Self-Study Report

Prepared for the
Middle States Commission
on Higher Education

August 2009

**EMPIRE STATE
COLLEGE**

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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Executive Summary

Empire State College, part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system, seeks to help motivated adult learners earn a college degree. The college serves over 19,000 students annually in programs leading to associate, bachelor's and master's degrees. Most students combine their college study with work, family and community responsibilities. In 2007, approximately 68 percent of undergraduate students and 93 percent of graduate students were enrolled on a part-time basis. Over 89 percent of students reside in New York state.

Nearly 60 percent of students are women. The average age of undergraduate students is 35 and that of graduate students is 39. The college serves a diverse student population, with 18 percent of students from racial/ethnic minorities. The college has seen consistent enrollment growth in the past five years, with an overall increase of over 10 percent since 2003 - 2004.

COLLEGE STRUCTURE

The college was founded in 1971 to reduce the barriers of geography and scheduling that excluded adult students from college participation. To make higher education accessible, the college was designed as a network of regional centers, each with smaller satellite offices, with a coordinating center to provide central administrative support and oversight. The college was a pioneer in distance education, opening its Center for Distance Learning (CDL) in 1979. Today CDL provides degree programs that are fully online and also makes courses available to those students who pursue their studies at regional sites. Over half the enrollment of the college currently is in the college's 36 locations across New York state.

The college has seven regional centers, in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, the Hudson Valley, metropolitan New York City and Long Island, as well as the Center for Distance Learning, the Center for Graduate Programs, the Center for International Programs and The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies. Each center is headed by a dean, who has responsibility for faculty, staff, academic programs and, in most cases, facilities. Each center is staffed with full-time faculty, part-time and adjunct faculty, professional staff and support staff. Regional centers also have smaller units typically staffed with one or more full-time faculty, part-time faculty and support staff.

MODES OF STUDY

To provide flexibility for adult students and to enable students to study in ways that fit their preferred learning style, the college offers the following modalities:

- guided independent study

- study groups (with a significant independent learning component)

- residency-based studies (with a significant independent learning component)

- online courses

- blended studies that combine face to face and online participation

- cross-registration at other colleges

- classroom-based courses (in the Center for International Programs and The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

At the undergraduate level, the college offers associate and bachelor's degrees in 11 broadly defined areas of study, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. Undergraduate areas of study are offered in business, community and human services and a broad array of fields in the liberal arts and sciences.

The undergraduate areas of study provide adult students a unique opportunity to develop degrees that build on their goals and areas of interest and incorporate their prior, college-level learning, whether acquired at other institutions of higher education or through learning from workplace-based training, experience or individual study. Undergraduate students enroll in a required study

in educational planning in which they work with a faculty member to plan a degree program that meets the college's academic requirements. The core features of undergraduate degrees are:

- individually-designed degrees;

- broad options for the assessment and award of credit for prior, college-level learning acquired outside formal higher education;

- opportunities to build prior college study into the Empire State College degree through the college's transfer-friendly policies;

- multiple modes of study;

- a close mentoring relationship with a faculty member.

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

The college offers master's degrees in five program areas: the Master of Arts in social policy, labor and policy studies and liberal studies; the Master of Business Administration, and the Master of Arts in Teaching. Graduate degrees are generally more structured than undergraduate degrees. They feature intensive residency programs combined with online study and other learning experiences appropriate to the particular degree. All of the graduate programs require an integrative closing experience: a capstone course in the M.B.A., a teaching portfolio in the M.A.T. and a final project in the other M.A. programs. The college's new program development plans are focused on the graduate level.

FACULTY AND MENTORING

In fall 2008, the college had 169 full-time faculty, 97 percent of whom hold the doctorate or other terminal degree appropriate to their field. The college's founders made the conscious decision to call Empire State College faculty members mentors to reflect a philosophy of education that emphasized the process of learning as well as its products. To this day, mentors work with students in many ways that go beyond the traditional professorial role. Mentors assist students to articulate their educational goals and design individual programs of study. They assist students in preparing for and navigating the complex but rewarding process of seeking credit for prior learning. They provide a point of personal contact for the student from the

point of entry to the completion of the degree. They guide students in making choices from the numerous study options available at the college.

The college also has over 70 part-time mentors who typically have the same array of teaching and mentoring responsibilities as full-time mentors. In addition, the college appoints adjunct faculty to carry out specific roles in teaching, evaluating prior learning and other academic assignments.

SUMMARY OF SELF-STUDY FINDINGS

The institutional steering committee created six task forces to review individual standards or clusters of standards. The principal conclusions of the task forces are summarized below.

Mission, Planning and Resources

The college's mission and core values are widely known and serve to guide institutional planning. Reflecting on the development and implementation of the strategic plan for 2006 - 2010, the self-study recommended a more participatory process and more specific benchmarks and metrics for assessing progress toward goals. Beginning in November 2008, the new president led a widely participatory process to frame a vision for the year 2015. The "Vision 2015" report was published in July 2009 and it outlined a process for developing the new strategic plan for 2010 - 2015, which will begin in September 2009. The planning process provides for wide participation and the new plan will include measurable goals and a new institutional report card.

The self-study recommended consultation and information-sharing about development beyond the administrative and governance groups that are currently involved. A first step toward that end was taken when budget narratives for all academic centers and administrative offices were published to the college in May 2009.

Leadership, Governance, Administration and Integrity

The college has undergone significant change in the five years since the periodic review. Enrollment growth, retirements of founding faculty and hiring of new faculty, creation of new professional positions, increased use of technology for academic

and administrative purposes and administrative changes, particularly in the academic calendar and registration, have been challenging for faculty and staff to accommodate. The self-study started during a presidential transition and came to conclusion as a new president assumed leadership of the institution.

The scope and pace of recent change raised concerns about the extent to which faculty and staff had an impact on institutional decision-making through the college's governance structure. Participation in college governance in this regionally-dispersed institution creates burdens related to travel for many representatives and technology alternatives are being explored. The self-study prompted an extended dialogue and administrative responses that resulted in perceived improvements by the time of the 2009 governance retreat. New methods to foster greater student participation in governance will be explored in 2009 - 2010.

The self-study found that academic freedom is well-supported by the college and that policies and procedures for faculty and students are readily available and followed.

Students

Empire State College students report high levels of satisfaction with student services and quality of instruction; on the SUNY Student Opinion Survey, the college has the highest ranking among state-operated campuses on many dimensions. For applicants and entering students, however, the college's wide array of options can be difficult to understand and navigate. A revision to the Web site, due for completion in fall 2009, will address some of these concerns and the vision process identified clarification of processes for students as a need.

Academic skills support has been increased with the hiring of directors of academic support in the regional centers and CDL and the introduction of face-to-face and online skill support programs. Enhanced skills support is part of a college commitment to improving retention and implementing a model for tracking retention. As the college has added professional staff who serve students in various ways, there is a need for a more integrated approach to assessing the impact of these services.

Faculty

The role of faculty as mentors is a major factor in the high level of student satisfaction with their academic experience at the college. The multi-faceted role of mentor and the 12-month professional obligation of faculty create challenges for faculty, particularly in regard to maintaining scholarly and creative engagement. The Task Force on the Faculty Professional Obligation in Teaching and Mentoring developed some guidelines to assist deans and mentors in managing teaching/mentoring loads and assuring more equitable distribution of this load. The Next Generation Faculty Task Force published a report in May 2009 with recommendations to address concerns about the faculty role that will be considered in 2009 - 2010.

Recent changes to the college's academic calendar and the introduction of online registration and an online term guide had a impact on the work of faculty. The self-study analyzed these issues in detail and a number of these are under consideration in governance and administrative groups.

Academic Programs

The self-study identified a number of strengths in the undergraduate and graduate programs of the college and documented academic quality review processes, particularly for the individually-designed undergraduate degrees. The college's virtual library has expanded considerably in recent years and support for the development of students' information literacy skills has been augmented. The college provides a program of general education that complies with the SUNY policy and offers a wide range of innovative courses that are of interest to our adult students. Both undergraduate and graduate programs offer extensive opportunities for online courses and other online learning resources of high quality.

As the college increasingly offers studies that are both mentor-supported and technology-supported, faculty members need assistance in instructional technology and design. New staff positions have been added to meet this need. Prior learning assessment remains a significant opportunity for adult students and the college has made improvements to policy and technology support in this area.

The college has implemented plans for the assessment of student learning outcomes in both general education and the major. The self-study noted some instances in which assessment results have been used for program improvement but recommended greater attention to "closing the loop." A governance subcommittee created in 2008 - 2009 was charged with this responsibility.

Assessment

The self-study reviewed the broad array of internal and external reviews and reports that address matters of institutional effectiveness. The usefulness of these reports would be increased if they were more widely disseminated and a recommendation for an open documents repository for these reports was presented as a means to achieve this end. In 2008 - 2009, the college developed a set of key performance indicators that will be refined and integrated with the 2010 - 2015 strategic plan. A data warehouse and appropriate analytical tools are also needed and this project is now in the planning phase.

The college has well-developed programs for assessment of outcomes in general education and the major. These assessments employ faculty-developed rubrics that are applied to samples of student work. As a result of these assessments conducted over several years, the college now has a group of faculty who are knowledgeable about outcomes assessment, both its methodology and its results. There is a need, however, to assure that this knowledge is more widely shared, particularly with new full-time faculty and with part-time and adjunct faculty. A number of promising ideas for potential use of the result of outcomes assessment for program improvement were identified. An e-portfolio for student work, which would greatly facilitate outcomes assessment, is under development with pilots planned for two academic centers in the coming year.

CHE
MSA

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Certification Statement:
Compliance with MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation and
Federal Title IV Requirements
(Effective Oct. 1, 2009)

An institution seeking initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation must affirm by completing this certification statement that it meets or continues to meet established MSCHE requirements of affiliation and federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including relevant requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 such as those on distance education and transfer of credit.

The signed statement must be attached to the executive summary of the institution's self-study report.

If it is not possible to certify compliance with all such requirements, the institution must attach specific details in a separate memorandum.

Empire State College
(Name of Institution)

is seeking (Check one):   ___ Initial Accreditation   ✔ Reaffirmation of Accreditation

The undersigned hereby certify that the institution meets all established requirements of affiliation of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including relevant requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 such as those on distance education and transfer of credit, and that it has complied with the MSCHE policy, "Related Entities."

___ Exceptions are noted in the attached memorandum (Check if applicable)

_____   Aug. 28, 2009
Alan R. Davis   (Date)
(President)

_____   Aug. 28, 2009
Richard C. Liebich   (Date)
(Chair, College Council)

Chapter 1
Introduction

Founded in 1971, Empire State College is a comprehensive public college within the State University of New York that awards associate, bachelor's and master's degrees. The college annually serves more than 18,000 students, 75 percent of whom work full time and manage family and community obligations while enrolled. The average age of students is 36 and most have acquired college level learning earlier in their lives. The college has nearly 60,000 graduates. The college offers full undergraduate programs online and in 36 locations throughout New York state and its master's programs are available through a blend of online courses and intensive weekend residencies.

MISSION, VISION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

The college's mission has remained fundamentally unchanged since its founding, although the means to achieve the mission have evolved over the years. The mission is currently stated as follows:

Empire State College enables motivated adults, regardless of geography or life circumstances, to design a rigorous, individualized academic program and earn a college degree.

In the interval since the periodic review process that concluded in 2005, the college has undergone significant change. The self-study process presented a welcome opportunity to reflect on the impact of those changes and to contribute to the development of a new strategic plan.

The college had a major leadership transition in the past two years. President Joseph B. Moore left the college to assume the presidency of another institution in June 2007, after seven years of service as the successor to the founding president. A presidential search concluded successfully and Dr. Alan Davis became president in August 2008.

By November 2008 President Davis had convened the Vision 2015 Task Force with wide representation from the academic centers and Coordinating Center of the college. The task force created numerous opportunities for all members of the college community to contribute to shaping a vision for the college. Regional meetings, an online discussion database and regular updates posted on the college's intranet assured broad input and transparency of the process. The Vision 2015 statement was published to the college community in July 2009. The college will engage in a new round of strategic planning under the president's leadership in the period September 2009 to February 2010.

IMPORTANT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The college has seen significant personnel transitions among faculty and staff. In recent years, founding faculty of the college began to retire in significant numbers. Both these retirements and enrollment growth have led to the hiring of large numbers of new faculty. The college also has invested in new positions for professional employees, particularly in the areas of academic support and instructional design and technology. The position of associate dean was established at each regional center and at the Center for Distance Learning. In welcoming and orienting significant numbers of new employees, the college faces the challenge of assuring that new employees understand the values and culture of the college while at the same time remaining open to the insights and innovative ideas of its newest members.

The college's enrollment has grown substantially in the past five years, with current enrollment more than 10 percent above that in 2003 - 2004. Enrollment growth has been concentrated in the online programs of the Center for Distance Learning and some of the master's degree programs, while regional centers and units have seen more modest growth.

The college has added new academic programs. A Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) degree serves career-changing students who wish to become teachers in high-needs school districts. A Bachelor of Science in Nursing program was approved in spring 2008 and admitted its first class in fall 2008. This program enables graduates of RN programs at community colleges and other holders of the RN license to earn a bachelor's degree in nursing.

Both the periodic review and the 1999 self-study identified academic skills support and retention as important priorities for the college. In 2003, the college initiated a comprehensive review of academic and support services from the time a student first contacts the college to the end of the second enrollment. This review led to the Front Porch Project, which was supported by a Title III planning grant. The project goals were to improve student retention and degree completion. The project envisioned a comprehensive skills assessment and support program and improvements in processes and supports associated with prior learning assessment and the design of individualized degree programs. A number of elements of the project have been implemented, including policy changes, the creation of academic support positions in academic centers, and new skills assessments and services.

The college has developed online learning resources not only in support of courses delivered entirely at a distances but also to enhance face to face modes of delivery, including independent studies, group studies and residency-based or classroom courses. Support for what is increasingly called "blended learning" – delivery that integrates online and face to face learning activities – includes faculty development activities, instructional design support, the extensive resources of the virtual library, and enhanced technical infrastructure.

The college also introduced major changes in its academic calendar and registration processes. Previously, the college allowed students in regional centers to create individual terms of enrollment that could start on any of 48 Mondays in the year. A new calendar of five overlapping terms, starting in September, November, January, March and May, was introduced at the same time that online registration and a newly-available online listing of a wide array of study offerings were implemented. While students, faculty and staff new to the college would have found many elements of a term calendar and online registration familiar, the new systems constituted a significant change for experienced faculty, both in the way they interacted with their students in planning and registering for studies and in the rhythms of their work. Review and discussion of the impact of these changes continues in several venues, including a joint governance-administrative task force.

In recent years, the college has substantially upgraded its facilities, both for regional centers and units and in the Coordinating Center. As a result, most of the college's facilities support the work of academic and administrative functions and provide a pleasant and professional environment for teaching, learning and administrative functions. In recognition of its continuing growth and its need for greater visibility to the many New York communities it serves, the college is implementing a plan for further improvements to and expansion of its facilities. New and renovated buildings in the college's administrative Coordinating Center in Saratoga Springs will house the expanded faculty and staff of the Centers for Distance Learning, Graduate Programs and International Programs and accommodate growth in staff in administrative offices. Historically the college owned no facilities outside its administrative center in Saratoga Springs; all regional centers and units were in leased or donated space. The college gained SUNY approval and funding to implement a plan to build or purchase a permanent facility for each of its regional centers over the next several years.

Facing significant change in a relatively short period of time, many faculty and staff are concerned about the implications of change for the college's mission and core values and the degree to which collegial governance offers meaningful opportunities for faculty and staff to have input into college decisions. This issue was a major focus of attention in governance bodies in the past year and this report documents significant progress.

SELF-STUDY PROCESS

The self-study began in fall 2007 with the appointment of the associate provost and a senior professor as co-chairs and the creation of a steering committee that represented the academic centers and administrative offices of the college and included all categories of employees.

In December 2007 the steering committee charged each academic center and administrative office with conducting a local self-study that addressed Middle States standards and questions specific to the college. During this phase of the self-study, steering committee members played leadership roles in their local center or office self-studies. In summer 2008 the steering committee reviewed the

local self-studies, considered comments received during consultation sessions at the 2008 All College Conference and developed sets of research questions to be considered in the institutional self-study.

The steering committee adopted a comprehensive model for the self-study. Some standards were combined and six task forces were created to address one or more standards. Steering committee members co-chaired task forces and task force members included both members of the steering committee and other members of the college community. Task forces were charged with reviewing the college in relation to their assigned standards. Task forces also were instructed to address the research questions arising from center and office self-studies and other discussions in the college. Task forces completed their reports by the end of January 2009.

A draft self-study report was published to the college community in March 2009 and discussed at several sessions during the All College Conference at the end of that month. At the same time, the self-study Web site that had been used by the steering committee was opened to the college community, making available local self-studies, Middle States publications and data resources used in the self study. Individuals had the opportunity to comment during the All College sessions, via e-mail, through an online database, and in center faculty/staff meetings. Deans and student services staff also convened small groups of students to give feedback on the draft.

The steering committee reviewed this feedback and developed a second draft that was posted for general comment and discussed at the annual governance retreat in June 2009. Final revisions were made over the summer.

INTENDED OUTCOMES OF THE SELF-STUDY

The purpose of institutional self-assessment is to enhance self-understanding and to provide an opportunity for improvement. Toward that end, the self-study at Empire State College was designed to yield the following outcomes:

- to construct a concise yet comprehensive report that shows how Empire State College meets the 14 Standards for Accreditation and, at the same

time, serves as a foundation for developing the 2010 - 2015 strategic plan.

- to foster a common vision of the institution's future as a new president assumes leadership of the institution.

- to examine the integrity of the institution following the implementation of a number of recent initiatives including the academic calendar, the learning opportunities inventory, and the online registration system.

- to integrate and synthesize the many types and sources of information recently generated by an enhanced institutional research capability with a view to improving institutional self-understanding.

- to foster communication among all college constituencies and decision-making bodies about the college mission statement and institutional core values in the context of changes associated with substantial faculty retirements and subsequent new hires and increases in overall number of employees.

- to examine the current status of academic programs, facilities, fiscal resources, and academic and administrative technology of Empire State College and to plan for growth and new developments consistent with the college's mission and distributed learning environment.

Chapter 2
Mission, Planning and Resources

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

Middle States Standard: The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates who the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are used to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.

The college has clear and focused statements of mission and core values that are widely communicated to the college community, providing guidance in the development of plans and goals at all levels of this geographically dispersed institution. With the recent appointment of a new president, the college's mission and strategic plan are being reviewed and updated as the college addresses changes in both internal and external environments. The last strategic plan, which was adopted for the period 2006 - 2010, is coming to conclusion. A statement of the college vision for the year 2015 was developed through a widely participatory process and published in July 2009. As an outgrowth of that process, the college's mission statement will be reviewed and revised in light of the new vision. The process for developing a new strategic plan will begin in September 2009.

THE VISION FOR EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

In November 2008, the president convened a widely representative task force to articulate a vision for the college in the year 2015. After an iterative process of consultation in regional and collegewide meetings and via electronic communication, the task force published a vision statement in July 2009. The vision for 2015 and the ideas and propositions that arose during its development will inform the 2010 - 2015 strategic planning process.

The Vision

In 2015, Empire State College, State University of New York, is widely recognized as a pioneering and innovative public university college. It provides high quality and affordable liberal, interdisciplinary and professional education to motivated and engaged lifelong learners everywhere in New York state and beyond.

The college, as the premier institution for adult learning within SUNY and across the nation:

- supports learners as active partners in their education;

- transcends the boundaries of time, place and ways of learning;

- integrates and engages learners with their past, present and future creative and intellectual lives;

- creates and supports cooperative initiatives among all segments of the population to foster respect, civility and a welcoming environment; and

- supports the social, cultural and economic development and sustainability of both its learners and their communities.

With clear expectations of its learners and of those who serve them, not only does the college continue to rank first in SUNY surveys of student satisfaction, it also has improved in all of its own unique indicators of quality.

This attention to quality, plus the introduction of new offerings (both in person and online) has led to steady annual growth in the size of the college in terms of learners, graduates, and the number of faculty and staff.

Empire State College's profile and reputation are enhanced, especially through its strategic partnerships, and as a result of more focused attention to profiling the college's accomplishments in its

- innovative and unique modes of networked mentoring and learning;

- research and scholarship;

- advocacy for nontraditional learners; and

- organizational effectiveness.

THE MISSION OF EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

The mission of Empire State College is currently stated as follows:

> Empire State College enables motivated adults, regardless of geography or life circumstance, to design a rigorous, individualized academic program and earn a college degree.

The mission statement concisely articulates the public function and role of the college in offering high-quality degree programs for adult learners. As an outgrowth of the Vision 2015 Task Force, the president has convened a group to renew the college's mission statement. The objective is not to change the college's mission but to refresh and revitalize the current statement in order to align with the vision for 2015 and to inspire us within the college, and beyond.

CORE VALUES

In December 2002, the College Senate initiated a review of the core values statement, which had been originally formulated in 1993. Over the next two years a task force of college constituents including faculty, administrators and professionals facilitated collegewide discussions and worked collaboratively to draft a revised core values statement that was endorsed by the College Senate in May 2005. The statement continues to reflect the commitments of a dynamic, participatory and experimenting institution accessible and dedicated to the needs of a richly diverse adult student body. These values are woven into the decisions we make about what we choose to do, how we carry out our work in all parts of the institution, and how we judge the outcome of our individual and collective efforts. The core values statement is featured prominently on the Empire State College Web site and includes the following elements:

Core Values of Empire State College

We value learning-mentoring **goals** that:

- respond to the academic, professional and personal needs of each student;
- identify and build upon students' existing knowledge and skills;
- sustain life-long curiosity and critical inquiry;
- provide students with skills, insights and competencies that support successful college study.

We value learning-mentoring **processes** that:

- emphasize dialogue and collaborative approaches to study;
- support critical exploration of knowledge and experience;
- provide opportunities for active, reflective and creative academic engagement.

We value learning-mentoring **modes** that:

- respond to a wide array of student styles, levels, interests and circumstances;
- foster self-direction, independence and reflective inquiry;
- provide opportunities for ongoing questioning and revising;
- reflect innovation and research.

We value a learning-mentoring **community** that:

- defines each member as a learner, encouraging and appreciating his or her distinctive contributions;
- recognizes that learning occurs in multiple communities, environments and relationships as well as in formal academic settings;
- attracts, respects and is enriched by a wide range of people, ideas, perspectives and experiences.

We value a learning-mentoring **organization and culture** that:

- invites collaboration in the multiple contexts of our work;
- fosters innovation and experimentation;
- develops structures and policies that encourage active participation of all constituents in decision-making processes;
- advocates for the interests of adult learners in a variety of academic and civic forums.

Standard 2:
Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal

Middle States Standard: An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.

2006 - 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan 2006 - 2010 described how the college was intended to become stronger, more visible and more competitive by focusing on four initiatives:

- *Managing Enrollment* – by developing high-impact strategies to identify audiences and markets and to enhance Empire State College's reputation

- *Promoting Student Success* – as the measure for institutional success

- *Embracing Diversity* – to become one of the most open and diverse institutions within the State University of New York

- *Securing External Resources* – to ensure that the college can continue to grow and flourish as it responds appropriately to external forces in the next few years.

Achievements in each of these areas are highlighted below.

Managing Enrollment

The cabinet recognized that a concerted effort to manage enrollment should be centralized and to this end, the Office of Enrollment Management (OEM) was organized in the spring of 2005. As its name suggests, the focus of the OEM is to be proactive in studying enrollment trends, including recruitment and retention of students and developing strategies to ensure that the college is competitive in its market while serving the needs of the adult student population.

As a result of the OEM efforts in collaboration with college deans and outreach staff, for the September 2008 term, the college enrolled 8.51 percent more students than for the September 2007 term. Tracking of term enrollments is an ongoing process which gives us the opportunity to determine if we are meeting our goals in this area, and to make adjustments to our strategies when necessary.

Promoting Student Success

The college actively seeks evaluations from students through surveys and requests for feedback on program delivery. Assessment of student success is ongoing, and the college's plans include reviewing retention and graduation rates to measure progress in meeting these goals. Through critical evaluations of past performance and related assessment data, the college has demonstrated its commitment to continuous improvement through a number of innovations in the last several years:

- development and implementation of the term calendar

- development and implementation of online registration

- development and implementation of the Student Information Center

- development and enhancement to the MyESC services

- enhanced processing in Student Financial Services

- establishment of the Center for Mentoring and Learning

- hiring of center-based directors of academic support

- development and implementation of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program

The college's plans include investments in facilities, enhanced support of academic skills and retention and ongoing scrutiny of policy and procedures to ensure that students' needs are being met.

Embracing Diversity

The Office of Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Research (OAIR) continues to generate data regarding student demographics. These data are

used to determine how well the college is meeting the goal of diversity and to plan accordingly.

The college's Affirmative Action Committee is responsible for distributing funding for diversity and outreach pilot projects. In addition, the college has made a sustained commitment to increasing curricular diversity and to diversity in the hiring of faculty and staff.

In the Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) program, there is a strong commitment to diversity in the curriculum, which includes courses titled Effective Urban Schools, Exceptionalities and Teaching Diverse Learners. Additionally, 20 percent of the students in this program are students of color.

