1. Background

In an email to campus on April 20, 2016, Interim President (then Provost) Farnam Jahanian was charged with convening an internal, campus-wide task force to closely examine the Carnegie Mellon University experience and develop recommendations to enhance this community for students, faculty, staff and alumni. The charge, quoted here in its entirety, is as follows:

*The Task Force is charged both with closely examining the Carnegie Mellon University experience, and with developing near-term and long-term recommendations to enhance that experience and ensure student success. Some steps may be taken as soon as this summer, and the Task Force will submit a full progress report to the President by the end of 2016.*

The Task Force should be attentive to what drives our excellence and achievement, as well as the risks associated with the hard-charging environment and stress culture common at highly-selective universities. Though the initial focus of the Task Force’s work will be on the student experience, it will also review key issues facing faculty and staff as appropriate. Recommendations should reflect our shared aspiration to become a national model for a community that helps all its members to flourish.

In close partnership with the CMU Faculty Senate and Staff Council, this Task Force will serve as a coordinating body across key academic and metacurricular issues, and will form a number of smaller, more nimble working groups to handle specific priority areas. For example, if health and counseling is to be an area of focus, one or more members of the Task Force should engage a smaller working group of community members outside the Task Force with key expertise in that domain, and report back with a set of actionable recommendations. This working-group model will simultaneously ensure that the committee is able to tap into the considerable expertise across campus, and that a diverse set of voices from all parts of the CMU community are heard.

The Task Force will consider the following as a set of steps to guide their work:

- Work with Institutional Research and Analysis and other campus offices to capture existing information on student and alumni perceptions of the CMU experience, including satisfaction and persistence data;
- Conduct focus groups with current undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, faculty, staff, and parents to inform their understanding of current strengths and areas of concern within the global campus community;
- Review research on best practices and benchmark CMU against relevant peer institutions, with special focus on those institutions that provide a supportive environment for high-achieving students to thrive;
- Make recommendations which enhance the CMU experience and identify the associated stakeholders on a rolling basis, so that ideas which mature quickly can be implemented without delay from those which may take more time to develop; and
- Create a community engagement plan that includes a web portal and set of opportunities for in-person engagement with student, faculty, staff, and alumni for the fall semester of 2016.

While CMU attracts individuals whose identities are often centered on their pursuit of intellectual and artistic excellence, the university must take steps to ensure this intensive environment does not give way to unhealthy anxiety, stress, and self-doubt. CMU must help its students—and faculty and staff—to be resilient, and to
recognize that a healthy mind, body, and spirit is a foundation for sustained, lifelong personal and professional success.

The Task Force on the CMU Experience works in conjunction with the President’s Advisory Board on the CMU Experience. The President’s Advisory Board is a standing committee charged with providing insights and expertise to help enrich the Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) Experience for students, faculty, staff and alumni. This advisory group comprises distinguished professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds and life experiences, many with direct experience either as a former CMU student or parent of a current or former CMU student. The Board includes: Cynthia Barnhart (Chair), Dedric Carter (unable to attend), Cynthia Cherrey, David Finegold, Evan Frazier, Ian Glasner, Alan Leshner, Erren Lester, Anne M. Molloy, Marlene Santos, Victor Schwartz, Lorraine Siggins, J. Lea Hillman Simonds, Prerna Singh, and Collin Wong.

The inaugural meeting of the President's Advisory Board (the Board) was held at CMU from October 30th through November 1st, 2016. The Board engaged with students, faculty, staff, alumni and university leadership to learn more about the CMU student experience and to identify opportunities for improving that experience.

2. Reflecting on Progress: Year One of the Task Force (AY 2016-2017)

A. Membership, Organization, and Meeting Structure
With input from key constituents on campus, Interim President Jahanian engaged 29 members of the CMU community to serve on the Task Force. Members currently include 11 faculty; 6 staff; 4 students; 5 senior administrative and academic leaders; and 3 alumni with Working Groups also involving an additional 70 individuals across campus. Interim Provost, Laurie Weingart serves as Chair while Marlene Behrmann, faculty in Dietrich College, and Gina Casalegno, Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs, act as Vice-Chairs.

