

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
of
SUNY ORANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Middletown, New York 10940
by
An Evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report
And a visit to the campus on April 4-7, 2004

The Members of the Team:

Robert C. Messina, Jr., Chair
President
Burlington County College
Pemberton, NJ 08068

Anthony DeGaetano, Vice President
Financial and Administrative Services
Burlington County College
Pemberton, NJ 08068

Judy A. Garbinski, Vice President
Planning and Assessment Development
Community College of Beaver County
Monaca, PA 15061-2588

Maureen A. Gilmartin, Dean
Career and Technology
Chesapeake College
Wye Mills, MD 21679-0008

James D. Stickler
Professor/Chair, Science & Forestry
Allegany College of Maryland
Cumberland, MD 21502

Kenneth P. Kerr
Associate Professor of English
Program Mgr, Developmental English
Frederick Community College
Frederick, MD 21702

Carole A. McCoy, Vice President
Learner Support Services
Anne Arundel Community College
Arnold, MD 21012

David Murray, Dean
Library and Learner Support Services
Brookdale Community College
Lincroft, NJ 07738-1543

Bette Simmons
Dean of Student Development
County College of Morris
Randolph, NJ 07869

Working with the Team:

Patricia Pietropaola, Assistant Provost for Program Review and Planning
State University of New York, State University Plaza, Albany, NY 12246

This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair; it goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission. It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist Orange County Community College. This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.

AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

President/CEO:

Dr. William Richards

Chief Academic Officer:

Dr. David Rule, Vice President for Academic Affairs

Chairman of the Board of Trustees:

Mr. Herbert Gareiss, Jr.

267 Bellvale Lakes Road
Warwick, NY 10990

I. INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND NATURE OF THE VISIT

Orange County Community College, a unit of the State University of New York, serves its students, its community, and the surrounding Orange County area. Orange County Community College offers a full complement of academic programs, which lead to one of three degrees: Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, and Associate in Applied Science. The college also offers certificate programs, non-credit courses for the workplace, distance learning, and customized training for business and industry. In cooperation with other educational agencies, the college offers programs for high school seniors who have shown high academic achievement, as well as an honors program to attract the best and brightest students in Orange County. There are programs for business and professional people, and partnerships with hospitals. Orange County, located in the mid-Hudson region of the state, is one of the fastest growing counties in New York State.

Orange County Community College was founded in 1950 as the first county sponsored community college in the State University of New York system. The college's primary purpose is to prepare students for careers or for transfer to Baccalaureate colleges and universities. The college currently has fourteen buildings on a thirty-seven acre campus in Middletown, an extension center located near the Hudson River in Newburgh, and offers classes at Port Jervis, Monroe-Woodbury and Warwick High Schools. The college is unique in the fact that it is located on the former Horton estate. Morrison Hall, the 40-room estate mansion, and a unique campus center by community college standards, was fully restored and is beautifully maintained. The mansion boasts exquisite original woodwork, ornate carvings, lighting fixtures and fireplaces, and an extraordinary stained glass window designed by Louis Tiffany. The mansion houses faculty and administrative offices and receives guests for meetings and receptions.

The last accreditation visit by a team from The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools was on May 24, 1993. At that time, the visiting team identified four major areas of concern that the college was subsequently asked to address: (1) outcomes data, (2) communication and teamwork, (3) faculty and staff development, and (4) advising. The 1993 team noted the shortage of clearly organized data, which could be analyzed to demonstrate that the college is doing what it says it does. It further identified the need for individuals and organizational units to open and strengthen lines of communication and to develop initiatives designed to foster working together as a team. It was suggested that faculty and staff development programs, along with teaching-learning initiatives, could be cultivated as a result of strengthening lines of communication across the institution. Further, an accountable student advising system needed to be developed for the institution. In July of 1993, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education concurred with the findings of the visiting team.

In 1999, a five-year Periodic Report was submitted to Middle States. A follow-up report was submitted in September of 2000 to address the Commission's request for a progress report in the areas of: (1) development and implementation of a comprehensive outcomes assessment plan, including student learning outcomes, and (2) implementation of the comprehensive institutional strategic plan.

The college began its most recent re-accreditation process during 2002. The steering committee selected a comprehensive review for its self-study design after determining that this approach

would best serve the college for the future. The steering committee worked very hard to produce a report reflecting an honest and introspective discussion about the issues and challenges facing Orange County Community College over the next years. One of the greatest of these challenges is to maintain and strengthen the excellence and growth of the institution during a period of reduced state funding and increasing needs and mandates.

The team chair made his initial visit to Orange County Community College in October of 2003. The evaluation team was on campus from April 4-7, 2004. The team of 2004 determined that prior visiting teams had identified some of the same issues identified in the institutional self-study of 2004. Some issues have been resolved, some are being addressed, some have not been fully addressed, and others are now new challenges being faced by the institution.

The report of the evaluation team was structured to follow the Commission on Higher Education's *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation*. The institution's self-study report format followed the fourteen elements outlined in *Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation*. The visiting team believes it will help Orange County Community College to see its report following that format as well.

Orange County Community College's self-study process involved a broad base of the campus community. Almost without exception, everyone with whom we spoke knew about, and was familiar with, the self-study process. The steering committee should be commended for its active involvement and the tremendous amount of hard work put into the report. The college is to be commended for the effort and energy it expended in the process so widely recognized throughout its community. It is our hope that the self-study will serve to guide the institution toward helping to determine its direction for the future.