Securing External Resources

The college has positioned itself as a leader in educational technology and innovative programs. Funding is an essential element to the ongoing development and implementation of such programs. In 2005, Empire State College received a $1.25 million grant to develop online courses for the purpose of enhancing the scientific and quantitative literacy of adult learners seeking to earn a college degree. Over the last three years, Center for Distance Learning (CDL) faculty, the CDL Curriculum and Instructional Design team and Center for Learning and Technology staff have worked collaboratively to develop or redesign 15 courses in science and mathematics that engage students in problem-based learning relevant to their lives and work while teaching them to think and speak knowledgeably in the community as engaged citizens.

The college has been successful in securing funds for a number of scholarships supporting students at centers throughout the state and for students engaged in the Nursing and M.A.T. programs. These two programs are examples of programs that meet the needs of society and have the potential for outside funding due to the critical shortages of both nurses and teachers. Included in the college's strategy is an effort to engage alumni in promoting the college and securing external funds. To that end, we have hired a coordinator of alumni services, redesigned the alumni Web pages and enhanced our outreach efforts to alumni.

Progress on the 2006 - 2010 strategic plan is documented in most local self studies and central offices reports. The Fact Book is the college's authoritative source of information and serves to document the institution's effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. Trend data as well as annual snapshots are provided in this publication. In addition, a summary of the college's student learning outcomes assessment activities is provided on an annual basis in the final chapter of the Fact Book for review by the entire college community. The college also has posted reports of progress toward achievement of the goals of the 2006 - 2010 Strategic Plan on the Web site of the president's office. A progress report was posted in June 2009, and a final report will be published in December 2009.

2010 - 2015 STRATEGIC PLAN

In May 2009, President Davis proposed a plan for consultation to develop the next strategic plan, which was endorsed by the College Senate at the governance retreat in June. Beginning in September 2009, all constituencies within the college and key external stakeholders will be invited to advise the president on key goals and objectives for the 2010 - 2015 strategic plan. The 2015 vision will provide the context for development of the plan. The plan will establish specific goals and targets in all key areas of the vision, strategies to achieve the goals and metrics to determine progress toward the goals throughout the term of the plan.

The process for developing the next strategic plan will include coordination of planning activities already under way in specific areas, including:

– development of a strategic technology plan

– development of a college academic plan

– enhancement of the college's capacity to undertake partnerships

– creating a vision for a "green" college

– conclusion of the work of a task force on faculty professional obligation in mentoring and teaching

– creation of a vision and plan for government relations

– development of a strategic marketing plan

Although the current plan has been reviewed periodically to document progress and is available on the college's Web site, the college community would benefit by a more formalized process to

evaluate and report on the progress of the next strategic plan. The president's proposal for the strategic planning process includes measures to update progress toward goals in the new plan and a process to adjust the plan in response to new circumstances. These provisions will add to the significance of the strategic plan, making it more meaningful by providing clear guidance and rationale for the distribution and utilization of all college resources.

BUDGET PROCESS

The college has a well-established institutional annual budget process. Unfortunately, the college does not forecast a budget for two years due to the New York state budget process and SUNY's budget allocation process. The state annual appropriation and SUNY allocations are generally not known until close to the start of the new fiscal year. Only in the past two years has the state passed its budget on time and in the 2008 - 2009 fiscal year the college and all institutions within the system received three reductions to the original allocation. All of these circumstances make it impracticable to budget more than a year out on state operating funds. Internal to the college, self-funded programs and new programs are expected to project budgets for three years. Some components of the budget, such as use of cash reserves and enrollment projections, are forecast for three to five years. Capital projects also are projected for multiple years.

The institution's budget process generally begins in January, with preparatory work in the preceding fall, and is targeted to conclude during June, provided the state has a fiscal year budget in place and the State University of New York has completed its allocation process at that point. Academic center deans and Coordinating Center office vice presidents are given budgetary templates and information on past and current allocations, past and year to date expenditures, and recent targets, year to date actual, and projections for enrollment to support budgetary requests and decisions. The deans are required to submit balanced budget requests based upon anticipated revenues generated from the proposed projected enrollment targets, whereas the Coordinating Center offices have limited available revenues to project and must rely on direct state support for their spending requests. All budgetary requests are expected to tie into the college's strategic plan.

In accordance with the college's Bylaws, the Program, Planning and Budget Committee (PPBC) advises and consults with the president on the goals of the institution and the budget process. The vice president for administration presents the college's annual budget to PPBC and provides updates when necessary on issues affecting overall college funding. The PPBC should and does question resource allocations.

Requests are put forward early in March and are reviewed by college budget analysts, with feedback and refinement provided back to the requesting center or office as needed. Proposals for budget allocations, staffing and enrollment targets are reviewed during hearings in April. Initiatives are carefully weighed as to their fiscal viability and alignment with the mission. Cabinet input is provided during the budget hearing process and is considered during the decision making process at the conclusion of all of the hearings. After funding decisions have been made, the decisions are communicated by the vice president for administration to the cabinet and President's Council. There are opportunities to revisit budgetary decisions during the fiscal year should significant changes, such as enrollment variances, occur.

At that point, provided that the state and SUNY have allocated funds for the college for the upcoming fiscal year which begins on July 1, the college should know the amount of resources it has available to fund such requests. Regardless of whether the annual allocation available is known at that point, the president, in collaboration with the vice president for administration and the assistant vice president for administration, prioritize and/or categorize the requests as items which are likely to be funded, items pending further determination of availability of funds, items to be funded from one-time college resources, and items not approved for funding. While there is some discretion as to how the college allocates resources, a large portion of the allocation process is driven by established funding and staffing models. Funding decisions are summarized and formally shared with the cabinet and President's Council at their meeting in June, although items for which funding has been identified and approved may be informally communicated in

advance to the deans and vice presidents so they may beginning their planning for programs and possible new hires.

The budget development process has not consistently involved participation beyond members of the President's Council and the Program Planning and Budget Committee, although individual deans and Coordinating Center administrators have solicited some form of input, either through an ongoing committee such as a center planning committee or more informally. Until the present year, the overall picture of budget requests was not made available beyond President's Council.

This year, budget narratives have been posted on the college's intranet and thus made available to any employee. More open communication about budget requests and final allocations and a formal process for assessing budget performance and the effectiveness of new investments are needed. A new budget development process will be implemented for the 2010 - 2011 fiscal year that reflects the goals of the 2010 - 2015 vision.

THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN NEW YORK

The recent radical deterioration of state support for public higher education offers Empire State College both challenges and opportunities. Challenges include maintaining enrollment growth in various areas and modes of study where student demand for credit-bearing offerings is relatively strong, while also facing diminishing state support and temporary state-imposed spending constraints. During the 2008 - 2009 fiscal year, the college has had to address three major reductions in state support by mid-year and tuition was increased in January.

The governor also has proposed further reductions in state support for the 2009 - 2010 fiscal year based upon the anticipation of the annualized tuition increase as well as use of college reserves. The impact of these proposed reductions has yet to be determined as specifics of the proposed plan have yet to be shared with the college. However, the proposed offsets of state support with tuition revenues and use of reserve funds would inhibit the college's ability to make strategic investments to shape its future. Recently enacted federal legislation for an economic stimulus package may provide for unknown opportunities to offset such proposed

reductions. Given the unknown impact of all of the variables noted above, the college needs to ensure strategic and prudent utilization of resources. Thus, spending plans should tie closely with the strategic plan of the college.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF RESOURCE ALLOCATION

The college monitors not only spending against expenditure plans throughout the fiscal year, but also monitors enrollment and its impact on the revenue projections. As a result, expenditures may be encouraged or curtailed based upon an analysis of budget versus actual, or funds redirected if they are identified as being unused, such as is the case with salary savings due to unfilled positions. The reallocation process could be improved if other metrics were developed and reported, such as including budgetary outputs in addition to budgetary inputs.

Throughout the fiscal year, all deans and vice presidents are given access to online reports as well as hard copies of budget and expenditure reports so they may track and adjust their spending plans accordingly. Deans and cabinet members also take ownership of achievements of goals and objectives; however, formal reporting on such achievements for the current year generally takes place only at the time of the next year's budget presentation.

The college has had a few robust fiscal budgets in the two years preceding 2008 - 2009. During those years, the college made substantial investments in student and academic support in attempts to bolster retention. For example, although the college's grant application for proposed "Front Porch" initiatives was not funded externally, the college still committed significant reserve funds to move the initiatives forward. Given the short time since these investments were made and the limited data available, the impact has not been fully assessed. Investments also were made to bolster marketing and recruitment; however, the full impact of these efforts is difficult to evaluate because of the number of variables which impact recruitment. The Office of Enrollment Management continues to monitor and direct marketing and recruitment resources in response to negative variances in enrollment targets. The centers would benefit from having reporting tools and small sets of dashboard indices available in

order to analyze investment returns on a local level. Key performance indicators under development in connection with the new strategic plan will address this need.

THE OUTLOOK FOR 2010 - 2011 AND BEYOND

The college's sound fiscal management in the past has resulted in solid reserves that can be applied to the current fiscal situation. While fiscal prudence will continue to be essential, the college will make judicious use of a portion of its healthy balance of cash reserves. Academic centers will use a portion of their over-enrollment reserves to support enrollment growth, student retention initiatives, innovative use of educational technology and enhancement of academic quality. The college also will use some of its reserves to invest in such priorities as re-orienting communications technologies, building capacity in mission-related and other research and scholarship, ensuring diversity among students, improving faculty compensation, fostering development of new programs and new partnerships, and addressing facilities issues.

Standard Three: Institutional Resources

Middle States Standard: The human, financial, technical, physical facilities and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.

The college has formal models for determining staffing levels for several of its academic credit-bearing entities. These include a staffing model for the seven regional centers and a separate funding model for the Center for Distance Learning (CDL). Certain other credit-bearing programs, such as The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies, have developed faculty allocations specific to their curriculum. Regional center staffing is based on a functional model, with the dean, during the annual budgeting process, having the opportunity to request additional faculty positions based on credit production or special programs offered in the center. The CDL model is based on credit production as well; however, the CDL model also includes incremental increase of professional and support staff positions in addition to faculty positions. New faculty lines are generated for specific increases in credit production. The staffing model for the centers does not address automatic increases in either professional employee lines or support staff positions. Other academic centers, such as the Center for Graduate Programs and the Center for International Programs, do not have staffing models to deal with growth, although adjust faculty staffing in graduate programs is adjusted based upon the total credits generated.

The center self-study reports demonstrate fairly universal recognition of the significance of the regional center staffing model and the new professional employee positions that have been created over the last 10 years as leading to a center structure that greatly enhances the services provided to students. The coordinators of student services and the directors of academic support play a critical role in assuring that students have the support they need to be successful. These positions support mentors in working productively with the college's students. Also, the new position of associate dean provides greater coordination for student retention activities

and the outreach and recruitment specialists hired in recent years have brought about more systematic and professional recruitment activities.

Salary levels for new faculty are set at the beginning of each fiscal year. The president, vice president for academic affairs/provost and the vice president for administration determine the level of entry-level salaries based on their understanding of the market for faculty in various disciplines. Business, information technology and nursing faculty tend to have higher entry-level salaries than other disciplines. Salary levels for professional employees are established on the basis for the classification of the position within which specific salary ranges are advertised. The dean or director, in consultation with the appropriate vice president set the salary ranges. The college has recently begun to undertake reviews of salary levels for faculty and professional staff. The college planned a phased roll-out of salary reviews; however given the recent budgetary constraints, the college may be unable to address disparities if any are discovered.

Each academic center is given an annual credit target that it is expected to meet during the academic year. The target for regional centers is based on 800 credits per allocated faculty line. The target for graduate programs is based upon 600 credits per faculty and other centers have targets specific to their modes of operation. The provost currently chairs a committee that is developing a definition of a faculty member's professional obligations with greater specificity than just a credit target. This work is expected to come to conclusion in 2009 - 2010. Given the college's extensive use of part-time faculty and adjuncts, models relevant to these groups also are under development.

Only in recent years has the college benefited from significant capital funding. In 2006, the college submitted an updated facilities master plan to the State University of New York Construction Fund and received significant new funding for building and critical maintenance initiatives. The college is currently implementing a new five-year capital plan which began in July 2008. Major capital efforts include renovations of two administrative buildings, the construction of a new building for the Center for Distance Learning, and funding of new buildings for the Genesee Valley Center and the Long Island Center.

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

At an institution where distance learning has become vital and at a time in which new technologies are being rapidly developed and deployed and student use of and relationship to technology is shifting, the ability of the college to effectively plan, implement, utilize and keep pace with technology is critical.

The Office of Educational Technology (OET) is responsible for the college's technology infrastructure, including planning, management, and ongoing development and maintenance. The college's technology infrastructure supports all academic and administrative record keeping and processing, electronic communications, telephone communication services, the college's Web presence and the use of synchronous tools by college employees and students.

The transition of the college to a term calendar and online registration in 2006 was a process that involved not only OET, but also other operational offices, notably the Office of the Registrar, Student Accounts, Financial Aid and the regional centers. Planning and communication about the new online system and staff training in the new online registration system occurred prior to the launch of the system. It was a model for how major new resources should be planned and implemented.

The college recently launched a Lotus Notes-based program, PLA Planner, to assist with the degree planning process and the evaluation of experiential learning. The success of this effort resulted from collaboration among OET staff, staff in the Office of Academic Affairs and staff at regional centers.

Currently, OET is in the midst of expanding the college's available bandwidth to meet the increased demand for videoconferencing and is developing a business continuity plan to assure support in case of a catastrophic failure of the computer systems. One useful step has been the hiring of instructional technologists to help faculty in regional centers better use the technology available to them for pedagogical purposes. This is a step toward greater integration of technology in the teaching of individual faculty members and in 2009 - 2010 a full-time instructional technologist will be hired at each regional center, bringing the number from three to seven.

The college has implemented several systems within the past five years to support academic work that is often done at a distance, either as a primary function of the Center for Distance Learning or at regional centers and other programs. The Technology Helpdesk has been expanded in terms of staffing and hours of operation. MyESC, the online student portal, was greatly enhanced with the advent of online registration and is continually re-evaluated and updated. The college's online library also has expanded both its staff and its resources. Finally, the college migrated to ANGEL as its primary learning management system during 2006 - 2007. In addition to providing the platform to deliver online studies, the ANGEL system has many other features that can be accessed by all faculty to better facilitate the delivery of their studies. Training sessions are held regularly in the regional offices for interested faculty.

Given the critical importance of information technology to the college's academic programs, student services and administrative processes, the president commissioned a comprehensive review of the college's information systems in fall 2008 by an external organization. In response to the recommendations of that group, the college contracted for IT consulting services. An interim vice president for educational technology was appointed in June 2009 and will work closely with the president and his cabinet over the next year to develop long-term strategies, which are congruent with the college's overall strategic vision.

The interim vice president for educational technology has been charged with the following tasks:

– develop short-term action plans to address issues such as bandwidth, wireless technologies, data warehousing, the expanded use of Datatel and the assessment of Lotus Notes and other applications, disaster recovery and business continuity, information security, portal technology, staff training and development, and evaluation of new IT products that have been suggested by college programs and personnel.

– develop a structure and process for consultation and decision-making, leading to the creation of an IT Steering Committee for the college.

– provide supervision and direction to the staff of the Office of Educational Technology.

– develop a position description and identify a viable candidate pool for a new chief information officer.

– provide recommendations on other IT policy matters.

This IT planning process will move the college forward with some short and long term changes to IT systems and services. While this process will take several years to fully achieve, it will open a new era for the college, and is well timed to support the new vision for the college for 2015 and beyond.

CONCLUSIONS

Strengths

– The college has clearly focused statements of mission and core values that are widely understood and embraced by the college community.

– Under the new president's leadership, a vision for 2015 was developed with broad participation across the college.

– The college has a well developed annual budget process.

– Prudent fiscal management has resulted in cash reserves now available for investment to support college priorities despite an adverse state budget situation.

– Planning processes for personnel, facilities, technology and academic development are well under way.

Challenges

– The college must continue enrollment growth in the current economic climate and adjust to diminished state support.

– The budgetary process needs to assure greater consultation, transparency and clear alignment with the strategic plan.

– The impact of recent investments in new staffing needs to be analyzed.

– Departmental plans (e.g., academic, technology, communications, marketing, etc.) need to link more clearly to the college's strategic plan.

Actions

– Increase systematic consultation and information-sharing about budget development beyond President's Council and PPBC.
Status: Budget narratives for the 2009 - 2010 cycle were posted on the college intranet in May 2009. An earlier time line for the 2010 - 2011 budget will enable fuller consultation in academic centers and administrative offices

– Create a participatory process for developing a new strategic plan.
Status: A plan for consultative development of the 2010 - 2015 strategic plan was presented by the president in spring 2009 and endorsed by the College Senate in June.

– Develop improved metrics for assessing budget performance and the effect of new investments.
Status: The Office of Institutional Research developed a preliminary set of key performance indicators in 2008 - 2009. These will be expanded and finalized in light of the 2010 - 2015 strategic plan, which will specify goals, targets and metrics.

– Enhance institutional capacity in planning and assessment of institutional effectiveness to ensure more coherence and relevance for all the college's annual and long-term planning and to more effectively measure and record the effectiveness of all aspects of the college's work.
Status: This need will be addressed in fall 2009 in conjunction with the strategic planning process and review of the structure of the President's Cabinet.

Chapter 3
Leadership, Governance, Administration and Integrity

Standard 4:
Leadership and Governance

Middle States Standard: The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

SYSTEM OF COLLEGIAL GOVERNANCE

The shared governance system at Empire State College is well-defined and highly participatory. Administrators and faculty maintain the college's historic institutional commitment to governance, working actively to include various constituencies, to increase participation in governance and to create an environment where multiple perspectives may be expressed.

As one of the comprehensive colleges of the State University of New York (SUNY), Empire State College is governed by the SUNY Board of Trustees, which appoints the college president, allocates resources to the college and approves its plans and programs. Like all SUNY institutions, the college has a ten-member College Council, which fosters positive relations between the institution and the communities it serves, and promotes the institution's interests. Members of the College Council are drawn from across the state. Nine members are appointed by the governor of New York. There also is a student representative who is a voting member of the College Council.

The college developed its internal system of collegial governance in conformity with the Policies of the SUNY Board of Trustees. The roles and powers of the college's internal governance structure are clearly stated in the college's Bylaws, which are posted on the college's Web site and available from the Office of Academic Affairs. Regional centers develop local bylaws in conformity with the college Bylaws and subject to the approval of the provost acting as the president's designee.

The college's Bylaws create a plenary body, the College Assembly, and two conferences representing key groups of employees: the Faculty Conference and the Professional Employee Conference. The Bylaws mandate that each of these bodies meets at least once year. The annual All College Conference provides an opportunity for each of these bodies to meet and conduct business. Electronic communication provides opportunities for interaction throughout the year within the two conferences.

Much of the work of shared governance at the college is transacted in the College Senate and its seven standing committees. The election of senators and committee representatives from academic centers and the Coordinating Center is done in open elections following nominations from their respective constituencies. The Program Planning and Budget Committee (PPBC) advises and consults with the college president about institutional priorities, short and long-range planning, and development of the college budget. The College Senate appoints members of PPBC following the procedure set out in the Bylaws.

The College Senate, its standing committees and PPBC are prominent fixtures in the college. The senate is typically consulted on major policy issues, as are the committees relevant to a given issue. The senate exercises its role as a policy advisor through motions and resolutions, which are discussed and adopted or rejected by a vote of the majority. Many of these actions originate in the standing committees, centers or other bodies such as the Faculty Conference.

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO GOVERNANCE

Participatory governance in an institution with faculty, staff and students dispersed throughout the state requires a significant investment of time and effort on the part of all participants and of funding and staff support on the part of the college's administration.

Governance representatives are expected to facilitate input from their constituents through fact finding, center discussions and informal networks, thereby assuring wide participation. Those who serve on governance committees bring considerable dedication and in many cases extensive experience to the role. In the 2007 - 2008 Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey, 65.6 percent of full time faculty reported spending between 5 - 12 hours per week on committee work broadly defined (as compared with 37.7 percent of full time faculty at four-year institutions nationwide). This suggests that Empire State College faculty, from all constituencies and ranks in the college, invest a great deal of time and energy in institutional service. While this level of commitment is laudable, it also creates certain strains that are discussed below.

Administrators demonstrate a similar commitment to governance processes. Each governance committee has a senior administrator assigned as liaison. The college administration as a whole ensures that governance is supported with institutional resources including staff and a sizable budget for meetings, travel and lodging.

The college supports travel and lodging expenses incurred by governance participants; the sum total of these expenses is considerable, given the distributed nature of the college. The senate meets six times a year in Saratoga or in the capital district. Many other committees have at least one face-to-face meeting a year. When committees decide to meet face-to-face, either to conduct regular business or to develop a focused retreat, the college has provided the resources for them to do so.

An annual two-day governance retreat brings together all governance representatives, who work together to set priorities for the year, to review opportunities for collaboration and to reduce duplication of effort across committees. The retreat, which is held in June, at the start of the governance year, provides an opportunity to orient new representatives to the governance system and their roles and responsibilities. The self-study process identified a need for more training of governance representatives in such topics as parliamentary procedure and effective strategies for governance bodies. The June 2009 governance retreat included such training by an external expert.

A governance secretary provides meeting support for the Senate and standing committees and assists members with travel arrangements and reimbursement. The governance secretary also maintains and updates the governance Web site and committee mail lists. This position has served to decrease the administrative workload on governance leaders, insofar as the distributed nature of the college makes that possible.

The college provides a 25 percent reduction in teaching load for faculty members who chair standing committees; if a committee chooses to elect co-chairs, the load reduction is split between the two co-chairs. Professional employees who serve as committee chairs also receive a reduction in professional obligations. Governance chairs and their deans or other supervisors face challenges in assuring that these load reductions are realized.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFICACY OF GOVERNANCE

While governance at Empire State College has a strong foundation and a clear commitment from administration and faculty, both the self-study process and earlier studies identified concerns about the impact of governance participation on decision-making in the institution. This issue also surfaced in the new president's visits to the centers and units of the college and in discussions about revisions to the Bylaws. As the self-study comes to a close, considerable progress has been made in analyzing and addressing the issue. The June 2009 governance retreat concluded with a meeting of the College Senate that laid out a plan for assessing the governance system in 2009 - 2010.

Evidence from the 2008 HERI Faculty Survey, a June 2008 self-study conducted by the Committee on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP), and interviews conducted during the self-study informed the analysis of this issue.

The results of the 2008 HERI Faculty Survey show that there are four areas in which Empire State College faculty rate their level of satisfaction or agreement with administration/administrative issues significantly lower than their peers at other public institutions, and at all institutions nationwide. Compared to the nationwide sample, a higher percentage of college respondents agreed that "the faculty are typically at odds with campus

administration." Empire State College faculty were less likely than their counterparts nationwide to agree that "administrators consider faculty concerns when making policy," "the administration is open about its policies," and "faculty are sufficiently involved in campus decision-making."

These perceptions are echoed in the CUSP self-study conducted in 2007 - 2008, which stated concerns about the substance and timeliness of consultation between administration and governance. CUSP addressed these issues by proposing a revised charge that clarified areas of responsibility and time lines for consultation. These changes were approved as part of the revision of Bylaws.

Both the CUSP report and the interviews conducted by the governance task force were completed at a point when the college had undergone a series of significant changes that had been the source of tension between administrators and governance representatives. Both groups affirmed that these tensions could be effectively resolved through joint proactive steps. A new president has already created a climate of greater openness and transparency and several concrete steps have been taken to enhance the efficacy of governance.

In response to a June 2009 draft of the self-study report, CUSP members reviewed their earlier report and their more recent interactions with administrative representatives. In a meeting shortly after the June 2009 governance retreat, CUSP members characterized the interaction with administration in the past year as follows:

> CUSP members asserted their responsibility and administration demonstrated their willingness to engage in more collaborative dialog and greater shared decision-making, which impacted the admissions policy. Because of this process, CUSP members were able to clarify and articulate their charge as reflected in the newly ratified bylaws. CUSP members affirm continued vigilance in their role and anticipate continuation of this kind of collaborative dialogue. (July 6, 2009)

There were two areas where specific concerns about the consultation process were frequently voiced in 2007 and 2008. In that period, minutes of governance bodies and resolutions from the Faculty Conference and some academic centers indicated significant concern about the impact of the term calendar and online registration system, introduced in 2007, and changes to the admissions policy. The latter came to resolution with the approval by CUSP, College Senate and president of a new admissions policy that will be implemented in the fall of 2009 and evaluated over a two-year period. A task force jointly appointed by the college president and the chair of the College Senate is examining the impact of the term calendar and developing recommendations for modifications to address unanticipated effects.

As the college embarked on the 2009 - 2010 governance year, there were clear indications of improvement in the relationship between governance bodies and the college's administration. At the June 2009 governance retreat, the College Senate unanimously passed a resolution affirming that significant progress has been made toward addressing concerns about governance raised in the deliberations of the governance task force of the Middle States Steering Committee in fall 2008 and early winter 2009. The Senate directed the Governance Operations and Review Committee to present a report on improvements in the governance process at the June 2010 governance retreat.