In year one the Task Force as a whole met monthly (12 times) for 90 or more minutes, and a Steering Committee met every two weeks to provide strategic guidance and oversight for the larger group. For year two, the interim President, Farnam Jahanian, will step down and Interim Provost, Laurie Weingart will join the Steering Committee. Other committee members are, Marlene Behrmann, Gina Casalegno, Todd Przybycien, Amy Burkert, Jocelyn Malik, and Rick Siger. Steve Kloehn, Sarah College and Megan Meyer also serve as ex officio members to provide communications and project administration support.

B. Working Group Updates
The five working groups of the Task Force met regularly in year one to investigate perceived areas for improvement, to more closely interact with the community, to develop recommendations, and to implement initiatives on behalf of the larger Task Force. This section provides a detailed progress report for each working group as of spring 2017.

i. Academic Policies and Practices

Co-Chairs
Amy Burkert, Vice Provost for Education
Brenda Peyser, Faculty, Heinz College
(newly appointed) Marsha Lovett, Associate Vice Provost for Educational Innovation and Learning Analytics

Laurie Weingart, Interim Provost (now Task Force Chair)

The Academic Policies and Practices working group has 12 members representing all colleges (7 faculty, 1 administrator, and 4 students) who are focused on examining academic policies and practices that have a direct or indirect impact on student workload, stress, and academic progress. They have developed recommendations to make changes in this domain. University policies and practices that address course loads, selection and scheduling of courses, grading, and course delivery and design are all core topics for the group’s work.

This working group has gathered input from campus constituents, analyzed related data and conducted benchmarking studies of our peer institutions’ academic policies and practices to better understand where we can enhance student success and promote greater well-being. In its first year, the group identified the extended timeline of Add/Drop/Withdraw dates currently in place and the existing policy and practices around automatic overload allowance as areas that contribute to the culture of excessively high workloads at the university. The group created and distributed to campus a White Paper summarizing their earlier efforts in this area. They have also drafted an Implementation Plan proposal to lay out an approach and timeline for implementation of new policies in the area of course overload workload & unit alignment, and the add, drop, withdraw calendar. In summary, the implementation plan proposal is as follows:

- On August 15, 2017, the Provost sent an email to all faculty and graduate student instructors outlining the resolution adopted by Faculty Senate in May 2017 that calls upon all faculty to have syllabi available to students by the first day of classes. Syllabi offer students an important glimpse into the instructor’s course design, foster clear understanding of content and expectations, and can set an important tone for promoting student success.

- As of fall 2017 for incoming students and fall 2018 for current students, the automatic increase in unit protocol for all departments will be removed. Students with a 3.25 or higher cumulative or last semester QPA will be eligible to overload, with the caveat that their advisor approves the request.

- As of fall 2017 the workload of each class will be analyzed using FCE student effort reports in regards to unit appropriateness by the UEC, deans, and department heads. This is a direct response to consistent feedback received from students that there is often a significant disconnect between units earned and the actual workload required for some courses.

- As of fall 2018 the new add/drop period will be 10th class day of the semester. The new withdrawal period will begin the 11th class day of the semester and end the 10th week of the semester. During the withdrawal period a student can withdraw from the course and receive a W. We are proposing that undergraduate students can convert up to two classes to pass/no pass during their time at CMU. Students will have until the last day of semester to exercise this option. Graduate students can convert up to one class to pass/no pass during their time at CMU. Students will have until the last day of semester to exercise this option, with an understanding that exceptions for extenuating circumstances will always be considered by college. It is important to note that in addition to these options, students with extenuating circumstances can always petition for exceptions to the policy.
The proposed changes to policy and practice have the potential to improve not only the academic performance and overall well-being of our students, but also the campus culture as a whole: to remove the perception that to succeed means you must overload. The overload restrictions and earlier add/drop deadlines are also likely to improve course access and diminish waitlist uncertainties.