The visiting team appreciated the generous hospitality of the faculty, staff, administration, students, Board of Trustees, and others associated with the institution during the campus visitation. It was rewarding and heartening to meet so many strong advocates of Orange County Community College. We would especially like to thank Dr William Richards, President of the College, and his staff, for going well above and beyond the call of duty in so generously accommodating the team. I speak for the entire team in extending sincere appreciation to everyone involved for a warm, informative, and professional visit to Orange County Community College.

II. AFFIRMATION OF CONTINUED COMPLIANCE WITH ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews, the team affirms that the institution continues to meet eligibility requirements 1 – 7 outlined in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*, p. xi.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS; ISSUES RELATIVE TO STATE REGULATORY OR OTHER ACCREDITING AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

Based on review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews, the team affirms that the institution's Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits or that the institution has an acceptable plan in place to address federal compliance issues. A serious issue, however, is the potentially substantial Federal Audit disallowance for non-compliance with the ability to benefit provisions of the Pell Grant.

IV. COMPLIANCE WITH ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

STANDARD 1: MISSION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The institution meets this Standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The institution has a clearly defined statement of mission, vision and values. The statement will be the driver for decision-making on key college issues. The statement relates to internal as well as external constituencies.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Practices

The college, under the leadership of the new president, and with the participation of all the college's constituents and stakeholders, developed a fresh statement of the college's mission, vision and values. The campus community welcomed the open, inclusive process that produced the statement.

Suggestions for Improvement

The Self-Study Report contains two sets of goals and objectives in Appendices 7 and 8. Both were written under the previous mission statement and will need to be reviewed in light of the changes. These documents also signal a need for goals and objectives that are more clearly defined, outcomes-based, and measurable.

The new statement of mission, vision and values will prompt a reconsideration of the planning process and should serve as the starting point for an outcomes-based strategic plan.

STANDARD 2: PLANNING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL

The institution does not meet this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Orange County Community College demonstrates an understanding of the need to plan and to assess the results of its planning; however, a lack of viable plans exists. This is consistent with the 1993 Middle States Evaluation. References were made to a 1997 plan, but the visiting team was unable to find evidence of the plan. A new strategic plan is being developed by consultants in collaboration with the College and external community. The development of a technology plan, resource development plan, enrollment development plan, a facilities master plan, and others are all being held up until the strategic plan is completed. A marketing plan is in place, but it is more than four years old, is not being updated, and few selected marketing strategies from the plan are being followed. The development of the new strategic plan is largely a top-down process, and constituents' involvement has been uneven.

There is general acknowledgement that former planning systems did not meet the needs of the institution and were primarily task-oriented, rather than strategically oriented. The annual planning cycle was more effective than the long-term cycle.

The college uses a bottom-up process to develop goals and objectives for each of the operational units and a top-down approach for institutional goals and objectives. These are subject to multiple changes through various review mechanisms like the strategic planning council and the cabinet. A review of unit goals did not find any units without annual goals.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Practices

The college has undertaken what appears to be a very comprehensive strategic planning effort. The college routinely annually establishes goals and objectives for each operational unit.

Suggestions for Improvement

The college should take steps to improve communications regarding planning and improvement processes, include more constituent participation, and incorporate the use of assessment results.

The college should develop college-wide tracking systems to provide the data needed by the institution for the assessment of the strategic plan and other college plans.

The college should identify additional plans that are needed to ensure the ongoing viability of the institution. For example, there is no disaster recovery plan.

Recommendation

While a process is in place, no strategic plan currently exists. The college must complete the strategic plan and all associated plans. Furthermore, it needs to make planning part of the College culture. As part of strategic planning, the college needs to establish a planning cycle that meets its needs, including an assessment component for each of the plans.

STANDARD 3: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

The institution does not meet this Standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Due to the scarcity of resources, the College has struggled to maintain adequate funding levels to support current operations. After two consecutive years of operating losses, the college has achieved financial stability and finished 2003 with a small surplus. This accomplishment should be recognized, and the administration is to be complimented. However, although the college is presently solvent and in the process of revamping its planning process, the college failed to supply adequate evidence of compliance with the ten fundamental elements of institutional resources listed in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*. These should be addressed in the college's pending master plan update process and procedures.

Significant Accomplishments/ Progress/Practices

The college recognized the need to update the master plan and hired a consultant to help with the process. The college should also be commended for recognizing the need to generate additional resources. A grants coordinator who was brought on board has successfully generated almost \$400,000 in grant revenues in less than two years. The college has also provided the county with a projected five-year budget in order that the county is made cognizant of future college funding needs. The college's good working relationship with the county is reflected in the high level of funding the college receives from the county.

Recommendations

The college needs to insure that the entire college community has input into the master planning process. Auxiliary operations such as food services and Kindercollege operated at a loss during 2002 and 2003 and should be reviewed for possible cost reductions and/or pricing increases. The college may also want to examine the feasibility of outsourcing these services.

The College must re-examine current staffing levels in each department to insure that existing resources are maximized and equitable distribution of scarce resources is taking place. In order to maximize resources and increase efficiency, the college should look into the feasibility of cross-training staff.

The potentially substantial Federal Audit disallowance for non-compliance with the ability to benefit provisions of the Pell Grant is of serious concern. The college should perform periodic internal compliance reviews on all local, State and federal aid programs.

