April 16, 2016


**Report to the**


**Trustees, Administration, Faculty, and Students**

**of**

**Nassau Community College**

**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 March 13-16, 2016**


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This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair, and 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 Nassau 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.

## I.     Introduction

The Middle States Evaluation Team Conducted an evaluation of Nassau Community College (NCC) as part of the College's decennial review.  This evaluation report reflects the collective thinking of a team of trained peer reviewers. The evaluation and report was based on the Institution's Self-Study Report and a subsequent team visit.

As a team, we were charged with examining the evidence in support of the College's Self-Study with judgments stemming from the degree to which the institution's practices were in compliance with Middle States Commission on Higher Education's (MSCHE's) 14 Standards as outlined in the Characteristics of Excellence.  Based upon our review, we sought to determine that the Institution met the following criteria:

- Has a mission appropriate to higher education;
- Is guided by well-defined and appropriate goals, including goals for student learning;
- Has established conditions and procedures under which its mission and goals can be realized;
- Assesses both institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, and uses the results for improvement;
- Is accomplishing its mission and goals substantially;
- Is organized, staffed, and supported so that it can be expected to continue to accomplish its mission and goals; and
- Meets the requirements of affiliation and accreditation standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

The Team would like to thank the Board of Trustees and members of the administration for your support and cooperation during this process. We'd like to acknowledge the work of Interim President, Thomas Dolan, and members of his cabinet. We'd like to give special thanks to Dr. Janice Grackin for her tireless work on the team's behalf. The team would like to thank the Self-Study Steering Committee and Working Groups. And finally, we would like to thank the entire college community for their input and candor throughout this process of self-reflection and continuous improvement.

## II.     Context and Nature of the Visit

Nassau Community College chose to use the Comprehensive Model for its self-study. The institution sought to examine its challenges by exhaustively studying its internal operations and functions and educational systems. The College recognizes the challenges that confront many colleges during an age of fiscal uncertainty and sought to explain its own challenges in the context of the broader fiscal issues confronting community colleges. The self-study was aligned with the six goals in the Institutional Strategic Plan: (1) Promote Access to and Excellence in Teaching and Learning Across all Modes of Instructional Delivery; (2) Improve Overall Student Retention across the Academy; (3) Expand Student Recruitment Initiatives; (4) Promote a Campus Community that Fosters and Respects Intellectual, Cultural, and Racial Diversity; (5)

Improve the Physical and Technological Infrastructure to Meet Institutional Graduates Needs; and, (6) Strengthen and Expand Community Partnerships with Industry, Civic, Educational and Cultural Organizations.

Nassau Community College (NCC) is the largest single-campus community college in the State University of New York system (SUNY). The College enrolls more than 22,000 undergraduate students and nearly 12,000 continuing education students. Approximately 60% of NCC's incoming students require some type of remediation. Most transfer to SUNY or CUNY four-year institutions. Specialized services are offered through Military and Veterans services, the Center for Students with Disabilities, the Psychological Counseling Center and the Center for Educational and Retention Counseling. The College should be commended for its newly designed and constructed one-stop center for student services.

The Self-Study Steering Committee was appointed by the Acting President in January 2013. Three Co-Chairs were appointed and eleven other members from the College community volunteered to serve which resulted in a fourteen Member Steering Committee. Fourteen Working Groups were added for the purpose of aligning the self-study process with the fourteen Standards. Four additional Working groups were created for specific purposes including: completion of the HEOA Compliance report, development of the Online Self-Study Resource Library, Data Support and Site Visit Planning.

## III.    Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation

Based on a review of the Certification Statement, the Self-Study, interviews and other institutional documents, the Team affirms that the institution continues to meet the MSCHE requirements of affiliation as described in the Characteristics of Excellence.

## IV.    Compliance with Federal Requirements; Issues Relative to State Regulatory or Other Accrediting Agency Requirements

The team was unable to verify the College's Compliance with Federal Requirement in matters related to tracking student complaints for the purpose of improving student life at Nassau Community College.

## V.    Evaluation Overview

The Team commends Nassau Community College for its willingness to be forthright about the status of the institution and related challenges. Team members found the faculty and staff to be dedicated professionals who were earnest in their comments and views. The Team members were especially impressed with the students who were interviewed.

**VI.    Compliance with Accreditation Standards**

**Standard 1:  Mission and Goals**

*"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."*

In the team's judgment, the institution meets this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings**

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard:

The College's Mission Statement clearly defines its purposes and the constituencies it serves. The College's goals are related to the mission and offer a clear framework for planning and decision making.

Periodic review of the Mission is clearly embedded in the College's shared governance process. The by-laws of the Academic Senate ensure broad representation by students, faculty and administration in Mission review. The Academic Senate Planning Committee is charged (in part) to "…review the Mission of the College on an ongoing basis and make recommendations as appropriate."

The current Mission and Goals statement was last revised in 1997 and has remained unchanged since that time. In the 2012-2013 academic year the Mission Subcommittee of the Strategic Planning Committee surveyed the campus community regarding the Mission statement and developed a proposal to modify a portion of it. However, this work did not go forward, and the decision was made to defer formal review of the Mission until such time as a permanent College President is appointed.

The College Mission statement is publicized in the Catalog and easily found on the public web site. However, the Institutional Goals are made available to the public only in the online Catalog which is not as easily located.

The text of the College Mission statement has been parsed into 11 elements, and one or more of these elements is associated with each Strategic Plan Goal. The relationship of the College's 11 Goal statements to planning is not as immediately apparent.

**Recommendations**

- Publicize the College's goals along with the Mission statement on the public website.

- Create a more explicit linkage between the goals of the strategic plan and the College goal statements which accompany the Mission statement.

- Implement the recommendation of the Academic Senate Strategic Planning Committee to review the Institution's Mission and Goals after the appointment of a permanent president. Engage the entire community including internal and external stakeholders.

**Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal**

*"An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based upon 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 maintain institutional quality."*

In the team's judgment, the institution does not meet this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings**

The institution established six goals within its Strategic Plan for 2014-2017. These were supported by various objectives to attain the goals. The goals in the Strategic Plan are loosely connected to the mission and its 11 mission-related goals, although there is limited assessment of either. The Strategic Plan provided tasks to achieve goals, responsible person(s), target date for completion and what constituted success for completion of these initiatives. If the institution's goals are not clear, the achievement of such goals is questionable until the institution as a whole defines its view of the planning process and one set of goals linked to the current mission.