ii. **Health and Well-Being Services**

**Co-Chairs**

Kasey Creswell, Faculty, Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Scott Sandage, Faculty, Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Health and Well-Being Services group is comprised of 30 diverse members of the CMU community (including 9 faculty, 7 staff, 13 students and 3 alumni) who met five times from January to May. Its mission is to develop data driven, near- and long-term recommendations for improving physical, mental, and emotional well-being of members of the CMU community. As part of their work, the working group is carefully evaluating Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) and University Health Services (UHS) as part of a broader, interconnected array of support units across campus. Progress of this working group includes:

- **On August 15th, 2017,** the Provost sent an email encouraging all faculty and graduate student instructors to include Wellness Language in their syllabi as well as Language relating to Student Accommodations. The email also provided a suggested message crafted by the Task Force and approved by Faculty Senate, although educators were encouraged to modify it as they see fit. This messaging, available on the Eberly Center website, signals our support to all students and provides easily accessible information about taking care of themselves and each other. As a result of this effort, the Faculty Senate is leading a process to institutionalize the effort across all syllabi at CMU.

- **Like in fall 2016,** all faculty, academic advisors, TA’s, and those staff who interact with students in an academic setting will be provided with a “CMU Cares” resource folder in early-mid fall 2017 (over 6500 folders). These folders are designed to provide vital guidance and resources for faculty and staff when they want to help a student access further support. The newly edited content includes information on need-specific university resources, key contacts by college, general guidelines for how to determine if a student may be in need of help, and what level of response may be needed.

- **At the recommendation of the student members,** this group catalyzed the promotion of Mental Health First Aid and Mental Health@CMU trainings to a broader section of our community. Coaching staff and employees for our largest food vendor received a tailored MH@CMU training that resulted from this group’s efforts (106 staff in all). In addition, we provided a special MHFA Training last January for interested staff, with 18 staff and one faculty attending. Since August 2016, over 216 students, faculty and staff have participated in MHFA trainings. Over 461 students, faculty and staff have participated in a MH@CMU training.”

- **At the recommendation of student members,** Catherine Getchell, Director of the Office of Disability Resources will continue to assess and evaluate how to better support the needs of CMU students with disabilities, especially how accommodation issues are addressed in the classroom, and how our current practices benchmark with other institutions.
At the recommendation of this group and as part of a multi-year agreement, CaPS and UHS are undergoing a self-assessment under the guidance of the Jed Foundation to assess our programs through a collaborative and consultative model. The effort seeks to drive progress in program and policy that can build upon existing mental health, substance abuse, and suicide prevention efforts to ensure the best possible care that aligns with best-practices in the corresponding care fields.

iii. Campus Culture and Student Success

Co-Chairs
Chris Hertz, Staff, College of Engineering
Jelena Kovacevic, Faculty, College of Engineering

The 21 members of the Campus Culture and Student Success working group recommend and implement strategies for fostering a CMU community where all members live and work in an atmosphere of mutual respect, inclusion and equity, focused on encouragement and support of students as they pursue their goals. As this Working Group’s goals aligned with the work of many of the others, they also advised the efforts of several recommendations for year one.

One of the earliest ways students experience the CMU community is Orientation, where the culture of this campus is first introduced. As part of efforts to continue conversations on the importance of well-being, self-care, reflection, and diversity, key wellness messaging was incorporated throughout Orientation programs for the incoming classes of 2020+ and 2021+, their parents, and new faculty members. Of note for fall 2017 were the Mindfulness Room Open House (August 22), First Year FIT Tours (August 22), Diversity Dialogue and Community Collage, and a “Building Health Communities” Session (August 23), led by faculty, staff and student role models who set a CMU ideal for what health and wellness means on campus.

To date, three Racism is Real lecture series have been held in partnership with the Division of Student Affairs. The speakers included Gina Garcia faculty from the University of Pittsburgh, Kody Manke, Teaching Professor in Psychology, and Ajay Nair, Dean of Campus Life at Emory University. Moving forward, future discussions will be facilitated by Student Affairs, the Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion, and the University Lecture Series program.