The college should respond to audit findings listed in the auditor's management letter in a timely manner. Findings such as: *"The general ledger for the plant was not maintained and depreciation expense for capitalized assets was computed on a spread sheet and not within the furniture and equipment inventory system."* were identified in the prior year's auditor's management letter and are still unresolved.

The college should interface the budget process with the strategic plan to insure established priorities receive adequate resources. The process should ensure adequate faculty, staff and administration equipment and facilities are available to support the institution's mission and outcomes expectations.

While a technology infrastructure is in place, it is aging and inadequate for innovative learning applications and a robust administrative information system. With the appointment of the Associate Vice President of Technology, the college should begin the

development of a technology plan to address the mission-critical areas of network support, database functionality, integration of staff and services, and life cycle management of computers across the college.

The college should insure that the 10 fundamental elements of institutional resources listed in the *Characteristics of Excellence* are incorporated into its updated master plan and review process. Establishing measures of efficiency and effectiveness, supported by quantitative and/or qualitative analyses, are essential elements of the planning process.

STANDARD 4: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The institution meets this Standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The system of governance at Orange County Community College meets the standard for leadership and governance. The governing body of the institution is lead by the Board of Trustees, which is comprised of five members chosen by the Orange County Executive, four members chosen by the Governor of New York, each for terms of nine years, and a student trustee elected yearly by the student body. The Board is committed to its role in enabling the institution to realize its stated mission and goals and is effective in its relationship with the newly hired President and oversight of long-range planning efforts.

In delineating the governance structure and providing for collegial governance, evidence was found to support the existence of written documents including a constitution and by-laws that assign authority and accountability for policy-making and decision-making. Additionally, evidence was found to support the governing body's willingness to support a climate of collegial governance.

The president serves as chief executive officer of the college and presides over a structure that includes four major areas: Administration, Academic Affairs, Institutional Advancement, and Student Development. A vice president represents each of these areas. Each major area provides evidence of an organizational chart that outlines the reporting responsibilities and span of control for each administrator. Evidence provided in the Constitution and By-Laws of Governance outlines the committee system that is used to provide a forum for dialogue on College issues and an avenue for recommending policies and procedures to the President.

The committee system is led by the Executive Committee, which presides over fifteen standing committees, a College assembly consisting of the College President and all full-time members of the academic, professional and administrative staff, and all ad hoc committees. There is evidence to support that most committees meet regularly for

governance purposes and file records of their proceedings in the form of minutes of meetings.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Practices

The College is represented by a Board of Trustees that is both supportive and committed to the success of the college. There is also an excellent relationship with the County, and their commitment to funding the college constitutes one of the best levels of support in the State. It is clear that the college has been committed to collegial governance and that the college's administration has been supportive of the committee structure and accepting recommendations from them in the decision making process.

Suggestions for Improvement

There has been frequent turnover in administrative positions over the past few years and there have also been attempts made at restructuring some of the college's major areas including Academic Affairs. While restructuring may be of benefit to a new administrator it may not accomplish all of the goals that are desired and its effect on the members of that area should be assessed before any future plans for restructuring are implemented.

The College has shown a renewed commitment to Leadership Training and this process should be encouraged. The planned Leadership Workshop to be held in May is an excellent example of the types of workshops that should be available for current administrators and accessible to those who aspire to move up in the College.

Recommendations

Provide a forum for all policy makers to meet regularly with the President. The current President's use of an Extended Cabinet meets this need and should be adopted on a permanent basis. This will allow for more input from a broader range of representatives for the four major administrative areas.

Communication between and among related areas of the College needs to take place on a regular basis. Collaborative staff meetings of the Academic Affairs and Student Development areas will assist both groups as they look to enhance their communication efforts and more effectively serve students and other constituents. Perhaps a facilitator may be able to assist in improving communication between these major areas.

The College's self study report and supporting documents establish a commitment to a more comprehensive College-Wide Assessment and Planning process. To effectively reach the goals outlined in both of these areas, a more concerted effort needs to be made

to document the proceedings of the committees charged with these goals and periodically review progress made in a more consistent, collaborative fashion.

Needs assessment for the restructuring of the Student Development and Institutional Advancement areas should be completed prior to any reorganization. Additionally, an assessment of the impact of the reorganization of the Academic Affairs area should be completed within the next academic year to determine its effectiveness and ability to improve communication within and between academic departments.

STANDARD 5: ADMINISTRATION

The institution meets this Standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The institution has satisfied the fundamental elements of Administration. The chief executive has the academic background, professional training and all the tools to lead the college toward fulfillment of its mission. The administrative leaders have appropriate degrees, training, skills and experience to perform their duties. The college has qualified staffing appropriate to achieve its mission.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Practices

Recognizing the need for clear lines of organization, communication, and recognition of authority, the college has undertaken the task of creating new updated comprehensive organizational charts for all departments and each Vice Presidential area. Weekly memos and e-mails, and regular announcements, are generated by the President to keep the institution updated on major initiatives, various issues and informational matters. To enhance the communication process, student development coordinators are now included in the Vice President for Student Development staff meetings, and monthly roundtable meetings have been instituted with all the members of the Vice President for Student Development staff being invited.

Recommendation

Due to the fact that the college has initiated a new organizational structure and is in the process of updating and implementing a new master plan, the team recommends periodic assessments of the new administrative structure and services to insure that they are working effectively and efficiently. This periodic review should also help ensure that communication within the new organizational structure is taking place.

The team recommends that the college institute a program of regular professional development for College staff.

