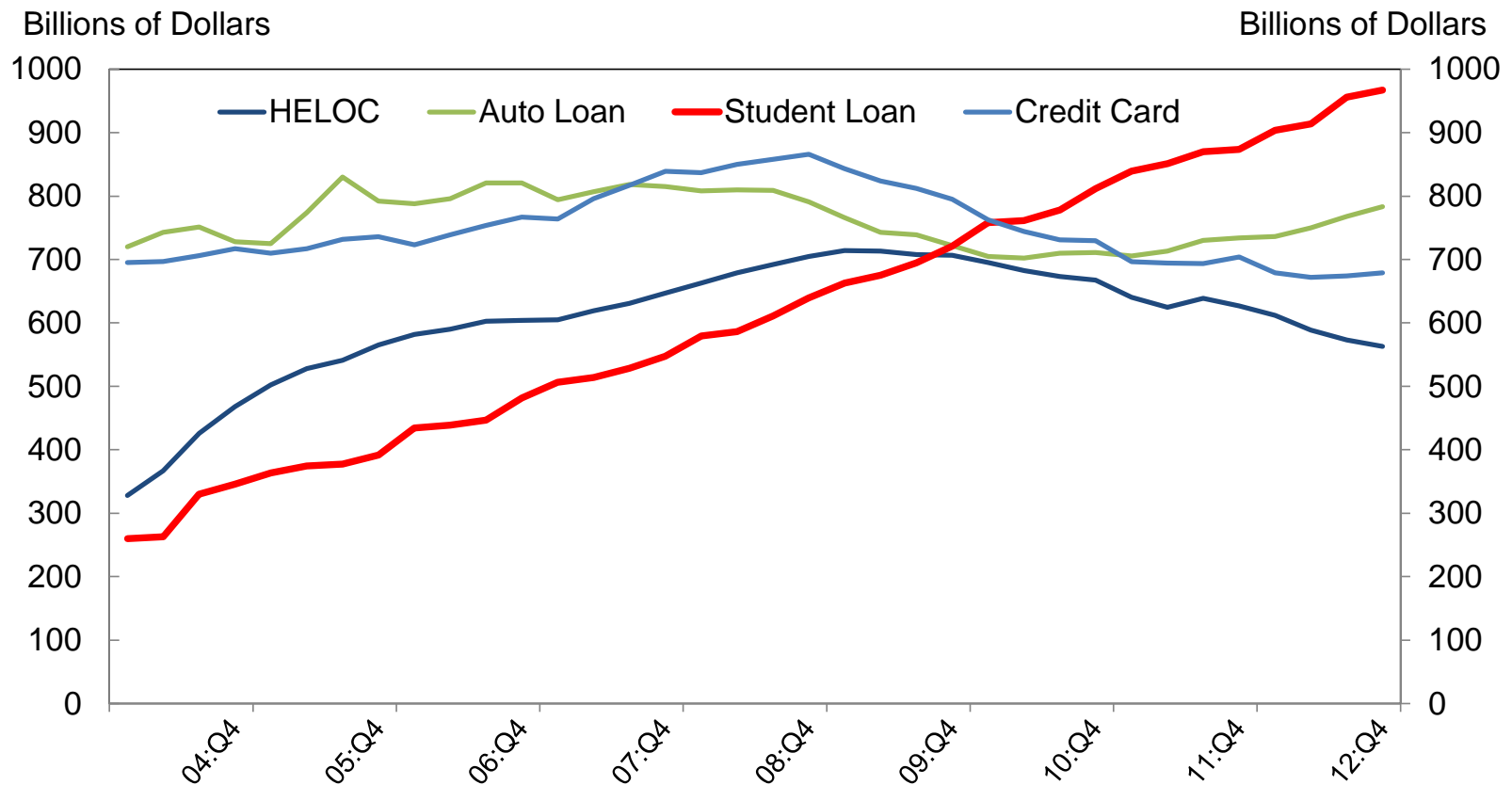
Federal Debt Held by the Public

Percentage of Gross Domestic Product



Source: Congressional Budget Office.