In addition, the self-study states that the sub-units of the College develop their own initiatives to align with the College's strategic goals. The self- study report mentions that these are in the Pegasus budgeting system. Evidence of some of these initiatives and allocated dollars was provided and are sufficient for some areas of the College. Other areas are linking such things as minor purchases which in the scheme of the institution are not part of the attainment of the strategic objectives. The self-study document refers to Academic Strategic Planning, but no documentation was provided to confirm that an Academic Master Plan exists nor is there any evidence of Academic Planning.

There were student surveys provided and a 2013-2023 facilities "needs" plan for the institution prepared by an external consultant which is a requirement of SUNY. However, there was no direction as to how this information was incorporated into a cross functional multi-year planning

document linked to utilization or planning for institutional resources.  In fact, much of what was provided was historical or factual in nature versus prospective for planning.

Nassau County's Improvement Plan for 2014-2017 was provided with resources set aside for NCC, however, there was no evidence provided as to the need or prioritization for the request for these capital county funds and how these construction initiatives aligned with the College's mission, goals and objectives.   A multi-year Academic Master Plan, Facilities Master Plan, IT Master Plan, Institutional Effectiveness Plan were not produced as evidence. Without these documents and related processes in existence with cross functional input and the use of data, decision making could not be well defined.

Further, there was insufficient evidence that there was institution-wide and consistent assessment occurring to support planning, resource allocation and institutional renewal.  Taskstream is referenced as the institution's assessment management system.  In reviewing the plans within the Taskstream system, it was noted that the utilization is not consistent throughout the institution. In fact, in many cases reviewed, no progress was reported.

Finally, in an institution with declining annual enrollments, it is imperative that the College engage in appropriate planning to prioritize resource allocation.

**Requirements**

- Develop an Institutional Effectiveness Plan to guide the planning process for the institution providing a gateway for long term plans that support the mission and goals of the College.

- Develop and link Multi-Year Academic, Facilities and Information Technology Plans to operationalize the goals and objectives of the College. Incorporate enrollment management as part of the planning process.

**Standard 3:  Institutional Resources**

***The human, financial, technical, 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.***

In the team's judgment, the institution does not meet this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings**

The FY 2015 budget included the utilization of approximately $2.5 million of unrestricted fund balance.  NCC is out of compliance with the State of New York recommended reserve balance and College policy based upon the FY 2014 audit report. The FY 2016 budget provided was to

be balanced with no additional downward impact on reserves.  However, it was reported that enrollment decreased greater than originally planned and is expected to be a decrease of 4.7% for FY2016.  In addition, the college offered incentive buyouts to over a hundred employees during FY2016, which was almost three times the number anticipated when the budget was prepared. As a result, the county issued debt for $7.5 million and the College needs to repay this amount to its sponsor over four years to cover the retirement incentive.  This buyout coupled with declining enrollments create additional fiscal burdens on the institution for FY2016.

The FY2014 audit report presents a $368.7 million unrestricted deficit of which $330.0 million pertains to postemployment retirement benefits payable as required by GASB Statement No. 45. In a letter dated March 3, 2014 from the State University of New York, it was stated that if the college was unable to meet this postretirement obligation, the local sponsor would ultimately become liable.  Included in this balance is a liability for $57.4 million for other compensated absences. However, as was the case with the GASB Statement No. 45 liability, associate counsel from SUNY states that the sponsor would ultimately be liable for this amount if the college was not able to pay this debt. A deficit net position of $213.6 million lends to serious concerns with regards to the ability of the institution to use resources to support the college's missions and goals.  In addition, this current fiscal state previously described questions the institutional controls in place to provide for the allocation of assets and resources as needed by the institution. It was represented that the FY 2015 audit was not yet complete and therefore, not available for review.

As previously mentioned, an annual audit takes places.  The Financial Report for FY 2014 was the most recent report provided.  The external auditor for NCC stated that these financial statements were fairly presented in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the USA in a report dated May 29, 2015.

The College has not been able to provide a cross functional multi-year IT Master Plan nor a Facilities Master Plan with required resources for the institution to meet its goals and objectives. Therefore, there can be no policies and procedures in place to determine the allocation of resources based upon these facts.

In an environment of ongoing declining enrollments (FY2016 projected decrease of 4.7% and an initial expectation for FY2017 of an additional decline of another 5% in enrollments), the institution needs to carefully evaluate its needs and allocate resources appropriately.

The 2013-2023 Facilities Master Plan Update was prepared by an outside consultant.  A life-cycle management plan was not referenced nor was there any evidence of implementation of such a plan. Reference was made within the 2013-2023 Facilities Master Plan Update for a maintenance plan, but no such plan was provided.   In addition, support and staffing for achieving the college's objectives for student learning was not addressed.

There have been no documents provided to support the acquisition or replacement for any technology needs. A document entitled Assessment of Academic Computing Spring 2013 was provided. This document addressed the age of student computers as well as location and faculty technology assessment. However, it was not found in any multi-year planning document of the College.

The self-study referred to Taskstream as the institution's assessment management system and Pegasus as the tool to develop budgets and strategic objectives aligned to College goals. In reviewing the plans within the Taskstream system, it was noted that the utilization is not consistent throughout the institution. Many initiatives were not even started or evaluated in any way to effectively link mission, goals and objectives and ultimately institutional resources. The use of Pegasus was sporadic. In those cases where it was used the links to strategic objectives were weak or non-existent.

**Requirements**

- Complete utilization of a systematic approach to recording institutional improvement efforts and their results through all areas of the College with periodic assessment in all areas of planning, resources and renewal within the institution.

- Conduct an overall institutional review of the resources needed to support the College's mission and goals.

- Develop a financial planning and budgeting process utilizing data trends and assessment documents.

- Establish policies and procedures to determine the institution's allocation of resources.

**Recommendations**

- The College should seek additional ways to strengthen the connections between assessment results and strategic resource allocations -- including improvements to the Pegasus interface to better accommodate those connections.


**Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

*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.*

In the team's judgment, the institution does not meet this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings**

The expected climate of shared collegial decision making does not exist at Nassau Community College.  As a result of an ineffective and distrustful system of governance, the institution has lost its ability to assign authority and responsibility in matters related to its mission and strategic goals.  A high level of distrust between the Faculty Senate, the administration and the Board of Trustees exists.