STANDARD 6: INTEGRITY

The institution meets this Standard.

Summary of Findings

In general, the college demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support to academic and intellectual freedom, and fostering a climate of integrity and respect for all members of the college community. Fair and impartial processes, addressing student code of conduct and student behavior, are published and widely available, and the institution assures that student grievances are addressed promptly, appropriately, and equitably. The institution's policies regarding hiring, evaluation, and dismissal are generally fair, impartial, and accessible, and they adhere to appropriate policies of non-discrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action.

Significant Accomplishments

The College utilizes effectively both print and electronic media to publicize catalog information and institutional policies, procedures and requirements. These appear to be updated on a regular basis, providing constituents with accurate information about the college and its programs and services.

While not well publicized at this time, the college has emergency protocol and procedures for responding to disruptive student behavior. The institution is commended for working on ways to improve campus-wide knowledge about these procedures.

Additional kudos go to the college for paying attention to issues surrounding promotion and tenure of faculty and improvements in hiring and evaluating faculty. It is critical to ensure a consistent process that encompasses all members of the faculty.

Suggestions for Improvement

Issues related to ineffective communication, especially in the areas of Academic Affairs and Student Development, cannot be ignored. These issues create distrust among the community and prevent the institution from moving forward in a positive direction. Steps need to be taken to strengthen communication and create an environment of openness and trust.

The college has no mechanism for formal assessment of policies, procedures and practices related to integrity. There needs to be periodic assessment of integrity and the manner in which institutional practices are implemented.

There appears to be inequity in the evaluation of department chairs, academic coordinators, management confidential employees and full-time and part-time faculty. The college needs to revisit the process for evaluation of these groups, as well as institutional policies and procedures that ensure standardized formats and equitable processes.

The Human Resources Department is compiling all documentation relative to personnel practices. Once assembled, these documents can be made available in electronic form and in handbooks for faculty, staff and administrators.

Recommendations

With regard to improving communication, steps need to be taken toward promoting an environment of trust and respect. Regular, full staff meetings of the Academic Affairs and Student Development Divisions should occur separately and together to discuss issues of mutual concern.

Formalized assessment of integrity throughout institutional policies, procedures and practices needs to be implemented. As well, there needs to be an evaluation of how these procedures are integrated throughout college programs and services. Specific plans should be put in place for implementing required changes.

The college self-study report identifies an array of areas related to integrity that require attention. The college needs to prioritize these issues and create a mechanism for implementing them in concert with the impending strategic plan and appropriate departmental missions and goals. Special attention needs to be given to the creation of a Conflict of Interest Policy Statement that is embraced by the entire college community, to which all members of the faculty, staff and administration are held accountable.

STANDARD 7: INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT

The institution does not meet this Standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The Commission on Higher Education expects institutions to assess their overall effectiveness. The fundamental element of institutional assessment is a written assessment plan. This plan should address the total range of educational offerings,

services, and processes, including planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes; institutional resources; leadership and governance; administration; institutional integrity; and student learning outcomes. Orange County Community College lacks such a plan. There is documented evidence, however, that assessment activity is taking place. Two examples are the Academic Assessment Plan and Process and the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in General Education. The Academic area is to be commended for the work being done in the assessment area. There was little evidence of assessment activity found in the areas of Administrative Services, Institutional Advancement or Student Development. As part of assessment, the college must collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data that can be used to make changes, improve services and better allocate resources.

There is data being collected at Orange County Community College. A listing on the college's web site, along with a link to the SUNY system, permits faculty, staff and administrators to access much information. There is little evidence, though, to demonstrate that the data is used as part of an assessment process to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the institution. While the College lacks a written strategic plan, according to the self-study and interview feedback, the development of a college-wide strategic plan is currently underway. Assessment, planning and the allocation of resources need to be tightly bound. Without an institution-wide assessment plan and a written strategic plan, this is difficult to achieve.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Practices

Two Committees, the College-wide Assessment Committee and the General Education Committee, are made up of faculty, staff and administrators who developed the plans and processes for meeting the SUNY mandates for programmatic and general education assessment.

Adding the planning function to the Office of Institutional Research is a very positive institutional step forward.

Suggestions for Improvement

The entire college community should have education and training in assessment practices, assessment methods and collection of data.

An individual or consultant with knowledge of assessment should be hired to lead the institutional assessment process. Assessment functions should be coordinated with the Office of Institutional Research.

The College needs to replace the anecdotal evidence currently on file with reliable and verifiable data to be used to demonstrate outcomes and measure the effectiveness of the institution.

Recommendation

The institution must develop a written strategic plan and college-wide assessment plans that are acceptable to the college community.

STANDARD 8: STUDENT ADMISSIONS

The institution does not meet this Standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The college has admissions policies that support and reflect the mission of the institution. Admissions policies and criteria are available to assist students in making informed decisions.

The college's website is an effective recruitment tool and includes an online application form.

The college conducts several modes of assessing student success for institutional purposes and for the statewide system. The Institutional Research Office creates retention reports, but there is no consistent evaluation that matches the attributes of admitted students and the institution's mission and programs. Additionally, it is unclear as to what the institution does with the data once it is available to improve retention through appropriate admissions criteria or procedures.

Information on student learning outcomes for programs is not available from all departments and is not uniformly distributed to prospective students.

The Admissions department is quite resourceful in reaching out to new students through a broad variety of outreach activities and mailings.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Practices

The college has taken steps to address the need to keep their website content fresh and current and has implemented an online application form.