Some context



These forces will be transformative for higher education:

- We have to get out in front of them
- Universities play a critical role in social change and are critical rung of the economic ladder
 - It's vital that ladder not be pulled up behind us. We need to find ways to maintain access and affordability
- Good planning and improving our effectiveness means
 - Better outcomes for students
 - Helps us to be good stewards of their tuition dollars and public resources
 - Improves the efficiency of our academic enterprise

What's the purpose of accreditation?

- Ensure that our student are getting a high quality education, our institution has the infrastructure and planning processes in place to conduct high quality research, and that the business processes support the academic enterprise...in short, that we're achieving our mission
- Promote improvement through reflection and peer review.
 - Identify what we're doing well, and what we need to work on
 - We want the accreditation process to be a useful and meaningful assessment of the university as an educational enterprise
- Accreditation is vital to the survival of institutions...which can't receive federal grants and student loans without it

High level review of process

- Middle States conducts a review every ten years (ours is scheduled for Fall 2016)
- The major steps in the process are
 - Design a self study and have it approved by Middle States (December 2014)
 - Write and submit the self study to Middle States (AY 2014-15)
 - Host a site visit by a team of external reviewers comprised of university faculty and administrators (Fall 2016)
 - Receive a report from the review team
 - Respond to the report (an example of one of our previous responses is the construction of our Blue Ribbon Library Committee)

Our self study

- Will be a “selected topics” design, focusing most intently on a subset of the 14 Middle States standards
 - Mission and Goals
 - Planning, Budgeting, and Institutional Resources
 - Institutional Assessment
 - Assessment of Student Learning
- The major theme of our study is covered under the umbrella of “institutional effectiveness”

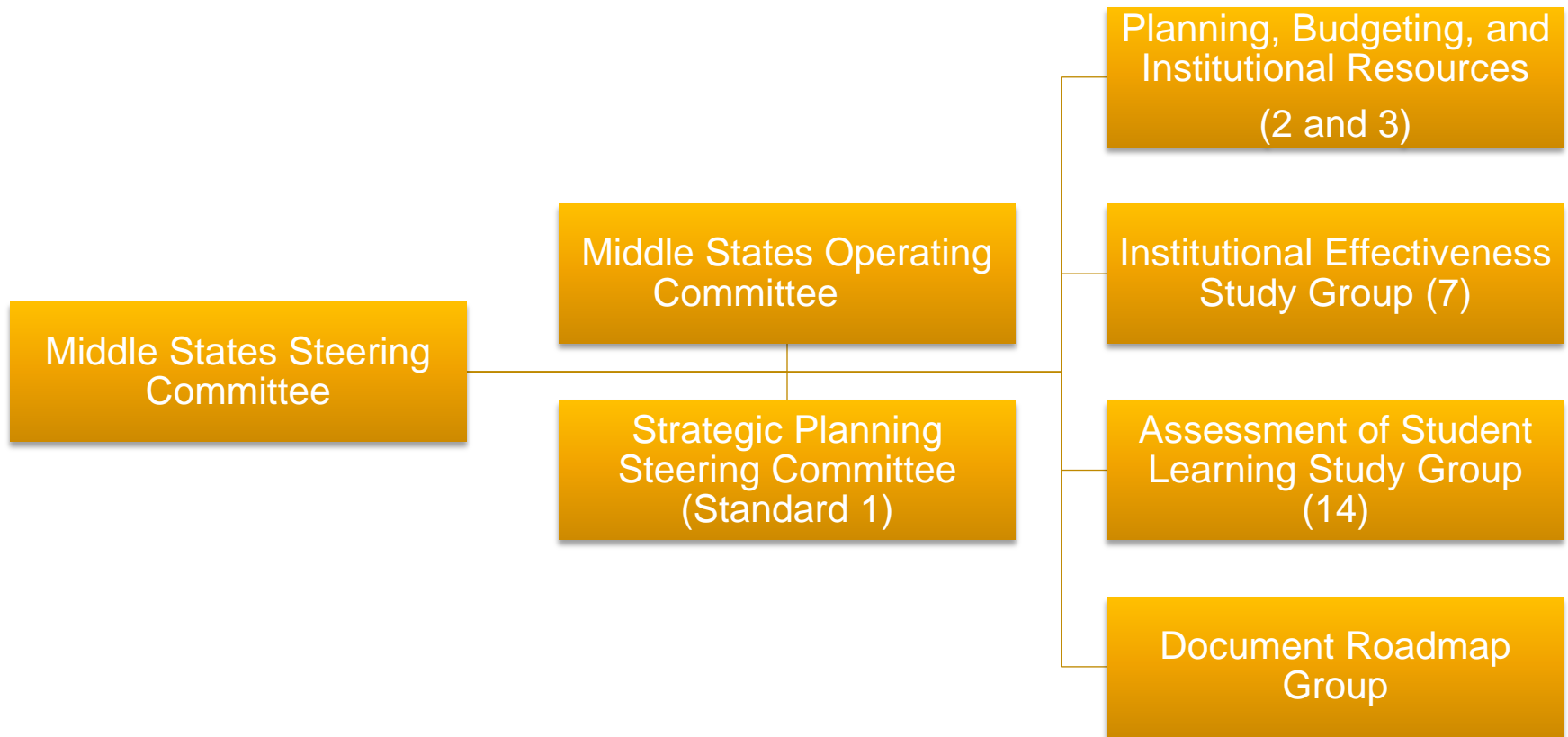
What's institutional effectiveness?