The institution has not had a permanent president since July of 2012. Two failed presidential searches followed. As of the writing of this report and the team's visit, the College has yet to hire a permanent president.  In addition, the College has experienced a prolonged period of instability at the senior levels of institutional leadership. Positions have been filled with acting or interim staff.  In at least one instance, key senior level positions – Executive Vice President, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Services – was held by one person.  This pattern of assigning faculty or staff to acting or interim positions – coupled with failed searches – exists at the dean's level as well.  This lack of stability at the highest levels of leadership has resulted in an inability for the College to rally around a shared vision and/or a set of priorities related to the current or future academic mission of the college.

The Board of Trustees does not have a process for orienting new board members. It does not have a process of self-assessment or evaluation.  There is no evidence that the Board of Trustees has an organized way of ensuring the effective interaction of the governing bodies in a manner consistent with the principles of shared governance.

**Requirements**

- The Board of Trustees must appoint a permanent president.

- The Board of Trustees must establish an organized and systematic way of orienting new board members.

- The Board of Trustees must establish an organized and systematic way of self-assessment and evaluation.

- The institution must create a system of shared governance in which each major constituency carries out its role in a complementary manner consistent with the principles of shared governance and New York State Regulations.

- The Institution must rebuild trust and collegiality among the constituent groups to ensure the interests of students are protected and the future of the College is secured.

- The Institution should invest the necessary resources to ensure that the constituent groups are trained in the conventions of governance and college leadership.

**Recommendation**

- The institutions should seek the services of national and state organizations such as NYCCT, ACCT or AGB to provide training and consultation on the roles and expectations of leaders in a shared governance environment.

**Standard 5: Administration**

*"The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institutions' organization and governance."*

In the team's judgment, the institution does not meet this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings**

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and following interviews with faculty, staff, students, et al., the team has developed the following conclusions relative to this standard.

Beginning with the retirement of 27-year veteran President Dr. Sean Fanelli in 2009, NCC appears to be experiencing a period of instability relative to institutional administration and governance. In November of 2009 the Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Donald Astrab President, who held the position until July of 2012.  From that point (July 2012), NCC has operated without a permanent President in office. Following Dr. Astrab's resignation in July of 2012, Dr. Ken Saunders, then Executive Vice President, was appointed Acting President in January of 2013.  In September of 2015 the Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Thomas Dolan, retired Great Neck Public Schools Superintendent as Interim President.  Dr. Dolan has served in this capacity since that time. Throughout this time period Dean's positions and that of the Vice President of Academic Affairs has been in constant flux.  The Vice President of Academic Affairs position remains vacant. The College has engaged in searches for this position, however the administration, reacting to a call for ceasing the search, by faculty, decided to cancel the search. The faculty request stemmed from their desire to hold off on filling this position until a permanent President had been hired for the College.

Dr. Thomas Dolan, Interim President, appears to be operating with the primary responsibility of leading the institution, along the lines of the mission, and with primary responsibility for the administration of the College.

Relative to the credentials and qualifications of the chief executive officer, the team has confirmed the following information.  Dr. Dolan has served as the Superintendent of the Great Neck Public School system as well as the Franklin Square Elementary School district and myriad other K-12 educational positions.  Dr. Dolan has taught at the collegiate level for both Hofstra

University and Queens College as an adjunct.  This is the extent of his professional experience within higher education beyond his current appointment as Interim President of NCC.

A review of the vitae and resumes for the President's Cabinet, and through interviews with the same, revealed that the administrative leaders of the College appear to be sufficiently skilled, credentialed, and experienced to carry out their responsibilities and functions.

Interviews with Interim President Dolan, the President's Cabinet, Assistant Vice President of Human Resources Dorlena Dunbar, and Associate Vice President of Equity, Inclusion & Affirmative Action Craig Wright, revealed a common belief that there exist sufficient administrative resources to carry out the operations and mission of the college.

As stated on page 38 of the self-study report, NCC has experienced an administrative salary freeze for the past seven years, which remains in place as of the team's visit.

From the Self-Study, it is clear that the Board of Trustees, under the authorization stemming from a resolution of the SUNY Board of Trustees to operate in New York State, maintains clear oversight over the Chief Executive Officer and general holistic oversight over NCC operations. It is further clear, and documented via the 10/05/2015 Organizational Chart, what structure is in place relative to lines of organization of the various administrative functions. However, the observed culture and reality of organization and lines of authority, on the ground at NCC, do not mirror the written documentation provided to the team.

A review of documentation, and confirmed in interviews with administrators, faculty, the Board of Trustees, the President, the President's Cabinet, the Academic Senate Executive Committee and students that the Academic Senate, through its 27 committees, is the driving entity for a large array of policy decisions. Interviews with the President's Cabinet revealed a feeling of frustration, by administrators, to enact meaningful and efficient change -- a feeling similarly expressed by the Board of Trustees. It should be noted that administrators, faculty, and the Board of Trustees all share a common hope that the next President will prove to be a transformational leader that the campus desperately needs.

The climate on campus is hostile and uncivil.

Stemming from interviews, and following a review of the NCCFT faculty contract, the Academic Senate Bylaws, SUNY regulations, and College Policy, the team feels that the interpretation of these documents, now and over the past decade, serves as the source of confusion leading to the negative climate that now exists.

There exist accusations of abuse of power and abdication of responsibility among the Board of Trustees, the administration, and the faculty. One documented example relates to the Board of Trustees responsibility for the approval of policy. The Academic Senate Bylaws, Article I: Purpose -- list five purposes of the Academic Senate (Note: this section is also included in the NCCFT Contract September 1, 2013 to August 31, 2017 but the remaining portion of the Academic Senate Bylaws [beyond this section] are not included in the NCCFT contract):

*"It is the Academic Senate of Nassau Community College that shall provide the College community with a voice in general education goals and policies as well as other matters of concern to the College community. The Academic Senate shall have responsibilities and powers in the following areas unless otherwise restricted by law and the provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.*

*a) To examine, approve and recommend curriculum for examination by the President and the Board of Trustees.*

*b) To recommend requirements for admissions, degrees, and graduation.*

*c) To formulate and propose academic college policies including policies on class size, academic advisement, educational TV, and academic calendar for the consideration of the President and the Board of Trustees.*

*d) To provide a forum for the consideration of academic matters of interest to the College community.*

*e) To formulate and propose policies in those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. "*

This section of the NCCFT contract and the Academic Senate Bylaws appear to conflict with Article II: Procedure of the Academic Senate Bylaws.