The Demands of Governance Service

The 2008 HERI survey shows that Empire State College faculty spend more time on committee work than full time faculty at other four year institutions. 78.1 percent of Empire State College faculty identified committee work as a source of some or extensive stress, as compared with 64.2 percent nationwide. At least some of this difference can be explained by travel demands, which often necessitate two or even three days out of the office for a single meeting.

More than half of the full time faculty responding to the 2008 HERI survey strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that "committee work is equitably shared by colleagues who vary in their length of service at the college." This perception may be a function of the differing demands on particular standing committees of the Senate. CUSP and the Academic Personnel Committee (APC), in particular, have a high workload that makes especially strong demands, including additional travel, on their membership. Junior faculty may

have concerns about the competing demands of governance service and scholarly activity.

These demands notwithstanding, the commitment of faculty and staff to governance remains strong, as demonstrated by the near-unanimous vote to approve new bylaws that added a new standing committee and extended term limits for senators and standing committee members. Over 90 faculty and staff, 20 percent of the full-time academic and professional staff of the college, serve as elected governance representatives in the 2009 - 2010 academic year.

Issues of Communication

The geographically decentralized structure of the college poses challenges to effective communication between central administration, collegewide committees and centers. There is a general consensus that Empire State College needs to draw upon the full potential of technology to support governance at both the center and college level. The college uses virtual meeting tools such as Elluminate to replace some face to face meetings and conference calls. A task force on videoconferencing began in spring 2009 to examine tools to support virtual meetings. The college will invest in appropriate technology to reduce the need for face-to-face meetings, thereby reducing the fiscal, environmental and personal impact of travel from distant locations of the college.

Current Status and Next Steps to Improve the Effectiveness of Governance

Both the process and the substance of a recent revision of college Bylaws have significantly improved the climate surrounding governance. A subcommittee of governance representatives worked with the administrator responsible for support of governance. The group produced drafts that were shared and discussed with the president and provost and with the College Senate. Drafts were posted on the college's intranet for comment by all in the college community. The final version was approved by a near-unanimous vote of the College Assembly at the 2009 All College Conference.

While the college's Bylaws had been reviewed and updated on a biennial basis, the 2008 - 2009 revision was the first comprehensive review and revision in many years. The revisions were intended

to clarify committee roles and jurisdiction; develop procedures to evaluate both governance functions and the policies developed through these functions; support the autonomy and expertise of governance members through more systematic training; and finally, comprehensively and systemically improve communication practices, including more collaboration and coordination among governance committees, more effective outreach to the wider college community, and renewed commitment to civil discourse across interested parties.

The CUSP's charge is more fully defined in the new Bylaws, and time frames are specified to assure adequate time for deliberation on proposals and consultation with constituents. The Educational Technology Committee (ETC) has been revitalized under a stronger charge in the Bylaws and renewed commitment from administration.

A new standing committee, Governance Operations and Review Committee (GORC), will be responsible in part for the systematic training of governance representatives, as well as the periodic evaluation and revision of governance processes and bylaws. Finally, the extension of term limits for committee representatives from two consecutive terms to three consecutive terms benefits governance by supporting experience and continuity. These changes are intended to strengthen the autonomy and effectiveness of college governance.

GORC began its work in June 2009 and has been charged by the College Senate with reviewing and reporting on the effectiveness of governance at the June 2010 governance retreat.

LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

Students are represented in collegewide governance through the Student Affairs Committee (SAC). Each center selects one student and one faculty/staff representative to the committee. The committee is co-chaired by a student and a faculty/staff member. The co-chairs are members of the College Senate, where SAC has one vote. SAC has increased its prominence in the college over the past five years. It has been particularly successful in acquiring college resources to support its initiatives, such as the Student Academic Conference.

Many of the college's locations and programs have active alumni-student associations. Each of these associations has a representative to the Alumni Student Federation Board of Governors, an active statewide group. In addition, the college supports college wide student referenda on such issues as the student activities fees. The Student Activity Fee Committee has a representative from each academic center of the college. This committee convenes annually to review and makes decisions on all proposals for student activity fee funding. Some centers have student advisory groups that are utilized differently depending on the center.

While SAC has had a clear impact, sustaining student involvement in college governance is challenging. The limited student involvement in college governance is especially unfortunate given the rich pool of talent, diverse skills and professional expertise adult students bring to the college. But the reality is that Empire State College students combine their college studies, often on a part-time basis, with work, family and community commitments typical of adults.

While the college cannot change the circumstances of its working adult students, certain structural changes might increase student involvement and authority. Currently, students have no autonomous representative voice within the governance structure. As noted above, students serve jointly with faculty and professional staff and a senior administrative liaison on one standing committee of the senate; only one student serves on the Senate at a time, and even then as a representative of SAC rather than of students per se. There is no provision for a student caucus either within or between centers. Secondly, students may be especially impacted by the college's geographical distribution. This makes it difficult for students to establish coalitions and develop consensus on any particular issue. Finally, there is little incentive for busy adult students to become involved in governance.

Empire State College students not only should have the opportunity to participate more fully in the leadership and governance of the college but are uniquely qualified to do so. Empire State College is at a point in its history where more structured opportunities for direct student involvement, leadership, and possibly autonomous student government are warranted, even though adult

learners may have less time available for such extra-curricular activities.

The SAC proposals to support adult student participation in governance (including the awarding of credit and/or small scholarships) are key initiatives in this regard. Beyond this, the college should develop systematic mechanisms for determining student needs and priorities, and factor these into its planning, decision-making and governance.

The college is working to develop mechanisms to support student community building across centers. A highly successful online community for alumni provides a model that is under exploration as the college moves toward the adoption of a student portal.

Standard 5: Administration

Middle States Standard: The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.

The college governs its statewide operations through an administrative structure that provides both local control and centralized oversight of college operations (see Appendixes A and B for charts of the college's geographic and administrative organization). The geographic dispersion of the college and the diversity of its academic programs both with regard to content and modes of delivery pose some unique administrative challenges that are discussed below.

The college is continually growing and changing in response to student and faculty needs. In fact, one could easily argue that where duplication of services or effort exists, it does so because student service demands it. In recent years, the college's administration has installed a number of systems designed to make the administrative operations of the college more efficient, effective, and responsive to the needs of centers for regularized data about, for example, student enrollments, student academic progress, faculty workload, and other measures of academic and administrative success. Terms have been implemented; technology has been upgraded; the Center for Distance Learning has grown substantially; and reporting on applications, enrollment and faculty credit load has grown more sophisticated. Central administration has increased the funding available for faculty development and scholarship; and a new CUSP sub-committee is committed to educating itself and the college about quality improvement, and to developing a process for academic program review with support from the college's Office of Academic Affairs. A skills development initiative has resulted in increased staffing and services for academic support. A Center for Mentoring and Learning is expanding the array of professional development opportunities available to faculty.

SUPPORTING THE COLLEGE'S MISSION

The college's strategic plan effectively communicates how various elements of the administrative structure promote the college's mission. At present, periodic reports about the college's progress in meeting the major goals outlined in the 2006 - 2010 strategic plan are available to the college community through the college Web site and another update will be completed in summer 2009. A new strategic planning process will begin in September 2009 with a new strategic plan to be completed by February 2010. A new system of key performance indicators will aid in monitoring progress toward the goals and objectives of the new plan.

BUILDING THE COLLEGE'S ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

In recent years, the college has made a substantial investment in building its administrative structure to more effectively carry out the current mission. During the past five years, for example, the college has added a vice president for enrollment management, an associate provost and an assistant vice president for academic programs; created several new administrative units, including a central call center and a new Center for Mentoring and Learning; and invested in a regional staffing model, added a associate dean, and professional positions in academic support, recruitment, prior learning assessment, and instructional technology positions at most centers. Each of these decisions were made with an eye toward obtaining staff members appropriate to the goals, type, size, and complexity of Empire State College, and each individual who was hired met or exceeded the required skills, degrees, and training necessary to carry out their roles. The college's new chief executive officer was hired with the same kind of attention to academic background, professional training, and the key qualities and skills necessary to promote the institution.

These additions have afforded greater professionalization of functions, the ability to analyze common problems, and the ability to collect data that can be usefully translated into strategies for improving learning and scholarship. Administrative procedures and communication processes have been refined. Revisions to the balance of roles and functions that occur between the Coordinating Center and academic centers have taken place, as well. A re-organization and renewal of the President's Cabinet is under way to reflect the priorities for the college in the next five to 10 years.

IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

The following actions would improve relations between the administrative and governance structures of the college, allowing Empire State to more fully address the ongoing and evolving institutional changes confronting the college.

Transparently and Inclusively Address Evolving Institutional Changes

Greater transparency in all aspects of central decision-making is desirable. The Vision 2015 process, which came to closure in the summer of 2009, and the process for developing the 2010 - 2015 strategic plan were designed to provide extensive opportunities for participation. In June 2009, the College Senate noted significant progress in addressing issues of communication and consultation between senior administration and governance bodies. These avenues for communication should continue beyond implementation of the policy changes being discussed because, as is frequently the case, one cannot accurately envision the effect that changes in policy might have on various groups, structures, and other policies at the outset of one's deliberations.

Review Administrative Structures and Senior Administrators on a Regular Basis

In reviewing the local self studies prepared by academic centers and offices, it appears that many of the structural elements associated with the college's evolving administrative footprint are still in flux. A systematic evaluation of who does what in terms of administration, and how both new and existing positions contribute to the ability of the college to fulfill its mission, is needed at both the central and local level. This review should illuminate questions about which functions of the college are best served centrally, which regionally, and which work best as a hybrid. It should evaluate whether the central/regional administrative structure of the college continues to work efficiently to support the institution's organization and governance. Because the college has evolved these structures over time in response to student demands, it is useful to step back periodically to see what continues to work, and what no longer works as well. Reviews of this kind will clarify new and continuing administrative

structures to the college community, provide insight into their perceived effectiveness, and enable the college to improve its structures and services.

Many believe that, on the whole, communication between administration and faculty/governance has been improved and will continue to improve with more effort from all parties. The openness of the new administration/president to shared governance bodes well. A new performance evaluation system for senior administrators was implemented in summer 2009. It includes a "360 degree" review, taking into account feedback from all groups. This kind of regular evaluation and transparency is necessary in an institution that is so decentralized: it will not only increase understanding, but build trust, and directly afford all members of the college community an opportunity to participate in strengthening the institution.

Because of the special nature and structure of the college, care must be taken to ensure that the impact of policymaking on various constituencies within the college is considered in decision-making. The Senate's GORC committee is charged with periodically reviewing the Bylaws, partially in response to this issue.

Standard 6: Integrity

Middle States Standard: In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Academic freedom and intellectual freedom are central to the college's model. Faculty members are hired to broad areas of study rather than to academic departments, and are dispersed geographically and by program. This assignment means that faculty members have broad options for engagement in research or program development with students, and are not hindered by departmental or narrow programmatic review in the personnel process. In the 2008 HERI survey, faculty members generally reported high degrees of satisfaction with areas associated with academic freedom and integrity. Eighty-two percent reported that the college promoted autonomy and independence for faculty. Over 90 percent reported that they had the freedom to determine course content. Some junior faculty members were not as positive, though, reporting pressure by colleagues to carry out certain types of work or service to students. To address the latter finding, the college is investing in climate focus groups, the Senate has created a Task Force on Workplace Civility, and the college's Next Generation task force is reviewing the information.

Academic freedom and intellectual freedom for students is not only responsibly communicated, but also celebrated in our various modes of study, including individualized learning contracts and other individualization models. Students are encouraged by faculty to explore broad topics of interest.

The college acts responsibly relative to academic freedom and intellectual freedom. No evidence has been reported of academic or intellectual freedom issues or governance-related controversies in the faculty personnel review process. There appears to be agreement on sharing intellectual property in the development of Web-based resources. A statement of policies for faculty approval of external visitors in instructional activities exists and is published. Orientation materials related to academic freedom are distributed to both students and faculty.

ADHERENCE TO ETHICAL STANDARDS AND THE COLLEGE'S OWN STATED POLICIES

The college maintains and publishes a comprehensive list of policies pertaining to the fundamental elements of institutional integrity. More than 15 policies associated with student life, including student grievances and the equitable treatment of constituencies, are published in the "Undergraduate Catalog," as are academic policies and procedures, financial aid policies, student services, areas of study guidelines, and information about Empire State College undergraduate degrees and comparable information for graduate students is made available in the "Graduate Catalog." These policies and procedures are referred to regularly by students and staff, and used as the basis for resolving conflicts.

The college has processes for filing student complaints and appeals that are clearly stated in the "Undergraduate Catalog" and the "Graduate Catalog." The assistant to the provost provides regular training to faculty and staff involved in the student appeals process and in student conduct matters and consults with deans and other center staff on an ongoing basis to assure consistent application of policies and conformity with procedures.

The college publishes information in its catalog about graduation rates. Information sessions available at regional locations and online permit prospective students to gain an overview of the college's unique approach of individualized degree program design and to learn about the ways in which the college recognizes a student's prior college-level learning.

The college publishes and consistently administers its personnel policies and conforms to the collective bargaining agreements that apply to certain categories of employees. The Faculty Handbook outlines criteria and procedures for the appointment of faculty and review of faculty for reappointment, tenure and promotion. The personnel review procedures currently in effect are the result of negotiation with the union representing faculty and professional employees. A handbook for professional employees will be published in the fall as a result of similar negotiations. A recently updated review process for managerial employees was approved in March 2009, after discussion with

PPBC and administrative groups, and implemented this summer.

CLIMATE

By its very nature, the college mission and the unique student mentor relationship it embraces contribute to fostering a climate of critical inquiry and respect for diverse backgrounds and viewpoints.

It is generally accepted that faculty and professionals participate without fear of retribution if they voice opinions different from administration, and indeed are rewarded for their level of engagement. Many committees include junior or newer employees whom most senior colleagues treat as equals, although some disparities exist, as noted above.

The college has conducted mandatory workshops on workplace behavior, as well as affirmative action workshops for members of search committees, and workshops for members of academic review/ student grievance committees. There also is a senior college officer and procedures in place for addressing and processing harassment claims. Workshops and policies alone do not guarantee a positive or productive atmosphere, of course, and the recent creation of the Senate Ad hoc Committee on Workplace Civility provides some evidence that the institution is committed to do more to create a climate that fosters respect among students, faculty, staff, and administration for a range of backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives. Collegewide climate focus groups will explore these issues in more detail in the coming year. That being said, the special nature of creating individualized study programs creates a bond between mentors and students that permeates the entire college and contributes to a positive atmosphere for all employees.

CONCLUSIONS

Strengths

– Faculty, professional employees and administrators demonstrate a strong commitment to participatory governance.

– The college devotes substantial resources, including travel funds and secretarial support, to the operation of the governance structure.

– College Bylaws underwent substantial revision as a result of an extensive process of collaboration between governance representatives and administrators.

– The June 2009 governance retreat affirmed an improvement in relations between governance and administration in the preceding academic year.

– The college provided enhanced administrative and professional staff support in academic centers.

– New positions have been established in strategically important areas: director of government relations, associate vice president for communications and government relations, director of environmental sustainability, etc.

Challenges

– The college's dispersed geographic structure creates challenges to governance participation and communication about matters under deliberation.

– The impact of governance on certain key institutional decisions has been unclear.

– Opportunities and incentives for student engagement need to be increased.

– Administrative functions and the performance of administrators need to be reviewed more consistently.

Actions

– Examine and address concerns about the impact of governance on institutional decision-making
Status: At the June 2009 governance retreat, the College Senate charged the new Governance Operations and Review Committee (GORC) with reviewing the effectiveness of governance and presenting a report at the June 2010 retreat.

– Reduce the travel burdens associated with governance participation by supporting technology-facilitated meetings.
Status: Some governance committees and subcommittees use Elluminate Web conferencing to replace some face-to-face meetings. A task force was created in June 2009 to investigate and make recommendations on videoconferencing for academic, administrative and governance purposes.

– Create opportunities and incentives for student participation in governance.
Status: The Student Affairs Committee has developed proposals to foster participation that will be reviewed in the 2009 - 2010 academic year. Planning is under way for a new student portal. The development of online academic and social communities is being explored with a highly successful alumni community as a potential model.

– Conduct regular reviews of managerial performance with appropriate consultation.
Status: A new system for regular review of senior management was approved in March and implemented in summer 2009.

– Ensure realignment of senior administrative positions with the priorities of the college.

– Undertake a renewal of the president's cabinet, to conclude by Dec. 31, 2009.

Chapter 4
Students

Standard 8:
Student Admissions and Retention

Middle States Standard: The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students' educational goals.

RECRUITMENT, MARKETING AND ADMISSIONS

Connection between the College's Mission and Admissions Policies

The college states its mission as follows:

> Empire State College enables motivated adults, regardless of geography or life circumstance, to design a rigorous, individualized academic program and earn a college degree.

The mission statement clearly expresses openness and access, offering options for students to engage in flexible modalities of learning. The college uses the phrase "we're everywhere and online" in promotions that closely parallels "regardless of geography or life circumstance." The stated admissions criteria are not highly selective. The college rejected 43 out of approximately 10,000 undergraduate applications (less than 1 percent) in 2007 - 2008. Our graduate program rejected approximately 49 out of 567 applications in 2007 - 2008.

The extent to which potential students refer specifically to the mission statement in deciding to apply is not known. It may be that students who respond to mission-focused communications do not fully appreciate that we will be asking them to design their own academic program. That is, the opportunity to "earn a college degree" may be more important to applicants than the prospect of designing "a rigorous, individualized academic program."

In the undergraduate program, mentors commonly report that newly-admitted students expect to be assigned to and enrolled in prescribed courses.

Mentors attend to this misunderstanding in the educational planning process, which is designed to foster the student's capacity to be self-directed and an active participant in the design of the degree program. This unique course, the only course required of most undergraduate students, presents the opportunity for mentors and students to forge enduring relationships. A communications gap here may not affect admissions numbers, but could affect short-term retention. The college has undertaken the "Front Porch" initiative, using significant internal resources, to focus on improving retention during the first several terms of enrollment and some of that work addresses clarifying our expectations. One question identified in the self-study is: "Are Empire State College's distinctions/advantages clearly stated and reinforced in application materials?" A review of the landing page and the online application form indicates that the expectation of student involvement in degree planning is not adequately addressed. Since successful completion of educational planning has proven to be critical in retaining students and allowing mentors to learn more about student's goals, expectations and concerns, the process and its benefits should be more clearly explained up front.

Based on the college's mentoring model, we are poised to excel at "high tech, high touch" approaches that are being discussed nationally. An online application portal is a logical place to clarify student expectations about their degree programs. Although we may not achieve "touch" within a few minutes (as some for-profits are doing), from a student perspective, we need to provide clear responses to questions from applicants and new students about degree program options and opportunities for their prior learning to be incorporated into a degree. Good responsiveness at the point when a student enters the institution can prepare the student from the outset to benefit from high-quality academic mentoring.

The Office of Enrollment Management (OEM), which oversees both marketing and admissions functions, has undertaken a variety of projects that address some of the concerns that arose during the self-study. OEM coordinates the efforts of outreach/

recruitment specialists at academic centers and disseminates models of best practice in generating inquiries and responding to prospective students. A client relationship management (CRM) system, which has been in place for close to two years, has improved tracking of inquiries to the college. In 2008 - 2009, OEM initiated a re-design of the Web site for prospective students, which is scheduled to be launched in fall 2009. New online undergraduate and graduate applications will be developed in 2009 - 2010. A new admissions policy and rubric for assessing applicants' writing were approved provisionally in June 2009. Implementation of the policy is scheduled for October 2009 and the impact of the change will be closely monitored, with regular reports to governance and administrative bodies.

Admissions Policies and Criteria Available to Prospective Students

Admissions requirements are located and easily found on our Web site. The range of choices possible with individually designed degrees is difficult for prospective students, usually accustomed to prescribed curricula, to understand and relate to their own goals.

After the college commissioned a Web site usability study, it became clear that the Web site needed re-working to better communicate the college's academic offerings. The study indicated that language used on the Web site needs to be more comprehensible to prospective students and we need to improve intuitive Web site navigation to better inform prospective students about study options, learning modalities and academic programs. The new Web site scheduled for introduction in fall 2009 is designed to address these issues.

The college relies on admissions outreach professionals across New York state, a Student Information Center (call center), and information sessions (online and onsite) to engage with prospects on how the college can serve them. These various forms of contact approach effectively introduce prospective students to the academic offerings that can be pursued at the college. Despite current Web site short-comings, these opportunities for communication with representatives of the college are effective and close the gap on information that a prospect needs. The college is beginning to explore new technologies such as Webinars as means to introduce the college and its academic programs to prospective students.

Policies and Procedures for Transfer Credit and Credit for Extra-institutional College-level Learning

The forms of credit that are provisionally accepted include transfer credit from other regionally accredited institutions and New York State Education Department-approved degree-granting institutions; standardized examinations such as CLEP; ACE or NPONSI evaluated learning; Empire State College generic evaluations for some professional licenses, certifications, training courses and other activities; and finally, individual credit by evaluation. This latter form of prior learning assessment for undergraduate students includes college-level learning that was acquired through experience or education/training programs outside higher education. College faculty or outside experts work with the student to identify and evaluate a student's prior learning.

While these policies are published in college documents and on the Web site and are described during information sessions, prospective students can be given credit estimates but not exact credit amounts for transfer or prior learning credit. The award of credit for learning documented on transcripts or through prior learning assessment is a decision made in the context of the student's degree program because their degree programs are designed individually, and may not include prior learning credits once that degree program is fully laid out. The process of degree program development often aids a student in identifying credit-worthy prior learning not noted at the point of admission, but the lack of a firm answer at the point of admission can be a source of frustration for prospective students.

However, most information sessions allot time for faculty or staff to meet individually with prospective students to answer some of their questions. Experienced mentors often make themselves available to help prospective students explore, if only in a preliminary way, the potential for experiential learning credit. Many times these few minutes of personal contact will be the reason a prospective student completes an application and later enrolls in the college.

Information about Expected Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Results Available to Prospective Students

Prospective undergraduate students can learn about the college's educational expectations in the catalog section that describes the SUNY general education requirements, including expected learning outcomes knowledge and skills areas as well as the competencies that are designed to be infused throughout the general education program. In addition, information is available to prospective students about program areas and concentrations, and guidelines for how the student can meet those program concentration guidelines. These college guidelines include language on what the college expects students to understand and master within these areas of study.

What is less clear in these statements is the college's overarching expectation of what its students should be able to demonstrate upon receiving a degree. In addition, while there is information on institution-wide assessment of outcomes in general education and the concentration available to the faculty and staff, this information is less readily available to students, and is not posted anywhere for our prospective students.

Information Regarding Financial Aid, Scholarships, Grants, Loans and Refunds

Financial aid information reflects a complex inter-related group of federal, state and institutional programs. This picture is further complicated at the college by term enrollment patterns. Comprehensive and accurate financial aid information is available on our Web site. The Student Information Center, however, reports a very high volume of calls from students with financial aid questions. The college should look into holding financial aid workshops alongside orientation. The college also should consider the development of Webinars designed to explain financial aid programs to prospective students.

Strategic Improvements in Admissions Services

The college implemented a prospect management system in February 2008 that enables the college to reach out to prospects with consistency and provide more assistance than in the past. In the first eight months of operation the system had more than 40,000 prospects and applicants under management. In addition, the college has hired a director of corporate and community partnerships to work with corporations, labor unions, government agencies, and the military. Finally, in order to provide better responsiveness to prospects and also to improve upon consistency of information to prospective students, the college has installed a student call center, has added the position of director of community college partnerships, and created an Office of Veterans and Military Education.

RETENTION

Definition of Retention

The generally accepted method of calculating retention at the baccalaureate level in higher education is to track first-time, full-time freshman from their first fall enrollment to their second fall enrollment and then to determine if they have graduated within six years of their start date. While this method works well for traditional aged students, it does not take into account patterns of enrollment that stretch beyond six years nor does it capture data on students who do not follow a fall to fall enrollment pattern. Empire State College students historically have not followed a fall to fall enrollment pattern and many students take longer than six years to graduate. Given this, the Office of Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Research (OAIR) has developed a retention model that makes more sense for the types of students Empire State College serves. In addition, OAIR tracks student engagement in studies on a term to term basis rather than on an annual basis, providing more accurate tracking of the retention patterns of students. The office also developed a retention database which allows for the tracking of student retention by centers on a term by term basis. The database includes several demographic variables, allowing deans and their respective staff to examine center or program retention patterns and address questions at their own pace.

The college has one definition of retention that is used consistently across programs. Retention is computed by dividing the number of reenrolled and graduated students by the cohort N (N being all students enrolled in that term). New and continuing student cohorts can be tracked on a term-to-term

basis at the center level. In addition, the OAIR database maintains enrollment status entry (full-time or part-time), new or continuing status, matriculation status, center/unit location, area of study; gender, age, and ethnicity so that retention can be analyzed with those variables in mind.

Identification of the Most Important Variables that Influence Retention

The model suggests that student attitudes/characteristics influence the Empire State College experience, which is simultaneously influenced by factors related to the local (e.g., support from family/employers, personal financial situation) and national environment (e.g., economic conditions, competition from other educational providers, international political situations –war and peace in international programs). In looking at retention data we might speculate on the factors influencing different retention rates between centers and programs, as well as between areas of study.