The college has surveyed students to determine their preferences for the schedule of classes and also looked at how to improve marketing efforts.

The college hosts an admissions reception for accepted students and their parents and families as a means of helping new students form a bond with the institution before starting their coursework.

Suggestions for Improvement

Feed the online admissions form into the Colleague system to avoid having to do data entry.

The college should look for ways to assess the effectiveness of its marketing materials and admissions activities.

Recommendations

Provide program outcomes to prospective students.

STANDARD 9: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The institution does not meet this Standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The college offers a comprehensive array of student support services at its main campus in Middletown and provides adequate services to meet the needs of students at the Newburgh site.

The student development services staff is highly qualified.

There is much concern, both within the student affairs division and across the college, about advisement and counseling. While there are plans for improvement in this area, there currently are not appropriate procedures and processes to support all students in all programs of study.

There are procedures in place for addressing student complaints/grievances, and appropriate records are maintained.

There are policies and procedures in place for the safe and secure maintenance of student records. The Colleague system is backed up to allow for recovery and information from the records office is microfilmed for backup. However, some paper records maintained

by the financial aid and bursar's offices do not have backups in the event the originals are destroyed.

There does not appear to be any ongoing assessment of student development or the utilization of assessment results for improvement.

The college does not provide online student services at this time. However, plans are in place to move in that direction.

There is confusion about the role of the student success center, and questions exist about its effectiveness. The person running the center is charged with retention management, but there is little retention management being done.

The CALL (Center for Adult Lifelong Learners) is a worthy concept, but the area is minimally staffed.

Communications and collaborations between Student Development and other areas of the college are weak.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Practices

The college has applied for a Title III grant to address some of its needs in student development for technology and human resources.

The college is implementing online placement testing.

The Vice President for Student Development has worked to improve communications based upon the findings in the Middle States report.

Suggestions for Improvement

The college should work toward implementing online student services as quickly as possible to address student support issues, especially during peak periods and to provide support for distance learners.

The Student Development division should seek out ways to improve collaboration and communication across the institution, particularly with Academic Affairs.

Recommendations

The college needs to finalize plans for advisement and counseling. In the process, input from the various affected constituencies should be sought and the plans should be implemented. A mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of the impending advising system should be included in the plans.

The college should re-evaluate the structure of the student development area to ensure resources are being allocated to best meet the needs of all learners, that functions of the various areas are clear, and that all constituents are able to participate in planning for student services.

The College should implement a comprehensive assessment model for Student Development.

STANDARD 10: FACULTY

The institution meets this Standard.

Summary of Evidence and Finding

The faculty, staff and administration of Orange County Community College are dedicated to the mission and vision of the college and to the success of their students. The faculty are professional, provide excellent educational opportunities for their students and are qualified for the positions they hold. The allied health and business programs are accredited through nationally recognized accrediting organizations and provide students with current practices and standards within the students' chosen professions. The dedication of the faculty to the educational process is amply demonstrated by their willingness to assist their students and to develop and implement new programs and teaching strategies.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Practices

The faculty are to be commended for their educational excellence, for their dedication to the college's community and for their continued pursuit of current trends in their areas of expertise. The faculty appear to be receptive to new ideas and concepts and strive to incorporate new pedagogy and technology into their teaching. Orange County Community College is fortunate to have a dedicated and innovative faculty.

Suggestions for Improvement

While the college provides opportunities for continued professional and educational development, the effort is too little. To provide a successful professional development

program, the college's efforts need increased funding and greater flexibility. Using existing expertise within Orange County Community College, it is feasible for the faculty and staff to provide in-house educational development programs, courses and training to the college community.

There is a need for the development and implementation of a student evaluation system for full-time and part-time faculty. The implementation of a student evaluation system would provide a mechanism by which students may express their opinions of instructors and courses without a fear of retribution if the response is critical. Indeed, the faculty are missing an opportunity of receiving feedback on their courses as well as providing a mechanism whereby students can voice their praise and concern about a course, instructor, or a program.

It is suggested that a mentorship program be implemented to assist newly hired teaching personnel to acclimate themselves to the college environment and procedures.

Recommendations

The implementation of college-wide, mandatory annual student evaluations of part-time and full-time instructional personnel is recommended. A student evaluation process would represent a positive step by which the faculty can receive a review of their teaching styles as perceived by their students and through which students can express their perceptions about instructors, courses, programs, and the college. Student evaluations need not and should not be perceived as punitive, but can be used by individual faculty for self-reflection and improvement as well as for professional advancement within the college. The student evaluation can also serve as an excellent source of affirmation and validation of teaching skills and interpersonal relations, but can also serve as an instrument for professional development. It is interesting to note that informal, unofficial evaluations for some faculty members are currently available on "www.ratemyprofessors.com."

The college should take steps to institute criteria for the supervision and review of teaching effectiveness for part-time faculty consistent with those for full-time faculty.

It is recommended that the college continue its efforts and then expand upon them to attract and retain underrepresented minorities. This may include, but is not limited to, identifying and encouraging Orange County Community College students to pursue higher education and return to Orange County Community College in staff, teaching and administrative roles.

It is further recommended that the current Faculty Handbook, which is currently dated 1988, should be updated.