Excerpt from Academic Senate Bylaws Page 1:

*"All formal actions (actions which affect the policies and procedures of the College and/or the Academic Senate in areas where the Academic Senate has powers and responsibilities) shall be communicated to the President of the College and unless vetoed in writing within ten (10) teaching days of receipt by the President, shall become the policy of the College."*

Additionally, this additional excerpt from the Academic Senate Bylaws Page 1 further reflects the conflict on campus:

*"The Board of Trustees under normal circumstances shall not formulate policies or modify existing policies in areas where the Academic Senate has responsibility and powers before the Senate has adequate opportunity to discuss policy and formulate recommendations."*

These statements, along with the complex process for Presidential veto and Academic Senate veto override have coalesced to form a difficult process for effective and efficient policy making decisions to occur on campus.

**Requirements**

- The College must prioritize and complete its search for a permanent President.

- The College must complete a formal review of the roles & responsibilities and authority of all constituencies and staff of the College, including but not limited to issues of policy creation / revision, policy final approvals, and policy implementation. The results of this review must be clearly communicated to all constituencies of the college.

## Recommendations

- The team recommends that NCC deploy a committee to research the effects of the salary freeze and propose recommendations on methods to conclude it.

## Standards 6: Integrity

*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.*

In the team's judgment, the institution does not meet this standard.

### Summary of evidence and findings

As a result of interviews, documents and videos, the team believes there have been incidents that raise concerns about institutional integrity. Recent board meetings have displayed behaviors that the team believes compromised the integrity of the hiring process and the presidential search. The hiring of the Assistant to the President for Government and Media Relations on December 8, 2015 during the Board of Trustees meeting – without the consent of the president or administration -- is one example of a complete breakdown of standards related to fair and equitable hiring practices. This hiring clearly did not follow the mission and procedures established by the College's Office of Equity, Inclusion and Affirmative Action and raises serious concerns about political intrusion into the business of the College. In addition, on February 9th, the public comments by certain board members regarding the presidential search process, and one of the final candidates, compromised the integrity of the presidential search process. The effect of these actions have had a profoundly negative impact on the morale of the College.

Students are supported and guided by policies and procedures available in printed or electronic versions including the Catalog available on the College website. Students seeking information related to academic policies have accessibility through various centers, including Academic Advisement, Dean of Students, Academic Counseling and the Center for Students with Disabilities. However, the team is concerned that the classroom management policy described in the Catalog does not allow for due process.

The system of committees and forums aspires to ensure a campus environment that encourages academic freedom and inquiry. However, within the current campus environment, the system is strained due to a climate of distrust between college constituents which may hinder academic discourse. This lack of a functioning shared governance structure may lead to issues with impropriety or the appearance of impropriety.

The Academic Senate Bylaws of the College address the need to maintain academic freedom and integrity including the charge of the standing committees' professional practices. The collective bargaining units for faculty (NCCFT representing full-time and AFA representing adjunct faculty) and classified staff help to establish fairness in the hiring, evaluation and promotion, and grievance processes.

In addition, the college follows policies regarding FERPA and Title IV Financial Aid Program.

**Requirement**

- The Board of Trustees must ensure the integrity of all hiring practices throughout the College.

- The Board of Trustees must ensure the integrity of the presidential search process.

- The Board of Trustees must prevent political intrusion into the business of the college.

- The College's Classroom Management Policy as described in the College Catalog for dealing with disruptive students enables the removal of students at the faculty member's discretion. The policy raises question of due process and must be revised. The College must ensure due process in matters of student discipline.

**Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practice**

The College Catalog and College Website are now updated annually and include identical information regarding policies and procedures of which students need to be aware. Archived catalogs are complete and accurate.

Board of Trustees Policies have been collected and organized in the Office of the President.

**Recommendations**

- The College should ensure information and processes regarding accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education is made publicly available to the institution's community in a timely fashion enabling sufficient input from various constituents. The processes and information gathering should have transparency in such a way that College stakeholders are confident in the veracity of such reports.

- Transparency in preparation and submission of College reporting, such as the SUNY EXCELS Performance Improvement Plan, should be implemented. The preparation of these reports should request input from the totality of College stakeholders to help ensure the accuracy and tone of the report will accurately reflect the College.

**Suggestions**

- The College should build a Site Map for the College website, to facilitate the ability of users to locate information.

- The College should develop an institutional plan to create a digital archive of hard-copy historical and other important documents.

**Standard 7:  Institutional Assessment**

***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.***

In the team's judgment, the institution does not meet this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings**

The College's Self-Study references the NCC Institutional Assessment Plan, which contains metrics to measure the College's achievement of mission related goals. Reviewing the plan dated October 2015, the College has established a format for academic program reviews and a schedule in compliance with SUNY system standards. The plan also outlines the College's compliance with regulatory standards for reporting. However, of great concern is the assessment of institutional effectiveness. Much of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan focuses on barriers to meaningful and effective assessment and decision making, particularly focused on the system of shared governance. The report details that the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan was not finally approved until midway through the evaluation period.

While the College has many tools for collecting and reporting data, including Banner, Pegasus, and Taskstream, it is difficult to find concrete examples that data is being used. For example, the Self-Study states "Information entered into Taskstream is essential to academic assessment and to determining operational effectiveness. While much of the data is narrative or textual, it is supplemented by metrics as necessary." While the College has the resources to collect and analyze data, it is clear that this is not being done in a systematic manner. Outside of the academic area, Taskstream appears to be used inconsistently and only for the purpose of collecting goals and plans without any data collection or analysis.

As a member of the SUNY system, NCC participates in the SUNY Excels initiative. The 2015 report details demographic profiles of NCC students, trends in enrollment and numbers of degrees awarded, and funding sources. Although the SUNY EXCELS PIP identifies concerning trends, it doesn't clearly identify benchmarks or strategies for improvement. It concludes with a paragraph which appears to lay the blame for a lack of institutional assessment on challenges in the governance system. Although helpful to identify barriers to change, the College is not relieved of its responsibility to measure its effectiveness and respond appropriately. The SUNY Excels Performance Improvement Plan identifies five priority areas:

1. Improvement in first- and second-year retention
2. Increased graduation rates
3. Growth in sponsored research activity
4. Increased diversity among faculty, administration and staff
5. Extending applied learning experiences across all associate degree programs

While these are not aligned with the College's six strategic goals, these five priority areas are consistent in spirit. Additional data and reporting is available through SUNY system standard reporting. Although the Dean for the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning has described the plethora of reports available from SUNY as overwhelming, use of this data represents a real opportunity for the College.