In collaboration with the College of Engineering Bias Busters team and Vice Provost for Faculty Kathryn Roeder, Unconscious Bias Training was extended to upwards of 175 faculty and staff on campus including the entire Office of the Provost, members of the Office of General Counsel, the Division of Student Affairs and all Incoming Faculty. In addition, the School of Computer Science offered this training to more than 450 students, faculty, and staff. Given recent feedback on the training sessions, the current training will be undergoing an overhaul for spring 2018.

iv. Campus Infrastructure

Co-Chairs:
Kristen Kurland, Faculty, College of Fine Arts and Heinz College
(newly appointed) Keith Webster, Dean of Libraries
(formerly) Marsha Lovett, Associate Vice Provost for Educational Innovation and Learning Analytics
The 21 members of the Campus Infrastructure group (8 faculty, 5 staff, 8 students) identify strategies through which the physical infrastructure on and near campus can better support a positive experience and enhance the overall safety and well-being of the CMU community. This group’s work includes both formal and informal learning spaces (e.g., classrooms, libraries, carrels, nooks) as well as housing, dining, and other gathering spaces.

- The Campus Infrastructure launched the “Nicer Nooks Initiative,” an effort to activate shared indoor spaces throughout campus, especially those adjacent to classrooms. In coordination with the capital renewal process led by Finance and Operations, and a generous gift by an anonymous donor, 11 projects were funded for the 17-18 Academic Year, spanning between $10,000-$25,000 and occurring in the College of Fine Arts, Wean Hall, Doherty Hall and Margaret Morrison. Completion of these projects is set to occur in spring, 2018.

- The Campus Infrastructure group collaborated with the Teaching & Learning Spaces Committee to produce a proposal aimed at improving classrooms across campus. The work focused on (1) bringing currently deficient classrooms up to standard and (2) enhancing classrooms to foster more engaging, adaptive educational experiences. In an email to campus on July 18, 2017, CMU committed to a multi-year, $20 million initiative to renovate classroom and learning spaces, which will dramatically enhance the CMU experience for students across campus.

- The UPLift micro-grant Challenge, born out of the Campus Infrastructure’s “Cartwright Fund” proposal, was launched in May, celebrating the power of our community to suggest meaningful place-making projects that benefit the entire campus. Students, faculty, and staff were asked to submit projects to four thematic categories: Health and Wellness; Crossroads of the Mind, Recognizably CMU, and Other. The Challenge was met with extreme enthusiasm, receiving 59 proposals (26 Health and Wellness, 10 Recognizable CMU, 12 Crossroads of the Mind, and 11 other). In an email to campus on August 7th, President Jahanian announced the five winners of the first UPLift Challenge. Implementation of each submission is currently underway, with the projected completion time being December 2017.

- Members of the Campus Infrastructure committee were also able to broker the donation of 25 Adirondack chairs by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at CMU. These chairs can be found throughout campus and are already adding to the aesthetic appeal of our outdoor spaces for the campus community.

v. Professional Development for Faculty and Staff

Co-Chairs
M. Shernell Smith, Chair, Staff Council
Todd Przybycien, Chair, Faculty Senate

The Professional Development working group comprises 19 members (6 faculty, 9 staff, and 4 students) who are working to enhance the CMU Experience for faculty and staff by proposing programs, policies, and processes that catalyze professional growth and promote professional satisfaction. They are also focused on considering actions that enable faculty and staff to be more effective in their interactions with students. In pursuit of this mission, the working group will continue to work closely with the Professional Development Services (Human Resources), the Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation, Faculty Senate, and Staff Council to expand the boundaries of their collective expertise.
This working group supported the other activities of the Task Force, in particular the expansion of Mental Health Training & Unconscious Bias Training, and the through the engagement of faculty and staff in connection to the work of the four other working groups.

3. Building on our Success: Year Two of the Task Force (AY 2017-18)

Following a highly successful brainstorm session with the Task Force (Summer Retreat: July, 10, 2017), the Task Force has devised a prioritized list of all ongoing and new initiatives for the 2017-2018 Academic Year. Several initiatives have concrete efforts underway with projected implementation in the next year, while others may require several years of benchmarking and research before being launched.

Year two represents an important pivot for the Task Force, as we shift from a set of working groups based around thematic goals to the pursuit of a set of concrete initiatives. These initiatives will be led by “initiative teams” that will be responsible for driving progress and reporting back to the Task Force on a periodic basis. Because of this shift in approach, the activities of the Task Force itself will change in the coming year. The group will move into an advisory capacity, and hold two 90-minute meetings each semester to monitor the progress of the initiative teams and to update on other relevant activities, and a half-day retreat during the summer to establish priorities for the following year.