A number of steps can improve the college's understanding of factors that influence retention: OAIR has identified variables that influence retention and a prototype database has been made available to deans. Other areas of needed development include:

- an enhanced retention program based on key performance indicators (e.g., stop out rates, analysis of students who did not re-enroll);

- effective means of tracking retention at the graduate level;

- comparative analysis of retention rates between centers and programs in light of self-reported best practices in a variety of activities associated with retention such as outreach, communication patterns and mentor accessibility, for example.

Programs and Services for Undergraduates Who Marginally Meet Admissions Criteria

The Committee on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP), approved revisions to college policy on admissions that were supported by the College Senate and approved by the president in May 2009. These revisions were implemented as a result of wide spread concerns that students were being admitted to the college who were not adequately prepared to succeed because of weak writing and critical thinking skills. While the college has always assessed applicants' writing through an application essay, the new policy incorporates a revised essay prompt and a new rubric that has been evaluated for validity and reliability. Effective October 2009, application essays will be assessed through the use of the new rubric, which was been developed in order to identify applicants whose writing skills appear problematic. Three categories of admission decision have been identified: admit, do not admit and admit with referral to the director of academic support for further assessment and potential placement into a writing skills development program called the Bridge program. The Bridge program has been designed to help students who marginally meet writing expectations at entry to improve their reading, writing and critical thinking skills so as to succeed in their educational goals and meet institutional expectations.

The Use of Current Technology to Retain Students

The college has instituted two important services that acknowledge our students are adults who can take ownership of their enrollments and finances. Through MyESC, the college's information and services Web-portal, students can monitor and manage all of their records (e.g., bill payment, financial awards), register for studies, and access resources such as financial aid and policy information. The online registration system has recently been improved by implementing an enhanced registration confirmation. The MyESC portal also provides links and contact information for a variety of services, notices about upcoming events and procedural issues, links for updating contact information, to instructional resources such as ANGEL (online/blended course delivery system) and DP Planner (degree-planning tool), the Empire State College Virtual Library, the college bookstore, and the helpdesk (processing 3,000 calls and trouble tickets each month).

The undergraduate Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Planner was piloted in January 2008. It interfaces PLA credits with the Degree Program Planner system and enables the management and tracking of prior learning processes and outcomes electronically. The Credit Available Database (CAD) is currently being developed and will eliminate the manual entry of advanced standing credit from transcripts, making

the completion of the mechanical aspects of degree planning more facile and accurate. Components of MyESC have been undergoing revision this past year, and these changes represent vast improvements in terms of quality of visual representation, accessibility and ease of use.

Groups in the college are exploring investment in synchronous Web-conferencing tools to facilitate student-mentor and student-student content and delivery of academic support workshops and seminars.

Standard 9: Student Support Services

Middle States Standard: The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.

CONSISTENT AND EQUITABLE STUDENT SERVICES ACROSS THE COLLEGE

Collegewide Services

Standardization of some collegewide services has decreased processing times for many procedures, while at the same time increasing the availability of staff to serve students individually. The central coordination of the college's disabilities services ensures equal and appropriate compliance with state and federal disability expectations, while overseeing disability professionals at the local centers and programs. The integration of the online registration system and the comprehensive financial aid office Web page has put more power in the hands of students, who can now take action on many tasks independent of office schedule, or availability of a college representative. The automation of many of the college bookstore practices has allowed students to order text books and receive them within days, regardless of their program or location.

The college also has been expanding centralized services that are accessible to all students regardless of their program, location or educational interest. The college offers online tutoring services and career resources that are available to all students. Additional Web-based self-help resources have recently been developed or improved, including library, financial aid and technology support resources and services, as well as the new online registration system. Future resources and services include a redesigned online Writing Resource Center, the Maximizing Academic Potential (MAP) program (a series of online and blended learning modules that will assist students in research writing, time management, grammar, etc.), a new student portal and more.

With these new or improved services, it is critically important to remember the circumstances of a diverse student population. For example, some rural students do not have high-speed internet access, which limits their ability to use the online support

services mentioned above. Student computers are available at all college locations, but travel, weather and timing issues pose obstacles to access for some students.

The services available to help improve students' skills have increased substantially in the past several years. Under the "Front Porch" initiative, designed to help ensure all incoming students are provided the support necessary for successfully engaging in studies, the college has made a significant investment in academic support in the past two years. In 2006, the college established a contract with Smarthinking, a tutoring and writing service to provide live, online tutoring to all Empire State College students. Subject areas include writing and quantitative subjects, as well as several introductory level studies in fields such as accounting, economics, mathematics and sciences. Smarthinking provides online resources as well as one-to-one tutoring by appointment.

In April 2008, a new director of college academic support was hired to develop collegewide leadership for this team, and ensure that students receive effective and equitable academic support services no matter in which center or unit they enroll.

Services in Academic Centers

Coordinators of student services and other student services professionals coordinate and provide location or program-specific student services in each of the regional centers and college programs. These professionals often serve as disability service contacts and ensure that appropriate accommodations are carried out, in coordination with the state-wide disabilities coordinator.

In January 2007, the college hired eight directors of academic support for the regional centers and CDL. The directors of academic support provide a range of services including individual assistance with college-level skill development, workshops for groups of students to learn about topics such as time management, stress management, critical thinking, and academic integrity. Also offered are workshops on advanced-level writing.

A director of academic review and an academic assessment specialist are available at all regional centers, in CDL and in the Center for International Programs. Both groups of professionals collaborate with the collegewide offices in their respective areas.

The director of academic support and the director of academic review at the regional centers also are responsible for coordinating and overseeing programs, supports and initiatives at their assigned units. Regional centers have funds available to engage prior learning evaluators and skills coaches to work with students at units.

Student surveys provide evidence that students are highly satisfied with the services they receive. In collaboration with the American College Testing Evaluation/Survey Service and SUNY system administration Empire State College participates in the triennial administration of the SUNY Student Opinion Survey. As with prior surveys, in the most recent administration of this survey (2009), among the 24 participating state-operated SUNY institutions Empire State College ranked first on many items that measure student satisfaction with a variety of student services including financial aid, billing and payment processes, new student orientation, bookstore services, registration processes and academic advising.

Appropriate Student Advisement Procedures and Processes

All of the well-qualified student support professionals described above have been added in recent years to supplement the advice and guidance provided in all cases by each student's assigned faculty mentor. The SUNY Student Opinion Survey as well as the aggregated data provided by the Student Assessment of Learning Experiences (SALE), a survey of student response to faculty, all point to very high levels of student satisfaction with advisement. Empire State College has been consistently number one in student satisfaction in SUNY and the results of the 2009 SUNY Student Opinion Survey continued to place the college in that top position.

In addition to the provision of these student services a number of initiatives have been developed to nurture the involvement of students who are served by the Center for Distance Learning. As CDL provides over 40 percent of the credit instruction in the institution, the effectiveness of its services has a wide impact on undergraduate students, whether they are matriculated in CDL or in another undergraduate center. Many faculty in regional centers also teach CDL courses and their practice

will benefit from the faculty-oriented aspects of these initiatives. These service initiatives are described here:

One finding of the CDL self-study was that there were few opportunities for CDL students to connect with one another outside their online studies. In the last year, the piloted CDL Student Community Group space within ANGEL, which includes student discussion areas, was expanded to include all matriculated CDL students. The community group now has over 8000 students who can connect with one another, as well as center mentors and staff, through online discussion areas and text chat tools. The CDL Student Community Group space also was expanded to include the CDL Online Orientation, so that students new to CDL and the college would be immediately connected with current students, faculty and staff well before their first term began.

Beyond the online spaces in ANGEL, CDL has been actively pursuing new programs to better connect students with the center and with each other. The piloted CDL Connects Program, an academic intervention program connecting a CDL student in academic warning with a trained academic support facilitator, has proved to be a positive retention tool for students in need of frequent and ongoing academic support assistance. This program also has provided wonderful professional development opportunities for those professional and staff facilitators who volunteer their time to work with these students. The new CDL Peer Tutor Program has allowed students in need of course assistance to work closely with peer student tutors on their course content and material. This program also has provided a new opportunity for those students looking to enter an educational or "helping" profession to get experience working with students in need.

Another finding of the CDL self-study was that the center did little to request, solicit, prompt, or encourage student feedback about center policy, practice, or procedure. In the last year, the CDL Student Community Group space within ANGEL has been more actively utilized to gather student feedback and thoughts using the group poll function. Over the last year, approximately 12 surveys have been conducted to gain insight into students' satisfaction with CDL's online learning approach and student comfort with new technology,

and to identify what is missing from a student's CDL experience. Results are shared with the entire center for continued adjustments and fine tuning of delivery and practice.

Additionally, a new Student Advisory Group (SAG) was established at CDL and held its first meeting in December 2008. The SAG is intended to be a group where CDL students (nominated by their mentors) can provide feedback, get questions answered, and connect with other students regarding their experiences at the college and in CDL. One of the main projects the SAG has been working on is a Frequently Asked Questions document – the SAG group members want to be able to provide incoming students with the information they need to be successful, right from the start ("If I only knew then what I know now … "). The SAG also has discussed many student issues, such as instructor involvement and course presence, the various uses of Angel, and the complex CBE process at the center. The SAG is still just getting started, but the students are enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge, and impacting change at CDL and the college

New college technologies have allowed CDL to provide virtual workshops and discussion sessions using the Elluminate software tool. Piloted in the January 2009 term, CDL held eight Elluminate "Q and A" sessions for students covering topics such as "What is Academic Support and Why Might I Need It?" and "The Educational Planning Process: Start to Finish" and other sessions focused on specific areas of study and concentrations. Topics for these sessions were generated by asking the students what topics were of most importance to them. Having sessions led by both faculty and staff made for engaging virtual workshops and plans are in place to continue these sessions in the fall term, with about 10 sessions scheduled so far.

The center also has strengthened or created initiatives for the development of faculty who work closely with students; a comprehensive online orientation for new faculty teaching in the CDL environment for the first time; a newsletter which goes out to all faculty each term with tips, faculty writings, and policy information; an ongoing development series to improve faculty teaching and decrease student problems (based upon those student situations which come up the most); an annual conference for faculty, portions of which are

available live; and an adjunct advisory group which gives a voice to the adjunct faculty population.

Effective and Efficient College Communication While Observing Standards of Information Security

Through use of a virtual private network (VPN), the new data dictionary, and Active Directory computers, access to sensitive information at the desktop and network levels is becoming more centralized and secure. In addition, new modes of properly vetted and sufficiently secure communication (VoIP, Angel communities, Elluminate, etc.) help keep lines of communication and collaboration effective but secure. One of the biggest challenges in this realm, given that information security will always be reliant on human decisions and workflow processes, is in the areas of staff education and best practices (shredding procedures, heightened awareness when using student social security numbers). Communicating best practices and keeping geographically distributed staff and faculty up to date on current information security policies and strategies is an area that the college will need to continue to focus on.

The college follows federal and state law with regard to student information security, but needs to ensure that all parties handling this information are aware of concerns, are kept up-to-date on best practices, and are given the tools and support to adjust daily workflows accordingly. This goal can be achieved through increased training on security issues, procedures, and best practice.

Accessibility of Student Support Services, Policies and Procedures

Recent years have brought many changes in the way the college makes its services, policies and procedures accessible to the college community, mainly through the continued development of the college Web site. Offices such as undergraduate admissions, the registrar, student financial services, disability services, and student accounting have developed information rich and user friendly Web pages that allow students and college staff to find answers to questions, make payments on outstanding bills, enroll in studies from their homes and work, and find specific college policy and procedure information. New cross-department

training activities have allowed students to obtain information from new areas within the college (e.g., a significant amount of financial aid information can now be accessed from the Student Information Center). Students experiencing technical difficulties with their online studies, registration, or the ANGEL environment can access the technology support page which includes a comprehensive technology knowledgebase that enables students to obtain answers to many questions 24 hours a day without the need to speak with a technical center representative. Many of these offices also make available college policies and procedures related to their area of expertise specifically for student, faculty, and staff use, through college publications, including orientation packets, the "Undergraduate Catalog," the "Graduate Catalog," the "Student Degree Planning Guide" and the term catalogs.

New and creative venues for posting college policy and procedures have been implemented recently with the creation of various student and staff community spaces, located in ANGEL. Although this approach is still in its infancy, many centers have experimented with making college policies and procedures available in this space for students, mentors and staff to access.

Ongoing Assessment of Student Support Services and the Utilization of Assessment Results for Improvement

Since the previous Middle States review, the college has dramatically increased its allocation of resources for student services professionals. New professional staff positions have been created in regional centers and collegewide. Future attention should be paid to the scale of each center, program and unit to ensure staffing needs are in line with the size, scope, and scale of each student population served. A review of the regional center staffing model scheduled for 2009 - 2010 will contribute to this assessment.

To better serve current and prospective students with questions and concerns, the Student Information Center (SIC) and the Center for Distance Learning (CDL) call centers were established, now answering over 15,000 calls from perspective and current students each month. One drawback is that communication is not overseen by one administrative office nor tracked in one database, creating some quality control and consistency issues.

Additionally, information is not sufficiently mined from these rich sources, which could shed light on future points of improvement.

While the increase in student services personnel was important, and in some cases additional staffing may be needed, the college's administrative systems and tools (college databases, course management system, and student management systems) also require ongoing attention and development to stay current with student growth, changing student populations, and changing technology. The need for development in college systems, particularly the development of a data warehouse, will need to be addressed to determine the effectiveness of any one particular student service using true and accurate data as a foundation, especially for those centers and programs with large student populations. The student service dimension of college systems will be addressed in the development of a technology plan in the strategic planning process, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Last, for each initiative created by the college, ongoing evaluation and usability studies need to be established. In fall 2006, for example, the college created an online registration system for academic courses. The online registration was a huge improvement from the previous cumbersome paper system but it brings along a different set of issues that must be evaluated. As with any initiative, evaluation, comprehensive training, and follow-up need to occur and improvements put into place. Toward that end, a joint governance-administrative task force was appointed in spring 2009 to review calendar issues related to registration.

Procedures and Records for Addressing Student Complaints or Grievances

In 2002, the college established a comprehensive student academic appeal policy and procedure, and a grievance procedure. The student academic appeals and grievance policies and procedures may be accessed by students via MyESC on the college Web site's as well as in the electronic and print versions of the "Undergraduate Catalog" and "Graduate Catalog." The grievance procedures also include the contact person for student problem resolution at each center. The coordinators of student services at each center/program are responsible for facilitating

a resolution to student complaints through both the informal and formal levels.

Record-keeping and process management throughout the college regarding complaints is not standardized at this time. Finding ways to streamline the tracking, maintenance, and overall process at all centers could be useful for resolving these situations and for understanding patterns of issues that might be addressed through policy or program change. More proactive outreach should be put in place, e.g., marketing of processes and procedures to empower students to resolve their complaints informally, before taking official action.

While almost all complains and grievances are resolved in an efficient and effective manner, the college must begin looking more carefully at all complaints, especially those lower level complaints that tend to be resolved through the informal resolution process. Evaluating and analyzing complaint/grievance data can help to improve student services efforts, study design, student communication, and student satisfaction, thus reducing future student issues. Reports from the Student Information Center have analyzed patterns in student calls that have helped to identify areas for improvement and similar systems at academic centers would be useful.

CONCLUSIONS

Strengths

– The college's recruitment and admissions processes are well-aligned with the mission.

– The college provides a mix of personal contact and Web-based information to prospective students.

– The college has supported and supplemented the primary mentor-student relationship by hiring new categories of professional employees in student services and academic support.

– Empire State College students report the highest level of satisfaction with student services among the SUNY state-operated campuses.

– Students express a high level of satisfaction with the quality of advisement.

– The college has explored and introduced a broad array of online and face to face support services tailored to the needs of adult learners.

Challenges

– The broad array of options for students in the college's individually-designed undergraduate degrees is difficult to convey to prospective students.

– The multiplicity and complexity of options for bringing prior learning into an Empire State College undergraduate degree is difficult for prospective students to understand.

– The patterns of enrollment of part-time adult students, the college's primary audience, create challenges in the definition and measurement of retention.

– The administrative systems and tools that support student services need to keep pace with institutional growth and evolving technology.

Actions

– In addition to graduation rates already published, the results of our institution-wide assessments should be made accessible to prospective students.
Status: The CUSP subcommittee on program assessment is considering ways to improve dissemination and use of outcomes assessment results.

– Existing statements of expected learning outcomes in general education and the concentration should be augmented with a statement about overarching expectations for all graduates.
Status: A recently revised policy on educational planning and ongoing discussions of academic programs in CUSP and its subcommittees provide a basis for such a statement.

– Electronic databases for complaint/grievance data should be established in all academic centers to gather data on patterns of issues. These data can then be used to address and improve these areas and support quality assurance of our programs.

– Data regarding all student services should be compiled and our service to students assessed and evaluated on a regular basis as we continue to grow and implement improvements.
Status: The Student Information Center has

tracked and reported patterns of issues since its opening in 2006. Further monitoring systems will be put in place in the context of the new strategic plan.

– The college should begin looking more critically at staffing models and the effectiveness of distributed services (student services, academic review, academic support), taking into account center/program/unit scale, size, student demographics, and student population.
Status: A review and update of the regional center staffing model scheduled for 2009 - 2010 will begin to address this question.

Chapter 5
Faculty

Standard 10: Faculty

Middle States Standard: The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.

The faculty role at Empire State College is one of the most distinctive features of the college and makes it unique in the landscape of higher education. Mentors advise on the design of individualized degree programs (curricula) that accommodate student's educational backgrounds, goals and interests. Mentoring is a holistic approach to education informed by the goal of helping students to become self-directed, life long learners. Faculty members mentor students through a variety of learning modes including independent study, group study, residencies, online courses, classroom-based courses and studies that blend online and face-to-face interaction.

The mentoring model is very likely responsible for the highest levels of student satisfaction in the State University of New York (SUNY). In fact, in SUNY student surveys in 2003, 2006 and 2009, when Empire State College students were asked if they would select Empire State College again if they were just beginning their programs, their ratings on average were higher than those given by students from any other SUNY state-operated institution. Empire State College students' ratings of the quality of instruction also were the highest among the SUNY state-operated institutions. Aggregated results from the college's Student Assessment of Learning Experiences (SALE), a survey used in faculty reviews, indicate that students see faculty as highly effective in teaching and mentoring. Over 80 percent of students responding to the SALE agree that faculty provide outstanding guidance and encouragement. They also believe that faculty demonstrate mastery of their subject, encourage students to evaluate different points of view, give helpful feedback on academic performance, make themselves available to students and demonstrate strong communication skills and attention to students' goals.

All mentors have a common core of responsibilities, including design of learning experiences and resources, instruction, advisement, evaluation and facilitation; however, the particular mix of responsibilities for an individual mentor varies considerably by location and center. This mix is part of the reason why faculty are so committed to the college. The combination of different functions and tasks allows an individual faculty member, in consultation with his or her dean, to develop a plan each year that responds to both student and faculty interests. It also opens up possibilities for many different approaches to teaching, mentoring, and professional development.

Another source of vitality in the college is the diversity of faculty roles and of the faculty as a group. Diversity in the mentor role has increased as the college has expanded its array of programs and delivery formats. In addition, recent recruitment efforts have resulted in the addition of younger faculty who bring fresh and new perspectives, an interest in technology and all its possibilities for education, and great energy in working with students.

In the 2008 - 2009 academic year, the college's instructional staff included 169 full-time faculty members and over 1,000 part-time and adjunct faculty members. Over 98 percent of full-time faculty members hold earned terminal degrees in their fields; part-time and adjunct faculty members are expected to hold the masters degree or to demonstrate equivalent educational or professional background or expertise in their fields.

The roles and responsibilities of the faculty are described in the Faculty Handbook section on faculty obligation (p. 14). The college places significant emphasis on the teaching and mentoring role for all faculty, and also expects full-time faculty members to engage in scholarship and service and to continue their professional development throughout their careers. Full-time faculty have substantial leadership responsibility in college governance and institutional development, along

with professional employees, some part-time faculty, and administrators.

While Empire State College is not unique among SUNY colleges in employing both full-time and part-time faculty, it has been much more successful than others in providing opportunities for part-time employment that offer many of the same benefits and rewards available to full-time faculty. The college has a reputation for honoring the academic strengths and interests of all faculty members, both part-time and full-time. For example, both full-time and part-time faculty may seek funding for professional development and both are encouraged to take part in college governance.

The college differentiates between two types of part-time faculty. Part-time faculty members who hold fractional line-based appointments often serve as primary mentors as well as subject-matter instructors, and those on half-time or greater appointments often engage in center and college service. In contrast, adjunct faculty undertake specific assignments, mainly involving direct instruction or prior learning assessment. These two groups are subject to different evaluation procedures.

In 2007, the provost created a collegewide Next Generation Faculty Task Force to examine issues in faculty hiring, retention, diversity and quality of work life and the legacy/renewal dynamics associated with the generational shift that is occurring among the college's full-time faculty. The task force distributed its report in May 2009, and the provost is now working with the Academic Personnel Committee and others to develop action plans based on the report. Many of the issues and actions plans discussed below have been or will be informed by the outstanding work of the task force.

Although the mentor role is in constant flux as a result of changes within and beyond the college, faculty, both full-time and part-time, seem equal to the task of absorbing these changes. The self study task force on faculty noted that faculty have built on their strengths and experience to identify and help address a variety of needed improvements and challenges, such as the balance of full-time and part-time faculty; faculty management of their work in a 12-month appointment; the impact of administrative changes such as a new term calendar, online registration, and changes in center staffing

patterns; technology support for faculty work, the faculty professional obligation in teaching and mentoring, and barriers to faculty working across academic programs and centers. The task force also reviewed issues and potential areas of improvement in the recruitment and retention of faculty, faculty orientation, faculty involvement in academic quality matters, faculty professional development and faculty personnel review.

FACULTY RECRUITMENT AND CLIMATE

The search process for full-time faculty members is described in the college's Policies and Procedures section titled, Employment Policies and Procedures, which is available on the college Web site. Full-time faculty searches are coordinated by the office of academic affairs and all proceed on a common time line. Deans propose new faculty hiring, to replace vacated positions or to create new positions to accommodate growth, as part of the annual budget process. The academic fields for new faculty are identified by deans using their local planning and consultation process. Information about all planned searches is shared with all deans to permit coordination and, at times, shared appointments. The provost and deans are currently working to enhance collegewide planning for full-time faculty positions, particularly within specific areas of study.

All searches must be conducted according to procedures in the college's 2006 Affirmative Action Plan, which are designed to produce a diverse pool of qualified applicants. In the 2007 - 2008 academic year, approximately 15 percent of the full-time faculty represented racial or ethnic minorities. Part-time and adjunct faculty members are typically hired from local pools of candidates, often to meet short-term, program-specific instructional needs.

A question that has arisen through this self-study is how we know that our policies and practices actually enable us to recruit and retain a diverse group of faculty who understand and support the mentoring model. The first part of this question can be addressed by reviewing trends in the proportions of full-time faculty from ethnic minorities. This proportion has risen from 12 percent in 2003 - 2004 to almost 15 percent in 2007 - 2008. The proportion of minorities among the full-time faculty varied substantially in 2007 - 2008 among the college's different centers and programs, ranging

from 0 percent at three centers to 21 percent at the Center for Distance Learning and 25 percent at the Center for Graduate Programs. The current administration is committed to achieving the goal of increasing diversity among the faculty, especially in those regions and programs where the proportion of faculty members from under-represented groups is low.

The second part of the question, regarding recruitment and retention of faculty members who understand and support the mentoring model, is much more difficult to address. Although the college attempts to explain the mentoring model to all prospective faculty members through job postings and the interview process, making potential faculty aware of this distinctive mode of teaching and learning presents an interesting challenge. Anecdotal evidence indicates that a few candidates have declined offers because the mentoring model was not consistent with their preferred instructional style or their concept of an academic career, and a few recently hired faculty members left in order to work at more conventional colleges. One center self-study noted that many new faculty members arrive to a way of working that is unexpected and sometimes unwelcome, in regard both to the expectation of generally spending four days a week in the office and to the limited and scattered time available for professional development and scholarly activities within 12-month faculty appointments (see section below on 12-month appointments for further discussion of this issue).

The recent faculty survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute indicated that Empire State College faculty reported lower satisfaction compared to faculty at other institutions, in terms of opportunities for scholarly pursuits, teaching load, and administrative support. While 69 percent of faculty from other institutions indicated they would choose their current college if they were to begin their career again, only 53 percent of Empire State College faculty indicated that they would come to this college again.

Since these questions did not address the mentoring model directly, it is difficult to conclude with certainty that the mentoring model, per se, can account for the differences in satisfaction ratings. Further, other data from the HERI survey suggest that the picture is more complicated than findings drawn from that specific question. For example, job satisfaction is much more gender-based at Empire State College than at other institutions. Overall job satisfaction is much higher for men than for women. 81 percent of men are either satisfied or very satisfied whereas only 56 percent of women reported being satisfied with their jobs. At other four year institutions the comparable figures were 76 percent and 72 percent respectively. So, men at Empire State College are more satisfied than their counterparts at other institutions and women are noticeably less satisfied. It also is true that new faculty are less satisfied than their more seasoned colleagues, specifically in relation to the 12-month obligation and the issue of governance responsibilities. Certainly there are many successful and satisfied mentors who have learned how to manage their time and energy, create time for professional development, and otherwise contribute to the well being of the college. Nevertheless, it behooves the college to further assist mentors, especially new hires, in identifying potential problems and strategies that will help them attain a desired level of job satisfaction.