Clearly, the College has many documents that identify plans, although it's difficult to find detailed reporting on achievement of the goals or strategies for improvement. For example, although the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan includes some quantitative metrics, most measurements are in the future and no data has been included for the 2014-2015 year. Additionally, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning produces over one hundred standard reports each year, yet it is unclear where the reports are published or how they are used by decision makers at the College.

The College identifies six broad expectations to fulfill its mission: access and diversity; academic programs; community needs; teaching and learning; student support and personal development; and administrative leadership. From the narrative of Standards 2 and 7, as well as interviews conducted on campus, there appear to be no metrics or benchmarks identified to measure the College's achievement of these expectations.

Academic program assessment is coordinated through the Office for Academic Assessment and Program Review. Each program submits an annual report to the office and these are aggregated into a report that is forwarded to the Academic Deans, the Dean of OIESP, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the Executive Vice President. After discussion, this group makes recommendations to the Cabinet, although there appears to have been limited improvements as a result of this process. Academic programs must also complete a SUNY program review once every five years, which includes an external review.

The College is working to develop more effective assessments of student support services and programs, though these efforts appear to be in preliminary stages of implementation. In addition, the College assesses the sufficiency of its facilities through a Facilities User Survey which has been used to inform the ten-year Facilities Master Plan. The College has also implemented a Capital Project request process to make more informed resource allocation decisions.

Resource allocation decisions are reflected in the College's Pegasus system, although the College has made limited connections between assessment and resource allocation. While Environmental Scans have reported on a wide variety of indirect measures of viability and student success, such as section efficiency, seat count efficiency, full-time/part-time balance, critical mass of staffing, and cost per credit hour, the process has not been active in recent years.

Annual reporting of key performance indicators derived from this dataset and others will help the college position itself for sustainability.

Taken as a whole, there are a wide range of institutional assessment activities at the College, although it does not appear that the data is used in any systematic fashion for continuous improvement.

**Requirements**

- The College must develop a clear set of strategic goals and plans and identify a set of metrics that will allow the College and its constituents to measure achievement of these goals.

- The College must fully and authentically participate in the SUNY Excels and Performance Improvement Process.

**Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices**

Although there is not a systematic process for institutional assessment, there are functions within the college which have done this effectively, including the financial aid, facilities, and student services offices.

**Recommendations**

- The College's five-year program review process should be expanded and improved with the goal of quality improvement.

**Suggestions**

- The College should develop a set of key performance indicators to provide administrators with clear measures of achievement of the institution's mission and goals.

**Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention**

***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.***

In the team's judgment, the institution meets this standard.

NCC's Office of Admissions works in close collaboration with the Office of Marketing and Communications to promote the institution and its offerings. The college has several publications, both hard copy and electronic, which are shared with a variety of stakeholders including guidance counselors, principals, and superintendents. A variety of strategies are employed to market the college to the broader community including traditional ads and billboards in highly trafficked areas such as malls and public transportation, as well as direct

communications to segmented populations such as Honors students and Veterans. Social media is also used to market the college.

A major recruitment effort is the annual Open House, where prospective students are invited to visit campus. Faculty, staff, and current students are available to answer questions about the college's academic programs and its services, and also provides an opportunity for prospective students to tour the facilities.

Admission policies and processes are available through the online college catalog, and the website. Some competitive admissions programs, primarily in the Allied Health Sciences, have a separate application process, and might have different admissions standards (such as specified previous coursework) and procedures. Recently, the college implemented an online application and other initiatives that may provide for more comprehensive and personalized communication with applicants. However, student learning outcomes by program are not listed on the College website.

Financial Aid and scholarship information can be found online through the college's website, and in hard copy form. In-person workshops are also periodically offered. The student loan default rate is well within acceptable parameters, and student receivables have improved significantly.

A robust developmental education program is in place with appropriate academic supports in each area, including several discipline-specific Help Centers, the Writing Center, the Math Center, and Computer Learning Centers. These academic supports are available in group settings, as well as one-on-one.  Developmental courses are offered in several formats (including hybrid) to help students complete the required sequences and in some cases, earn college credit at the same time. A class has been developed, ENG 100, to better prepare students with marginal writing skills for college level writing.

While retention initiatives have been primarily managed by individual departments, a campus-wide retention committee was formed to address the attrition rate of nearly forty percent. The committee has broad participation from the campus community, with membership appointed by the Acting President and NCCFT. Student retention is also featured prominently in the college's strategic plan, with plans for the development of a First Year Experience program, and the construction of a One-Stop Center where students may complete most necessary transactions and access critical services in one location. Cross training is occurring in the staff of the One-Stop Center to better assist students.

An Early Warning System was instituted in 2010 by the Strategic Enrollment Management Committee (SEMC). Students who receive an alert are encouraged to seek assistance in the Center for Educational and Retention Counseling (CERC). Academic progress reports are also available for faculty to communicate progress to students in the 6th-8th week of the semester. How effectively or widely the system is used is unclear to the reader.

**Conclusions**

Nassau Community College has a wide range of services and programs related to the admission, enrollment, and retention of students. Attrition rates are of concern, with the 2015 report of the Retention Committee alluding to "losing" 6,000 students. A One-Stop Center is currently under

construction, which will house related operational areas to provide students with greater ease of access in the enrollment process. Staff are currently being cross-trained in these related functions in anticipation of the opening of the center. NCC should be commended for their efforts in better meeting the needs of students.

**Recommendations**

- The College should develop a comprehensive strategic enrollment plan.
- The recommendations from the 2015 Retention Committee report should be reviewed and prioritized based on institutional goals and resources, and operationalized to include timelines and performance indicators to measure success and outcomes.
- The college should publicize to prospective students the expected student learning outcomes for each of its programs.

**Standard 9: Student Support Services**

**The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.**

In the team's judgment, the institution meets this standard.

A broad range of support services are in place at NCC which are appropriate and supportive of the open admissions mission and which meet the diverse needs of the student body. The Center for Educational and Retention Counseling provides educational planning assistance as well as interventions for students on academic probation. The Career Counseling Center offers resources for students and alumni including career exploration and counseling, with additional services such as internships and employment opportunities offered by the Job Placement Center.