Ongoing Task Force Activities

- **Academic Policies and Practices Implementation Team**: Beginning in fall 2017 the APP Working Group will continue to pursue feedback and advance towards a timeline of changes to policy and practice that are necessary to implement before reforming CMU’s add/drop/withdrawal policies in fall 2018.

- **Nooks and the UPLift Challenge Initiative Team**: The Task Force will continue to oversee the transformation of all eleven spaces (some in summer 2017, some later), as well as to identify new nooks for renovation. The UPLift Challenge committee will continue the award and implementation process for five initial winners of the UPLift Challenge, and plan for the next challenge iteration in spring 2018.

- **Engagement with the JED Foundation**: The Task Force will continue to work with the JED Foundation (under a multi-year commitment) to assess our programs through a collaborative and consultative model. The effort seeks to drive progress in program and policy that can build upon existing mental health, substance abuse, and suicide prevention efforts.

- **Tartan Reboot**: In an effort to prepare for a Beta Launch in fall 2018, members of the Tartan Reboot team will work to create programming that interrupts business as usual on our campus, with grassroots activities that emphasize fun, relaxation, and work-life balance.

- **Life @ CMU Project**: Piloted in spring 2017, this project involves a research study designed to identify and gain a deeper understanding of the psychological, social, and institutional factors that affect students’ overall health and academic success. In spring 2018 the Life@CMU Project Team will expand their research sample to include an additional 225 students across all colleges. The project will help the Task Force objectively assess the current state of the student body across a set of important measures, and to identify data-driven opportunities to intervene to improve student life. (See below for more information on this initiative.)
New Initiatives for Year Two

- **Designing a Life @ CMU Course:** The Task Force will explore the possibility of creating a CMU-centric course to be required for first-year students across all six undergraduate colleges. The course would be designed based on best practices from similar peer institution courses, including the MCS Eureka course, the Stanford “Design Your Life” course, and others.

- **Holistic Improvements to Advising across the Life Cycle:** A sub-group of the Task Force will assess our practices and benchmark against our peers to create a more consistent, holistic model for advising at CMU. The model should focus on regular, meaningful connections that are more uniform across all departments, and emphasize the multiple dimensions of the CMU experience for students.

- **Doctoral Students Mentorship:** The Task Force should assess current mentorship opportunities available to Doctoral Students in relation to our peer institutions, and consider programs to prepare faculty and staff for effective mentorship, to create department specific mentoring, and other interventions.

- **An Ecosystem of Support for Health, Well-Being, and Resilience:** Guided by initiatives housed in Student Affairs, the Task Force will work to launch and enhance several programs that foster resilience across the student experience in and out of the classroom, such as creating a digital wellness hub, educational campaigns regarding resilience, and deploying one or more mobile apps to provide a broader set of tools to the student population.

- **Leadership Academy for CMU Faculty and Staff:** The Task Force will spearhead the creation of a prestigious leadership academy for faculty and staff nominated by their peers and senior managers. Individuals in the program will strive to improve their management skills, build a network of outstanding peers, and bolster their future as leaders at CMU.

4. **Commitment to a Data-Driven Approach**

The Task Force is committed to a data-driven assessment of our core challenges. To that end, volunteers from each of the individual working groups also serve as members of the “Data Summit” subcommittee. Members included six faculty and three senior administrative and academic leaders; and two staff. Marlene Behrmann served as chair of the Data Summit committee, with Task Force Vice-Chair Gina Casalegno and Amy Burkert serving as ex-officio members to provide guidance on the committee’s work.

The Data Summit subcommittee met on three occasions, and identified data-driven needs of each of the Working Groups, as well as future needs moving forward, in particular relating to tracking the success/failures of recommendations implemented by the Task Force. In year two, the “Data Summit” subcommittee will only meet if/when data requests take shape.