Salary also has emerged as an issue in the recruitment and retention of faculty. The Office of Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Research (OAIR) concluded a study of gender equity in salary in 2009. The study did not find gender-based differences in salary, but the study and discussions surrounding it suggested that further research is needed on the relation between gender and teaching load and gender and career development. The provost has initiated a study of the competitiveness of faculty salaries, and preliminary results from OAIR suggest that faculty salaries are below the median for comparable institutions. Planning is underway to address this gap. A follow-up survey of the faculty climate will assess in more detail the faculty's level of satisfaction with various aspects of the work environment; this survey is scheduled to be completed early in 2010.

ORIENTATION OF NEW FACULTY

New full-time faculty participate in a year-long New Mentor Orientation, which includes three face-to-face workshops in Saratoga Springs, online discussions and activities, and mentoring from senior faculty. Many new full-time faculty members have found these workshops to be extremely useful

for providing information about policies and procedures, tasks, and expectations. Perhaps even more importantly, recent participants report that the workshops help develop a sense of cohort and offer new hires the opportunity to form relationships with others that will support them throughout their time with the college.

Orientation activities for part-time and adjunct faculty, however, are not consistent across the college. For example, the Center for Distance Learning, which employs the largest number of adjunct faculty in the college, has an online adjunct orientation program and an annual professional development conference attended by a number of adjuncts. The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies has a program for orienting new adjuncts. Regional centers each have their own methods for orienting new adjunct faculty. The Center for Mentoring and Learning is developing improved orientation and training for part-time faculty members. Working with the group of associate deans it is gathering data on best practices across the college and will develop a more formalized and standardized orientation and training for adjuncts and tutors.

TWELVE-MONTH APPOINTMENTS

Full- and part-time faculty members holding line appointments normally hold 12-month appointments. Adjunct faculty members' appointments may vary in length from one instructional term to a full academic year. Since the founding of the college, full-time Empire State College faculty have always had a 12-month obligation. Over the past 35 years, senior faculty have developed time management practices that allow them space in the 12 months to engage in professional development opportunities. The college has greatly benefited from the results of their scholarly activities, and the faculty deserve high praise for their accomplishments in research, publication, and public service. However, with an increasing number of new faculty members whose frame of reference is a 9-10 month college calendar and the term calendar, attitudes, expectations and practices relating to this obligation have been changing.

The Faculty Handbook (p. 11 - 12) describes faculty "reading periods" and "no appointment periods" as follows:

> A faculty reading or no appointment period, usually scheduled from late July into the month of August, is a period of shifted professional responsibility rather than a vacation period. Faculty use this period to further their own professional development, to complete documentation of student work and to engage in service and scholarly activities … There are three additional weeks of 'no appointment' periods scheduled during the academic year (two weeks during the holiday period and one week in May). These also are periods of shifted professional responsibility rather than vacation periods.

While many faculty have learned how to make good use of the reading periods and no appointment weeks, and have managed their weekly time to provide space for scholarship, there are others who report that the 12-month obligation makes it difficult to find time for professional and scholarly activities. They may be aware that one day a week is (generally) expected to be devoted to scholarly activities, but other demands of the mentoring role too often keep them from taking full advantage of that time. The four-week summer reading period, which is the only sustained time away from student contact, is generally viewed as a time to read, write, stay current in one's field and focus on professional development

Faculty concerns about time for professional development and scholarship have been widely discussed and the recently-published report of the Next Generation Faculty Task Force has made proposals to address them. There is a wide range of practice among faculty in regard to these issues. Some faculty members do disengage during no-appointment weeks and the reading period, and do not check voicemail or e-mail at all. Some work through these periods, seeing students as usual. Many have some degree of contact with students during these times as well on vacation, holidays, and weekends. Time spent in the office on a weekly basis varies as well. Nevertheless, it must be noted that faculty have been extremely creative in fulfilling responsibilities to students while scheduling vacations and professional development time.

These good practices should be shared widely so that newcomers can be exposed to possible ways of sustaining their work and personal needs. Beginning with the interview process and new mentor orientation, new faculty can be informed of effective methods to manage their work across the calendar year. Scheduling matters such as the 12-month obligation, the use of the no-appointment weeks and reading period, and mentors' weekly office schedules also should be explicitly discussed during annual consultations between the deans and faculty members.

FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN MAINTAINING ACADEMIC QUALITY AND SETTING CURRICULUM

Governance responsibilities for academic programs and policies are established in the college's Bylaws through the charges to the senate and relevant standing committees. At the annual college governance retreat, the Office of Academic Affairs distributes a summary of the approval steps for committees, the Senate, graduate dean, provost and president, for various actions involving new and revised academic programs and policies.

In terms of program delivery, faculty develop learning experiences and evaluate student performance in the context of college policies and the settings in which they work. Oversight varies depending on the setting. For example, in regional centers, academic documents such as learning contracts and evaluations may be reviewed by the primary mentor, associate dean, faculty chair or faculty committee, either for each document or for a periodic sample of documents. In CDL, area faculty and a curriculum committee review and approve curricula and establish priorities for course development, and course delivery is monitored by area coordinators and professional staff. Closer oversight and support are provided to new faculty. Professional development to enhance practice occurs through the Center for Mentoring and Learning, the academic centers and through college and external meetings. Peer and administrative reviewers examine academic documents and learning materials as part of the faculty review process.

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT FOR CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

A major section of the Faculty Handbook (p. 58 - 79) is devoted to describing professional development opportunities and application procedures for the faculty. The following excerpt from the introduction of this section demonstrates the college's commitment to continued professional growth.

> "At Empire State College professional development has three meanings: first, the development of the individual as a mentor; second, engagement in scholarly and creative work; and, third, exploration of new directions and new professional competencies.
>
> Continuous activity as a mentor or member of the academic staff is intellectually and emotionally demanding, and effective performance over long periods of time requires opportunities for professional growth and development through leaves and changes in assignments. Professional leaves, no appointment or reading periods, and changes in institutional responsibilities can be especially important means of helping mentors become better educators and sustain their professional competence and performance at high levels."

Part-time mentors on 50 percent or greater lines are invited to participate in the annual All College Conference, the All Areas of Study meeting and the annual academic conference. Part-time mentors also may apply for faculty development funds, NYS-UUP Individual Development Awards, and participate in the Scholars Across the College program.

Individual Professional Development

From 2005 to 2008, individual faculty development funds administered by the college increased from $88,000 to $200,000 per year. During roughly the same period, these funds transitioned from being allocated by deans and the Office of Academic Affairs to being allocated by a faculty committee chaired by the assistant vice president of academic affairs for academic services. All applications, awards, and reports are available on the college's Web site. Faculty members also have an annual opportunity to apply for funds from the NYS-UUP Joint Committee to support professional

development activities. The task force suggested that the procedures and results of individual faculty development awards should be disseminated more widely and the selection/awarding process made more transparent.

Collegewide Support of Mentoring Development

In December 2006, the provost announced the closing of the Mentoring Institute, which had served as the main resource for in-house faculty development from 1993 to 2006, and the opening of a new Center for Mentoring and Learning. The widespread training needs of ongoing initiatives, such as the Front Porch, as well as increased numbers of new faculty members, prompted the college to develop the center. A director of the center was hired in 2008 along with an instructional designer and a half-time staff assistant. The Center for Mentoring and Learning began its work on July 1, 2008. The work of the Center for Mentoring and Learning is informed by an advisory board comprising representatives from each center, from governance groups, from professional employees, and from the associate deans and deans.

The Center for Mentoring and Learning will:

- improve the sharing of best practices in mentoring, teaching and research across the college and across different faculty constituencies;

- experiment (and reflect on those processes) with new ideas, new methods, new learning forms and contents;

- foster awareness of and help communicate the core values of mentoring at Empire State College as a whole, while, at the same time, attend to the very specific development needs of particular faculty in particular centers and programs.

Finally, new mentor training and on-going mentor development across the college should be made more systematic and acknowledged as central – not peripheral – to quality faculty work.

The Center for Mentoring and Learning advisory board has established a working group focused on the experiences and needs of adjunct and part-time faculty, recognizing that this is an area that needs collegewide attention. The associate deans' group also has established a working group to improve professional development for adjuncts.

FACULTY PERSONNEL REVIEW

Procedures for Personnel Review of Full-Time Faculty

Criteria and procedures for appointment, promotion and tenure are published in the Faculty Handbook. The criteria for appointment, promotion and tenure are based upon SUNY guidelines and apply to all full-time faculty members. Concerns about consistency and transparency in faculty review procedures across the college led to a negotiated agreement between UUP and the college administration outlining detailed personnel review procedures at the center and college levels. Procedures for amending the review process are outlined within the agreement.

When asked on the 2007-08 Faculty Survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute if they agreed with the statement, "The criteria for advancement and promotion decisions are clear," 59.2 percent of Empire State College faculty agreed compared with 70.1 percent of faculty members at public four-year colleges, and 72.1 percent of those at all four-year institutions. One center self-study report noted that "Recent changes in expectations for scholarship, as well as revised personnel procedures, have resulted in anxiety and frustration for both senior and junior faculty." Another center self-study report noted that "The faculty review process needs more of a formal development component and systematic opportunities for peer involvement."

Among the core values of the college, two stand out as being supported by a highly participatory peer review process of faculty members:

> "We value a learning-mentoring community that … attracts, respects, and is enriched by a wide range of people, ideas, perspectives and experiences."

> "We value a learning-mentoring organization and culture that invites collaboration in multiple contexts of our work; … and that develops structures and policies that encourage active participation of all constituents in decision-making processes."

The efforts of the faculty and administration to ensure fair and consistent treatment of all faculty members clearly support these values. Nevertheless, this conversation needs to continue across the college, so that all faculty members understand the policies and procedures and that our practices echo our ideals.

The revised review procedures were designed to be transparent, consistent and based in agreed-upon principles. Nevertheless, various concerns regarding the new procedures have been brought to the attention of the administration and the UUP chapter. For example, concerns have been raised that the Student Assessment of Learning Experiences (SALE) instrument does not take into account sufficiently the varied modes of mentoring and learning across the college, particularly those employed by CDL and some graduate faculty. Although it properly seeks out students' voices in assessing the learning experiences they encountered at the college, SALE may not be as effective as we might wish because of the college's complex modes of mentoring and learning. The new review procedures also limit the investigative role of the Center Personnel Committees, and limit the contact between faculty peer reviewers and administrative reviewers to matters of procedure rather than the substance of individual reviews. In this respect, the core value of promoting active participation seems to have been limited.

In July 2009, the administration and UUP chapter formed a new joint labor-management task force to take another look at the review procedures, informed by experience and feedback from across the college, and to negotiate any needed amendments. Led by the provost and UUP chapter vice president for academics, the task force hopes to complete its work by early 2010.

The college's enrollment growth since 2000 led to the hiring of new, tenure-track faculty. With large numbers of pre-tenure faculty undergoing reappointment reviews, the demands on individual candidates, local and college-level personnel committees and administrators has grown. A possible solution is to reduce the number of pre-tenure reviews in cases where the new faculty member is making good progress.

Procedures for Personnel Review of Part-time Faculty and Adjuncts

All line-based, part-time faculty members are reviewed annually by their respective deans. Part-time mentors who serve as primary mentors (i.e., who advise students academically and supervise their degree planning) are reviewed every three years by their respective Center Personnel Committees and the dean. Procedures and criteria for these three-year reviews are outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

The status of adjunct faculty also is outlined in the Faculty Handbook (p. 84). As stated there, "Empire State College uses the term 'adjunct faculty' to refer to individuals with limited roles as tutors, evaluators, course instructors, study group leaders, M.A. project readers, etc." However, personnel review procedures are not specified for adjunct faculty, and therefore, they are quite varied across the centers and programs of the college.

Since the college values the expertise and contributions of its adjuncts, it is very interested in making their review process more consistent and transparent towards strengthening their satisfactory relationship with the college.

Nearly all part-time faculty have one-year appointments. While this approach maximizes the capacity of a center to shift faculty appointments as student demand changes, it also creates the need for frequent personnel reviews. Discussions during the self-study brought forward the possibility of multi-year appointments for selected part-time faculty.

We have many part-time faculty who have provided excellent and long-term service to students, participated in governance, and have otherwise performed as diligently and successfully as their full-time colleagues.

ISSUES RELATED TO FACULTY PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATION

In 2007 the college administration created a Task Force on the Faculty Professional Obligation for Mentoring and Teaching to examine current instructional workload distribution patterns among the faculty and to develop parameters to guide the deans in their assignment and monitoring of this aspect of the faculty professional obligation. A set of guidelines for full-time faculty in the regional centers was published in the summer of 2008. The

model for these faculty members is based on each faculty member supervising 800 (+/- 20 percent) credits annually over the five terms of enrollment. The deans are responsible for setting and monitoring annual and term credit targets for each faculty member and for reviewing center plans with the entire faculty at least annually.

For the regional centers, the recently developed guidelines are based on a budget model that allocates one FTE faculty line for each 800 credits in anticipated enrollment (e.g., an anticipated 16,000 credits allocates 20 FTE faculty lines). In the last several years, as the college's financial situation has improved, the required number of credits per FTE has been reduced from 960 to 800, effectively reducing the average faculty credit load. The credits attributed to a given faculty member include credits through direct instruction of students, as well as those generated through some, but not all, academic coordination activities associated with primary mentoring (referred to as indirect credits). Credits that a primary mentor's students take with adjuncts or tutors, with CDL instructors, or as cross-registrations at other colleges are counted as indirect credits toward the primary mentor's credit targets, while credits that students take with other line-appointed faculty members are not counted toward the primary mentors targets. This system works well to provide information regarding center enrollments to guide budget decisions, but is inherently inequitable with respect to faculty workload. For example, a faculty member responsible for 800 credits, of which 50 percent are indirect credits, is judged to have the same instructional load as a faculty member generating 800 credits with only 10 percent as indirect credits. The task force is exploring ways to take such differences into account, including measures of the number of active advisees each primary mentor supervises.

For 2009 - 2010, the task force also has developed guidelines for line-based, part-time faculty, and work continues on guidelines for faculty members in CDL, the Centers for Graduate Programs and International Programs and The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies. The guidelines for these settings need to be tailored to their delivery models and faculty roles.

In 2009 - 2010, the task force also will examine the intersections of faculty position staffing allocations, student enrollment and faculty mentoring and teaching responsibilities at a macro level, across center boundaries. It will develop alternative budget and enrollment allocation models that might foster greater transparency and equity in faculty responsibilities, and that could underpin an increase in the number and proportion of full-time faculty. This project may have far-reaching implications for the college.

An examination of the center self-study reports suggests some additional areas of concern related to the distribution of faculty responsibilities. It is difficult to identify explicit patterns because centers have expressed their workload concerns in unique ways. Only a few centers mention the distribution of credits or courses among faculty members; workload and professional obligation issues appears to be a more general theme relating to the available time that faculty members have to complete their responsibilities for mentoring, evaluation, committee work, advisement, administration and registration oversight as well as to the faculty's ability to participate in scholarship and professional associations. Some programs, particularly the M.A.T. and the nursing program, require faculty involvement in academic activities such as visiting school districts or clinical sites, which do not translate to a credit hour or course load.

The center reports and the results of the HERI survey with respect to workload/professional obligation issues indicate a perception that faculty do not have sufficient time to complete their tasks and responsibilities effectively. In the HERI survey, the response of Empire State College faculty is compared to other public institutions. Themes in the center reports are echoed by HERI survey results that indicate that:

- Empire State College faculty report more committee work than in other schools with almost three times as many faculty reporting more than nine hours per week of committee work when compared to similar institutions; this result might be associated with the small number of full-time faculty available for committee work when compared to other SUNY institutions of similar size.

- Although the results of the HERI report indicate that Empire State College faculty members spend a comparable amount of time per week associated

with research as faculty at other institutions, they report less satisfaction than faculty members at other institutions with respect to the opportunity for scholarly pursuits. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, in spite of these impediments, Empire State College faculty have excelled at finding opportunities for research, publishing, community involvement and personal growth.

- Empire State College faculty report significantly more time spent with e-mail communications (almost four times as many faculty report spending 13 hours per week in e-mail communication as compared to faculty in other institutions); Empire State College faculty also report using written assignments and term papers for the majority of their assessments, unlike their peers at other institutions.

Top sources of stress for Empire State College faculty are personal factors such as lack of personal time and self-imposed high expectations. However, institutionally-based stressors such as significant teaching load, meetings, committee work, institutional procedures and "red tape," and working with under-prepared students also were prominent. The fact that faculty may feel stressed at times is a reflection of their involvement in new projects, studies and programs which is fueled by their energy and creativity. This, more than anything, typifies the type of person who is attracted to Empire State College and who can thrive and be happy in a nontraditional setting.

College discussions of the self study task force's preliminary report yielded several suggestions, including better communication to students about realistic expectations for faculty availability and, improved clerical and technological support for faculty administrative work.

Balance of Full-time, Part-time and Adjunct Faculty

One of the internal changes affecting the mentor role has been the shifting ratio of full- to part-time and adjunct faculty in the college. The college has intentionally created and sustained a variety of roles for part-time and adjunct faculty for a variety of reasons: to assure students access to faculty who are current practitioners in the student's field of professional interest, to enable assessment of prior learning in areas outside the expertise of full-time

faculty, to permit students enrolling at small units to study in a face-to-face mode in areas beyond the expertise of the full-time unit mentors, and generally to augment the expertise of full-time faculty. The college values the professional abilities and commitment to students and the college's mission demonstrated by part-time and adjunct faculty. The question that emerged in the self-study is whether the current balance among these three categories of faculty (full-time, part-time, and adjunct) is appropriate to the academic program and governance demands of the college, demands traditionally met by full-time faculty.

In 2001, the first year that data are available in the Fact Book, the ratio of full-time faculty to part-time faculty was 136:290. In that year, 32 percent of the faculty in the college were full-time. That proportion remained somewhat constant until 2003 - 2004 when the college's adjunct faculty, who previously had independent contractor status, were switched to employee status and became members of the UUP bargaining unit. (Fact Book 2007 - 2008). As the Fact Book notes, the actual number and work of these individuals didn't change in 2003 - 2004. They generally continued to offer independent studies, conducted prior learning evaluations or taught courses in their areas of expertise. However, because of their new status, the overall percentage of part-time faculty rose (from 69.4 percent in 2003 to 80.2 percent in 2004). The apparent sharp decline in the full-time part-time ratio was therefore attributable to the new system of including adjuncts as part-time faculty.

Using the same metric year to year, it is still clear that the percentage of full-time faculty has declined. By 2005 the percentage of full-time faculty was 14.3 percent and by 2007 it had dropped to 12.4 percent. However, it is important to note that, on average, 25 percent of the credits at the college are generated through direct instruction by full-time faculty. At some regional centers, the proportion of credits taught by full-time faculty is as high as 40 percent. At the Center for Distance Learning, the Center for International Programs and The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies, the proportions are lower because of their much higher use of adjunct faculty.

Full-time faculty have a very strong position in the academic life of the college, serving a higher

percentage of students through direct instruction than might be expected given the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty. Full-time mentors continue to be effective in college leadership, service and program development; mentoring and teaching, and scholarly and creative activities. The college continues to value the more focused contributions of part-time and adjunct faculty as teachers and evaluators. The challenge that is now being taken up is to assure that the college has full-time faculty sufficient in number to discharge the broad array of responsibilities expected of mentors.

IMPACT OF RECENT ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES ON FACULTY

Since the last Middle States accreditation review, a number of very positive administrative changes have been implemented. Adding assessment specialist positions to centers has centralized processing and assignment to evaluators of students' requests for prior learning assessment. These activities were previously managed by individual faculty members. Adding directors of academic support and associate deans to centers also has positively affected the working lives of faculty members. A major improvement in the degree planning process has been achieved with the implementation of DP Planner, the electronic tool that assists students and mentors in developing students' degree plans. In July 2009, the college implemented PLA Planner, an electronic tool to assist in the entry and processing of prior learning assessment requests. Recent changes identified in the following sections have been more controversial.

Term Calendar

Since the last Middle States review, the college has adopted a five-term calendar; terms start in January, March, May, September and November. Center for Distance Learning, Center for Graduate Programs, FORUM and Center for International Programs already had term calendars, though the calendars varied from setting to setting. The calendar change primarily affected the regional centers, though the Genesee Valley Center had already adopted a term model on a trial basis. Previously, student enrollments in regional centers started on a weekly basis throughout the year, with the exception of the four-week reading period in the summer. Although many regional center students already enrolled in

a pattern consistent with the CDL terms, the new calendar has had the effect of further clustering the work of advising students about registration, providing instruction, and evaluating student work. The overlapping terms mean that more of these tasks are bunched together into peak periods: for example, registration for one term (January), at the same time evaluations are due for another (September), while providing instruction for yet another (November).

Ten years ago the Empire State College Middle State self-study report recommended that the college "Reconsider the academic calendar to provide better opportunities for concentrated professional development activities for all mentors." The five-term calendar was expected to address this recommendation yet, while some faculty have worked successfully with deans to map out effective scheduling to assist in their professional development program, many faculty report that the obligation to teach in five overlapping terms limits rather than increases such opportunities.

Faculty members have identified the following issues with the term calendar: the end of the September and January terms are very stressful; it has become more difficult for faculty members to take vacations, schedule reassignments, or pursue other professional development activities; there seems never to be a break for the faculty (always on e-mail – nights, weekends, vacations, summer) and time management is difficult; no appointment periods can no longer be used solely for professional development due to calendar pressures; there is a perceived increase in scholarship expectations but inadequate time, funding and library resources to pursue scholarly activities.

The impact of the new term calendar on faculty schedules depended on the center. For example, in centers already on a term calendar faculty usually taught straight through the August reading period. These faculty now have more opportunity to disengage. On the other hand, many regional center faculty who were used to 48 start dates for students throughout the year find the new calendar more challenging than the old one.

The Task Force on the Professional Obligation in Mentoring and Teaching, convened by the provost, is reevaluating the current model for determining and monitoring the faculty professional obligation

for mentoring and teaching. Discussions in a variety of contexts in recent years have surfaced ideas for managing faculty professional obligation in the five-term calendar that will inform the work of this group. The college needs to articulate general guidelines that will assist deans and faculty in apportioning the mentoring/teaching obligation across the five terms in ways that assure time for professional development and scholarship.

A collegewide review of the impact of terms on faculty work is being conducted by the joint administrative-governance Task Force on the Term Calendar. Their report, expected in October, will recommend ways to ease time and workload pressures and to provide meaningful time for the faculty's developmental needs.

Shared Appointments

The college offers the opportunity for shared appointments, where a faculty member holds part of his or her line in more than one program or location. Shared appointments draw on a faculty member's special expertise and talent to benefit the student and the program, while enabling the faculty member to experience different venues and students. An increasing number of faculty members are employed on shared appointments (e.g., regional centers and graduate programs). Although this strategy may be attractive to both administrators and individual faculty members, it also can complicate time and workload management, center resource planning, and mentors' availability to students.

Faculty have identified several issues with shared appointments. Centers need to support faculty who have shared appointments to ensure these are managed appropriately. Some center faculty have been reluctant to work in graduate and other college programs due to the workload and time pressures. In some instances, faculty have been moved into shared appointments to address individual or center credit shortfalls rather than for programmatic reasons.

Center Staffing Model

On-going efforts to serve students effectively and maintain their satisfaction with the college have resulted in a significant increase in the number of professionals at the college since the last

accreditation review, including the creation of the center positions of director of academic support, assessment specialist, and outreach and recruitment specialist, and the re-establishment of associate deans in the regional centers. Students are able, through consultation with their mentors, to connect with these professionals for assistance in many areas of concern or need.

However, as often happens in situations of multiple and simultaneous change, some confusion and concerns are raised. Center and program faculty have identified the following issues with the staffing model: although students and faculty have benefited from the opportunities created by the expertise of professionals in student services and academic support positions, faculty in most centers struggle to define the mentor role in this changing environment; new faculty and newly hired professionals are sometimes unclear about who does what or who should be called or asked what questions; and the number and role of the new professionals may weaken mentor oversight of students' academic careers.

The college should ensure that newly-hired professional and support staff understand and act in accordance with the college's core values. These new colleagues have provided important student and center/program supports and resources. They have helped centers reach out to communities and offered mentors important academic resources to which to turn (for example in terms of academic skill development). Yet, these additions also have altered the terrain of work at the centers, confused roles, and made us aware of the need to more clearly define appropriate academic and professional responsibility.

CONCLUSIONS

Strengths

– The mentoring model is associated with high levels of student satisfaction with the quality of instruction and advising.

– Faculty demonstrate a high level of commitment to the college mission and to their students.

– The diversity of faculty and faculty roles has increased in recent years.

– A new mentor orientation for full-time faculty has been highly successful.

– Resources for faculty professional development have increased. Additional sabbaticals and professionals reassignments have been funded for 2009-2010.