Psychological Counseling is also offered in the Counseling Center, staffed by licensed practitioners. Short-term therapy is available, as are referrals to external agencies such as hospitals and social services. The Center for Students with Disabilities, partially funded through a TRIO grant, provides students who have self-identified as having a disability appropriate service guided by proper documentation. Childcare is available on campus.

For students exploring or planning to transfer, the Transfer Counseling Office offers individual and group counseling, transfer fairs, many college visits and on-site decision days with participation from over 120 colleges and universities.

There are ample opportunities for students to participate in clubs, organizations, and leadership opportunities. With one of the largest athletic programs on the east coast, there are twelve men's teams, ten women's teams, a cheer squad and a dance team. Approximately 500 students participate in these activities, funded through student activities fees and administered by the Faculty Student Association.  The academic progress of student athletes and student organization leaders is monitored through a questionnaire that is completed by their instructors, though it is unclear how high the return rate is, who follows up, or what the corrective measures are.

The student code of conduct is administered through the Dean of Students, is detailed in the college catalog, and is available online. The policies and procedures for appeals on conduct charges/decisions are also clearly stated. While policies and procedures for student grievances and complaints exist, they are not located in one, easily accessible location. There is a strong concern about a classroom management policy in the College catalog which permits the dismissal of a student from a class without being afforded due process.

Student records are handled and maintained securely and the policies for the release of student information are published and promoted through a variety of forums including workshops, and annual distribution (via e-mail) of a FERPA Handbook to the college community.

**Conclusions**

A broad range of services are available to students at NCC including various types of counseling services and childcare. There are ample opportunities for students to participate in clubs and organizations, as well as intercollegiate sports. The Dean of Students serves as a student advocate and resource for resolving issues that may impede their progress. The dean also administers the student code of conduct, which can be found in the catalog and online. While students' rights and responsibilities in the disciplinary process provide for due process, the College's Classroom Management Policy allows for students to be debarred from attending a class without a hearing, at the discretion of the instructor.

**Recommendations**

- The team commends the Student Services team for their ongoing assessment efforts in all student services areas and **recommends** that they close the assessment loop by documenting evidence that the results are used to improve and gain efficiencies in services and programs through institutional planning, resource allocation and renewal.

- The team **recommends** that procedures for student grievances and complaints concerning college and academic policies/decisions should be easily accessible, and clearly delineated to include to whom the appeals should be submitted, in what form, and by what timeline.

- The team **recommends** that every effort be made to ensure that the make-up of the Student Code of Conduct Committee reflects the diversity of the NCC student body.

**Standard 10: Faculty**

*"The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals."*

In the team's judgment, the institution meets this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings**

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard:

The faculty are uniformly creative, dedicated and passionate in their devotion to students and their success. Whenever the team talked with students they did not hesitate to express their regard and appreciation for the efforts their teachers devoted on their behalf.

The Self-Study reports that the College employs 495 full-time credit faculty, who, along with their adjunct colleagues, are charged with responsibility for the teaching and learning mission of the institution. Recent departures under an early-retirement incentive initiative in 2015 have reduced this number by approximately 100. Policy and procedure for the development, review, assessment and revision of the curriculum are clearly outlined in the by-laws of the Academic Senate and constitute the primary responsibility of the Curriculum Committee. Faculty clearly take a lead role in designing, maintaining and updating curricula.

The college places a clear priority on the continuing development of its full-time faculty. Upon hire, all faculty are required to develop a five-year professional development plan leading to tenure review. This plan is reviewed and updated as part of an annual year-end summary report. Additionally, a classroom observation is included each academic year as part of this report. Tenured faculty are evaluated no less than every other year, and this review may also include a classroom observation. Adjunct faculty are observed in the classroom during a probationary period upon hire and periodically thereafter. Processes for classroom observation are developed and implemented by each Department. These processes also extend to faculty teaching online.

To support the continuing improvement of faculty, the Self-Study documents multiple opportunities for professional growth. The faculty are enthusiastic and creative in providing professional development programming that includes development grants through the NCC Foundation, distance education stipends, cultural and academic programming, travel stipends, sabbatical opportunities, best practices roundtable discussions, full-day teaching and learning conferences, and many Department-based sessions. The campus is anticipating the arrival of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning which evolved from and expands the space and programming opportunities for the former Center for Faculty Development.

Institutional support for academic freedom is strong. Clear and thorough policy language for assuring such freedom is found in the negotiated agreements for both full- and part-time faculty.

The Self-Study acknowledges that the racial and ethnic diversity of its student body is not mirrored by the diversity of its faculty and staff. A goal within the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan seeks to address this discrepancy, in part, through a review of current search and hiring processes to be carried out by the Academic Senate Affirmative Action Committee. At the time of the visit a five-year affirmative action plan was being prepared for submission to the Affirmative Action

Committee through the shared governance process. This plan will be a comprehensive campus-wide program that will include, in part, the processes for hiring full-time and adjunct faculty and respond to the SUNY directive to all its campuses to develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion policy.

**Significant Accomplishments**

The College should be commended for its support of faculty development. Faculty are creative in providing multiple opportunities for professional growth and passionate in their desire to help each other become better teachers for the ultimate success of their students.

**Recommendation**

- Complete the development of the comprehensive Affirmative Action Plan for the College. With respect to the hiring processes for full-time and adjunct faculty, attention should be paid to assuring that all involved in selecting new faculty are starting from a common understanding of goals and procedures for increasing the diversity of the instructional staff.

**Standard 11: Educational Offerings**

*"The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings."*

In the team's judgment, the institution meets this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings**

Based on the review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others the team developed the following conclusions related to the standard. The institution's educational offerings are extensive and appear to include a large number of academic programs, sufficient content, breadth and length. Faculty within departments develop the curriculum which is reviewed college wide and approved by the Faculty Senate and SUNY. Program and course learning outcomes are articulated in Taskstream. Curriculum mapping clearly connects program and required course learning outcomes. However, there is no mechanism to communicate those outcomes with students.

Program requirements in the catalog are specified by semester. Graduation requirements in the majority of the programs are 62 to 64 credits in compliance with SUNY guidelines. The recent overhaul of program requirements have an appropriate combination of major and general education courses.