STANDARD 11: EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

The institution does not meet this Standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Orange County Community College provides sound educational programs to its clientele and to its supporting community. The programs are rigorous and prepare the college's graduates for employment or for transfer to senior institutions. The College's offerings are recognized by the community as providing a valuable resource for economic and civic growth and by nationally recognized accrediting agencies. For these successes, the college community is to be congratulated and encouraged toward continuation and expansion of their strong cooperative endeavors.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Practices

The programs offered by Orange County Community College are excellent and provide educational opportunities and employment to members of the community. The evolving cooperative endeavors between the credit and non-credit divisions of the college are excellent examples of such innovative practices.

The facilities, instructional equipment, library services, and professional library staff are all adequate to support the institution's educational programs.

Suggestions for Improvement

The expansion of the annual "assessment reports" that the LRC Director submits to the Vice President of Academic Affairs into an outcomes-based assessment of the LRC service program is suggested.

Recommendations

While there is a current adopted standard for the preparation of course syllabi, the standard does not include goals written in terms of student outcomes. Further, the course syllabi, in general, do not incorporate expected assessable student learning outcomes. While there is evidence of some college-wide program assessment plans, they appear inadequate to meet the college's requirement to provide a college-wide assessment program. Providing a framework for preparation of course and program goals written in terms of student outcomes will require that a comprehensive college-wide assessment program be developed and implemented.

It is recommended that Orange County Community College develop a comprehensive assessment program, which links the assessment of student learning and program outcomes relative to program and College goals and objectives. It is further

recommended that program and course goals be stated in terms of student learning outcomes. The student learning outcomes can, and should, then be used to evaluate the effectiveness of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular learning experiences.

The development of a comprehensive assessment process will expand the annual “assessment reports” that the LRC Director submits to the VPAA into an outcomes-based assessment of the LRC service program.

Extend the collaboration between librarians and faculty to all academic departments to foster information literacy skills across the curriculum.

Accelerating the development of rubrics and outcome measures for information literacy to meet the target date of Spring 2005 for the assessment of general education will enable the college to rationally evaluate existing programs and add new programs.

STANDARD 12: GENERAL EDUCATION

The institution does not meet this Standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

This Standard has six fundamental elements. Orange County Community College is in compliance with Middle States’ element requirements of sufficient scope to enhance intellectual growth; applying course skills to the major or program; incorporating values, ethics, and diverse perspectives; and oral and written communication, qualitative reasoning, technological capabilities, information literacy, and critical thinking. Additionally, general education requirements are clearly and accurately described in the college catalog and other official publications.

While there is a three-year planning cycle to assess student learning in general education, the college lacks clear evidence that assessment results are utilized for curricular improvement.

Significant Accomplishments

Orange County Community College has a well thought-out plan to assess student learning in general education. It has successfully complied with Middle States and SUNY requirements in this area. A full year of assessment has been completed and meaningful data has been collected. The college has a good understanding of general education and its importance in its curricula and programs.

Suggestions for Improvement

Orange County Community College is in need of leadership to ensure that assessment data are used to improve teaching and learning. We agree with the self-study concern over a lack of a position to oversee student learning assessment.

Re-examine general education course syllabi to ensure that course objectives are stated in terms of student learning expectations. Additionally, these should be consistent for multiple sections of the same course.

Include a statement about general education courses that explains to students the role and importance of general education within the context of their degree or program.

Recommendation

Departments must provide evidence of how assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning. This includes devising learning strategies to address student learning deficiencies and incorporating those into courses. These should then be reassessed to determine if the course improvements were effective.

STANDARD 13: RELATED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The institution meets this Standard.

Summary of Findings

The college provides variety to its educational program to ensure that students of all types have the means to pursue their educational aspirations, regardless of the mode of delivery, content, focus, location, or interest area. There is a systematic process for identifying students who are not fully prepared for college level study. These students benefit from basic skills offerings in reading, writing, mathematics, algebra, and English as a second language. Added to this, Learning Assistance Service is the availability of many discipline-focused labs and tutorial centers, created to provide students with the academic assistance they need to be successful in the classroom. Tutoring is available at a low cost, and is provided through professional or peer tutors.

Alternative educational programs are available in a variety of certificate and non-credit offerings. These courses assist students in developing job entry-level skills, addressing enrichment interests, or preparing for career changes, licensure requirements, workforce development, or continuing education in a variety of professions.

The institution provides several means by which credit may be granted through experiential learning, such as College Level Examination Program, Advanced Placement, military service, internships, life experience, and examinations.

Finally, the college offers an array of modes of delivery through distance learning, the Newburgh Extension Center, off-campus sites, and through contractual relationships with other institutions, organizations, or businesses.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Practices

The development and growth of the Newburgh Extension Center is an outstanding venture for the college. It demonstrates a commitment to the local community and offers students, especially part-time students, a wide variety of options that meet their educational aspirations.

The visibility of the college President and other members of the college in the community have strengthened relationships with members of the business community. The college enjoys great support from local hospitals, institutions, and the Chamber of Commerce. This, in turn, gives the college additional resources and support as it looks to strengthen its position in the community and better meet community needs.

The college is commended for its efforts at redefining the Developmental Education Program and giving it a more positive benefit to students. The impending restructuring of the Academic Affairs Division, and its impact on the Developmental Education Program, will strengthen the college's efforts at assisting students in acquiring the necessary skills for entry in college-level courses and programs.

Suggestions for Improvement

The college should continue the consideration of making the Newburgh Extension Center a branch campus as long as appropriate financial, facility, and human resources are available to support it.