Challenges

– A generational shift in faculty has posed challenges in recruitment and orientation of new faculty and in maintaining continuity of institutional mission and values while embracing the fresh perspectives of new faculty.

– The demands of faculty's 12-month professional obligation have implications for faculty recruitment, retention and professional development.

– Faculty report lower job satisfaction than their counterparts at comparable institutions.

– Full-time faculty report stress in carrying out their teaching, service and scholarly obligations and the decline in full-time faculty over the years contributes to the issue.

– Faculty salaries are below the mean for comparable institutions and fields.

Actions

– Address the recommendations of the Next Generation Faculty Task Force Report and climate issues that surfaced in the HERI survey.
Status: Review of this report and follow-up action is a priority for the provost and the Academic Personnel Committee in 2009 - 2010. A campus climate survey will be completed by early 2010.

– Conduct a study of faculty climate.
Status: This study will be completed in early 2010.

– Through the Task Force on the Faculty Professional Obligation in Mentoring and Teaching, continue to develop fair and equitable methods of defining faculty expectations and obligations in order to ensure academic quality, service to students, and an environment conducive to the ongoing professional development of the faculty.
Status: Guidelines for full-time regional center

faculty obligation were established in 2008 - 2009. Guidelines for other categories of faculty and new reporting systems will be developed in 2009 - 2010.

– Review the proportions of full-time and part-time faculty in each academic center and the proportions of instructional credit offered by each group. To achieve a more appropriate balance and to distribute instructional loads, committee work and other service activities more widely, it is likely that additional full-time faculty members will need to be hired.
Status: This action proposal will be addressed through the budget and enrollment allocation modeling being undertaken by the Task Force on the Faculty Professional Obligation in Mentoring and Teaching, as well as through annual budget and planning processes.

– Build on existing center practices to develop collegewide procedures for orientation, professional development and evaluation of the various categories of adjunct faculty members appropriate to their instructional settings.
Status: Associate deans and the associate provost have assembled information on center practice. The Center for Mentoring and Learning has a working group on professional development needs of these faculty.

– Strengthen existing procedures for initiating and managing shared appointments, to enable individual faculty members to take on new and interesting work, centers to provide quality services to our students, and the college as a whole to plan effectively.
Status: This matter will be considered in the context of the Next Generation Faculty report.

Chapter 6
Academic Programs

Standard 11:
Educational Offerings

Middle States Standard: The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

Over the past decade, Empire State College has strengthened its core undergraduate program model, which features individually-designed degrees, assessment of prior college-level learning, and multiple modes of study designed to serve adult learners. The college also has strengthened its graduate programs and added an innovative M.A. in Teaching as well as an online RN to B.S. in Nursing degree. A number of new programs are in development. Policy, administrative and technological supports for the academic program also are significant elements of program quality, and these also are discussed below, along with the variety of learning modes which the college makes available to its students.

DEGREE OFFERINGS

Undergraduate Degrees

Most Empire State College undergraduates complete individually designed associate or bachelor's degrees tailored to the student's background, interests and needs. Rather than providing programs in traditional disciplines or departments, the college offers 11 broad areas of study (AOS) within which most undergraduate students design their degree programs. The areas of study are:

- The Arts
- Business, Management and Economics
- Community and Human Services
- Cultural Studies
- Educational Studies
- Historical Studies

- Human Development
- Interdisciplinary Studies
- Labor Studies
- Science, Mathematics and Technology
- Social Theory, Social Structure and Change

For each area of study, the faculty have developed guidelines to help students conceptualize their degrees. In a number of fields, the faculty also have developed guidelines for specific concentrations. Many individualized degree students use a disciplinary framework for their program designs. Others choose a thematic, interdisciplinary or problem-centered curricular approach. As might be expected, many adult students also choose to design their programs around their professional interests and competencies.

The 11 undergraduate areas of study have been in place for well over two decades. While there has been considerable updating of area of study and concentration guidelines, the broad structure of the areas of study has not changed. In 2008 - 2009, the Office of Academic Affairs and the Committee on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) initiated an institutional conversation on the areas of study, and the June 2009 Academic Conference focused on this topic. In 2009 - 2010, a faculty member on release time is working with the assistant vice president for academic programs and an advisory committee to develop a new proposal for a new area of study in public affairs, and adjustments may be made in the existing areas over the next few years.

Students designing individualized degrees work closely with their faculty mentors. A hallmark of an Empire State College undergraduate education is a credit-bearing study in educational planning, which undergraduate students are required to take. Students earn 4 to 8 credits for learning activities associated with the design and development of their degree plans.

The degree program consists of studies selected by students that contribute to both general education and the concentration. The degree plan typically

includes transfer credit for courses completed at other colleges and, where relevant to the student's academic objectives, credit for demonstrated college level experiential learning. The plan also lays out the studies that remain to be completed in both general learning and in the concentration. Once the plan has been established, the student is then required to write a rationale essay that explains how the degree exhibits coherence, breath, depth and progression. It also must show how the degree program meets the student's individual needs and goals and how it meets the academic guidelines for concentrations in one of the selected area of study. The degree program and rationale along with relevant documentation are then submitted for review and approval.

In addition to its predominantly individualized approach to undergraduate study, the college offers several more structured bachelor's degree programs. These include the associate degree programs offered by The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies in partnership with labor organizations' apprenticeships and the degrees offered through the center for International programs, which build on the programs of partner institutions in other countries.

Since the last periodic review, the college has developed a statewide, online RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing program in direct response to health care needs and nursing shortages in New York state. The new program addresses nurse shortages by providing a stepping-stone for nurses seeking to become nurse educators through pursuit of an MSN or higher degree. The program also is designed to place bachelor's-prepared nurses in hospitals and community health settings, strengthen the profession, and improve patient outcomes. This structured program is designed for students who already hold the RN credential and an associate degree in nursing. The program requires 45 advanced level credits in nursing, along with general education studies and electives. Since the program is delivered almost entirely online, its academic and administrative home is the Center for Distance Learning. The nursing program opened with 42 students in the fall of 2008, and expects a positive program accreditation outcome through the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) in spring 2010.

Master's Degrees

At the graduate level, Empire State College degrees are generally more structured than at the undergraduate level. Most feature intensive residency programs coupled with online and other learning experiences. Education is now the dominant area for graduate study, as enrollments in the relatively new Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) program reached 250 students in 2008 - 2009. The M.A.T. program serves career changers who hold bachelor's degrees and want to transition to middle and high school teaching. This is an alternative certification program with a special focus on high needs areas (science, mathematics and languages) and high needs schools (both urban and rural). The program features online and blended courses along with a two-year mentored teaching placement. The program requires good working relationships with school districts across the state; the M.A.T. is the only SUNY degree offered in partnership with the New York City Teaching Fellows.

The M.B.A. program, which also is experiencing significant growth, offers a distinctive competency-based curriculum. The M.B.A. program is currently designing a new track in global management, a program alternative designed for MDs, and several certificate programs. Since the last review, the college has discontinued the M.A. in Business Policy. The M.A. in Social Policy and the M.A. in Labor Policy offer core required courses and a range of electives. The M.A. in Liberal Studies has a required core while offering more of the flexibility characteristic of the individually-designed undergraduate degrees. All of the graduate programs require an integrative closing experience: the capstone course in the M.B.A. program, the teaching portfolio in the M.A.T. program, or the M.A. project in the other programs, which varies in format from a traditional thesis to more applied project.

The college is initiating additional new program development at the graduate level. In 2009 - 2010, a faculty member on release time is working with the dean of the Center for Graduate Programs (CGP), the assistant vice president for academic programs and an advisory committee to develop a new master's degree in adult learning. Conceptual work has begun on a Master of Science in Nursing degree to complement the new B.S. in Nursing program. The M.S. in Nursing will emphasize

nursing education, with additional tracks possible in administration and informatics. The CGP also is collaborating with the other SUNY comprehensive colleges by organizing and offering online core courses for their new Professional Science Master's (P.S.M.) degrees, and Empire State College may consider a possible P.S.M. in applied social science.

Academic Plan

This has been a period of substantial program development, with more on the horizon. Consistent with the 2015 Vision and as part of the college's current cycle of strategic planning, the Office of Academic Affairs will develop the institution's first formal Academic Plan in 2009 - 2010. The provost will lead an advisory team to design the overall scope of the plan, prepare the first edition, and recommend how governance consultation for academic planning might best be institutionalized in the future.

ACADEMIC QUALITY REVIEW

Review of Degree Programs

At the undergraduate level, review of students' proposed degree plans and any prior learning components is conducted at both center and college levels. After review by the primary mentor, the proposed degree plan goes to the center assessment office for review and transmittal to the center assessment committee, which consists of three faculty who are responsible for academic approval of the proposal. The collegewide office of academic review does a final check for conformity to college policy. Several center self-study reports noted that the degree program assessment process is a particular strength of the college and that faculty members are very influential in assuring quality academic review of students' academic programs. Center assessment meetings are often prime opportunities for orientation and development of new mentors.

In addition to these degree program review processes, the Center for Distance Learning has a robust curriculum development and review structure. Teams of faculty from adjacent fields of study engage in curricular planning, and a CDL Curriculum Committee approves new courses and curricular directions. Since CDL courses serve undergraduates both within CDL and across the

college, CDL faculty also may consult colleagues from relevant areas of study.

The area of study faculty, the Committee on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) and the provost review and approve area of study and concentration guidelines for individualized degrees. Major changes in the area of study structure, as well as new programs such as the B.S. in Nursing, require approval by CUSP, the College Senate and administration, SUNY and the NYS Education Department.

At the graduate level, the program faculty, the Graduate Studies and Policies Committee (GSPC), the dean of graduate programs (and the associate dean/director of the M.A.T. program where appropriate) and the provost review and approve new programs and major changes in existing programs. Significant changes also require approval by the president, SUNY and the NYS Education Department.

The CUSP also approves undergraduate academic policies and provides leadership related to undergraduate outcomes assessment and area of study reviews conducted by the Office of Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Research. The GSPC approves graduate academic policies and participates in program review and accreditation processes for graduate programs. For more on these processes, please refer to the chapters on governance and outcomes assessment.

In comparison to students at other SUNY institutions, Empire State College students provide higher rankings on items in the SUNY Student Opinion Survey, especially on issues related to the academic program. Empire State College earned the highest marks for the quality of instruction, for feedback from faculty on the quality of work and for offering an intellectually stimulating curriculum. Students said that the college had helped them meet their goals and helped them acquire knowledge and skills for academic study and for intellectual growth throughout life. The college and its faculty also were acknowledged for helping students acquire analytical thinking skill and for assisting students to develop self-understanding.

Assuring Consistency Across the College

Given the dispersed nature of the college, college-level governance committees serve an important role in fostering academic rigor, consistency of practice and a common academic culture. These goals also are addressed through faculty engagement in three major conferences that occur during the year: the All-College Conference, the June Academic Conference and the All Areas of Study meeting. Additional supports include professional development programs offered by the Center for Mentoring and Learning and through the academic centers, and quality reviews conducted at the center level.

College professional and administrative staff members also play a key role in academic quality. The deans provide academic leadership for the centers, with the support of regular conference calls with the Office of Academic Affairs leadership and periodic face-to-face meetings as a group and as part of the President's Council. In 2007, the college re-established the role of associate dean in most centers, and this position also encompasses academic leadership and responsibility for faculty orientation and development. The associate deans meet regularly with the associate provost. The center directors of academic review, who oversee undergraduate degree program review and prior learning assessment, also meet regularly with the director of college academic review.

Review of Learning Contracts and Courses

Empire State College pioneered in the use of learning contracts to convey academic expectations to students and to invite their active participation in planning their learning. Learning contracts and companion evaluative documents called contract evaluations remain a key component of students programs. Each learning contract or course, whether online, group, or independent study, outlines the purposes/objectives and learning activities to be undertaken, and criteria and methods for evaluation of student learning. Online courses incorporate similar elements into their syllabi. Curricular content is designed and updated through an active community of faculty who consult one another and invite the participation of students in crafting their own learning experiences.

College policy charges each academic center with developing procedures for reviewing the quality of learning contracts and contract evaluations. Consequently, faculty involvement in academic review of these documents varies across the college. At three regional centers, all learning contracts and contract evaluations are approved by the primary mentor. At other centers other personnel, such as deans, associate deans or designated faculty are responsible for the final approval. Curriculum committees in CDL and program faculty in graduate programs and international programs play comparable roles in the review of courses.

At two regional centers, faculty members hold regular program review meetings where groups of faculty gather to review and discuss learning contracts and contract evaluations for graduating students. One center's self study recommended that the Academic Quality Committee or another faculty group periodically review a random sample of learning contracts and contract evaluations to identify best practice and areas for improvement.

The creation of high quality academic documents is considered a matter of faculty development. The documents of new faculty generally receive greater scrutiny than those created by more experienced mentors. Learning contracts and contract evaluations are typically reviewed during faculty personnel reviews, and this is an opportunity for developmental feedback to mentors around the quality of these documents.

Academic Policy Development

Academic policies are an important underpinning of the college's academic program. During the past decade, the college has established or substantially revised a wide range of academic and related policies. These include:

- undergraduate and graduate student evaluation and grading policies

- undergraduate and graduate satisfactory academic progress policies, and related policies on academic standing

- polices on academic integrity, student appeals, grievances and student conduct

- undergraduate policies on educational planning, the degree program rationale, prior learning

assessment, and degree program review and approval

- program-specific policies for the M.A.T. and B.S. in Nursing degrees

- learning contract policy, which is undergoing further revision in 2009 - 2010

This ongoing attention to matters of academic policy in the collegewide governance structure and the Office of Academic Affairs assures that those in the dispersed academic centers and units of the college responsible for academic programs have guidance and common standards for academic programs.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTS

The college is structured to serve the particular needs of adult learners, by allowing and encouraging active student participation in constructing parts of their curriculum, and by delivering education in modes that serve adult lifestyles and needs. These various modes of study are supported by an online library and other online learning resources and services.

Learning Contracts and Other Study Opportunities

At the undergraduate level students may draw on a wide array of resources as they complete components of their degree programs. They can pursue individually structured learning contracts with any one of the several hundred full and part time faculty of the college, and may participate in the design of the study. They may enroll in study groups (small group seminars) offered by local faculty that combine periodic meetings throughout the semester with significant independent study. They may enroll in online courses through the Center for Distance Learning through any academic center in the college. Finally, they may cross-register into courses at other colleges either on campus or online.

Since the last Middle States review the Learning Opportunity Inventory (LOI) has been devised to allow students to survey the full range of topics that the faculty is prepared to offer. This inventory allows students to search by topic, learning modality or location. Each semester students enroll either full-time or part-time and their learning objectives,

learning activities and methods and criteria of evaluation are recorded in a learning contract.

A learning contract often contains studies that have a pre-existing structure and content that was determined by faculty, as most courses at most colleges would. Empire State College learning contracts, however, offer students the opportunity to be a partner in developing their studies. At the undergraduate level, in consultation with the primary mentor, a student can design learning contracts with individualized studies that are specifically tailored to that student's interests, background and academic and professional goals. The needs and preferences of adult learners constitute an important focus in the orientation of new faculty and in the on-going work of the Center for Mentoring and Learning. These features of the college are recognized and applauded by students.

The Virtual Library

In 1971 the college was established without a physical library or collection. Students were expected to use the already existing facilities of the SUNY system. Today the Empire State College library is staffed by five librarians with master's degrees in library and information science and delivers services through its Web site, www.esc.edu/Library. As a result of the growth of online services and widespread digitization efforts over the past decade, the library's collection is fully electronic and provides access to approximately 60,000 electronic books, 57,000 unique online journal titles, 500 plus electronic reference books and over 80 research databases that provide access to a broad collection of scholarly and professional journal articles, reports, financial data, images and other multimedia resources. The library offers reference services via phone, e-mail and instant messaging most weekday evenings and on Sundays. The librarians work closely with faculty and staff by providing research consultations, and by working closely with individuals and course development teams for both online and blended courses to ensure that quality materials and information literacy activities are built into these courses. In the past year the library initiated a new interlibrary loan service for faculty and graduate students which draws upon the extensive collections of the University of Buffalo. The library also maintains the college's Academic Integrity Web site and an online information literacy

study that serves as a self-paced tutorial and a learning activity which is integrated into many of the faculty's learning contracts.

The library has recently revamped its Web site to be more user-friendly to students, and has added numerous student aids, such as the "Ask-a-Librarian" function and basic skills tutorials. Results of the college's General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) in information management raise a concern about students' competency in evaluating information critically. Several systems are in place to address this ongoing need to foster information literacy, such as free online tutorials, onsite workshops, and credit-bearing courses.

Access to the college's online library is available to all members of the college community who have been issued a login and password. Some access issues remain for students at the Van Arsdale Center and in international programs; these issues are offset to some extent by learning resources available through partner colleges or other organizations.

Education about copyright compliance within the college remains a challenge, as more faculty and students express interest in using a wide range of media for teaching and learning. There is a growing need to develop a common baseline understanding of intellectual property and copyright issues. The Center for Learning Technology (CLT) and library staff are working on trying to meet this need with an expanded Web site and faculty workshops

Instructional Design Support for Distance Learning and Blended Studies

At an experimenting institution, with new technologies to try out and use with students, faculty need support to learn and take advantage of what is available. Faculty also need better vehicles for sharing online materials among groups of college colleagues with similar disciplinary interests.

The CDL and Graduate Programs course development models can serve as prototypes for other centers seeking to develop online and blended learning resources and activities. As well, CDL employs a model in which all faculty members developing distance-learning courses make use of instructional design staff, and recently the Center for Graduate Programs also has housed two instructional designers. In 2007 the college hired

additional instructional technologists, each of whom serves faculty members at multiple centers.

Historically, instructional design staff have been spread too thin to support adequately the needs of faculty members to learn new technologies and to develop support materials for delivery to students at a distance. Instructors developing or revising online course materials for CDL were able to enlist the support of instructional designers easily, while instructors in other programs who use online resources in blended delivery have found it much more difficult to get help. To address this need, the college has now established at least one full-time instructional design position for each center, and searches are currently underway to fill the added positions by fall 2009.

Learning Opportunities Inventory and the Term Guide

Along with the term calendar has come the establishment of a Learning Opportunities Inventory (LOI) that provides an online compendium of the studies offered by faculty. The online registration system includes a term guide, which draws its listing from the LOI. The term guide continues to make available the opportunity for a mentor and student to work together to create a learning contract individually tailored to the student, although this option is not very visible to students in the current registration view. A subcommittee of CUSP has been working on a "next generation" LOI that gives greater visibility to individualized learning contracts and the opportunity for students to participate in learning contract design.

Ongoing Challenges

The college has invested significant resources, both financial and personnel, in improving our technological resources as they pertain to delivering high-quality and updated education. Most faculty, students, and staff recognize the necessity of rapidly improving their technological skills, by both learning new skills and using technology to facilitate learning. Many challenges exist, such as questions of access, ethical issues, keeping up with instantaneously changing demands, staying informed about new resources, and finding time to incorporate new resources effectively. Overall, the college possesses adequate learning resources,

and collaboration between library staff and faculty is growing in many positive ways. The library distributes a newsletter with updates on resources, and recently hired instructional designers and instructional technologists work assiduously to increase communication and training resources for faculty. These developments result in innovative and ever-changing improvements to course delivery that promote student use of varied and contemporary information and research resources.

Standard 12: General Education

Middle States Standard: The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

Effective September 2001, the college fully implemented the general education program mandated by the SUNY Board of Trustees. The college adopted the SUNY requirement that all bachelor's degree candidates complete a general education program of no fewer than 30 credit hours designed to achieve student learning in 10 knowledge and skill areas and two areas of competency that are infused throughout the curriculum. Students pursuing associates degrees must complete at least 21 credits across at least seven of the 10 knowledge and skill areas:

Knowledge and Skill Areas

Mathematics

Natural Science

Social Science

American History

Western Civilization

Other World Civilization

Humanities

The Arts

Foreign Language

Basic Communication

Competencies

Critical Thinking

Information Management

All undergraduate students who matriculated after the implementation of general education program were offered the opportunity to fulfill the requirements through transfer credits, standardized exams, prior learning, and/or Empire State College courses. The broad guidelines allow faculty to create and teach a wide range of innovative courses that meet general education.

Area of study groups determined how the relevant general education requirements would be met within their AOS. These groups have ongoing discussions of general education issues and foster the development of new, innovative, rigorous, and socially relevant courses that fulfill general education requirements.

Today, student materials clearly explain these requirements, and students can see which general education requirements, if any, a course fulfills by looking at the learning contract, term guide description, or learning opportunity inventory entry. Since faculty assessment committees scrutinize every undergraduate individualized degree program plan, there is regular recognition and discussion of these issues.

There are two sources of evidence about the impact of the general education program. The SUNY Student Opinion Survey asks students to assess the extent to which they believe they have attained certain learning objectives, including those related to general education. The college also developed a plan for assessing outcomes of general education, following guidelines set by SUNY System Administration. The college initiated the General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) process in 2003. These assessments focus primarily on the direct assessment of samples of student work.

The results of the Student Opinion Survey attest to the effectiveness of the general education program. Among the 27 state-operated campuses Empire State College ranked first on a variety of items measuring student satisfaction including the quality of instruction, the acquisition of analytic skills, developing self-understanding, acquiring knowledge and skills for further academic study and for intellectual growth throughout life. Students also ranked the college first in terms of having been required to think critically in completing assignments, having worked hard to meet faculty expectations, on feedback from faculty on the quality of work and on offering an intellectually stimulating curriculum.

The results of the GEAR assessments are summarized in Chapter 7, which addresses Standard 14, Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes.

The GEAR assessments stimulated discussion of college-level writing skills, with the aim of fostering more awareness and agreement – if not uniformity – on how best to serve students at all writing skill levels. The GEAR rubric in basic communication has been adopted by many faculty as a way of conveying college expectations about writing to students. The college has undertaken actions to assure that students are appropriately prepared for the demands of the writing-intensive independent studies and online courses that they will take at the college. A new admissions policy and a new assessment built into the application process will identify students who need early assistance with writing in order to succeed. Students identified in the application process as having marginal writing skills will be referred for further assessment and potential placement into a skills development program. The discussions generated by the GEAR assessment contributed to this new skills support effort.

Standard 13:
Related Educational Activities

Middle States Standard: The institution's programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The college has been a leader in the assessment of adult's prior experiential learning since the 1970s and prior learning assessment continues to be a significant component of undergraduate degrees. The college continues to devote its energies to assure the quality of the assessment process and to make the process clear and navigable for students.

The college awards credit for experiential learning, upon approval of the faculty acting through the center assessment committee and with the concurrence of the Office of Collegewide Academic Review (OCAR). The review procedures help ensure consistency and quality in the awards of credit.

In 2007, the college reaffirmed its commitment to assessment of experiential learning through the development, review and approval of the Individual Prior Learning Policy and Procedures Principles. This was a major effort that involved the college's assessment professionals, the Committee on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) and the College Senate.

The Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Planner, implemented in summer 2009, adds to these efforts by providing a mechanism for the development, tracking and evaluation of individualized PLA. It also provides a centralized evaluator database that will assist the centers' Office of Academic Review in finding and assigning qualified evaluators.

A sub-committee of the college assessment group is studying evaluator reports to assess the degree to which the reports conform to college policy and ensure consistency of the process for students, mentors and assessment professionals. The sub-committee has developed rubrics for assessing the quality of the reports.

A second sub-committee of the college assessment group is developing centralized training resources for evaluators. The implementation of the PLA Planner will enable this project to move forward.

The actions discussed above will ensure that the prior learning assessment process maintains quality and consistency.

ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

When Empire State College was founded as a new college in the State University of New York in 1971, it was conceived as an alternative that would remove geographic and other barriers limiting access to higher education. The 1971 SUNY planning document Prospectus for a New University College described the proposed college's structure as a network of regional learning centers across the state coordinated by an administrative core. The goal was to have an Empire State College location with full undergraduate degrees available within commuting distance of every resident of the state. By the end of 1971, the college had centers in Manhattan and Albany and a unit in London, England. By the time of the first Middle States evaluation team visit in 1974, the college had a total of 17 locations where full degrees could be pursued.

Over the years, Empire State College added centers and units as community demand and college capacity warranted. Many units were located on the premises of SUNY community colleges and in state office buildings. Currently, eight of the college's units are on the campuses of community colleges or extension centers of community colleges. Two units are located on the campuses of other SUNY state-operated campuses and the college has units in five state office buildings.

Because the college was a single, integrated statewide institution with no main campus, the category of "additional location," when it was added to Middle States reporting requirements, did not seem applicable to the college. The dispersed sites encompassed the entire instructional program of the college until the advent of distance learning programs. The college and Middle States were in agreement in this interpretation for many years. Recently, Middle States substantive change policies have been revised due to more stringent federal requirements, and commission staff advised the college to seek formal approval of its dispersed sites as additional locations through the substantive change process. The college received this approval in June 2009.

From its very first days, the whole organization of Empire State College was built around dispersion as a means to fulfill the college's mission of extending access to college degrees to populations underserved by higher education. Today, the college's models for budget, staffing, enrollment targets and allocation of personnel lines are based on an organization of seven regional centers in the major population centers of the state, each with a network of satellite units; a center serving trade unionists, which is co-located with the regional center in Manhattan; and academic centers for distance learning, graduate studies and international programs administered in Saratoga Springs, where the college's central administrative offices also are located.

