

Audit: NCC failed to collect \$14M in tuition, fees

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Nassau Community College failed to collect \$14 million in tuition and fees since 2006, depleted its reserves to "dangerously low levels" and spends more money than other area community colleges, a county comptroller's audit released Tuesday found.

The Garden City institution, the largest single-campus, two-year college in the state, had "numerous financial and operational inefficiencies," according to the report. It did not send past-due letters to students while they were enrolled, collect application fees from some students and properly track employee time and leave in compliance with labor contracts and college policy.

Nassau County Comptroller George Maragos, in releasing the findings, recognized improvements the college has made but said the issues "persisted for too long, and if allowed to persist could threaten the mission of the college and cause significant tuition increases in the future."

NCC officials said they already have collected some \$4 million in back tuition and fee payments. The college's administration, in a formal response to the audit, said its high expenses are due to maintaining higher staffing levels of full-time and part-time faculty when compared with other two-year institutions.

Auditors said staffing, administrative expenses and operating costs at Nassau Community College were out of line with comparable area colleges, including Suffolk County Community College, Monroe Community College in Rochester and Westchester Community College.

The college's administrative and general expenses for the fiscal year ending Aug. 31, 2011, were the highest when compared with the other three colleges, the audit found. NCC's total was \$56 million, followed by SCCC at \$52 million, Monroe at \$41 million and Westchester at \$27 million.

Budgeted operating costs for the 2011-12 school year were \$1,302 more per student at NCC than



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at Suffolk County Community College, according to the report. In addition, the college's reserve fund was at \$10 million, after it was drawn down to cover operational expenses.

The audit was from December 2011 to August 2013.

NCC officials said the student-to-full-time-faculty ratio of 55 to 1 is the lowest of the comparable institutions. When adjunct faculty are considered, the ratio is 21 students to 1 faculty member.

"Differing staffing levels can arise for a variety of reasons, including those that relate to value judgments as to what is necessary to maintain educational quality," NCC acting president Kenneth Saunders said in a statement Tuesday.

The Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers, the full-time faculty union, did not respond to a request for comment.

Charles Loiacono, president of NCC's adjunct faculty union, said for administrators to single out faculty for high costs was "disingenuous."

Maragos recommended the college install a permanent president.

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