The college needs to give serious consideration to enhancing its offerings of distance education courses, making sure that the same quality and integrity experienced in on-campus courses are also maintained in online courses. Training needs to be made available to educate faculty about developing online courses, and they should be encouraged to offer a more robust selection of online courses. Additionally, the college needs to have online support services to facilitate the expansion of the online program.

Recommendation

Developmental student learning is very important for the success of under-prepared students. As the college does not utilize consistent student-specific data on the progress of these students, appropriate resources should be made available to assist the Developmental Education Program in tracking the progress of students and assessing their success after completion of developmental courses. Adequate software, and qualified and sufficient staffing to effectively and efficiently utilize it, should be available to gather important data about the progress of students.

STANDARD 14: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

The institution does not meet this Standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The 2002 edition of *Characteristics of Excellence* includes a new Standard 14, the Assessment of Student Learning. This new standard, along with increased emphasis on assessment in other standards, demonstrates the importance the Middle States Commission places on assessment in accredited higher education institutions. This standard has four fundamental elements.

Fundamental element one requires articulation of expectations of student learning at the course, program, and institutional levels. Orange County Community College has course objectives present on all syllabi; however, these are not always stated in terms of student learning or in a way that can be assessed. Additionally, where there are several sections of the same course, the course objectives are not always consistent.

At the program level, all programs have articulated expectations of student learning in the departmental or program files. However, these are not always available to students in college publications. For the degree programs, expectations of student learning are not always articulated in a way that is assessable. Moreover, no documentation exists that demonstrates how articulated expectations of student learning at the course level relate to those at the program/degree level or how both relate to institutional-level learning expectations of all students. Furthermore, the college has not articulated expectations of student learning at the institutional level.

Fundamental element two requires a plan that describes the assessment activities being undertaken at the institution. Orange County Community College has a plan that includes the specific methods used to validate learning goals articulated at the course and program levels. This plan is centered on general education courses and college programs. However, if a course is not on the general education list and is not in a program, it will not be assessed under the current plan.

Beyond articulating expectations of learning and devising a plan to assess them, fundamental element three requires evidence that student learning assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning. The allied health programs can document that they have used assessment results to improve teaching and learning; however, little documentation is available to establish this is done outside that area. Furthermore, although the first round of general education course assessments is complete and data are available, there is no protocol in place to assure the assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning or that assessment results are shared with the students and the campus community to aid in decision-making. Additionally, there is no evidence to show the effectiveness of any curricular change that occurred as a direct result of general education course assessment.

The final fundamental element requires evidence that student learning assessment is used at the institutional level to aid in decision-making. Outside allied health, no documentation was provided to establish that this is occurring.

Significant Accomplishments/Progress/Practices

The college has done considerable work on developing a comprehensive plan to assess student learning. A five-year cycle is in place to assess learning at the program level, and a three-year cycle to assess student learning in general education exists. These assessments are underway and yielding meaningful data.

All course and programs have articulated expectations of student learning in some form.

Suggestions for Improvement

Revise college publications—syllabi, catalog, and marketing materials—so that it is easier for students to be aware of what learning expectations are at the course, program, and institutional levels.

Revisit course syllabi and program documents to ensure that objectives are written in terms that articulate expectations of student learning and are assessable.

Create a crosswalk that demonstrates how course-level, program-level, and institutional-level expectations relate to and support one another.

Consider assessment activities that document actual gains in student learning that directly occurred as a result of the student's experience in the course, program, or at the institution. In other words, document what the student can do now that he or she could not do before.

Recommendations

We agree with the recommendation cited in Standard 14 of the Self-Study Report to establish a position dedicated to assessment. This individual would oversee, coordinate, and provide assistance and training for all assessment activities undertaken at the institution.

Articulate expectations of student learning at the institutional level. These may take the form of college-wide competencies expected of all graduates and certificate holders, or these may reinforce the general education expectations present in all certificates, degrees, and programs.

Establish protocols that specify how learning assessment results and course modifications are to be completed and communicated after assessment data are obtained.

Establish a means to communicate results of student learning assessment to students and the campus community to aid in decision-making.

Document that student learning assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning.

IV. SUMMARY OF TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

(Only Standards for which there are recommendations are listed.)

STANDARD 2: PLANNING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL

While a process is in place, no strategic plan currently exists. The college must complete the strategic plan and all associated plans. Furthermore, it needs to make planning part of the College culture. As part of strategic planning, the college needs to establish a planning cycle that meets its needs, including an assessment component for each of the plans.

STANDARD 3: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

The college needs to insure that the entire college community has input into the master planning process. Auxiliary operations such as food services and Kindercollege now operate at a loss and should be reviewed for possible cost reductions and/or pricing increases. The college may also want to examine the feasibility of outsourcing these services.

The College must re-examine current staffing levels in each department to insure that existing resources are maximized and equitable distribution of scarce resources is taking place. In order to maximize resources and increase efficiency, the college should look into the feasibility of cross-training staff.

The potentially substantial Federal Audit disallowance for non-compliance with the ability to benefit provisions of the Pell Grant is of serious concern. The college should perform periodic internal compliance reviews on all local, State and federal aid programs.

The college should respond to audit findings listed in the auditor's management letter in a timely manner. Findings such as: *"The general ledger for the plant was not maintained and depreciation expense for capitalized assets was computed on a spread sheet and not within the furniture and equipment inventory system."* were identified in the prior year's auditor's management letter and are still unresolved.