DISTANCE OR DISTRIBUTED LEARNING

Empire State College has always taken pride in its mission to "enable motivated adults, regardless of geography or life circumstance, to design a rigorous, individualized academic program and earn a college degree." In recognition of this mission, the college has developed various modes of learning that allow students to study at a distance. Earlier sections of the report discuss the face-to-face modes, including individual studies, group studies and residencies. This section focused on the college's online courses and studies.

The Center for Distance Learning (CDL) delivers the bulk of the college's online courses and studies. The center's conversion to the online environment in 2003 - 2004 greatly augmented the mission of the College in reaching potential students "regardless of geography or life-circumstance." Today, CDL delivers about 40 percent of the college's total credits per term.

Within CDL, significant emphasis is placed on ensuring that courses adhere to the college's core values and are appropriate for adult students. Maintaining quality standards in course design, development and delivery is a key focus in the center's curricular policies and procedures (e.g., course proposal policies and procedures). The course development and revision process incorporates a team approach from the proposal stage through delivery. Course proposals are reviewed at multiple levels, including the center's curriculum committee which approves all new courses and major revisions involving course scope. Development teams include

academic subject experts to develop content and for review, instructional design professionals and others such as technologists, librarians and editors. Full-time faculty members within the center coordinate the work and are responsible for ensuring that the courses meet expected quality standards. The process is driven by theory and research in curriculum design, with particular attention paid to eliciting deep learning within a visual pedagogy, and collaborative learning within a social constructivist paradigm.

In the past two years, the center has developed greater supports for instructors and students. Investments in training for instructors include a new professional position of instructor development and the development of more robust orientation and training workshops delivered online. Instructors also have access to training and support through the Center for Learning and Technology (CLT). In addition, the annual CDL Conference brings together instructors to share research, learn about new teaching and technology methods and tools, and for community building.

Since the adoption of the ANGEL course management system in 2006, centers have expanded the use of this resource to support their work with students in a variety of learning modes. In addition to CDL, centers such as Center for Graduate Programs, Center for International Programs and the FORUM Management Program provide online studies, including blended models incorporating residencies and other meetings with students, as a core delivery mode. At regional centers, the faculty members also have shown significant interest in using ANGEL to support their work with students in individual studies, study groups and residencies and can select from a range of models that allow, at a minimum, the ability to post content and resources to ones that include some interactive elements, such as student discussion areas or designated drop boxes for submitting assignments, to a fully online course. As of the start of the September 2008 term, there were over 140 requests for center-based ANGEL courses and groups.

Over the past two years, the Center for Learning and Technology has put in place a new Instructional Services Group to assist faculty members in integrating technology into their practice. CLT offers online and on-site workshops and one-

to-one support in developing online resources through ANGEL and using technology effectively; topics include basics of online and blended course development, teaching and managing online studies in ANGEL, using advanced ANGEL features and other technologies, such Elluminate, podcasting, and iTunes for teaching and learning. The instructional technologists, who are assigned to work with different programs and centers, help faculty select, evaluate, and use educational technology tools and electronic resources to enhance student learning; they work through personal consultations, on-site visits, and workshops. They also work with faculty to develop personal Web sites, and provide faculty with a single point of access to information on a variety of technology applications. CLT also established a faculty helpdesk to enable faculty to receive expedited help in addressing their questions and technical problems in using ANGEL.

The Technology Development Fund, sponsored by the Office of Educational Technology, has awarded 15 grants to faculty since the program began in 2006. The fund supports faculty projects that involve the use of technology or the development of technology-based resources in content areas or to support mentoring, whether in individualized contracts, study groups, residencies or online studies.

The college recognizes that students studying at a distance need online access to resources and services that are similar to ones available to students in more traditional settings. The college has moved forward with a number of initiatives to provide students with a rich array of services and resources, which are described in Chapter 4, Students.

These developments across the college reflect recognition of the role of technology in enhancing students' opportunities and enriching the learning experience. It will be an on-going challenge to ensure that the college is making the most effective use of technology to support and enhance student learning. It is increasingly important for the college to build a community of users and stakeholders that include faculty, administrators, curriculum and instructional designers, technologists, the Center for Mentoring and Learning, and others who discuss, share experiences, model and demonstrate best practices and exemplary applications that not only use the ANGEL environment, but other emerging technologies as well.

PARTNERSHIPS

The academic centers of the college have pursued a variety of partnerships with community colleges, corporations, labor unions, cultural institutions and community organizations. Many of these partnerships serve to disseminate information about the college's flexible programs, assessment of prior learning and other features that are of particular interest to the constituents of partner organizations. With increased interest in partnerships both with community college and with corporations and community groups, the college has undertaken initiatives to improve coordination of these efforts.

While all academic centers engage in some partnerships, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies and the Center for International Programs rely on partnerships as the principal means for drawing students. For both these centers, students bring prior learning from the partner organization that is built into an Empire State College degree.

The Van Arsdale Center has partnerships with Local 3 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and other unions in the construction trades. The partner union offers an apprenticeship program that has been evaluated by ACE for equivalence to college credit. An apprentice is able to incorporate credit from the apprenticeship into an associate degree program that also include course work at the college in general education and labor studies.

The Center for International Program delivers its program with partner institutions in various countries. Almost without exception, these partnerships tend to be private education providers. As part of a repositioning strategy, the center is seeking to develop new partnerships with public institutions. The center is well-positioned to meet this challenge, given its investment in fostering a series of faculty development programs involving interactions between our faculty and host institution faculty. This should result in significant alignment in approaches to teaching, assessment and a general understanding of the differences and complementarities of our different systems of education.

The center has begun to develop new partnerships outside Europe, particularly in Central and South America. To strengthen quality assurance and

improve management of the programs, the center has undertaken a major exercise of reviewing and assessing the quality and value of our partnerships. One of the outcomes has been the drafting of new partnerships agreements, most of which have now been accepted and signed by our partners.

CONCLUSIONS

Strengths

- The undergraduate degree planning process ensures that students graduate with a thorough and well articulated understanding of their concentration as a coherent, purposeful, rigorous, and relevant set of studies.

- Program development has been congruent with the college's mission and with the needs of adult learners and their communities.

- Governance committees, center-based faculty leadership and administrative oversight assure consistency in the quality of programs across the college's dispersed locations.

- For undergraduates, the college offers a wide range of courses in flexible, individualized formats that incorporate active, adult-oriented learning into academic content. Course materials articulate learning goals and evaluation criteria clearly and well.

- Our library and educational technology resources are expanding and improving, as faculty, staff, and students work to improve their technological skills in a rapidly changing world.

Challenges

- While the term guide has made the array of studies across the college more visible to students, the options of developing a totally individualized study or participating in designing a learning contract are less visible to students.

- As mentors increasingly work with students at other locations, technical support and training are needed to assure appropriate cross-center availability of student information.

- The college needs to address more fully the "digital divide" caused by different levels of access to or proficiency in technology, on the part of faculty, staff, and students.

Actions

- Examine and possibly redefine or restructure areas of study, which provide the frameworks for the college's individually-designed undergraduate degree programs.
Status: Discussion of these issues began at the fall 2008 All Areas of Study meeting and continued throughout the year. A new undergraduate area of study is under consideration and a comprehensive academic plan currently under development will address this point.
Status: They also will foster a college discussion on the meaning of an Empire State College degree in the coming year.

- Assure that undergraduate learning contracts consistently present well-articulated statements of learning outcomes.
Status: The CUSP will update and revise the college's policy on learning contracts in 2009 - 2010 and identify training and development needs in this regard. The Center for Mentoring and Learning's New Mentor Orientation and CDL training for adjunct faculty address this issue as well.

- Establish structures to assure that the results of outcomes assessments are systematically used to foster improvement. Better articulate student learning outcomes for undergraduate areas of study.
Status: In fall 2008, CUSP created a subcommittee on program assessment that brings faculty together from all areas of study to deliberate on outcomes assessment and its application to the improvement of programs, courses/contracts and policies. In 2009 - 2010 they are developing a protocol for outcomes-based program review. They also will foster a college discussion on the meaning of an Empire State College degree in the coming year.

Chapter 7
Assessment

Standard 7:
Institutional Assessment

Middle States Standard: The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.

SYSTEMATIC ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES AND SERVICES

Empire State College's mission statement and strategic plan outline the college's goals. Some individual departments have specific goals which also are aligned with the college's mission. The college assesses its overall effectiveness in achieving these goals in a variety of ways, many of which are summarized annually in the college's Fact Book.

President Davis has directed the Office of Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Research (OAIR) to develop a series of key performance indicators (KPIs) to be displayed on a collegewide dashboard. With the implementation of a data warehouse, many of the college's KPIs will be displayed as part of the business intelligence suite of reports. While it is necessary to crosswalk the college's KPIs with the 2011 - 2015 strategic plan, which will be developed beginning in fall 2009, some of the KPIs already available or under development include:

- Financial
  - Percent State Support
  - Total All Funds Budget (Annual)
  - Endowment
  - Percent Giving (Employees/Alumni)
- Admissions
  - "Funnel" Yields – Inquiry/Applications/Info Sessions/Enrollment
- Enrollment
  - Annual Unduplicated Headcount
  - Total Credits Generated
  - Percent in Largest AOS

  - Average Credits per Student (Head)
- Faculty
  - Part-Time to Full-Time Ratio
  - Average Professional Obligation (Teaching)
    - Equating for Center (Grad/CDL/Van Arsdale/IP)
  - PLA Components
  - HERI Satisfaction Index
  - Salary versus Benchmark
  - Retention Rate
    - Tenure track, Part-time, Adjunct
- Student Outcomes
  - Graduation Rates/Retention Rates
  - Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards in GEAR/AOS
  - Alumni Employment Rate
  - Alumni Continuing Education
- Student Engagement
  - Key NSSE Indicators
- Academic Information
  - LOI Diversity of Offerings
- Facilities
  - Building Progress
  - Gas/Electric Usage Collegewide (per building)
- Satisfaction
  - Alumni Satisfaction with Curriculum
  - SOS
  - Faculty/Staff/MC satisfaction indices
- Research
  - External Grants
  - Boyer: Scholarship Reconsidered – index of scholarly engagement

- External Ratings
  - Benchmark against Charter Oak/Excelsior/ Thomas Edison – Graduation rate/Retention
- Productivity
  - Defined by each division

Current Processes for Monitoring and Assessing Institutional Effectiveness

The president's quarterly report, which is presented to the College Council and published on the college's Web site, summarizes information drawn from all the academic centers and administrative offices of the college. This document includes data on degree awards, financial aid awards, enrollment and application, hiring, facilities, grants activity, fund-raising, technology training, support and hardware/ software updates, and summaries of issues identified by the Student Information Center.

In an institution that is highly tuition-dependent, careful monitoring of enrollment is essential. Enrollment targets ensure that the college is fulfilling its mission of serving the needs of adult learners. The college's current strategic plan includes managing enrollment as one of its main components. Members of the President's Council receive weekly enrollment management reports, tracking the effectiveness of outreach activities and insuring that the college's centers and programs have sufficient information to achieve their annual enrollment targets.

Monitoring the effectiveness of marketing campaigns was a sizeable challenge prior to the establishment of the Office of Enrollment Management (OEM). OEM determined that the college's existing systems were not useful in assessing the success of its marketing and recruitment efforts. OEM, therefore, selected a constituent relationship management (CRM) platform, which was implemented in 2008. In addition to managing leads, this system will allow the college to determine yield rates at each step of the enrollment funnel.

The college assesses administrative processes through external audits, outside peer reviews, and internal reviews as required by SUNY's internal control program. Some recent reviews and audits include:

- Office of the State Comptroller – Review of Selected Financial and Management Practice issued August 2006, and Follow-up Review issued October 2007. This audit included purchasing, accounts payable, travel, accounts receivable and human resources in its scope.

- Research Foundation Office of Internal Audit – Audit of Campus Sponsored Program Operations issued March 2008. This audit included all facets of pre and post award activity including purchasing, accounts payable, human resources, and contracts in its scope.

- National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) – Standards of Excellence (SOE) Peer Review on the College's Administration of Federal Student Financial Assistance Programs draft report issued April 2008. This peer review included all areas of financial aid awarding and disbursing and federal guidelines in its scope. This review is strictly voluntary and was conducted based on a request from the Office of Student Financial Services.

- Internal Control Review of purchasing and accounts payable functions by an independent consultant was conducted in summer 2008.

All of these reviews concluded that the functions generally operate as intended in compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations; in addition, each review contained observations and recommendations for improvements that the college has implemented or is in the process of implementing.

Recommendations from the Research Foundation (RF) audit included issues such as appointment letters complying with RF policy, appropriate documentation for some vendor payments, including the RF as party to the agreement in Memorandums of Understanding related to RF administered grants, correct use of expenditure type, certification of salary distribution and Operations Manager signature on award applications. The appropriate college offices have implemented all of the recommendations.

The NASFAA Standards of Excellence Review included compliance exceptions and recommendations. All compliance issues have been addressed and recommendations are being implemented. Compliance issues included items such

as separation of duties, Department of Education reporting, financial aid awarding, and student consumer information. Many issues related to the Web site are being addressed with the rewrite of the Student Financial Services Web page.

The college also is committed to continuous improvement by performing internal reviews as required by SUNY's internal control program. The Office of Administration has reviewed several functions and has other area reviews planned on a cyclical basis.

Recommendations from the Procurement Internal Control Testing include separation of duties between Purchasing and Accounts Payable, procurement card supervisor approval, and timely reconciliation of procurement card activity by cardholders. The Business Office has implemented most of the recommendations. Staffing is being reviewed to determine the best way to separate responsibilities in the office between Purchasing and Accounts Payable.

Staff members from the Offices of Educational Technology and Administration regularly meet with each other as well as other offices to assure systems for online registration and billing are functioning smoothly and accurately. These groups include but are not limited to the Administrative Systems Group, Registration/Advising Group, Accounts Receivable/ Financial Aid Group, and Student Information Center/Student Financial Services/Business Group. Most of these meet at least on a monthly basis.

Offices establish priorities to work on for the year and for five years out and report annually to the appropriate vice president regarding progress.

The college also assesses student perceptions of college service quality by participating in the SUNY Student Opinion Survey (SOS) on a triennial basis. The SUNY SOS is a measure developed by ACT Inc. and designed to assess student satisfaction with a wide range of campus services. Empire State College has participated in five administrations of the SUNY SOS and has typically ranked first in SUNY on most indicators as compared to all other state operated campuses. In the most recent administration of the SUNY SOS (2006), Empire State College was found to rank first in the following service areas:

- academic advising

- availability of courses

- college bookstore services

- course registration process

- billing and payment processes

- new student orientation

- financial aid

The college opened a Student Information Center (SIC) in 2006 to provide a central point of telephone contact for all current and prospective students. The SIC staff summarize and regularly report on patterns of student questions and refer the information to the appropriate office or center to assist in process improvement.

The college has developed and incorporated myriad changes related to the NYS Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) after an audit in 2000 by the NYS Office of the State Comptroller. Specifically, improvements have been made to better gather and track data on high school completion, NYS residency and good academic standing. In addition, the process for awarding, certifying and disbursing TAP awards is now automated, replacing an archaic, manual method.

The college makes use of a number of methods to assess processes and services and to ensure compliance with regulations. While external reviews and audits have been valuable and helpful, the college has placed increased emphasis on internal controls. While the results of many of the audits conducted have been shared either with the President's Cabinet or the President's Council, wider dissemination would be helpful to raise awareness of the issues and how they have been addressed by different functional offices within the college.

CLOSING THE LOOP: USING ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The college has ongoing efforts to "close the loop" in the interest of continuous improvements to policies, procedures and practices.

Empire State College constantly assesses its practices with respect to compliance with changing regulations. The college must balance good customer (student) service with the need to follow state and federal regulations. To participate in federal and state financial aid programs, the college must adhere to requirements that are a poor fit to the

circumstances of part-time, adult students. The college advocates for these students with government contacts at the regional, state and national levels.

Offices maintain lists of compliance issues, and establish due dates and deadlines for completion and assuring compliance. The appropriate offices monitor compliance; assessment results are followed up with decisions to improve on policies and procedures.

The college provides all account administrators with monthly reports of funds allocated and expended to assist in budget monitoring. The Office of Administration also monitors budgets closely to ensure that the college expenses do not exceed funds allocated. The format of these reports is reviewed annually to make certain they are providing the information to the appropriate account administrators in a manner in which data can be monitored easily.

The college has begun development of a business continuity plan that reflects the critical nature of technology infrastructure to all aspects of the college's administration. The Office of Administration staff continuously monitor expenditure patterns and reporting to assure the college is making the best use of its limited resources.

The college has created an information security team to monitor and manage the security and efficiency of the college including reviewing policies and procedures as well as technology, such as the college's network. The team is in the process of recommending improvements to college policies and procedures or updating current procedures to assure compliance. An example of better security is the centralization of shredding sensitive documents.

An area for improvement is the presentation of information on the college's Web site. In response to a recommendation of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) Standards of Excellence (SOE) team, OET is working closely with Student Financial Services (SFS) to completely revise the SFS section of the college's Web site.

The Office of Administration is considering establishing one standard repository for all audits and internal control reviews to better monitor compliance. Currently, any office that has been

reviewed through an external audit maintains its own records of the audit and the corresponding assessment activities and documentation.

One issue in the area of financial aid is the number of regulations and requirements tied to the legislation to fund financial aid. An example of this is the student consumer information that must be provided such as security, FERPA, accreditation, graduation rates, and voter registration, which are all tied to the ability to award Title IV federal financial aid. Since not all the information is "owned" by the Financial Aid office it is sometimes difficult to ensure compliance. The college recognizes the need for offices to work together on regulation compliance.

Responses to the SUNY Student Opinion Survey (SOS) have generally been highly favorable, but the survey also has been useful in identifying areas for improvement. When, for example, the ratings of library services in 2006 placed the college at a rather low ranking among SUNY state-operated institutions, this information prompted immediate analysis and development of a plan for improvement. Shortly after the results of the 2006 SUNY SOS became available, the President's Council discussed the lower-ranked items at its bi-monthly meeting, library services were identified as a priority for action. The vice president for educational technology took the results back to the Center for Learning and Technology, which houses the college's librarians. It was determined that better publicity around the college's library services would be helpful in letting students know about the full range of services the college has available. The results of the 2009 SOS administration indicated that the college had moved from a ranking of 22nd among 27 participating state-operated campuses in 2006 to a ranking of 12th among 24 participating state-operated campuses with respect to library services.

INTEGRATION OF OPERATIONAL/ ASSESSMENT PLANS WITH THE COLLEGEWIDE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The college's creation and continued support of the Office of Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Research (OAIR) demonstrates its commitment to institutional assessment. OAIR was established in

2003 in response to the college's strategic plan (2001 - 2004) goal to develop the institutional capacity to design and produce timely, valid assessment reports.

In its first five years, OAIR has assisted the college's transition from "a culture of anecdote" to a "culture of evidence," where valid data are used to support the decision-making process, and policy implementation is informed by information. While the office continues to mature and evolve, decision support and continuous quality improvement continue to be essential functions performed by the office.

The college needs to develop a data warehouse, business analytics, or business intelligence applications, so that OAIR staff can quickly identify trends in the college's enrollment and other key indicators. By providing such tools to the college community, more information will be in the hands of end users in a more timely way, allowing for better management of the college's various functions.

OAIR needs to conduct research that supports the college's centers and programs as well as central administrative functions. OAIR needs the flexibility to best serve the needs of the college community by being able to address questions on a systematic rather than ad hoc way.

Information concerning our alumni population is collected and maintained by the Office of External Affairs. The college would benefit from greater collaboration between the External Affairs and OAIR offices to develop and implement a systematic survey to collect information about our graduates and their experiences as students of the college.

There was ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the college's progress toward attainment of the goals in the 2006 - 2010 strategic plan and updates were published on the Web site of the president's office periodically. The process for developing the strategic plan for 2010 - 2015 calls for the creation of specific and measurable benchmarks and a closer link between the college's budget process and the strategic plan.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

Middle States Standard: Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

Conducting outcomes assessment research that provides meaningful and usable information is challenging in a college that does not have a standard curriculum prescribed in each of the undergraduate programs. The college, nevertheless, has invested considerable energy in devising approaches to outcomes assessment that fit its mission and distinctive programs.

Empire State College conducts outcomes assessment research in two main areas at the undergraduate level: at the general education level and at the level of "the major." Research in both these areas is mandated by SUNY assessment initiatives.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING IN UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS

General Education

In 1999, the Empire State College Senate voted to accept the SUNY Board of Trustees general education distribution and corresponding learning objectives. SUNY required that all of its institutions participate in the General Education Assessment Review (GEAR), which stipulates the assessment of student learning in 10 general education areas and two infused competencies. Each SUNY institution was required to submit a plan for the assessment of learning outcomes in general education. Empire State College's plan was approved in February of 2004. The plan, in essence, is to collect samples of student work from approved general education studies and to score these work samples against faculty-developed rubrics for each area.

The college's general education rubrics are available at www.esc.edu/rubrics, so faculty, students and other members of the higher education community can see how Empire State College defines proficiency in the areas of general education. Because each study in a general education area is individualized for particular students' learning needs and goals, the

assessment rubrics are necessarily broad to cover the range of learning opportunities the college makes available. Given the number of general education studies offered at the college and a range of titles associated within each area, it is difficult to have a fine-tuned instrument that is sensitive to changes in content delivery. Therefore, our measures do not have the ability to track subtle changes and corresponding small incremental improvements over time.

Assessment of general education at Empire State College is a fairly labor-intensive process compared to other SUNY institutions. Faculty participate in two-day rating sessions that always start with a norming session. The norming session involves having faculty score samples of student work independently and then discussing their ratings on the rubric with one another and with staff from the OAIR. The goal of the norming session is to have consensus about scoring criteria prior to beginning the rating session, in essence, calibrating the raters. The norming session is designed to enhance interrater reliability and ultimately, the validity of the rubrics.

The results of each assessment are shared first with the members of the task force that worked on the assessment and then with the larger college community. Two dissemination channels are always used for assessment research: individual reports are posted on the colleges OAIR Web site, providing an historical archive for this work, and the outcomes assessment results for any given year are published in the college's annual Fact Book. In addition, members of the task force may collaborate with OAIR staff on the development of presentations for either the college's All Area of Study meeting or All College meeting so the results can be discussed more widely with other faculty. OAIR staff are frequently invited to participate in area of study meetings to review general education outcomes assessment results and participate in discussions about how the results can be used to improve mentoring practices at the college.

The outcomes assessment results for general education have varied by area. For members of the faculty and the administration, it is extremely gratifying to see large numbers of student assignments meeting and exceeding standards. The most recent administration of the General Education

Assessment Review was completed in 2009. Results of this review were very gratifying, indicating improved student performance across the board, with the exception of ratings of student performance on the Western Civilization rubric. Even with this latter rubric, the decline may be merely a function of samples that were not well suited to measure student learning in this area. In addition to increased student performance, internal consistency on the rubrics, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, showed measurable improvement and, as might be expected with additional experience with rubric assessment, inter-rater reliability increased in all general education areas.

Assessment in the Major

SUNY also mandates a process called "Assessment in the Major" (AitM). For Empire State College, "majors" equate to concentrations designed in areas of study (AOSs). To comply with the AitM SUNY directive, the college engages in two assessment activities for each AOS on a six-year cycle. A task force of area of study faculty volunteers to participate in the process, which generally unfolds over the span of a year. Working closely with OAIR staff, the task force reviews portfolios of graduates of the AOS and, through a second process, reviews authentic examples of student work. In this context, a "portfolio" at Empire State College refers specifically to certain documents maintained by the college's registrar. These include all learning contracts (LCs) and contract evaluations (CEs) for a student, her or his degree program rationale, documents pertaining to prior learning assessment – including transcripts from other colleges the student attended as well as evaluator reports in instances where the student has requested prior learning assessment. A college academic summary report also is included, as well as the final concurred degree program. Faculty review these portfolios and score them against a series of criteria, including ratings of the quality of the degree program rationale essay (which is the only direct assessment of student work), the quality of LCs and CEs, the breadth and depth of the degree program, the extent to which the program adheres to established college guidelines, the appropriateness of award of credit for prior learning assessment, and many other issues associated with students' degree programs.

As the institution provides individualized degree programs and does not have a standardized curriculum, this type of periodic quality check of student programs is an essential feature of outcomes assessment at the college. And while the Area of Study Review has been folded into the AitM mandate from SUNY, it has been in place at the college since 1988. Faculty frequently comment that these sessions are valuable because they allow individual mentors to see how their areas of study are operationalized at other centers at the college along with how learning contracts are designed. Given that many centers will only have one faculty member in a particular area of study, the Area of Study Review is an excellent professional development opportunity for faculty.

A second element of the AitM process is in the review and scoring of authentic examples of student work. This process closely mirrors the GEAR review described above; however there are several steps involved prior to reviewing the student work. The faculty task force for the AitM under review begins with a review of the area of study (AOS) guidelines, which in essence provide learning goals and objectives. The guidelines serve as the basis for the development of program goals and objectives. The program goals and objectives serve as the roadmap for the assessment process. Faculty develop scoring rubrics to assess the program goals and objectives, delineating their expectations for student proficiency at four levels: failing to meet, approaching, meeting, or exceeding faculty expectations. These four levels of proficiency were established by SUNY for the GEAR process and also are used to assess area of study outcomes at the baccalaureate level.