In addition, the Task Force recently received the initial findings of the Phase 1, Life @CMU Study. A research project by Professor David Creswell, faculty in the Psychology Department, and several colleagues from Dietrich and SCS, the project observed the day to day activity of 172 freshman (61% of whom were female) during their first year at CMU. Participants checked in three times during the year for data collection – reporting on their current activities, social interactions, stress and traumatic experiences, mood, coping strategies, and health behaviors. Using a provided Fitbit and AWARE app, participants also recorded continuous passive sensing measures of activity, sleep, location, and smartphone use behaviors during the entire semester. The data is still being analyzed, but in general the research team was able to garner hard data on how our students work, eat, sleep, study, and live during their time here at CMU. We are excited by what
future efforts these findings will help to inform.

Currently, David Creswell and the research team have received additional funding from the Provost for a Phase II implementation. The primary goal of Phase II is to add more students to the sample and follow them for the entire Spring 2018 semester to identify and gain a deeper understanding of the psychological, social, and institutional factors that affect students’ overall health and academic success. In addition, previous participants will also be invited to join in the study, creating an opportunity for a longitudinal study of students in the coming year. The Task Force Steering Group is working with the research team to enable continued work in spring, 2018 with the hopes that their findings can more directly inform current Task Force initiatives.

5. Communications and Public Engagement

A key component of the Task Force’s work is engaging in a vital and ongoing dialogue with members of the CMU community. The current communications strategy and plan was constructed with three interrelated goals in mind, outlined below.

A. Changing the Narrative

To communicate the foundational values of the CMU experience directly to the campus community and reset the current narrative on campus, the following strategies are currently in process:

- Creating a new and improved webpage for the Student Experience off the main homepage, which will include greater use of visuals; social media feed, and a calendar of Task Force related events open to the public;
- Engaging our social media channels to encourage story-telling and community-building;
- Capturing videos that showcase a vibrant and diverse CMU experience for a YouTube playlist; and
- Working with the Deans to plan college- and school-level Town Hall meetings that encourage meaningful conversations on issues facing our campus and our nation. This kind of engagement is something CMU students have been very vocal about (see this editorial in The Tartan). An initial timeline of upcoming Town Halls in the 2017-18 Academic Year is currently being created by Sarah College, and will be added to the Task Force webpage.

B. Project-Specific Communications

To communicate about specific projects of the Task Force, Steve Kloehn and Megan Meyer will work closely with the co-chairs of each Ongoing and New Initiatives to execute engagement and communications plans that will lead to valuable feedback and the necessary community buy-in. Our key tactics will depend on the scope of the project, but can include:

- Presentations to Dean’s Council, Department Heads, Faculty Senate, Staff Council, Student Senate, Graduate Student Assembly, Student Dormitory Council, and other groups as needed;
- Creating posters and/or flyers to spread awareness and invite participation in certain initiatives (e.g., Nicer Nooks micro-grant program);
- Open feedback forums with administration, staff and students (including co-sponsoring student forums with Student Senate and the Graduate Student Assembly);
- Creating shareable 60 second videos that convey the reasoning behind and benefits of certain initiatives; and
- Outreach to media channels on campus, e.g., 8.5x11, The Tartan, The Piper, CMU Today
• Main page stories on the both the Task Force and CMU Home Page

C. Good Faith Updates and Public Engagement

To remain transparent, document accomplishments, share goals, and encourage participation among the entire CMU community, the following communications tactics are underway:

• An evolving webpage for the Task Force for the CMU Experience with progress and goals;
• Email communications on the progress and goals of the group;
• Bite-sized updates via social media videos – the first teaser video was published on Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook in conjunction with the October 6, 2016 email;
• The opportunity to submit questions and feedback through our webpage and the email address, CMUexperience@andrew.cmu.edu;
• Developing a series of “open houses” whereby those who have expressed interest in helping the Task Force can attend a Working Group discussion;
• Scheduling meetings between Task Force leadership and core campus groups, e.g., Greek, Athletics, Housefellows, diverse student organizations, and others; and
• Student focus groups (of students currently outside the work of the Task Force) to gauge next steps and approach. The Task Force will continue to solicit input from students on the components of an effective, innovative and student-focused communications strategy.

Signed by:

[Signature]

Interim Provost