The college should interface the budget process with the strategic plan to insure established priorities receive adequate resources. The process should ensure adequate faculty, staff and administration equipment and facilities are available to support the institution's mission and outcomes expectations.

While a technology infrastructure is in place, it is aging and inadequate for innovative learning applications and a robust administrative information system. With the appointment of the Associate Vice President of Technology, the college should begin the development of a technology plan to address the mission-critical areas of network support, database functionality, integration of staff and services, and life cycle management of computers across the college.

The college should insure that the 10 fundamental elements of institutional resources listed in the *Characteristics of Excellence* are incorporated into its updated master plan and review process. Establishing measures of efficiency and effectiveness, supported by quantitative and/or qualitative analyses, are essential elements of the planning process.

STANDARD 4: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Provide a forum for all policy makers to meet regularly with the President. The current President's use of an Extended Cabinet meets this need and

should be adopted on a permanent basis. This will allow for more input from a broader range of representatives for the four major administrative areas.

Communication between and among related areas of the College needs to take place on a regular basis. Collaborative staff meetings of the Academic Affairs and Student Development areas will assist both groups as they look to enhance their communication efforts and more effectively serve students and other constituents. Perhaps a facilitator may be able to assist in improving communication between these major areas.

The College's self study report and supporting documents establish a commitment to a more comprehensive College-Wide Assessment and Planning process. To effectively reach the goals outlined in both of these areas, a more concerted effort needs to be made to document the proceedings of the committees charged with these goals and periodically review progress made in a more consistent, collaborative fashion.

Needs assessment for the restructuring of the Student Development and Institutional Advancement areas should be completed prior to any reorganization. Additionally, an assessment of the impact of the reorganization of the Academic Affairs area should be completed within the next academic year to determine its effectiveness and ability to improve communication within and between academic departments.

STANDARD 5: ADMINISTRATION

Due to the fact that the college has initiated a new organizational structure and is in the process of updating and implementing a new master plan, the team recommends periodic assessments of the new administrative structure and services to insure that they are working effectively and efficiently. This periodic review should also help ensure that communication within the new organizational structure is taking place.

The team recommends that the college institute a program of regular professional development for College staff.

STANDARD 6: INTEGRITY

With regard to improving communication, steps need to be taken toward promoting an environment of trust and respect. Regular, full staff

meetings of the Academic Affairs and Student Development Divisions should occur separately and together to discuss issues of mutual concern.

Formalized assessment of integrity throughout institutional policies, procedures and practices needs to be implemented. As well, there needs to be an evaluation of how these procedures are integrated throughout college programs and services. Specific plans should be put in place for implementing required changes.

The college self-study report identifies an array of areas related to integrity that require attention. The college needs to prioritize these issues and create a mechanism for implementing them in concert with the impending strategic plan and appropriate departmental missions and goals. Special attention needs to be given to the creation of a Conflict of Interest Policy Statement that is embraced by the entire college community, to which all members of the faculty, staff and administration are held accountable.

STANDARD 7: INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT

The institution must develop a written strategic plan and college-wide assessment plans that are acceptable to the college community.

STANDARD 8: STUDENT ADMISSIONS

The College should provide program outcomes to prospective students.

STANDARD 9: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The college needs to finalize plans for advisement and counseling. In the process, input from the various affected constituencies should be sought and the plans should be implemented. A mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of the impending advising system should be included in the plans.

The college should re-evaluate the structure of the student development area to ensure resources are being allocated to best meet the needs of all learners, that functions of the various areas are clear, and that all constituents are able to participate in planning for student services.

The College should implement a comprehensive assessment model for Student Development.

STANDARD 10: FACULTY

The implementation of a college-wide, mandatory annual student evaluation of part-time and full-time instructional personnel is recommended. A student evaluation process would represent a positive step by which the faculty can receive a review of their teaching styles as perceived by their students and through which students can express their perceptions about instructors, courses, programs, and the college. Student evaluations need not and should not be perceived as punitive, but can be used by individual faculty for self-reflection and improvement as well as for professional advancement within the college. The student evaluation can also serve as an excellent source of affirmation and validation of teaching skills and interpersonal relations, but can also serve as an instrument for professional development. It is interesting to note that informal, unofficial evaluations for some faculty members are currently available on “www.ratemyprofessors.com.”

The college should take steps to institute criteria for the supervision and review of teaching effectiveness for part-time faculty consistent with those for full-time faculty.

It is recommended that the college continue its efforts and then expand upon them to attract and retain underrepresented minorities. This may include, but is not limited to, identifying and encouraging Orange County Community College students to pursue higher education and return to Orange County Community College in staff, teaching and administrative roles.

It is further recommended that the current Faculty Handbook, which is currently dated 1988, should be updated.

STANDARD 11: EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

While there is a current adopted standard for the preparation of course syllabi, the standard does not include goals written in terms of student outcomes. Further, the course syllabi, in general, do not incorporate expected assessable student learning outcomes. While there is evidence of some college-wide program assessment plans, they appear inadequate to meet the college’s requirement to provide a college-wide assessment program. Providing a framework for preparation of course and program goals written in terms of student outcomes will require that a comprehensive college-wide assessment program be developed and implemented.

It is recommended that Orange County Community College develop a comprehensive assessment program, which links the assessment of student learning and program outcomes relative to program and College goals and objectives. It is further recommended that program and course goals be stated in terms of student learning outcomes. The student learning outcomes can, and should, then be used to evaluate the effectiveness of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular learning experiences.

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