Empire State College faculty deliberate extensively over the development of the scoring rubrics. Given the schedule demanded by SUNY for the assessment and the major, students can not see the rubrics prior to their application to student work. We recognize the inherent deficiency in this methodology. Also, since assignments were not designed with the rubrics in mind, it is sometimes difficult to find samples of student work that are appropriate for these assessment activities. Another challenge for the assessment of student learning that cuts across all levels of assessment is that in an individualized learning environment, a good deal of learning occurs orally and in feedback on assignments that may not lead to revised submissions. Thus, the artifacts used in the assessment of student learning at Empire State College may not reflect the full extent of the learning that occurs for students. While this is unfortunate, the college does not currently have the capacity to record all interactions with students (nor is this desirable).

The final step in the AitM process involves having an external review panel review the two main elements of the process. Faculty from the disciplines reflected in the Empire State College areas of study with no affiliation to the college are asked to serve as external reviewers. Their reports, written to the provost of the college, are shared with SUNY System Administration.

The collection of student work for the AitM is coordinated by OAIR staff in support of the assessment process. OAIR used a variety of methods to collect student work. Currently, the college is moving towards the use of electronic portfolios for the collection of student work. The recent transition to the ANGEL learning platform has greatly facilitated this effort.

Graduate Level Assessment

At the graduate level, assessment of student learning varies by program. The M.A.T. program, for example, includes a student capstone experience consisting of a three-credit course in which a portfolio of student work is developed by the students that demonstrates achievement of program standards. The M.A.T. program is seeking program accreditation through the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC), which emphasizes assessment of student learning in its standards. The M.B.A. program takes a competency approach to management and therefore has a focus on assessment.

Governance and Administrative Support of Assessment

To address the schedules of assessment required by SUNY, the college has initiated a number of activities. The college reinstated the position of associate dean in 2007. Associate deans can provide leadership at the center level in the collection of student work, the dissemination of outcomes assessment findings, and the improvement of the teaching and learning environment by using the

research findings. The college has recently founded a Center for Mentoring and Learning. This center will play a significant role in professional development of faculty by sharing best practices in the development of assignments and learning contracts at the college.

Another important development is the establishment of a subcommittee of the undergraduate academic policy committee (CUSP) to work with the Office of Academic Affairs on assessment and program improvement issues. This subcommittee on program assessment (CUSP-PA) is working on using the findings of outcomes assessments to guide improvements in programs, policies and practices. The subcommittee involves faculty from all areas of study and its work is a priority for CUSP in 2009-10. The CUSP subcommittee is charged with using outcomes assessment data to assist in program improvements.

INCORPORATION OF CORE VALUES INTO ASSESSMENT PLANNING

An outcomes assessment program cannot simply be transferred from one institution to another. Outcomes assessment must reflect an institution's mission and values. The college's procedures for outcomes assessment reflect the mission of Empire State College and its values. As individualization and flexibility in delivery of instruction are core values of the college, the college's assessment activities reflect these values. Empire State College does not make use of standardized tests. Instead, the college examines authentic examples of student work developed through the course of a student's studies. This approach has the potential to provide richer data and faculty professional development opportunities, as faculty who participate in the student learning assessment process have the opportunity to see examples of academic practice from across the college. It is, however, labor-intensive, which makes participation of part-time faculty difficult or impossible.

Given the significant role of part-time and adjunct faculty in delivering the college's academic programs, there is a need for improved means to disseminate best practices to all faculty. Associate deans can be particularly useful in fostering the sharing of best practices that emerge from outcomes assessment research at the local level. Since associate deans have more contact with adjuncts and part-

time faculty, they will be instrumental in improving the quality of the teaching and learning environment going forward. The new Center for Mentoring and Learning also will play a critical role. The role of the area of study conveners at Empire State College have evolved over the years, but currently this group of individuals is probably underutilized. The college is currently reconsidering this role; newly charged area of study conveners could have a significant impact in this area.

Organization, Dissemination and Use of Outcomes Assessment Data

The issue hinges on how do outcomes assessment data support a number of activities at the college, to include:

- improvement in teaching and learning
- institutional and local center planning
- resource allocation
- faculty and professional employee development
- services and processes that support student learning and success

The OAIR works with faculty task force groups from both general education and "assessment in the major" research. OAIR develops the reports produced from student learning assessments; the faculty task force that worked on a particular area approves any report before it is shared with the college community. All assessment reports are posted on the OAIR Web site. In addition, the college's Fact Book provides an annual summary of all assessment research. In addition, faculty task force members and OAIR staff frequently make presentations at the college's annual meetings: the All College Conference and the All Areas of Study meeting. These activities afford an opportunity for face-to-face discussion of the assessment results along with suggestions for best practices in teaching and mentoring at Empire State College.

Outcomes assessment data has not been typically used to support institutional and local center planning, although we are beginning to use it systematically. The addition of associate deans means that we can pay systematic attention to the available data to improve services. At the Metropolitan Center, for instance, retention data provided by OAIR is being used to improve services

and make suggestions about the use of best practices for teaching and learning.

In International Programs, assessment data is collected through student questionnaires and classroom visits by the dean or academic program directors. Evaluation also is achieved through inputs from college faculty and partner-college academic administrators, as well as Empire State College meetings with department chairs and instructors, and peer-based professional development focused on pedagogy workshops. The results are shared with the instructors as a vehicle to improve their work with students and are used to guide planning of faculty development workshops.

While direct measures of student learning are emphasized in the assessment process, indirect measures include SALE, M.A.T. course evaluations, and CDL course evaluations, all of which have been used to support continuous improvement at the college.

Aside from budget allocations to conduct the assessment research, resource allocation is not typically influenced by outcomes assessment research. However, there are two notable exceptions: the Empire State College Provost Joyce Elliott has submitted a grant proposal to the Charitable Leadership Foundation seeking funds to improve students' knowledge of social science research, and the funding of the Front Porch initiative to employ directors of academic support services at each center.

Services and processes that support student success have been implemented. Some examples are:

- The creation of the position of director of academic support at regional centers and the Center for Distance Learning is in part a response to outcomes assessment data and the Front Porch initiative.

- The college recently introduced a Bridge Program to help students with skill deficits be successful at the college. This program was developed as a response to the college's prior self-study and further research on student skills needs. Research has been designed to assess the effectiveness of this program. A new college writing admissions assessment has been developed to determine placement of students in the Bridge Program.

FACULTY KNOWLEDGE OF THE METHODS, RESULTS AND USE OF ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

Prior to the establishment of OAIR in 2003, the college has not had a sustained effort in student learning assessment outside of area of study reviews. Through OAIR, faculty members who have been involved in the assessment of student learning have been educated in the methods of assessment and tailoring the outcomes assessment literature to the students and delivery methods of the college. As the college is now approaching its second round of assessment research, those members of the task forces that have been previously involved in outcomes assessment are reasonably well-versed in the methodologies and processes involved. However, with the large influx of new faculty and the retirements of senior faculty, it is important to have continuous efforts in advancing faculty levels of knowledge of assessment. It was recently suggested by an external review panel that the college provide incentives for faculty participation in student learning outcomes assessment beyond recognition of university service. If implemented, this may have a positive impact on the rate of participation among Empire State College faculty.

In addition, effective use of technology to avoid travel time also would make participation in college assessment activities more feasible and effective for faculty. While the college is currently experimenting with online conferencing technology, there are some technical issues to be resolved before this technology can reduce travel burdens.

There also are activities that occur at the local center level. For example, at the Metropolitan Center, a sustained, year-long faculty development effort has taken place examining study or course level outcomes assessment. It is anticipated that an audit of the learning contracts and contract evaluations of faculty members who participated could show an understanding of learning outcomes and an effort to use them to develop studies that improve student learning. Sustained development opportunities locally available to all faculty on outcomes assessment can be another way to promote and improve student learning.

Sustained effort on the part of the college is necessary to bring a sense of continuity to the outcomes assessment process. While some faculty

may experience career transitions in the interim period during an outcomes assessment cycle, it's likely that a core group of faculty can maintain momentum and interest in this area.

The college currently employs rubrics for assessing student achievement in general education and in the major (AOSs). The results of these existing embedded assessment techniques should influence mentor practices toward improved student learning. Learning contracts and assignments within studies and courses at Empire State College could be modified to include the faculty's best thinking about student performance. This best thinking is integrated in the college's faculty-developed rubrics. Faculty could work with associate deans, the Center for Mentoring and Learning, the directors of academic support and others to allow students opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in widely shared knowledge areas.

Associate deans could be one conduit for disseminating this information in tandem with the local directors of academic support. The associate deans also can develop systematic faculty development programs in this area and work individually with faculty conducting consultations on outcomes assessment and study design, the differences between intentional and unintentional learning to increase faculty ability to use outcomes assessment information on the study and program level to both design and improve studies.

Some centers, for example the Metropolitan Center and CDL already do systematic work in study design with faculty that includes work on outcomes assessment. In the Center for International Programs (CIP), faculty who serve as academic program directors evaluate student learning and monitor academic progress. They are uniquely positioned to glean evidence on a daily basis since they work on-site where student contact is frequent. At the center level additional oversight also occurs through the work of the CIP dean and the Curriculum Committee.

AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT IN OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Best practices in the development of learning contracts, questions that elicit critical thinking and narrative contract evaluations that provide developmental feedback represent the next level of outcomes assessment at Empire State College.

The professional development aspects of faculty work on learning assessment are integrated into a larger agenda at the college. The Center for Mentoring and Learning and the Office of Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Research will work together to promote the evolution of student learning assessment at the college.

The Center for Mentoring and Learning (CML) has responsibility for faculty development and has the opportunity to enhance the development of learning contracts and contract evaluations. The research on learning assessment is directly relevant to CML's work with the Empire State College faculty. In addition, faculty participants in outcomes assessment have the ability to share their observations with the center for best practices that they have observed by participating in rating sessions.

There are rich possibilities for development in this area. The CML could open a dialogue to rethink learning contracts and contract evaluations. The college could update the learning contract format so that expected learning outcomes are more explicitly stated. Even discovery itself, a hallmark of Empire State College's approach to individualized learning, is an outcome. Specified outcomes permit a student to engage in a clear set of activities to facilitate learning toward the outcome. In addition, learning contracts could more fully specify the methods and criteria of the assessment of student learning so that students know how their learning will be assessed and evaluated. If learning outcomes are well articulated in the learning contract, the contract evaluation can address the outcomes and focus on students' progress and assessment through the study. Further, learning contracts might be designed to help students work toward more integrated learning.

Associate deans can work with CML to support local level dialog on these issues. In addition, it might make sense to develop a best practices Web site so faculty can share their best work with students. This initiative also could be managed by CML.

Given the outcomes assessment efforts the college has undertaken in recent years, it is now poised to take the next steps that will make these activities

much more valuable across the college and will serve to improve the teaching and learning environment at the college. However, to realize these gains, many of the suggested actions for improvements mentioned below will have to be funded and acted upon.

CONCLUSIONS

Strengths

– The college participates in internal and external reviews to assure compliance with applicable laws and regulations and to identify areas for improvement.

– Empire State College has taken significant steps to build an infrastructure that will greatly enhance and support the teaching and learning environment and the assessment of learning outcomes.

– Additional staff and structures are now in place to help move the institution forward in ways that were not possible at the time of the last Middle States visit in 1999.

– The CUSP created a subcommittee representative of all areas of study to assure reflection on and use of outcomes assessment results for improvement.

– Assessments in general education and the major have created a core of faculty knowledgeable about and committed to outcomes assessment.

Challenges

– While there are instances of local program or center use of outcomes assessment data, a more programmatic system for use of data in center planning is needed.

– While service on outcomes assessment task forces may be recognized as university service in personnel reviews, other incentives for participation are lacking.

– Faculty in any area of study are dispersed across the state, which limits opportunities to discuss the implications of outcomes assessment results for program improvement within the area of study.

Actions

– Establish an open document repository and make it available to the college community so that audit reports and other documents, and the timelines and contexts for their development, would be more widely available for interested parties.

– Establish a data warehouse and appropriate analytic tools.
Status: Planning for a data warehouse is scheduled for 2009 - 2010.

– Move toward the use of electronic portfolios for the collection of student work.
Status: The ANGEL course platform has an e-portfolio function, which has the potential to facilitate collecting student work. Empire State College has plans to pilot student portfolios at two centers in the coming year.

– A comprehensive review of the learning contract and contract evaluation should be undertaken, with broad input from all college constituencies. A redesign to improve student learning should be the goal.
Status: A subcommittee of CUSP is revising and updating policies on learning contracts and contract evaluations and grading in 2009 - 2010 and will consider how these documents can better convey learning expectations.

– The CUSP subcommittee should consider how learning contracts can take into consideration the faculty developed rubrics, which outline specific expectations for student proficiency in learning objectives.
Status: The CUSP subcommittee will consider these resources in its deliberations.

– Develop a Web site for all faculty, including adjuncts, to share best practice and to post papers, assignments and questions that elicit students' critical thinking and other higher order responses.
Status: The CML and OAIR have Web sites that could accommodate this material.

– Create incentives for area of study conveners assure peer leadership in the application of outcomes assessment findings to academic programs and practice.
Status: The Office of Academic Affairs will consult with AOS groups in 2009 - 2010 and develop a plan for enhancing the effectiveness of these groups and the role of the convenor.

Chapter 8
Conclusions and Future Directions

The self-study documented a thriving, academically effective and adaptable institution that is well-positioned for future success. Since the Middle States periodic review five years ago, the college has seen significant change: enrollment growth, hiring of many new faculty, broader application of educational technology to teaching and learning, procedural and system changes affecting how students, faculty and staff interact, and a presidential transition. For most of the time since the periodic review in 2005, the college has been in favorable financial circumstances that will sustain it in the current economic downturn. The scope and pace of change has posed challenges to faculty and staff and the response has been to work to improve open communication and transparency of administrative processes.

The latter half of the self-study and the Vision 2015 process ran concurrently. Thus, as the self-study came to a close, the college had come to agreement on a new vision for the college. Both the consultation process and the content of the vision statement stimulated reflection and led many individuals, centers, offices and committees to craft their own vision statements derived from the new college vision.

The college is now poised to enter the process for the creation of a new strategic plan. The president drafted a process for development of the strategic plan and invited comment from the college community. At the June 2009 governance retreat, the College Senate endorsed the president's process for development of the strategic plan, which appears below. This process will result in a new strategic plan by February 2010.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

"Vision 2015: the Report of the Vision 2015 Task Force" was published to the college community in July 2009. This document presented a new vision statement and laid out the details of the process for developing the strategic plan for 2010 - 2015.

Timeline

During the six months from September 1, 2009 to February 28, 2010, the college will engage in strategic planning, led by the president with support from the Office of Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Research. This broadly-based process will gather input from all corners of the college and from key external stakeholders.

Mandate

a) Engage all sectors of the college and key external stakeholders in an iterative process of consultation and feedback.

b) Develop a long range plan of action, with responsibilities, timelines and anticipated costs for the college to achieve the 2015 vision.

c) Establish specific goals and targets in all key areas of the vision, strategies that will be adopted to achieve the goals, and metrics needed to determine progress towards those goals.

d) Coordinate the progress and direction of planning and related activities that already are underway or planned, including:

   – development of a strategic technology plan;

   – development of a college academic plan;

   – development of a strategic marketing and recruitment plan;

   – development of a comprehensive approach to ensuring learner diversity;

   – building the capacity to undertake partnerships;

   – creating a vision for a "green college;"

   – continuation of the task force on faculty professional responsibilities;

   – creating a vision and plan for government relations.

e) Ensure regular and effective communications and consultation with the college community and others as appropriate.

f) Annually update and adjust the plan as circumstances change.

The process will be led by the president, working with a researcher and a writer, with the college's Program, Planning and Budget Committee acting as an advisory body.

Consultation

During fall 2009, the team will:

– hold open forums in each region at key stages;

– present updates and drafts at each College Senate meeting, (using senate subcommittees to comment on specific sections of the plan), as well as at college Council, Foundation Board and Alumni Student Federation meetings;

– use groups that reach across various college constituencies (President's Council, student services professionals, areas of study, directors of academic support, directors of academic support, outreach/recruitment specialists and others) to provide updates and drafts;

– align this plan with SUNY goals;

– host a Web site where documents are easily accessed and comments can be provided at any time.

In January and February of 2010, final drafts of the plan will be formally shared with the College Senate, College Council, President's Council, Foundation Board and SUNY.

Support and approval of the final plan will be sought from the chancellor and the SUNY Board of Trustees of SUNY.

Development Process

The planning will be iterative, generating draft documents at key stages that will invite feedback and discussion, and working through these tasks in the following sequence:

1. translate the vision into a strategic plan framework: what key goals and specific objectives will comprise the plan, and how will other plans nest within the larger plan (technology, college academic plan, environmental impact etc.)?

2. undertake a gap analysis for each objective

3. identify actions and strategies for getting to each objective

4. identify metrics and targets for each objective.

5. identify those responsible for overseeing implementation and documentation of the plan.

For 2010 - 2011 and beyond, the college's budget model will adapt to reflect the goals of the new strategic plan.

VISION 2015, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND THE SELF-STUDY

The process for developing a new strategic plan lays out specific steps for consultation that assure the transparency and broad participation that the self-study called for. The broad themes of the self-study and "Vision 2015" provide the context for the next strategic plan.

In the period 2010 - 2015, the college will continue to enhance accessibility, quality and affordability for motivated students who combine college study with work, family and community responsibilities. A comprehensive academic plan, to be designed concurrently with the strategic plan, will guide new program development and ongoing program review that is based on results of outcomes assessment. A new technology plan will assure that integrated technology systems, services and training support communication and learning in this dispersed but highly networked college.
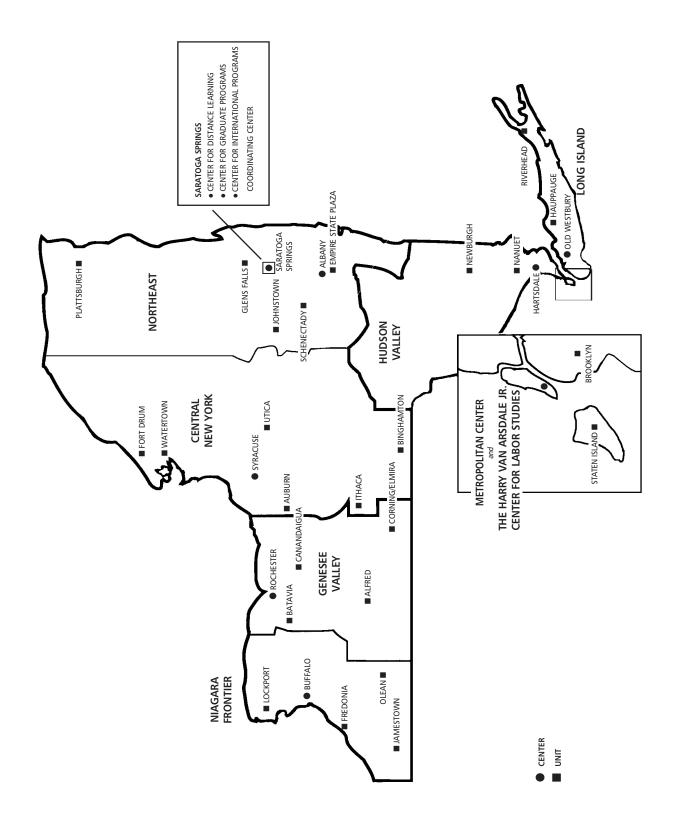
The strategic plan will develop targets for recruitment and retention to achieve growth of about five percent per year during the term of the plan. At the same time, the college will clarify college processes for applicants and students and assure consistent and accessible student services, including timely and appropriate academic support.

Mentoring is a key feature of the college and it informs all that is done with our students. Going forward, the college will promote excellence in mentoring and explore new models for mentoring that promote authentic, substantive and collaborative learning communities. The issues identified by the Next Generation Faculty Task Force will be addressed to assure that students work with mentors who are engaged with them as learners and also engaged in scholarly and creative activity that renews and energizes their mentoring.

The college also will define broad organizational goals for the next five years, assuring opportunities for self-renewal not only at the organizational level but also for individual employees. While serving a growing body of students, the college will generate a smaller carbon footprint and adopt a role in SUNY and beyond as an advocate for sustainability. Finally, progress toward attainment of the goals of the new strategic plan will be monitored through a college report card that measures achievements in academic quality, student services, scholarship and organizational effectiveness.

Appendix A

Empire State College Geographic Organization

SARATOGA SPRINGS
● CENTER FOR DISTANCE LEARNING
● CENTER FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS
● CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS
COORDINATING CENTER

LONG ISLAND

RIVERHEAD ■

HAUPPAUGE ■

OLD WESTBURY ●

NEWBURGH ■

NANUET ■

HARTSDALE ●

PLATTSBURGH ■

NORTHEAST

GLENS FALLS ■

JOHNSTOWN ■

SARATOGA SPRINGS ◉

ALBANY ●

EMPIRE STATE PLAZA ■

SCHENECTADY ■

HUDSON VALLEY

BROOKLYN ■

METROPOLITAN CENTER
and
THE HARRY VAN ARSDALE JR.
CENTER FOR LABOR STUDIES

STATEN ISLAND ■

FORT DRUM ■

WATERTOWN ■

CENTRAL
NEW YORK

UTICA ■

SYRACUSE ●

AUBURN ■

ITHACA ■

BINGHAMTON ■

CORNING/ELMIRA ■

ROCHESTER ●

CANANDAIGUA ■

BATAVIA ■

GENESEE
VALLEY

ALFRED ■

NIAGARA
FRONTIER

LOCKPORT ■

BUFFALO ●

FREDONIA ■

OLEAN ■

JAMESTOWN ■

● CENTER
■ UNIT

Appendix B

Empire State College Organization Chart

Empire State College
Organization Chart

Revised July 2009

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK BOARD OF TRUSTEES

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK CHANCELLOR
N. Zimpher

PRESIDENT
A. Davis

SECRETARY TO PRESIDENT
T. McCarthy

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE COUNCIL
R. Liebich, Chair

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE FOUNDATION
Executive Director
E. Buchanan

FEDERATION OF ALUMNI STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
M. C. Powers

- AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OFFICER
  M. Morton
- GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
  Director
  J. D'Agati
- MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
  Director
  K. Starczewski
- PUBLICATIONS
  Director
  G. Fischer

VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION
P. Tucci

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION
R. Barthelmas

- BUSINESS AFFAIRS
  Director
  B. Palmeri
- CENTRAL SERVICES
  Director
  J. Cronin
- FINANCIAL AID
  Director
  K. Delbridge
- SAFETY AND SECURITY
  Director
  T. Vumbaco
- STUDENT ACCOUNTS
  Director
  P. Malone

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR HUMAN RESOURCES
L. Cohen

- FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE
  Assistant Director
  L. Woodcock
- CAPITAL PROJECTS
  Director
  W. Ferrero

INTERIM VP FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY
T. Warger

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
(vacant)

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
C. King

ASSISTANT TO THE PROVOST/VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
P. Myers

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
T. Arnold

- CENTER FOR DISTANCE LEARNING
  Dean
  M. Benke
- CENTER FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS
  Dean
  R. Clougherty
- CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS
  Dean
  K. Nyamapfene
- CENTRAL NEW YORK CENTER
  Interim Dean
  N. Shrimpton
- GENESEE VALLEY CENTER
  Dean
  J. Franz
- THE HARRY VAN ARSDALE JR. CENTER FOR LABOR STUDIES
  Dean
  M. Merrill
- HUDSON VALLEY CENTER
  Dean
  R. Trullinger
- LONG ISLAND CENTER
  Interim Dean
  K. Feldman
- METROPOLITAN CENTER
  Dean
  C. Ward
- NIAGARA FRONTIER CENTER
  Dean
  N. DiBello
- NORTHEAST CENTER
  Dean
  G. Lorentz

PROVOST/VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
J. Elliott

ASSOCIATE PROVOST
M. Lavin

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH
M. Nesler

INTERIM ASSISTANT VP FOR ACADEMIC SERVICES
N. Travers

- CENTER FOR MENTORING AND LEARNING
  Director
  K. Jelly
- COLLEGEWIDE ACADEMIC REVIEW
  Director
  N. Travers
- COLLEGE REGISTRAR
  M. Edinburgh
- COLLEGE ACADEMIC SUPPORT
  Director
  D. Brigham

INTERIM VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT
J. Handler

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT
(vacant)

- ADMISSIONS
  Director
  J. D'Agostino
- COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS
  Director
  B. Goodale
- CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
  Director
  L. Sax
- MARKETING
  Director
  R. Shampeny

VICE PRESIDENT FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
H. Hammett

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR DEVELOPMENT
E. Buchanan

- GRANTS AND CONTRACTS
  Director
  L. Anthony
- ADVANCEMENT SERVICES
  Director
  V. Schaake
- ALUMNI AND STUDENT RELATIONS
  Director
  M. Winney
- ANNUAL GIVING
  Director
  D. Thompson
- GIFT PLANNING
  Director
  A. Schallehn
- MAJOR GIFTS
  Senior Associate
  T. Tobrocke