- Here's my high level working definition
 - The processes an institution uses to determine how well it's accomplishing it's mission
 - Assesses outcomes (student performance, research productivity, administrative productivity)
 - Uses the assessment to make evidence-based changes to improve performance
 - To be helpful for decision making, decisions must recognize tradeoffs (in terms of costs or in terms of how existing activities will be affected)
- The difference between effectiveness and assessment?
 - Effectiveness is the soup to nuts process, Assessment is the measurement of specific goals and objectives and the judgment and decisions that follow from it

How will we organize the work?

- A steering committee
- A small number of study groups (**members needed!**)
- An smaller “operating committee” that advises the steering committee and coordinates the study groups and construction of the self study
- The study groups will develop a series of research questions, the answers to which will guide the construction of the self study
- The research questions should examine whether our desired outcomes are clearly stated. They should be evidence based, appropriate to our institution, transparent, and become part of the institutional culture

The Middle States organizational chart



Aligning planning and accreditation

- We've been approved to delay our site visit by one semester to align the work of the self study with the strategic planning process
 - A key task for the Middle States Steering Committee and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee is to leverage our efforts and exploit the complementarities between them (without duplicating efforts)
 - This will make both exercises more meaningful, more useful, and avoid reinventing the wheel
 - The alignment of the work is something Middle States is excited about and their approval of a selected topics design along with the adjustment of the timeline reflects a lot of confidence in us as an institution

Thinking about the high level linkages



What you can expect from us...

- Constructing a self study is a two-year process that involves several dozen people across the campus. Choreographing it will be quite a challenge
- Our goals:
 - To have a clear set of well-defined tasks and waypoints
 - To be transparent with the campus. We are developing a website (selfstudy.umbc.edu) that will give you access to the self-study process
 - To be inclusive
 - Constructing a self study is an opportunity for the campus to thoughtfully reflect upon where it's been over the past 10 years, and where we want to take it (hence the link to strategic planning)
 - The campus will have opportunity to comment on the process and the draft self study through “town halls” and electronic comments

What we need from you...

- Support for our work (especially for the members of the committees taking this on as an additional service commitment)
- Constructive comments on the self study process and the draft documents
- To be engaged in the process so that the final product represents the campus and we get the benefit of your knowledge and experience
- To be available to meet with Middle States representatives and the external evaluation team when they visit campus

Contact us

- Your best email option is
 - middlestates@umbc.edu
- Philip Rous (Co-Chair of the Steering Committee)
 - rous@umbc.edu
- Bob Carpenter (Co-Chair of the Steering Committee & Chair of the Operating Committee)
 - bobc@umbc.edu
- Lee Hawthorne (Vice Chair of the Operating Committee)
 - hawthor@umbc.edu