A large number of the students are recent high school graduates enrolled in the liberal arts program. Due to demographic shifts in Nassau County it would be prudent for the College to

review its mix of offerings to appeal to non-traditional populations.  The proposed AOS degree in the health sciences is one such program. Some programs are restricted to students who have completed developmental requirements.  Implementation of co-requisite developmental education with credit courses such as in ENGL 100 would aid retention efforts and reduction of time to graduation. The development of an academic master plan pairing the education portfolio and community needs is good practice especially in the climate of declining enrollment projections and financial belt tightening.

Regarding program rigor, the College offers many 200 level courses. However, due to the structure of some programs, a student may be able to graduate without completing a 200 level course.  The findings of the 2015 administration of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) speaks to the institution's academic rigor benchmarked against other similar institutions.  The key findings show that NCC scores fell below the 2015 CCSSE comparative cohort in each of the five areas.  The college is to be commended in scoring 68.5, significantly above the norm of 59.8 for the number of written papers or reports of any length. The College catalog contains over 60 courses with a 300 to 600 code.  The coding does not reflect conventional numbering practices therefore the numbering of the courses above 299 might be misleading to students and other readers of students' transcripts, potentially impeding the transfer of credit.

Course codes, titles, prerequisites, credit hours, and departments are consistently included in the catalog course descriptions.  However, course descriptions were missing for approximately 40 courses. Students are informed of the transferability of courses to SUNY institutions as well as the semester in which the course is offered.  The number of lecture and lab hours were provided in several instances, however, they were missing from many others.

The institution's transfer policy is articulated in the catalog.  In compliance with the policy, transcripts are reviewed by Recruitment on a timely basis and up loaded to students' profile for inclusion in degree audit.  Joint admissions and guaranteed transfer agreements are described in the catalog.

The College operates a full service library.  Resources and access to electronic databases meet the needs of the academic programs. Library assistance supports students' acquisition of the information management, critical thinking and basic communication competencies across the curriculum via faculty collaborations, individual services and workshops.

**Recommendations**

- Communicate program learning outcomes in a place such as the catalog that is easily accessible to students.

- Assure contact hours by type i.e. lecture hours and lab hours are published in the catalog for all courses.

- Review course numbering and renumber the course whose numbers exceed 299 to be within the common convention of 100 and 200 level courses characteristic of associate degree programming.

- Review all programs to ensure graduates in each program develop the knowledge and skills characterized by 200 level course work.

- Develop an academic master plan to guide program development and discontinuance, innovation in programing and support, and to be a guide to other plans and resource allocation.

**Suggestions**

- Engage the institution in the analysis of the data obtained via survey and comparison to other institutions i.e. CCSSE, ACT Student Opinion Survey, and National Benchmark Project.

- Consider expansion of integration of developmental education with introductory level courses to quickly place students in programs of their choice.

**Standard 12: General Education**

*The institutions 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 technical competency."*

In the team's judgment, the institution meets this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings**

Based on the review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others the team developed the following conclusions related to the standard.

General education requirements serve as the institutional level learning outcomes. The skills and abilities students acquire through the general education portion of their program support the mission to expand students' knowledge and skills.

The distribution of courses and the specificity of the learning outcomes are of sufficient scope and number for the degree programs the College grants. Furthermore, the distribution is appropriate and sufficient to enhance students' intellectual growth. Many of the learning outcomes are framed after the SUNY general education learning goals. Several of these courses are accepted as general education courses by SUNY and noted in the catalog as are the SUNY distribution and credit limit requirements.

General education designations are clearly marked in the course description section of the catalog. A description of the purpose of each of the categories is also articulated in the catalog.

In 2006-2007 the college participated in the SUNY General Education campus wide assessment plan. Three infused competencies, critical thinking, information management, and basic written communication were addressed. More recently The General Education subcommittee of the Academic Senate Assessment Committee conducted an assessment initiative to assess the three infused competencies noted above plus basic oral communication skill. In its report dated October 2013 there was participation from approximately 15 departments to assess students' acquisition of the skills in the four categories. The acceptable metric of compliance was set at 65% of the students demonstrating acquisition of the specified skills.

**Recommendations**

- Employ modifications to improve student acquisition of the general education outcomes assessed.

- Report the effect of changes made based on the findings to increase the acquisition of the general education skills and abilities.

- Systematically expand the assessment piloted to all general education learning categories as recommended by the self-study.

**Suggestions**

- Incorporate faculty-designed best practices in general education assessment in professional development.

- Determine whether a 65% success rate is an acceptable standard.

- As the College anticipates further reductions in enrollment coupled with the streamline program requirements referenced in Standard 11, the College should consider trimming its portfolio of offerings and focusing on reinforcing student learning and success in fewer courses.


**Standard 13: Related Educational Activities**

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

In the team's judgment, the institution meets this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings**

NCC provides many learning opportunities and activities that are characterized as related educational activities, including in the areas of basic skills, academic and non-academic certificate programs, experiential learning, non-credit offerings, distance education, and opportunities at other instructional sites abroad. These diverse offerings reflect the College's Mission by serving to shape and enhance students' learning experiences. These programs may prepare students for college-level academic work such as Developmental Education and English as a Second Language or assist students in attaining immediate employment such as academic certificates or workforce training programs. Experiential learning opportunities have been strengthened by implementing a service learning component by establishing the Center for Service Learning administered by the Dean of Service Learning and Veterans Affairs in 2010.

NCC offers clear procedures for the identification of students not fully prepared for college level course work including the requirement for admitted students to undergo placement testing. The students are directed into developmental courses in Reading, English and Mathematics within a variety of frameworks appropriately based on students' needs. The impacts of these programs are extensively analyzed by examining several indicators including program completion rates and graduation rates. These programs are aligned with the College's Mission by developing students' skills to help them succeed academically in college level coursework.

In order to continue to fulfill the demand for new online courses and increased enrollment of existing courses the College utilizes the Office of Distance Education (ODE). The ODE provides training and administrative support for all online course applications. The College has supported online education by creation of a Distance Education committee and actively participating in *Open SUNY*, a statewide initiative for enhancing online learning opportunities. In addition, the College has continued to upgrade software for enhancing distance learning.

In addition, the College fulfills its mission of pursuing lifelong learning by serving the community as a testing site for the High School Equivalency (HSE) exam, the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and the DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) exams, and the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS). Also in supporting lifelong learning, the College enables senior residents to easily enroll in courses as part of the Senior Observer Program. And lastly, NCC offers programs for residents to learn the English language or improve their English language proficiency; and provides education in basic foreign language skills to adult residents.

**Significant accomplishments, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practices**

The College has continued to effectively address the needs of underprepared students in basic skills. The College employs effective procedures for identifying students who are not fully prepared through use of "multiple measures" and based on those measures directs students to appropriate remediation services. Students can demonstrate competency through multiple pathways to ensure they reach credit bearing coursework in the most expedient manner. The effectiveness of these services is appropriately assessed to ensure success.

The College instituted a service learning component by establishing the Center for Service Learning administered by the Dean of Service Learning and Veterans Affairs in 2010. This was promoted by establishing a subcommittee of the academic senate Student Activities Committee to promote service learning activities on campus. In addition, the College has hosted professional development activities on service learning to assist faculty and administrators with its incorporation into the College.

The College recently developed the Health Information Technology Certificate, externally accredited by the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), in response to a growing labor demand. NCC is the first institution in New York State to obtain AHIMA approval for this type of program. The Certificate program is linked into the Health Information Technology (A.A.S.) enabling students completing the certificate to enter into the A.A.S. program with advanced standing.

**Suggestions**

- Grow collaborative efforts between the Office of Workforce Development and Lifelong Learning and faculty to develop new non-credit programs in labor sectors which forecast growing regional employment opportunities for graduates.

- The College should continue to support the implementation of service learning opportunities and internships and analyze the success of such opportunities.

- Examine "Best Practices" and engage members of the community in professional development for basic skills courses provided by the College in order to ensure optimal student success.

**Recommendations**

- Implement online academic support services that are equivalent to those students can access in person on campus.

- Ensure the periodic evaluation of academic program certificates utilizing established institutional procedures.

**Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning**

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

In the team's judgment, the institution does not meet this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings**

The narrative for Standard 14 in the institution's Self-Study indicates a "robust", faculty-driven process of student learning outcomes assessment. The college utilizes Taskstream software to accumulate assessment data and faculty feedback and there is clear evidence that course level data as they related to program goals is consistently being collected and reported. According to the *Summary Report: 2014-2015 Annual Departmental Assessment Reports and General Status of Course Level Outcomes Assessment at Nassau Community College*, 100% of departments submitted their reports for the 2014-2015 academic year, with varying levels of quality and sophistication. Reports are reviewed by a Faculty Reader and the Assistant Vice President of Academic Assessment and Program Review and a review outcome is assigned – ranging from Response Required to Exemplary.

It appears that assessment works best when faculty collaborate to identify what is most important to assess and when they authentically measure what they truly value rather than participating in assessment to comply with SUNY and MSCHE standards. Additionally, the availability of released time for coordinating assessment activities and reporting on results has supported this process.

However, of great concern is the perception that the divide between faculty and administration, referenced in other sections of the Self-Study report, affects the student learning outcome assessment process. The language of the 2014-2015 summary report, particularly through lengthy footnotes, suggests that faculty and administration are not working together to understand and improve student learning through the assessment process.

The 2014-2015 report also expressed concerns about the quality of course level assessments, noting that many departments are using course grades as a measure of learning. While the course grade is certainly important to students, it is an indirect assessment of student achievement and not a direct assessment of skills or attainment of learning objectives. Additionally, it appears that the flexibility which has allowed individual faculty to select their own assessment measures for course or program objectives also limits the ability of the department to draw conclusions and make plans for improvement. It is essential that the college support faculty in the development of assessment tools that are efficient and effective at measuring learning. The college holds a number of professional development opportunities associated with student learning outcomes assessment, and there is ample evidence that there is a continuing need for training in this area.

Similar to program goals, general education outcomes are collected through course level assessments. This process has evolved in recent years, although there is little evidence that the results have been used for improvement.

The Self-Study provides several examples of the use of student learning outcomes assessment data to inform the budget and resource allocation process, including purchases of Nook readers and "smart boards" for the Reading and Basic Education department; updated computer equipment for the Recording Technology Certificate program; and increased funding for lab hours in the department of Marketing, Retailing, Fashion Buying and Merchandising, Fashion

Design, and Interior Design. These examples provide clear evidence of the value of meaningful, faculty-driven assessment.

Departments are generally compliant with the five-year program review process. The quality of these reviews is highly variable and the Assistant Vice President for Academic Assessment and Program Review provides support and feedback throughout the process. The college should be commended for the use of external reviewers in the process. However, it appears that the Deans are inconsistently engaged in the program review process, a pattern that is clearly not in the College's interest.

Indirect measures of student learning are available through reports provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning. However, other than use of NCLEX scores by the Nursing program, there appears to be no systematic evaluation of this data by the departments.

The evaluation team concurs with the Self-Study recommendation: "Having all the appropriate assessment elements in place, the College should bring these together to support a process of comprehensive assessment of student learning at the institutional level." This affirmation, though, is conditioned on the qualification that it's unclear that the college has "all" the elements in place. There is clearly a large amount of data and copious plans, but it is important that the myriad of activities coordinate towards meaningful evaluation and instructional learning.

**Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:**

Some academic programs have fully embraced the assessment of student learning and have engaged in program improvement. By building on this expertise, the College may more fully and effectively implement a comprehensive system of student learning outcomes assessment.

The external reviewer process as a component of the five-year program review is valuable, although fuller participation by Deans in the program review process would result in greater impact.

**Requirements**

- Each program at the College must develop clear statements about expected learning outcomes and each goal must be regularly and consistently measured with direct and indirect measures.

- The College must develop and implement a rigorous and comprehensive system for general education assessment.

- The College must use assessment data to improve teaching and learning and to inform the academic plans of the College.

**<u>Recommendations</u>**

- The College should continue to assist faculty with measuring course and program outcomes using rubrics and other clearly measurable tools rather than assignment or course grades.

- The College should expand reporting and analysis of indirect and direct measures of student learning. Chairs should regularly receive data on graduation rates, grades and course success, and enrollments and systematically respond to the data.

- The college must assess the effectiveness of their remedial skills and distance learning programs. For example, the college should measure and evaluate the completion rates in the developmental programs and determine if student success in distance courses is similar to that in face to face courses.

**<u>Suggestions</u>**

- Recognizing that a large number of students transfer from NCC to four-year institutions, the College should provide data to programs (at least for program reviews) about transfer outcomes.